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Deadly mortar strike on Damascus University – indiscriminate attacks must end

A Syrian university located in a government-controlled area has been hit with mortar rockets, reportedly killing up to 15 and injuring many more in what Amnesty International branded a serious violation of the laws of war.

The attack on the Architecture Faculty of Damascus University came amid escalating fighting in the area in recent days.

“Those who endure the worst atrocities in this brutal conflict are civilians. All sides must abide by international humanitarian law and avoid attacks which indiscriminately kill and injure civilians,” said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Director at Amnesty International.

“It’s not yet clear who was responsible for firing the mortars in this attack, which landed in a government-controlled area, but one thing is obvious, they are being fired into areas with a large civilian population. Mortars are completely inappropriate for use in civilian areas. Even if the intended target was a military objective, the choice of mortars to attack a target in proximity to civilians displays a callous disregard for their fate and the rules of international humanitarian law.”

“Although an armed opposition group in recent days has reportedly warned civilians to evacuate some areas in Damascus ahead of planned attacks that does not absolve them from their responsibility to minimize harm to civilians. If it appears that an attack is likely to be indiscriminate or disproportionate, it must be cancelled immediately.”

“States which have pledged to provide arms for the opposition have a responsibility to ensure such arms are not subsequently used to violate international humanitarian law.”

So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack and the victims are yet to be identified.