

Syria - a looming pandemic catastrophe



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad speaks during an interview with Russian television channel NTV, in Damascus, Syria in this handout released on June 24, 2018. SANA/Handout via REUTERS

Sir, - President Bashar al-Assad of Syria is reported in The Irish Times as expressing concern about what may happen if there is a spike in Covid-19 cases in his country ("Assad warns of catastrophe", World, May 5th) but failed to observe in Idlib and northwest Syria he and Russian forces have directly targeted and bombed over 70 hospitals and medical facilities, destroying much of the health system. Doctors in Idlib released research on the same day as Assad's comments appeared, showing the health system is now so vulnerable that it can only survive a short time if there is a coronavirus outbreak unless the World Health Organisation (WHO) moves urgently to strengthen it.

Idlib is a mirror image of targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure duplicated in so many other parts of the country as the Syrian regime crushed the 2011 peaceful uprising pursuing its "Assad or we burn the country" strategy. The targeted bombing of civilians, destroying hospitals, schools, mosques, markets, and bakeries, and reducing opposition areas to rubble to cause them to flee is the primary reason Syria is now extremely vulnerable to the coronavirus, and no amount of spin by the Syrian regime can disguise that fact. - Yours, etc,

Source: *Syria - a looming pandemic catastrophe*

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