(New York, 10 April 2014) Yesterday’s deadly car bomb attacks on a shopping street in Homs remind us again of the contempt the parties to this conflict show for human life. More than twenty people were killed and more than one hundred injured, including women and children going about their daily business. Two volunteers from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were among the injured as they arrived in an ambulance to treat people hurt in the first blast, and were caught in the second.

Brutal violence and indiscriminate attacks on ordinary people have been taking place for more than three years in Syria and no longer have the power to shock. But attacks on civilians are war crimes and may also amount to crimes against humanity. The use of car bombs, barrel bombs, aerial bombardment and mortars in residential areas, with no distinction between military targets and civilians, are violations of International Humanitarian Law. The use of siege as a weapon of war, the recruitment of children for combat, and the subjection of women and girls to sexual and gender-based violence are abhorrent and must end immediately.

This is a war, but even wars have rules. All parties to the conflict need to commit now to upholding International Humanitarian Law.