

Press conference opening remarks by Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, on the special inquiry in Idlib region

[ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx)

[العربية](#)



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/nCiMqUFWrEU>

Thank you for joining us today for the launch of our special report on Idlib, mandated by the Human Rights Council. I encourage you to read it carefully – this is a **chronicle of deaths foretold**. The commission has said time and again that Idlib is a ticking time bomb – and this report lays out what human suffering ensues after a partial detonation.

On one side there is a border wall, while on the other there is a Government that has failed its population in more ways than can be fathomed. The people of Idlib are **trapped**, scarred by fighting and abuses by all sides over the course of the conflict, and forced to live in terror.

Now the governorate is either largely laying in depopulated ruins or conversely overcrowded, underserviced and over-bombed. More than **one million people have been displaced** from different parts of Idlib over this period, fleeing a campaign of bombardment and terror that may amount to crimes against humanity.

All sides likely committed war crimes. **Children were shelled at school, parents were shelled at the market, patients were shelled at the hospital.** Entire families were bombarded even while fleeing these attacks.

Terrorist and armed groups launched indiscriminate attacks on civilians in government-controlled areas. They arbitrarily detained, tortured, and executed civilians expressing dissenting opinions, including journalists. They oppressed women.

The civilian population is now crammed into an ever-shrinking space in Idlib, largely under the control of terrorist groups and armed groups with ever-increasing needs. During the winter months, children without shelter froze to death - and the international response was to play a game of chicken with humanitarian aid border crossing access. Despite the risks involved, some people are returning to their homes and places of prior displacement because the conditions in overcrowded camps are just that dire, and compounded by the looming threat of COVID-19. **Pandemics know no borders, nor should humanitarian aid.** The very least the Security Council can do now is to renew and strengthen the cross border and cross line aid operations.

The global pandemic helped ensue a pause in fighting. Now that the initial shock of the pandemic fades, so does hope that the ceasefire would become permanent. We need true concrete actions now to end the conflict, cease the continuation of so much suffering, and begin the path to a more rights-respecting Syria for its people. While we welcome last week's resolution by the Security Council calling for a 90-day pause in fighting, we urge the parties to the conflict to heed the Secretary-General's, the Special Envoy's call for **a lasting cease-fire**, and an immediate return to negotiations to end this conflict.

Any lasting peace requires **justice** for the victims, as defined by and for Syrians, and an end to the rampant impunity.

To conclude: this report sets out the details of emblematic attacks and human rights violations and abuses - but there is no explanation to be found as to **why such a predictable and foreseeable amount of suffering has been permitted to proceed to its terrible conclusions.** Without a redoubling of principled efforts to end this conflict by all involved, I fear that we will return here time and again to inform you of what is painfully apparent in the present report – that once again that the Syrian Government, the other parties to the conflict, and the international community have failed the Syrian people yet again, and that this bloodshed continues to go unchecked. Thank you.