



Statement

29 June 2018

Syrian Regime Offensive on Southern De-Escalation Zone

Rethink Rebuild Society (RR) condemns the violation of the de-escalation zone in southern Syria, with the latest military offensive shun by the Syrian regime supported by Russian airstrikes on the province of Dara'a.

After weeks of military mobilisation, the Syrian regime begun its offensive on the rebel stronghold in the country's southern region where more than 750,000 people reside. Already around 45,000-50,000 individuals have been [displaced](#) to other areas within the opposition-held area. Again, indiscriminate bombing has damaged medical facilities, in violation of international law. To add to civilians' plight, [Jordan](#) has made clear that it will not admit any displaced people across its border, effectively trapping civilians.

The southern opposition-held region was subject to a de-escalation agreement entered between the United States, Russia and Jordan in July 2017. The timing of the Syrian regime's offensive comes after its recent recapture of other rebel-held areas in Eastern Ghouta and northern Homs, both of which were also de-escalation zones. Despite the agreement in the south being guaranteed internationally, the regime's offensive has not been met with any serious response. A publicised message from the US that it will not come to the aid of the rebels has probably even further encouraged the regime to continue with its attacks. The silence and inaction of the international community is practically "allowing" this offensive to happen.

Unfortunately, this example demonstrates the vulnerability of such externally-guaranteed agreements that are subject to continuous changes of balances, dynamics and understandings. It shows that foreign countries involved in "managing" the conflict are not really serious about peace, but about the pursuit of their narrow interests at the expense of the well-being of Syrians.

A ceasefire was particularly possible in the southern region, given the frozen fronts that were largely in place even before the 2017 de-escalation agreement. Yet, the Syrian regime's latest military offensive demonstrates its intention to militarily and coercively 'win' back the country, leaving behind massive destruction and dimming prospects for political negotiations and inclusive peace.

Over the past period, the UK Government had shifted most of its stabilisation programming, including support to local governance structures, in the north to the southern region. This latest offensive constrains the implementation of such programmes and undermines taxpayer monies put into development aid.

RR thus urges the UK Government to engage through diplomatic channels to push for renewed talks over a ceasefire and halt the regime's military offensive in order to prevent another humanitarian catastrophe that leads to the drastic loss of life and permanent displacement of families. By stopping this offensive, and with the assumption of a standing de-escalation in the north-west and north-east regions, the Syrian regime will have no further fronts to open and will no longer have excuses to refrain from serious engagement with the political process.

ENDS

For further information and press enquiries, please contact 07510007187, or email: bilal@rrsoc.org

Rethink Rebuild Society has established itself as a non-profit organisation that acts as an umbrella for the Syrian community in Manchester, and endeavours to promote peace and protection of civilians to its audience in the UK and the wider public.