

700,000 civilians escaping a deadly offensive launched by Assad regime forces against Idlib

3 minutes read



Photo by IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation, Taken on April 14, 2013 in Atmeh refugee camp. Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Almost 700,000 civilians have evacuated areas in **Idlib** province in northern **Syria** according to a statement by **Panos Moutzis**, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis. Areas in south East Idlib have been witnessing a deadly offensive by the Assad regime backed by the Russian air force.

Assad regime forces have captured several towns and cities in south east Idlib, some of which are key towns such as, **Maaret Alnuman** and **Saraqeb**. Heavy bombardments and air attacks followed by Invasion is Assad's strategy to take back control of Idlib which leaves civilian with no choice but to escape from death.

Speaking to **Amani Al Ali**, a Syrian character artist in Idlib, said: "Civilians are fleeing areas and heading to towns and cities near the Turkish border like, **Sarmada** and **Albab**". She added that civilians who have displaced to northern parts of Idlib have gone through difficult situation also the cost of travel to their destination is high, as it has reached \$200.

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by Amro Bakkar

Most of the fleeing civilians live now in open-air resorts and temporary homes in cold winter conditions. Half of the displaced are believed to be children.

Civilians who have wished not to leave their hometown faced terrible consequences. **Abdul Hassib**, a photographer in the Northern countryside of **Aleppo**, said: “No civilians have remained in areas that have been recently controlled by the regime forces, except two cases. The first one was known as the old man of **Qalaat Al Madiq city**, who was treated badly by the regime forces.” He continued: “Whereas the second one had mental and physical disabilities and was brutally killed in Maaret Alnuman, and there are videos approve that.”

“The **Turkish observation points** have not taken any action, even some of them were bombed by the regime forces”, Hassib said. However, he added that this shelling was not met with any response until the incident of the **five Turkish soldiers’ killing** on Monday 10th of February. In which spurred Turkey to retaliate and kill allegedly 51 Assad regime soldiers next day in collaboration with the **Syrian opposition factions** according to Reuters which cited the Turkish Defence Ministry.

Assad regime forces are still advancing in Idlib, the last stronghold of the Syrian opposition, despite the existence of the Turkish observation points around the province which their object is to maintain the de-escalation zone in Idlib according to the **Astana agreement**.