



Statement from the Syrian British Consortium and the American Coalition for Syria

01 December 2024

The Syrian British Consortium (SBC) and American Coalition for Syria (ACS) have been closely following the military operations in Syria since the early hours of Wednesday, November 29, 2024. As part of Operation “Deterrence of Aggression,” a coalition of opposition forces launched a preemptive military offensive to prevent further attacks and ceasefire violations by Assad regime forces and Iranian militias in Northwest Syria (NWS). The opposition forces overran regime defensive positions across NWS remarkably quickly and recaptured the major city of Aleppo. Since then, the operation has succeeded in recapturing additional areas in Aleppo province, the entire province of Idlib, including strategic cities along the M5 highway, several military bases and airports, Aleppo International Airport, as well as towns in the northern countryside of Hama province. Opposition fighters have also reached the city of Hama. This operation is a joint effort by a united front of several opposition forces. The recent developments have given cautious hope and excitement to millions of Syrians after years of displacement and violations from the Assad regime.

SBC and ACS would like to make a few critical remarks:

- **Protection of civilians should be the number one priority of the international community:** Aleppo is a city that has been subjected before to the Assad regime’s scorched-earth policy, facilitated by Russia and Iran. Bombs rained down on Aleppo in 2016, causing a humanitarian and moral crisis, and they have started to fall on Aleppo’s neighborhoods again, killing several civilians. The United States and the United Kingdom must not allow this to happen again. As we mark the international day for victims of chemical weapons, a weapon that Assad used against his own people as proven by the UN and OPCW, **we call on the allies of the Syrian people to set clear, enforceable red lines against any bombardment of civilians across all towns and cities in Syria, including Aleppo.** Ensuring the safety of civilians and that their basic needs are met would facilitate the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians from Syria and from around the world to their communities and hometowns.
- **Protection of civilians should continue to be the number one priority of the military operation room:** Opposition forces have issued several messages and declarations reassuring the populaces of the cities and towns they have captured of their personal safety. SBC & ACS have taken note of these declarations by the forces providing guarantees to all of the ethnic and religious sects in the areas recaptured of their safety and freedom, and we will be closely following the implementation of these commitments. In case of breaches of any of these declared commitments, or any

obligations under international laws or norms, these perpetrators should be held to account. We note with relief that there have been relatively low civilian casualties reported as a result of the opposition's military operations and very few recorded instances of violations against civilians. We recognize too that landmines are a persistent challenge in many of the frontline communities that opposition forces have recaptured, and the forces have been trying to detect and disable landmines and other threats to the personal safety of civilians.

- **The United States and United Kingdom should escalate support to humanitarian organizations on the ground providing immediate, much-needed services and aid, and offer its assistance in clearing landmines and booby traps.** SBC and ACS will also continue to press opposition forces to ensure power-sharing and that a representative civilian administration governs recaptured areas and upholds the rights of all Syrians, regardless of sect, ethnicity, gender, or political opinion. **We call on donor governments to also support immediate stabilization and governance efforts that would facilitate a safe environment for those returning to their homes after years of displacement.**
- SBC and ACS assert that the recent military operations and the surprising advances of the rebels demonstrate the hollowness and frailty of the Assad regime, its lack of popular legitimacy, and the failure of the containment strategy by regional and international actors. The international community cannot ignore all indicators of the Assad regime's inability to maintain security control or govern Syria effectively. **A political transition is more important now than ever.** The opposition control of Aleppo from the Syrian regime represents a step towards a political process. We call on the international community to support Syrians in achieving comprehensive stability, maintaining Syria's territorial integrity, while realizing a political solution in alignment with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.
- SBC and ACS reaffirm that **displaced Syrians have the right to return to their communities.** We also condemn all efforts to remove agency from the Syrian people, who have shown tenacious determination to liberate their country from the brutal and oppressive 54-year yoke of the Assad regime.
- SBC and ACS are coordinating efforts collectively and with key local and international stakeholders to effectively respond to the political, human rights, humanitarian, and governance ramifications of these developments.

SBC and ACS have met with and will remain in communication with relevant stakeholders on the ground to ensure the safety and security of all Syrians.