

Syria/Aleppo: Joint Statement on the Military Escalation in the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyh Neighborhoods



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The Undersigned Syrian Organizations Call For The Immediate Cessation Of Military Operations And The Accompanying Violations, The Protection Of Civilians, And An Urgent Return To Negotiations

The undersigned Syrian organizations express their grave concern over the escalation of military operations in the city of Aleppo in northern Syria. They call for an immediate ceasefire, the protection of civilians, an end to violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, and an urgent return to political negotiations as the sole viable path to resolving the dispute.

In an unprecedented escalation, on 7 January 2026, amidst military clashes and an exchange of accusations between the parties, the Ministry of Defense of the transitional government in Damascus announced the launch of a “limited military operation” in Aleppo against sites affiliated with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), referring to the predominantly Kurdish neighborhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah. This was followed by deadly military attacks and clashes described as the most severe to affect the two neighborhoods since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024. The recent escalation has, to date, resulted in dozens of civilian casualties, including fatalities and injuries. This escalation was preceded by military skirmishes amid an exchange of accusations between the two parties.

The recent escalation in Aleppo constitutes a clear violation of the agreement signed on 1 April 2025 between the Civil Council of the Ashrafiyah and Sheikh Maqsoud neighborhoods and the committee mandated by the Presidency of the Republic to implement the 10 March 2025 agreement with the SDF. The agreement explicitly stipulated the obligation to protect civilians, prevent any form of attack or harm against them, and preserve civil peace.

This military escalation endangers the lives of hundreds of thousands of residents of the city of Aleppo, including more than 250,000 civilians living in the Sheikh Maqsoud and Ashrafiyah neighborhoods, among them tens of thousands of persons forcibly displaced from the Afrin region, which witnessed military operations in 2018, as well as residents of the Syriac and Sheikh Taha neighborhoods. As of the time of issuance of this statement, tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced to other areas amid ongoing shelling and exchanges of fire.

The organizations undersigned to this statement call for the protection of all civilians without discrimination, strongly condemn all violations committed by any party, and stress the obligation to respect the principles of International Humanitarian Law, including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precaution. They further affirm that this recurring violence stems from the absence of national political solutions and the lack of genuine and inclusive political participation in shaping the country's future during the transitional period, thereby threatening the transition in Syria as a whole.

Moreover, the recent military escalation has raised serious concerns among local communities regarding the risk of new grave violations, as events in the Syrian coast

and in Suwayda have revealed alarming indicators of the recurrent targeting of Syrian civilians from minority communities in Syria on the basis of identity. Accordingly, and in light of their firm commitment to the protection of civilians, full compliance with the rules of International Humanitarian Law, and the promotion of peaceful coexistence and civil peace in Syria, the undersigned Syrian organizations call upon all parties to:

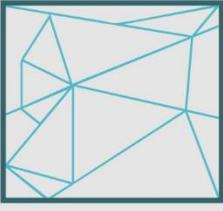
1. Ensure an immediate and unconditional ceasefire by all parties, and put an end to indiscriminate shelling and the targeting of civilian objects. Also, accord the highest priority to the protection of all civilians, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law.
2. Comply with the 1 April 2025 Agreement and its provisions requiring the protection of civilians and the prevention of any attack or harm against them, and respect the 10 March 2025 Agreement, which stipulates in its third clause a nationwide ceasefire across the entire territory of Syria.
3. Refrain from any acts that may lead to forced displacement or demographic change affecting the civilian population, and ensure the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of all persons displaced as a result of the recent military operations.
4. Launch a credible, inclusive Syrian-led political process that guarantees the participation of all Syrian components, strengthens the transitional justice process in a manner that ensures justice for all victims, reopens and sustains national dialogue, and undertakes a review of the Constitutional Declaration.

In conclusion, the undersigned call upon all parties involved in the recent military escalation, as well as all Syrians, to reject hate speech, incitement, and violence, and to uphold peaceful solutions and dialogue. They further urge the international community and United Nations bodies to fulfil their responsibilities in supporting a ceasefire and facilitating negotiations between the parties, in order to prevent the recurrence of cycles of violence. The undersigned reaffirm that the protection of all civilians is not a matter for negotiation, but rather the core and foundation of any sustainable peace.

Signatory organizations:

1. Transformative Pathways
2. Justice for Life - JFL
3. PÊL- Civil Waves
4. Syria Justice and Accountability Center - SJAC
5. Media For Women
6. Syrians for Truth and Justice - STJ

7. Ezdina Organization
 8. Duderi Organization
 9. We are Up to the Challenge Organization
 10. Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR)
 11. Seen for Civil Peace
 12. Dawlaty
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ABOUT STJ

Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) started as an idea in a co-founder's mind while attending the U.S. Middle-East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program (LDF) in 2015. The idea became a reality and flourished into an independent, non-profit, impartial, non-governmental human rights organization.

STJ's beginnings were more than humble; initially, it only reported stories of Syrians who experienced arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, or torture. Planted in fertile soil, the seed of this project grew into an established human rights organization licensed in the Middle East and the European Union. STJ today undertakes to detect and uncover violations of all types committed in all Syrian parts by the various parties to the conflict.

Convinced that Syria's diversity is a wealth, our researchers and volunteers serve with unfailing dedication to monitor, expose, and document human rights violations that continue unabated in Syria since 2011, regardless of the affiliation of the victims or perpetrators.