

STATEMENT ON THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN NORTHWEST SYRIA

The Diakonia International Humanitarian Law (IHL) Centre expresses profound concern over the alarming escalation of violence in northwest Syria. The intensifying hostilities in Aleppo Governorate, which have now spread to parts of Idlib and Hama, have created a dire humanitarian situation marked by widespread displacement and exacerbated civilian casualties.

Thousands of families have been forced to flee their homes, while critical civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, university dormitories, and markets, have been damaged. Senior United Nations officials have also issued urgent warnings about the deepening humanitarian crisis.

The Diakonia IHL Centre therefore stresses the urgent need for all parties to the conflict to respect and uphold their legal obligations under IHL. The protection of the civilian population and civilian infrastructure must remain a paramount priority. We call on all parties to the conflict:

1. To distinguish, at all times, between civilian persons and objects, and only direct attacks against lawful military targets.
2. Not to undertake any attack expected to cause excessive disproportionate harm to the civilian population.
3. Facilitate the safe and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid to the affected population.

We reiterate the fundamental principles of IHL, including distinction, proportionality, and precautions, which aim to limit the suffering caused by armed conflict. Violations of these principles, which may amount to a war crime, not only undermine the dignity and safety of affected communities but also risk prolonging the cycle of violence.