**Position Paper for the Roundtable on the Humanitarian Situation in Hawija**
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**Introduction**

On the night of 2 - 3 June 2015, an airstrike carried out by Dutch F-16s, targeting an ISIS vehicle bomb factory in the industrial neighborhood of Hawija district which caused a secondary explosion that destroyed a large part of the industrial neighborhood and three other neighborhoods including Hittin neighborhood , Awan neighborhood and Yarmouk neighborhood.

The incident resulted in at least 85 verified civilian deaths, more than 500 hundreds of injuries, and long-term damage to homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods.

While the Netherlands formally acknowledged responsibility in 2019, many critical aspects of accountability, reparations, and recognition of civilian harm remain unaddressed from the perspective of the affected population.

**Key Points**

**1. Civilian Harm: Scope and Consequences**

* At least 85 civilians died, dozens more sustained severe and life-altering injuries.
* More than 6,000 houses, shops and businesses were damaged or destroyed.
* Survivors suffer from long-term psychological and economic consequences.
* Public services including schools, the electricity substation, and civil defense buildings were heavily impacted.

**2. Delay in Acknowledgment and Response**

* The Dutch government initially denied collateral damage. It took over four years to publicly acknowledge the strike.
* A dedicated fact-finding mission only materialized after media reports and civil society pressure in 2019.
* The subsequent Commission of Inquiry confirmed that limited access to intelligence, overly rigid procedures, and insufficient civilian harm protocols contributed to the damage and delayed transparency.

**3. Inadequate Compensation Approach**

* The Dutch Ministry of Defense opted for community-level reconstruction projects instead of individual compensation.
* Research conducted in 2021 and 2025 by PAX and Ashor Foundation found that only 5–15% of the project beneficiaries were direct victims of the airstrike.
* Survivors widely perceive the 4.5 EUR million reconstruction efforts (2021–2023) as insufficient and not targeted to those harmed.
* The projects lacked meaningful consultation with survivors or affected communities and did not address personal losses.

**4. Ongoing Needs**

* As of 2025, many victims have not received any form of direct assistance, financial compensation, or formal apology visit.
* The lack of transparent mechanisms for civilian responses remains a concern, not only for Hawija but for future military operations.

**Recommendations**

1. **Official Apology Visit to Hawija**: The Dutch government should issue a formal apology visit to the victims and the community of Hawija.
2. **Individual Compensation**: A targeted compensation mechanism should be established for individuals directly harmed by the airstrike, including retroactive support for those who self-financed reconstruction or medical care.
3. **Inclusive Consultation**: Any future response must be designed with the involvement of survivors, civil society, and local stakeholders in Hawija.
4. **Monitoring Mechanism**: Establish a civilian harm accountability unit with independent oversight to track and respond to harm from Dutch military operations.
5. **Enhanced Support from INGOs and Local NGOs:** The Dutch government and its partners should enable increased humanitarian and development support through INGOs and local NGOs. Such support is necessary to:
* Address the ongoing needs of those excluded from past projects.
* Rebuild livelihoods and provide psychosocial care.
* Ensure faster, context-sensitive, and survivor-informed interventions in the future.
* Fill gaps left by state-led responses and improve targeting of assistance.

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