

US-led coalition violated intl law in Syria by failing to protect civilians – UN report

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The UN Syria Commission released a report saying it is “gravely concerned” about the impact of international airstrikes in the war-torn country, adding that US-led forces failed to take proper precautions to protect civilians during an attack in Aleppo.

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*“The Commission is gravely concerned about the impact of international coalition airstrikes on civilians,”* the report states.

It goes on to cite the March 2017 incident in Al-Jinah, Aleppo, in which *“forces of the United States of America failed to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian objects when attacking a mosque, in violation of international humanitarian law.”*

It also mentions the situation in Raqqa, in which the *“ongoing Syrian Democratic Forces and international coalition offensive to repel [Islamic State or IS, formerly ISIS] has displaced over 190,000 persons, and coalition airstrikes have reportedly resulted in significant numbers of civilians killed and injured.”* It added that investigations are ongoing.

Raqqa, the last stronghold of Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL), is under *“intense artillery shelling”* and *“limited airstrikes by the coalition forces,”* Amnesty International [stated last month](#).

Some 20,000 civilians are currently trapped in Raqqa, unable to escape from the terrorist stronghold, according to the UN, which urged the US-led coalition last month to stop the bombings to allow people to safely leave the city.

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The trapped civilians have virtually no access to basic services, including safe water and food, and are surviving on food they stored up earlier, David Swanson, public information officer from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told RT.

The US-led coalition began an offensive in Raqqa in June, aiming to recapture the city. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured since that offensive began, according to Amnesty.

The UN Syria Commission's Wednesday document also suggests that Syrian government forces were responsible for a chemical attack that took place in April.

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*“All evidence available leads the Commission to conclude that there are reasonable grounds to believe Syrian forces dropped an aerial bomb dispersing sarin in Khan Shaykhun at around 6:45am on 4 April,”* it states, adding that such attacks constitute war crimes.

However, the Russian Defense Ministry reported at the time that the chemicals were a result of the Syrian air force destroying a warehouse where chemical weapons were being produced and stockpiled before being shipped to Iraq.

The warehouse was used to both produce and store shells containing toxic gas, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov said at the time.

Colonel General Sergey Rudskoy, the chief of the Russian General Staff's Operations Department demanded a *"thorough investigation"* of the Khan Sheikhoun incident in April, noting that US and Western claims accusing the Syrian government of being behind the chemical attack were *"highly questionable."*

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He added that Russia was ready to provide experts from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) with access to the Syrian Army airbase from which the attack was allegedly launched.

*"The experts are aware that it is impossible to conceal the traces of the chemical weapons,"* he said, adding that the Syrian government was also ready to grant access to the base to experts.

However, no such expert investigation has taken place at the site.

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