

Friday, 3 May 2013

Battles raging in Damascus, Aleppo and Idlib



Rebels in Syria fired two rockets at Damascus international airport on Friday, hitting an aircraft and a fuel dump and sparking a massive fire, the official SANA news agency reported. "One rocket hit a kerosene tank and the other hit a parked commercial aircraft, badly damaging it," the agency said, adding that traffic at the facility was "normal" and the fire had been extinguished.

The violence continued across Syria on Friday with battles raging in Aleppo and Idlib, the Associated Press reported.

Amateur video posted online by activist groups showed two large fires overnight at Damascus International Airport.

Explosions were heard just prior to the fires.

Rebels were filmed firing their weapons from a walled position and a large plume of smoke could be seen after a warplane had been flying in the eastern Ghouta district, an opposition stronghold near Damascus where rebels have been staging an offensive on the capital. In the northern city of Aleppo rebels were seen throwing an explosive device, then firing their weapons, while anti-aircraft artillery was deployed in the northwestern province of Idlib.

The activist videos appeared genuine and corresponded to other AP reporting about the events depicted.

Syrian government forces have mounted a string of attacks reaching from the capital Damascus and the central city of Homs out to the Mediterranean coast, homeland of the Alawite minority sect to which Syrian President Bashar al-Assad himself belongs.

The two-year uprising against four decades of Assad family rule has been led by Syria's Sunni Muslim majority, and sectarian clashes and alleged massacres have become increasingly common in a conflict that has killed more than 70,000 people.

The war has largely split the country along sectarian lines, with the divide deepening over months of bloodshed.