

Syrian Coalition Stresses the Need for Civilian Protection After UK Vote on Airstrikes in Syria

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December 4, 2015

Press Statement

Mouaffaq Nyrabia

Syrian Coalition's Representative to Benelux and the EU

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Following the 2 December vote by the UK Parliament supporting British airstrikes against ISIS in Syria, the Syrian National Coalition's Representative to Benelux and the EU, Mouaffaq Nyrabia, said:

“The Syrian National Coalition condemns the brutal attacks perpetuated by ISIS in Europe, in the region and across Syria, and we stand with our friends in the UK, France and across the EU who are committed to degrading and defeating ISIS. We are grateful for the UK's longstanding commitment to ending the war in Syria and the humanitarian aid it provides the Syrian people.

However, the fight against ISIS won't succeed until it tackles the root causes of the extremist threat in Syria: the indiscriminate killing of civilians. Indiscriminate aerial bombardment remains the chief cause of civilian death in Syria, and a major force driving recruits into ISIS ranks. In November, one out of two civilians killed in Syria died as a result of indiscriminate air strikes. According to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, 97% of the people killed by Russian airstrikes were civilians. ISIS will not be defeated as long as this bloodshed continues and the world fails to take the action required to stop it.

A comprehensive and effective approach that includes a guarantee of civilian protection from indiscriminate aerial bombardment is an essential component in the fight against ISIS. By protecting Syrian civilians, the international community will:

1. enable moderate groups now engaged primarily in fighting Assad to focus more resource on ISIS;
2. enable moderate groups to hold territory that they take from ISIS without facing inevitable bombardment by Syrian regime or Russian forces, which risks the territory captured from ISIS falling back into ISIS control;
3. remove a core radicalizing factor—the indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas—and , demonstrate unequivocally the West's commitment to protecting the Syrian people;
4. make a political solution more likely by pressuring the regime and Russia to negotiate seriously, and making compromise on all sides more possible.

Civilian protection will also slow the exodus of innocent Syrians, who continue to arrive on Europe's shores hoping for a better life. Protection is what Syrians want, need and deserve. But it is also the essential core of any functioning strategy that can actually defeat ISIS. It's time for the international community and the EU to listen to Syrians. This is why we, the Syrian National Coalition, urge the UK and the EU to stand against the indiscriminate killing across Syria and to make all the efforts to protect Syrian civilians.'