



STAND Statement on U.S. Missile Strike on Shayrat Airbase in Syria

On Tuesday April 3, 2017, 86+ civilians were killed in a chemical weapons attack in Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib. While STAND has issued statements¹ condemning the attack and mourning the civilians who were brutally killed, we also seek to clarify our position on the U.S. decision to strike regime air facilities in response to the attack.

As our Syrian-American partners have noted for years, the international community has failed to adequately alleviate the immense suffering of the Syrian civilian population throughout six bloody years of conflict. Despite the proliferation of extremist groups, the Assad regime remains by far the largest perpetrator of attacks against civilians, using torture, chemical weapons, barrel bombs, and strategies such as double-tap strikes and siege to cause vast civilian harm. The Assad regime's apparent use of sarin gas is a clear violation of UN Security Council Resolution 2118, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and the 2017 Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons, which called for the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons by mid-2014. STAND unequivocally condemns the use of chemical weapons, and maintains unremitting support for the international norm banning their deployment. We encourage an independent investigation into the April 3 attack, and applaud the work of organizations such as Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, and the Center for Documentation of Violations in Syria (VDC) in documenting such attacks by all parties to the conflict.

As an organization committed to civilian protection, we will continue monitoring the Trump administration's policies in Syria and urge the Trump administration to handle relations with Russia with caution, as escalating conflict would yield particularly devastating consequences for Syrian civilians. Moving forward, all military action taken by the U.S. to reduce civilian harm must take part within a broader, long-term diplomatic strategy aimed at securing a political solution to conflict. Additionally, the U.S. should seek Constitutionally-mandated Congressional approval for any future military action against the Assad regime, and should work multilaterally with international partners in both diplomatic and military spheres, if necessary, to address root causes of the conflict while pushing Assad towards the negotiating table.

In addition to the recent missile strike, American airstrikes against ISIS in Syria and Iraq have caused hundreds of civilian casualties in recent weeks, and we emphasize the need to use the highest possible standards to ensure that only military targets are hit. We urge a robust and independent investigation into these recent air strikes by the US military.

Finally, STAND calls on the Trump administration to take decisive measures to support those uprooted by conflict by providing adequate funding for humanitarian aid and for refugee resettlement, both in the region and in the U.S. Though the Trump administration has said the strikes were conducted out of concern for Syrian civilians, current policies on refugee resettlement and humanitarian aid suggest otherwise. The administration must recognize the immense human cost of its current stances on foreign aid and refugee resettlement and immediately reverse these policies.

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/STANDNow/posts/10155248122747049>,
<https://www.facebook.com/STANDNow/posts/10155258933252049>