

# WHEN YOU QUESTION WHICH IS BETTER BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

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 Analysis

After almost two months of an aggressive military campaign by the Assad regime forces alongside the Russian Wagner militias, Iranian militias, and the Lebanese Hezbollah, the regime took control of Ma'rat al-Numan, a strategic town near the M-4 highways between Aleppo and Latakia. The fighting was not a walk in the park for either of the two sides, Al-Assad regime forces lost more than 359 fighters during the battle according to the Nawras Study Center statistics, while the Syrian opposition army lost important towns, such as Kafr-roma and Khan-alsabil within the two months.

During the clash in south Idlib, Al-Assad regime forces, along with Iranian and Russian militias began a new battle on the western Aleppo countryside, in an attempt

to conquer the Syrian opposition and force them to surrender. The Syrian Civil Defense "White Helmets" counted 338 targeted locations, more than 670 air strikes, 1,440 barrel bombs and 808 rockets, which killed over 130 civilians and wounded more than 263, most of them women and children, in January 2020.

These air strikes also killed three members of the civil defense and harmed others when Russian warplanes targeted them directly during their work.

While Russia and the Assad regime were claiming that they were facing "extremist terrorist groups" in Idlib, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) withdrew from all battles, leaving the fighting to the Syrian opposition factions and the local population. The



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opposition alongside the local population lacked any heavy weapons or ammunition, as HTS confiscated them by force.

## **We are humans:**

The current fighting process shows that Russia and Al-Assad regime forces are planning to besiege the opposition fighters in a closed corner, and force them to surrender by hitting civilians and inflicting heavy casualties among them. Thus, Russia centered its bombing outside the fighting axes and forced surviving civilians to flee and gather near the Turkish border.

Syrian Response Coordinators Group counted the number of displaced within 48 hours after the attack, in which it reached 10,446 families (60,377 people) from Sarakib, Ariha and Khan Alsabeel in south Idlib, and more than an extra 18,406 families (106,754 people) from western and southern areas of rural Aleppo during the period between January 16 and January 28. Thus, the total displacement in last month alone has reached more than 47,070 families (268,298 people).

Samer Bitar, an activist from Idlib, said, “It is not possible to describe the displacement situation, wherever you go, you will see long lines of cars that have come out in haste and do not know where to go, There is no safe road for them, The regime warplanes are targeting them in their cars, death is chasing them even as they flee.”

Samer noted that NGOs in Idlib are no longer able to accommodate the needs of the recurring displacement groups due to the scarcity of humanitarian aid, so hundreds of families ended up living with their children under the trees, or, with more than one family shared one tent or room, if they are lucky enough to find any.

Laith Al-Abdullah a civil defense volunteer in Saraqib town asked in a video message about the role of the international community and human rights organizations. He questioned why they are ignoring these huge human tragedies in Syria and why they are ineffective in stopping this war crime. He asked, “We are humans and we have the right to live, is there any law that can deter this crime?”

Recently many families are still stuck in their towns under the attacks, many of whom do not have cars that can transport themselves to safer areas while the rest of them have no money to rent one, which has prompted many Syrian activists to release many campaigns to collect their transportation costs and prepare tents and food for these people.

Relief organizations inside Syria face many challenges. Beside tents and food, there are urgent needs of fuel for heating, especially following preventable infant mortality cases due to the cold weather or asphyxiation by toxic gases as a result of burning clothes or plastic to substitute the absence of fuel for heating.

Medical teams are also facing increasing pressure as a result of the huge number of shelling injuries, and the increase of diseases due to the cold and the lack of basic needs, especially after the destruction of many hospitals by direct strikes.

Civil defense statistics in 2019 indicated that Russian warplanes destroyed 45 hospitals, 18 ovens, 72 markets, 90 schools, 19 camps, and more than 39 mosques and forced more than 1,182,772 to flee from their hometowns.

## **Tragedy ignored:**

Despite the news, photos and videos that flow continuously from Syria, politicians of global powers aren't showing any real interest

in stopping this humanitarian catastrophe, meanwhile even the Turkish political efforts seem unable to stop Russia, which is seeking a quick victory on the ground. Many Russian-Turkish meetings were made but proven ineffective, because they were not supported by the international community, so Russia's announcement about a truce on January 11th was a trick, and Russia has broken the agreement as usual, and has continued to bomb and destroy everything according to its "scorched earth" policy.

The United States of America, which recently adopted the "Caesar Law" under the title of "Civilian Protection", stood by and watch, it positioned itself so limitedly in the tragedy as can be seen from Minister Pompeo's statement that merely expressed the United States' concern about the deteriorating situation in north-western Syria as a result of the large-scale assault which combined the forces of Russia, the Iranian regime, Hezbollah, and the Assad regime. There are accusations that these forces are conducting indiscriminate aerial bombardment and

ground attacks that have trapped thousands of civilians under bombardment in Marat an-Numan, leaving them nowhere to flee, which is directly preventing the establishment of a ceasefire in northern Syria, as called for in UNSCR 2254, and the safe return of hundreds of thousands of displaced persons in northern Syria to their homes.

The United States condemned these unjustifiable attacks against the people of northwest Syria, and called for an immediate ceasefire with full access to the affected areas by humanitarian organizations. But when condemnations and calls have been made for years but nothing changed for the Syrian people, will the thought of making a new move emerge?

The Syrians in Idlib are waiting for their death every minute in its various yet all heinous forms, and they realize that no one really wants to help them, or support the efforts of their allies, but many of them prefer mass death under bombardment than to return to a life under the Assad regime and die in his horrific detention centers.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/humanitarianresponse1/photos/pcb.3209980619046637/3209980575713308/?type=3&theater>

<sup>2</sup> [https://twitter.com/SaveIdlib/status/1222138297415323648?fbclid=IwAR1Vu0K8LsAFOHZEKs5z3fayLk9y1WlabsqjzDIEsZGUhj1qb\\_O8aadXpJU](https://twitter.com/SaveIdlib/status/1222138297415323648?fbclid=IwAR1Vu0K8LsAFOHZEKs5z3fayLk9y1WlabsqjzDIEsZGUhj1qb_O8aadXpJU)