

Canada calls on the Syrian regime and Russia to protect civilians in Idlib

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Statement

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The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today released the following statement regarding the increasingly worrying situation in Idlib, Syria:

“Since the beginning of the war, the Syrian regime and its allies have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law, and they continue to regularly bomb and indiscriminately target civilians.

“Canada is increasingly concerned by the potential Syrian regime-led offensive in Idlib, Syria, which would have a disastrous humanitarian impact for the 3 million civilians who are currently in this area, many of whom have been displaced more than once. These civilians include children, doctors, first responders and journalists. They must never be a target.

“We unreservedly condemn all attacks directed at civilians, aid workers and civilian infrastructure. We urge the Syrian regime to respect international humanitarian law, to safeguard civilian lives, and to allow for full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. Canada continues to monitor the changing humanitarian situation in Idlib and stands ready to respond as necessary.

“We are gravely concerned that the Assad regime may again use chemical weapons against its own people in Idlib, which would constitute a war crime. Canada and the international community have repeatedly condemned the egregious and morally reprehensible use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime, which has been confirmed by independent international investigators.

“Russia and Iran, as allies of the Syrian regime, bear moral responsibility for the continued suffering of the people of Syria and the destruction and death caused by any Assad regime offensive or chemical weapons attack.

“Canada will continue to pursue efforts to hold the regime accountable for its war crimes, through our support for the collection and preservation of evidence in the region. This includes funding for the Commission for International Justice and Accountability; Hala

Systems; and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Those Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.”

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