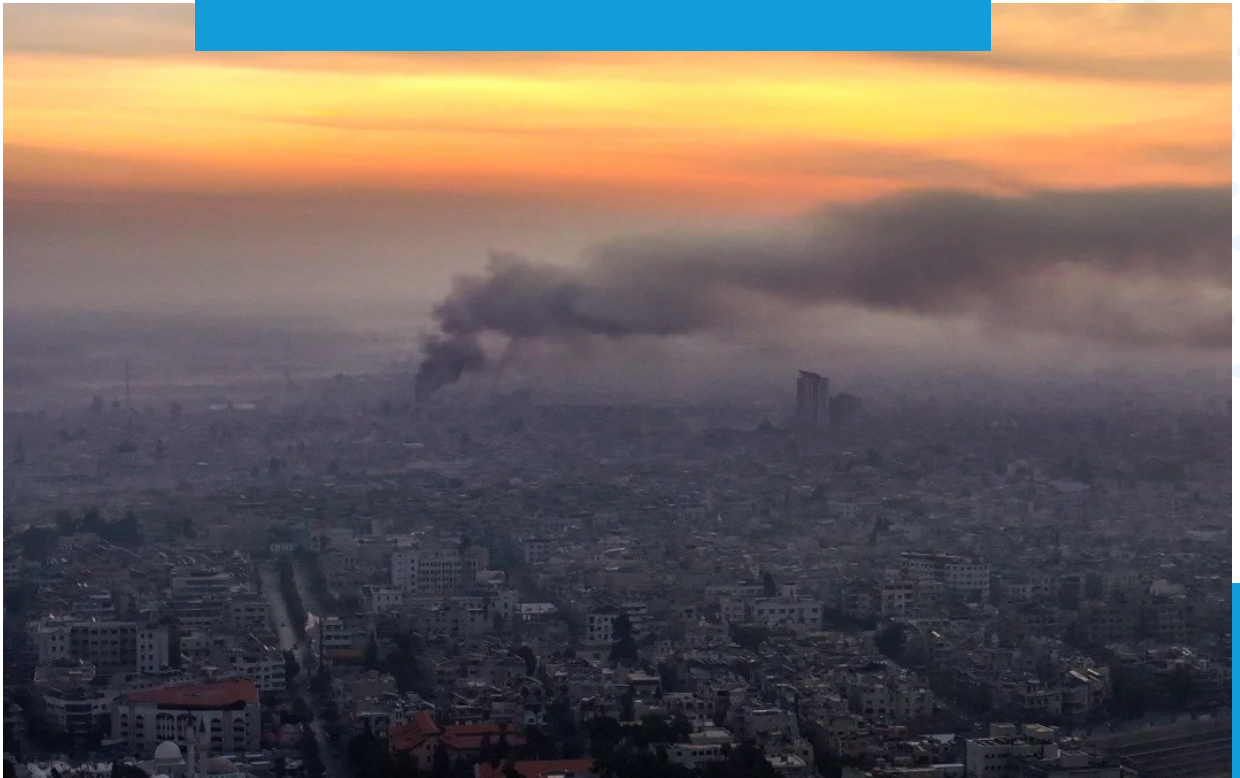


Statement

SNHR Condemns Israel's Attacks and Occupation of Syrian Territory, and Calls on the Arab League and the International Community to Take Urgent Action

There is no Justification for Continuing Israeli Attacks Since Iranian Militias Have Left Syria



Saturday 14 December 2024

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyzes in Syria.

VICIOUS ISRAELI ATTACKS ON SYRIAN LANDS:

In the aftermath of the fall of the Assad regime, the Israeli Air Force (IAF) launched one of the most aggressive military operations in its history against Syrian territories. The IAF carried out approximately 500 airstrikes targeting over 130 sites, including airports, military bases, weapons depots, and army infrastructure, as well as ground-to-air missile systems and weapons production facilities. These airstrikes extended across various Syrian governorates, including Damascus, Daraa, Quneitra, Homs, Latakia, and Hasaka.

In addition, the Israeli occupation forces conducted a ground incursion into Syrian territory, taking full control of the demilitarized zone, including Mount Hermon and several towns and villages. According to Israeli reports, about 85 percent of Syria's military capabilities were destroyed in an attempt to impede the new Syrian government's ability to rebuild its military forces.

ISRAEL'S JUSTIFICATIONS ARE NO LONGER VALID

Israel has long justified its attacks on Syria while it was under the Assad regime as targeting Iranian militias, which posed a threat to its security. With the fall of Bashar Assad's regime on December 8 and the withdrawal of most Iranian militias from Syrian territory, as well as the return of the Syrian army and its assets to the Syrian people under a new authority which considers these militias as enemy entities, these justifications have become untenable. As such, Israel is now obligated to cease all attacks, withdraw completely from Syrian territories, and pay reparations for all the damage it has caused to the Syrian state. Additionally, the occupied Syrian Golan must be returned to its rightful owners as part of these commitments.

AN ISRAELI DE FACTO POLICY AND ISRAELI INFRINGEMENTS

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) must stress that Israel's attacks on Syria is a manifestation of a systematic policy aimed at imposing a new reality that completely contradicts the principles of international law. With that in mind, the international community must act urgently to stop these violations and ensure respect for Syrian sovereignty.

Israel's strategy focuses on targeting and systematically destroying Syria's military infrastructure, systemically weakening its army, disarming the Syrian state, and undermining its defensive capabilities. These actions violate international laws that guarantee every state the right to defend its national security and jeopardize the new Syrian leadership's ability to navigate the transitional period in with peace and stability. Moreover, these attacks endanger regional security, further complicating the political and military situation in the region.

ISRAELI AGGRESSIONS VIOLATE INTERNATIONAL LAWS

Israeli airstrikes and ground incursions into southern Syria constitute dangerous violations of international law, of disengagement agreements signed between Syria and Israel, and of principles of national sovereignty. These violations include:

1. Breach of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement

The Israeli incursion into the demilitarized zone and southern Syrian villages is a direct violation of the May 31, 1974, disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel, brokered under UN supervision and coordinated with the United States and the now-dissolved Soviet Union in line with UN Security Council resolution 338 (1973). The 1974 agreement demarcated the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) ceasefire line, ensuring that neither party can engage in acts of aggression within the buffer zone.

2. Violation of the principle of prohibition of land seizure by force

The Israeli seizure of Syrian territories, including incursions into buffer zones and border areas, constitutes a violation of the principle prohibiting the acquisition of territory by force, which is a peremptory norm in international law. This is affirmed by Article (43) of the Hague Convention of 1907 and reinforced by Article (10) of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Forceful acquisition also contravenes numerous international resolutions that emphasize the illegality of occupation or altering the legal status of territories through the use of force.

3. Infringement of state sovereignty

The Israeli aggression against Syrian territories constitutes a violation of the principle of national sovereignty, which guarantees every state the right to control its territories without external interference. According to the Charter of the United Nations, no state may intervene in the affairs of other states or use force to infringe upon their sovereignty and independence. In this context, Israeli attacks threaten Syrian sovereignty, making it impossible for Syria to exercise authority over its territory, which represents a flagrant breach of international law.

4. Violation of the right to self-determination

Israeli attacks on Syria aim to deplete the Syrian state's capacity to make free decisions, thus violating the Syrian people's right to self-determination. This right is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, which guarantees all peoples the right to decide their fate without external interference. The First Protocol of the Geneva Conventions of 1977 (Article 1/4) considers this right an integral part of international humanitarian law.

5. Contravention of international humanitarian laws

Israeli military attacks on Syria, which have targeted both military and civilian infrastructure, constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law. According to the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, civilians and infrastructure in conflict areas must be protected from arbitrary attacks or unjustified destruction. The First Protocol of the Geneva Conventions also mandates respect for the rights of local populations in conflict zones and prohibits targeting civilian facilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

UN and international community

1. **Condemn Israeli aggression:** Issue an official statement condemning Israel's violation of international law and the rights of Syrian sovereignty.
2. **Take immediate action:** Call on the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting, and impose sanction on Israel in order to deter it from continuing its acts of aggression.
3. **Enhance international monitoring:** Deploy international observers in the buffer zone to ensure a stop to Israeli expansion and respect for ceasefire lines.

Israeli government

1. **Commit to withdraw from all occupied Syrian lands**
 - **Return all occupied areas:** The Israeli government must fully withdraw from all Syrian lands, including the Golan Heights. These lands must be returned to Syria in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including resolution 497 of 1981 which declared the Israeli decision to annex the Golan to be null and void.
 - **End military incursions:** Immediately stop any land operations or military incursions across the Syrian borders, and ensure respect for internationally recognized borders.
2. **Compensate Syria for damages caused**
 - **Compensate the Syrian state:** Take responsibility for the severe damage to the Syrian infrastructure, whether military or civilian, and pay comprehensive compensation in accordance with the estimates of the UN and competent international organizations.
 - **Compensate civilian individuals:** Establish a transparent and direct mechanism to support Syrian civilians affected by the IAF airstrikes and/or military operations in Syria.

3. Cease hostile operations

- **End airstrikes:** Commit to completely cease airstrikes on Syrian lands, whether under the pretext of targeting militias or military sites.
- **Respect Syrian sovereignty:** End the use of military force or interference in Syria's domestic affairs, in line with the Charter of the United Nations, which prohibits the use of force against other states.

4. Comply with international humanitarian laws

- **Protect civilians:** Ensure that civilians or residential areas are never targeted in any future military operations, in line with the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention.
- **Respect the rights of local residents:** Commit to refrain from using Syrian resources in occupied areas, and ensure the protection of the rights of local residents according to international instruments.

5. Cooperate with the UN and international community

- **Allow international monitoring:** Agree to deploy international observer teams in border areas to ensure compliance with the ceasefire lines
- **Implement UN Security Council resolutions:** Fully abide by all relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Israeli-Syrian conflict, especially those calling for ending occupation and ensuring states' regional sovereignty.

Arab League

1. Support Syria's efforts on the regional and international stage:

- Intensify diplomatic efforts to support Syria's position in the UN and international organizations, towards regaining its sovereignty over all of its lands.
- Call for adopting unified Arab decisions that apply pressure on the international community to end the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan, while putting this issue at the top of the agenda at Arab summits.

2. Boost Arab solidarity in face of aggression

- Work to provide political and economic support for the new Syrian government to enable it to face the consequences of the Israeli aggression and to restore state sovereignty.
- Arrange an Arab conference at the state level to discuss potential strategies to address Israeli incursions in the area, as well as ways to support the efforts to rebuild Syria and to promote stability in the country.

3. Form a special monitoring committee

- Form a special Arab committee under the Arab League's supervision to closely monitor the issue of Israeli violations, and submit periodic reports to international bodies concerned with human rights and international law regarding this issue.

New Syrian government

1. Work on comprehensive legal documentation of violations

- Collect evidence and provide detailed documentation of all Israeli violations, including all incidents of bombardment and incursions into Syrian territories, inclusive of infrastructure damages and civilian casualties, in coordination with independent human rights organizations in order to file legal cases against Israel in international courts.
- Coordinate with international experts to assess the damages inflicted on Syria by Israeli attacks and prepare comprehensive files in preparation for demanding reparations.

2. Strengthen diplomatic presence

- Enhance coordination with allied countries at the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly to bolster Syria's position.
- Leverage regional and international organizations to form a diplomatic front to pressure Israel to cease its aggression and end its occupation of Syrian territories.

3. Rebuild national capacities

- Work on rebuilding the Syrian army to ensure national stability while focusing on compliance with international law.
- Devote efforts to developing a national security strategy that ensures state sovereignty and prevents future aggressions.

4. Enhance cooperation with the international community

- Establish partnerships with countries and international organizations to rebuild areas affected by Israeli aggression and ensure the sustainability of essential services for the population.
- Call for UN missions to monitor the situation in border areas and ensure compliance with ceasefire lines under international agreements.



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No justice without accountability

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December 2024

