The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

UN Says Russia Knows Who's Behind Syria Hospital Strikes

By Eva Hartog

February 16, 2016



United Nations human rights spokesman Rupert Colville has said that the deadly air strikes on several hospitals and schools in northern Syria on Monday could constitute a war crime.

In a carefully phrased statement, Colville said that the Syrian and Russian governments "should know who is responsible" for the attacks, since they are active in the area in northern Syria where they were carried out, the Reuters news agency reported Tuesday.

He also echoed a statement by the Turkish Foreign Ministry, which earlier described the bombings of schools and hospitals in Idlib and Aleppo as an "obvious war crime."

"If it's deliberate, intentional targeting, then it may amount [to] a war crime. But at this point, we're not in a position to make that judgment," said Colville.

Turkish officials have accused Russia of carrying out the strikes, a claim that was dismissed by Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Tuesday, according to the state-run TASS news

agency.

Peskov cited Syrian Ambassador to Russia Riyad Haddad as blaming the attacks on the United States, the report said.

About 50 civilians died as a result of air strikes on Monday on at least five medical facilities and two schools in northern Syria, according to the UN.

Medical non-governmental organization Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said in a statement on Monday that the air strikes on one of its hospitals in the Idlib province had been "a deliberate attack" but it did not specify who was responsible for the strike.

At the time of attack, 25 staff members were in the hospital. Five have been confirmed dead, three have been recovered having sustained injuries and two remain missing, MSF reported Tuesday. Five patients and a caregiver were also killed, and the death toll is likely to rise as staff do not know the exact number of patients inside the structure at the time of attack, the report said.

The offensive came only days before a "cessation of hostilities" agreement is set to come into effect on Friday. The agreement was announced by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the eve of a security conference in Munich.

Contact the author at e.hartog@imedia.ru. Follow the author on Twitter: @EvaHartog

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/02/16/un-says-russia-knows-whos-behind-syria-hospital-strikes-a51846