

Erdogan warns Europe of new migration crisis



Bombardments by the Assad regime have led millions of Syrians to flee their home country (Photo: Reuters/Abdalkhman Ismail)

Turkey cannot handle “another refugee wave” from Syria, the country’s president Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned on Sunday (22 December).

Talking at an award ceremony in Istanbul, he said more than 80,000 people had fled the Syrian city of Idlib to the Turkish border amid intensified Syrian and Russian bombardments.

“If the violence towards the people of Idlib does not stop, this number will increase even more. In that case, Turkey will not carry such a migrant burden on its own,” he said.

The province of Idlib has 3m inhabitants and is the last rebel stronghold in the

armed Syrian revolt against President Bashar al-Assad.

Turkey hosts 3.7m Syrian refugees, the highest number in the world.

In 2015, 1m refugees passed through Turkey to Europe triggering the so-called migration crisis.

Now, Erdogan has warned of a new refugee crisis in Europe, saying “the negative effects of this pressure on us will be an issue felt by all European countries, especially Greece.”

Idlib ceasefire

On 31 August 2019, Russia declared a ceasefire in Idlib, the north-western province of Syria bordering Turkey.

But the ceasefire was violated several times and fighting has intensified since 1 December.

Turkey supports the ceasefire in Idlib in order to stop new waves of refugees.

It also wants to create a safe zone in north-eastern Syria in order to relocate Syrian refugees currently residing in Turkey.

According to Erdogan, that is the reason why Turkey invaded north-eastern Syria until then controlled by Syrian-Kurdish fighters who had helped a US-led alliance against Islamist militant group Isis.

EU foreign ministers earlier condemned the Turkish invasion, angering Erdogan.

In his speech on Sunday, Erdogan came back to this, stating: “We call on European countries to use their energy to stop the massacre in Idlib, rather than trying to corner Turkey for the legitimate steps it took in Syria.”

He said a Turkish delegation would go to Moscow to discuss the situation.

Source: <https://euobserver.com/migration/146998>

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