



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
www.foreignaffairs.house.gov

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our grave concerns with the ongoing assault on the people of Idlib by the Assad regime, Russia, Iran, and Hizballah. According to the UN, at least 1,730 civilians have been killed since April and almost 900,000 people have been displaced by this offensive since it intensified on December 1. We urge you to utilize available authorities to apply economic pressure to all those responsible for this carnage to compel them to return to ceasefire and to commit to a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Additionally, while we appreciate Turkey's efforts to end the offensive, we also ask you to urge the Turkish government to do more to help ease this humanitarian crisis.

It is well documented that Russia has repeatedly bombed hospitals and attacked medical workers in Syria for years, in violation of international norms. A UN Board of Inquiry is investigating these allegations; however, more must be done in response. Russia's seat on the Security Council should not give them a license to murder civilians. We urge you to continue to raise these despicable actions in international fora and to prioritize accountability and justice for Russian war crimes.

Russia has also used its position at the Security Council to manipulate a resolution to increase the Assad regime's ability to control life-saving aid. As U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft said recently, the resulting resolution, which closed two border crossings, was, "grossly inadequate to the needs of the Syrian people...Syrians will die as a result of this resolution." We urge you to enhance diplomatic action to ensure that Russia and Assad cannot further undermine the international response to the humanitarian crisis that they created. It is vital that we work with like-minded partners to reopen the border crossings that were closed while also preserving the two that remain.

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Furthermore, as the House of Representatives acknowledged during the passage of H.J. Res. 77, a resolution opposing the decision to end certain United States efforts to prevent Turkish military operations against Syrian Kurdish forces in Northeast Syria, an abrupt withdrawal of United States military personnel is beneficial to adversaries of the United States government, including Syria, Iran, and Russia. We urge you to work with others in the Administration to clarify our force posture and military mission in Syria in order to provide certainty for our troops and partners alike.

Finally, we are disturbed that despite the ongoing slaughter of innocent people and destruction of civilian infrastructure across Syria, some entities remain interested in reconstruction in territory under Assad's control. While we support alleviating the suffering of the Syrian people, we must carefully avoid rewarding Assad and his cronies with reconstruction money and contracts in rebuilding the infrastructure they destroyed. We expect vigorous enforcement of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act when it comes into effect, including sanctions on those that contract with the Government of Syria to provide construction or engineering services. In addition, the Caesar Act requires a strategy to deter foreign persons from entering into such contracts. We look forward to reviewing this strategy and working with you to ensure its successful implementation.

We greatly appreciate and support your efforts to help the Syrian people and safeguard U.S. national interests regarding Syria and the surrounding region, including through your support of the Caesar Act. Thank you for considering our views and we look forward to continuing to work together on these critically important issues.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs