



NATO PARLAMENTER ASAMBLESİ TÜRKİYE DELEGASYONU
TURKISH DELEGATION TO THE NATO PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY
DELEGATION TURQUE A L'ASSEMBLEE PARLEMENTAIRE DE L'OTAN



28 February 2020, Ankara

Dear Colleague,

On 27 February 2020, as a result of a heinous attack of the Russian backed Syrian regime forces in the village of Balioun of Idlib province, 33 Turkish soldiers lost their lives and 32 others injured. After this cowardly attack on our troops, we responded to the illegitimate Assad regime who is responsible for this attack and the murder of hundreds of thousands of Syrians, and eliminated 309 regime militants, 5 helicopters, 23 tanks, 10 armored carriers, one SA-17 and one SA-22 air defence systems.

In September 2017 the Astana guarantors declared Idlib as a “de-escalation area”. At the Sochi Summit (17 September 2018), Turkey and Russian Federation signed a Memorandum to stabilize the situation in Idlib and to preserve its de-escalation area status. These measures were vital to protect the civilians in the area as well as to prevent influx of over one million refugees to enter Europe. The regime’s ceasefire violations have impeded the efforts to fully implement the Memorandum. Since May 2019, more than 2000 civilians were killed in the regime’s air and land attacks. More than 300 civilian facilities, including schools and hospitals were bombed. More than 1.7 million people were displaced since 2019. The regime forces has constantly targeted Turkish observation posts and encircled some of them. In the last two months, unceasing attacks of the regime concentrated on our troops and observation posts, the recent being the most flagrant one.

The regime uses the pretext of combatting terrorism, however, its deliberate targeting of civilians only fuels further radicalization. This aggression carries the risk of a new humanitarian catastrophe, a mass migration flux towards Turkey and beyond, and the collapse of the political track.

In line with the Article 4 of the Treaty, we requested consultations with the Allies on the grounds of the threats against our territorial integrity and national security. Our NATO Allies offered their deepest condolences for the death of our soldiers near Idlib. They also condemned the indiscriminate air strikes by the Syrian regime and its backer Russia in Idlib province, and called on them to stop their offensive, to respect international law and to back UN efforts for a peaceful solution. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stressed that NATO stands in strong solidarity with Turkey and will continue to support Turkey with a range of measures, including augmenting its air defences.



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The safety and security of our servicemen is our priority; hence, we will not hesitate to retaliate against any provocation. The regime's deliberate attacks on our forces is a turning point for us. We are now determined more than ever to preserve Idlib's de-escalation status. We will not allow the regime to act contrary to the agreements on Idlib. The regime must cease its attacks and withdraw to the boundaries of the de-escalation area. If the Regime insists on its ongoing reckless behavior, Turkey will keep acting on its own.

At this point, it is inevitable for our NATO allies to act against the regime and show their iron will to protect the borders of the Alliance. We expect our Allies to force Assad regime and its guardian Russia to stop attacking civilians and Turkish troops on the ground. We also expect from distinguished members of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly to push their respective governments to understand the grave consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe that might directly affect the European region and beyond.

Yours Sincerely,

Osman Aşkın BAK

Head of Turkish Delegation to NATO PA