

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 10, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Ambassador Kelly Craft  
Representative of the United States of America  
to the United Nations  
United States Mission to the United Nations  
799 United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our dismay at the deteriorating situation in northwestern Syria and call for the Trump Administration to enhance diplomatic and foreign assistance efforts to respond to the humanitarian catastrophe in Idlib.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council's emergency meeting on February 6, 2020 made clear that the recent military escalation in northwest Syria has resulted in what many have feared would become the worst humanitarian crisis since this conflict began. The situation in Idlib is a painful reminder that the violence in Syria is far from over, and further action is required from the international community to mitigate the ongoing humanitarian disaster.

The impact on Syrian civilians has been unconscionable. Idlib holds roughly three million people—the majority of whom are children—and terrified civilians have fled the military bombardment only to be trapped in an ever-shrinking space near the sealed Turkish border. According to the UN, since December 1, 2019, nearly one million people, half of them children, have been displaced and forced to flee their homes in the dead of winter. Those lucky enough to find shelter live in overcrowded conditions often without basic necessities such as electricity and running water. Those that cannot find suitable shelter are often forced to sleep in tents or out in the open as temperatures drop below freezing. Small children are freezing to death in their mothers' arms. The United States must not turn a blind eye to the suffering of the Syrian people.

The Assad regime, backed by Russia and Iran, have violated ceasefires and flagrantly disregarded international humanitarian law throughout the Syrian conflict, including in their assault on Idlib. Exacerbating an already-dire humanitarian catastrophe, they have targeted hospitals, schools, shelters, health clinics, and residential areas. Additionally, reports from the limited remaining hospitals in Idlib show that Assad deliberately targets children—not Islamist extremists or militant rebels—on a daily basis.

As a result of the recent fighting in Idlib, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that at least 53 medical facilities have stopped operations, further straining a system where only 46 percent of health facilities were fully operational before the assault. To make matters worse, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 has been reported in Syria. While the WHO recently began testing in Idlib, we fear that this pandemic, which has overwhelmed fully operational healthcare

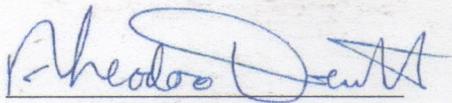
systems in developed nations around the world, threatens to cause unfathomable devastation if immediate action is not taken.

The United States must act to ease the appalling human suffering in northwestern Syria. While we greatly appreciate the recent \$108 million humanitarian assistance pledge by the United States, as well as the \$16.8 million in the COVID-19 humanitarian response package, the UN's rapid response plan for northwestern Syria requires \$500 million, roughly half of which has been raised to date, and an additional \$2 billion is required for protection and lifesaving assistance inside of Syria. Unfortunately, only nine percent of this funding has been provided by the international community. In addition to increasing the United States' pledged funds, we ask that you encourage our allies and partners to increase their contributions as well to help us meet this need.

Ensuring the safe and secure passage of humanitarian aid to those who need it most should always be a priority for the United States. That is why we also ask that you continue to urge unfettered humanitarian access to northwestern Syria, including by defending cross-border humanitarian aid programs, and enhance diplomatic efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire that can lead to an eventual political settlement in Syria.

We stand ready to work with you to prioritize the humanitarian disaster in Idlib. It is critical that the people of Syria stay at the forefront of our awareness. The U.S. must act now before it is too late. Thank you for your attention to this crisis and we look forward to your response.

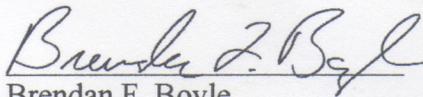
Sincerely,



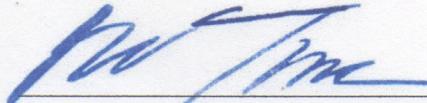
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CHAIRMAN, Subcommittee on the  
Middle East, North Africa, and  
International Terrorism



Adam Kinzinger  
SYRIA CAUCUS CO-CHAIR



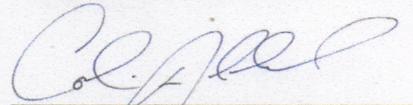
Brendan F. Boyle  
SYRIA CAUCUS CO-CHAIR



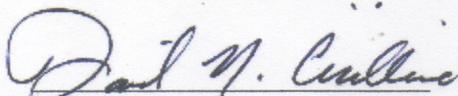
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