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Hundreds of Mosul civilians killed by airstrikes were told not to flee by authorities – Amnesty

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Hundreds of Mosul residents were killed by airstrikes in their homes following repeated instructions from Iraqi authorities not to leave, Amnesty International says. It adds coalition forces should have known they were likely to result in civilian deaths.

Citing numerous testimonies given by survivors and eyewitnesses, Amnesty [said](#) many people did not attempt to flee during the US-backed operation to retake the city from Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) due to Iraqi authorities' instructions.

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*“Evidence gathered on the ground in east Mosul points to an alarming pattern of US-led coalition airstrikes which have destroyed whole houses with entire families inside,”* said Donatella Rovera, a senior crisis response adviser who carried out field investigations in Mosul.

She noted the increasingly high civilian death toll *“suggests that coalition forces leading the*

*offensive in Mosul have failed to take adequate precautions to prevent civilian deaths, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law.”*

The fact that the Iraqi authorities repeatedly told civilians not to flee the war-ravaged city in the midst of fighting, *“indicates that coalition forces should have known that these strikes were likely to result in a significant numbers of civilian casualties,”* the organization said, adding that *“disproportionate attacks and indiscriminate attacks violate international humanitarian law and can constitute war crimes.”*

Wa’ad Ahmad al-Tai, a resident of eastern Mosul, said these instructions were delivered via radio and through leaflets dropped from military aircraft.

*“The government ... told us [to] stay in our homes and avoid displacement,”* he added.

Amnesty has also noted IS resorts to using civilians as human shields, which amounts to a war crime.

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*“However, the IS’s use of human shields does not absolve Iraqi and coalition forces from their obligation not to launch disproportionate attacks,”* said Rovera.

Amnesty has urged the Iraqi government and the US-led coalition to *“immediately launch an independent and impartial investigation into the appalling civilian death toll resulting from the Mosul operation.”*

The statement comes as the US-led coalition faces allegations that one of their airstrikes on March 17 killed dozens of civilians.

[READ MORE: 307 civilians killed, 273 wounded in western Mosul since February 17 – UN human rights chief](#)

The US declared that its forces are not planning to change the way they conduct airstrikes despite the battle for Mosul entering more densely-populated areas in the western part of the city.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi president told RIA Novosti that *“there is coordination between the US coalition and Iraqi security forces, but sometimes it fails,”* civilian deaths being the result of *“miscalculations”* and *“unintended mistakes.”*

UN Human Rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein made a statement on Tuesday condemning the *“massive loss of civilian lives in western Mosul,”* where at least 307 people have been killed and 273 wounded in just over a month.