

# Nations bombing IS failing to protect civilians



Smoke rises from buildings following a reported air strike on a rebel-held area in the southern Syrian city of Daraa

## Geneva

The UN yesterday urged all nations bombing jihadist targets in Syria to better distinguish between civilian and military targets, following reports that US-led coalition strikes killed dozens of non-combatants.

Air raids on Islamic State group targets in Syria have left hundreds of civilians dead since 2014.

The latest strikes that hit a series of residential buildings on Thursday in Mayadeen, a town in Syria's eastern province of Deir Ezzor, killed at least 35 civilians, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

UN human rights chief

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said "all states" whose air forces are active in the anti-IS missions needed "to take much greater care to distinguish between legitimate military targets and civilians."

The rights office had no specific information about Thursday's bombings.

Zeid's spokesman Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva that identifying the air force responsible for civilian deaths is often difficult given the number of countries in the anti-IS coalition and the lack of credible information.

The US military had said coalition airstrikes in Iraq and Syria had "unintentionally" killed a total of 352 civilians



UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein since 2014.

Zeid underscored that civilians were now being hit by both sides in the conflict.

"The same civilians who are suffering indiscriminate

shelling and summary executions by (IS), are also falling victim to the escalating air strikes", he said in a statement.

The rights office has also received credible information that IS fighters slit the throats of eight people earlier this month who were accused of providing the coalition coordinates to guide strikes, Colville said.

"Scant attention is being paid by the outside world to the appalling predicament of the civilians trapped in (IS-held) areas," Zeid said. (AFP)

## US-led strikes kills scores of relatives of IS

### Washington

Dozens of relatives of Islamic State group fighters were killed yesterday in Syria in US-led strikes, regime or Russian raids.

Scores of civilians, many of them families of IS members, have been killed in

bombing raids in recent days on the eastern Syrian town of Mayadeen, held by IS since 2014. Early Friday, at least 80 relatives of IS fighters were killed in US-led coalition bombardment, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"The secondary explosion triggered a rapid failure of the structure which killed the two ISIS snipers, 101 civilians sheltered in the bottom floors of the structure," said US Air Force Brigadier General Matt Isler, the lead investigator.

## Syria dismissed 4,000 judges

### Ankara

Turkey has dismissed over 4,000 judges and prosecutors accused of links to last year's failed coup after an investigation of the judiciary, the Turkish justice minister said Friday.

Ankara blames the attempted overthrow of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on an Islamic movement led by Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen.

"Over 4,000 judges and prosecutors have been removed from their posts inside the Turkish judiciary over their links to the Fethullah Terrorist



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

Gulen, living in self-imposed exile in the United States, vehemently denies the claim that he ordered the coup attempt.

"The investigations have finished. At this moment, there is no judge or prosecutor left that we have not screened," Bozdog said in a speech in Ankara.

He added that there could be further investigations "because of the nature of the organisation", saying: "We are facing a very different kind of terror organisation."

More than 100,000 people

have been sacked or suspended from the public sector including teachers, academics, doctors and members of the armed forces under the state of emergency imposed a few days after the attempted putsch and renewed three times.

Meanwhile, more than 47,000 people have been imprisoned because of suspected links to the movement and the failed putsch.

Ankara claims the Gulen movement had infiltrated the state and the series of purges are necessary to remove the "virus" inside the public sector.

## New Taliban attack kills at least 15 soldiers

### Kandahar

At least 15 Afghan soldiers were killed when Taliban fighters attacked their base in Kandahar, officials said Friday, in the third major insurgent assault this week on the military in the southern province.

The assault in Shah Wali Kot district late Thursday comes after hundreds of insurgents stormed other bases in the same area and Maiwand district earlier this week, bringing the death toll among Western-backed troops to around 60.

The attacks highlight a growing insurgent offensive in Kandahar, a Taliban hotbed where security has relatively improved in recent years under the iron grip of police chief and regional strongman General Abdul Raziq.

"The Taliban launched a coordinated assault on an army base last night (Thursday) in Shah Wali Kot," defence ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said.

A provincial official who spoke on the condition of anonymity gave a higher death toll of 20, adding that some soldiers were missing after the attack and the Taliban had seized four military humvees.

## Tunisia opens trial over 2015 beach massacre



Seifeddine Rezgui killed 38 people in the Sousse attack in June 2015

### Tunis

A Tunisian court held its first public hearing yesterday in the trial of 26 people in connection with a 2015 jihadist beach massacre that killed dozens of foreign tourists.

A student armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle and grenades went on a rampage in the Port el-Kantaoui resort near Sousse killing 38 holidaymakers, 30 of them Britons, before being shot dead by police.

It was the second of two deadly attacks on foreigners claimed by the Islamic State group that year, which devastated Tunisia's once-lucrative tourism sector.

Security was unusually tight at the Tunis courthouse for Friday's hearing, which lasted around an hour and a half and was attended by British diplomatic officials.

Six of the defendants are policemen accused of failing to assist a person in danger.

The remainder, all Tunisians, are accused of terrorist offences, murder and "conspiracy against the security of the state", the prosecution said.

## Syria army takes control of Damascus-Palmyra road

### Beirut

The Syrian army is in full control of the highway from Damascus to ancient Palmyra for the first time since 2014 after driving out jihadists, a monitor said yesterday.

Since troops recaptured Palmyra from the Islamic State group in March, the UNESCO World Heritage site had been accessible via Syria's third city Homs, about 150 kilometres (95 miles) to the west.

But after major advances on Thursday night, the army now controls the direct road from the capital to Palmyra, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

IS fighters first overran Palmyra in May 2015, and government troops recaptured it 10 months later.