

**United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Imran Riza, and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Kevin Kennedy – Joint Statement on safe access for students to sit final examinations**

Damascus and Amman, 19 June 2020

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Mr. Imran Riza, and United Nations Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Mr. Kevin Kennedy, call for all parties to facilitate safe passage for students travelling to government areas to sit their final school examinations.

Up to 23,000 students, largely from the northeast but also from the northwest, are expected to travel crossline to government areas in Syria. They will join approximately 250,000 students across the country who will sit national examinations scheduled to commence on 21 June.

According to reports, in at least two separate incidents, non-state armed group members denied dozens of students safe transit through checkpoints in Idleb and Aleppo governorates while en route to examination centers. Other reports indicate that elsewhere, including in Ar-Raqqa governorate, students have been subject to harassment and intimidation.

In Syria, children already face a raft of challenges to stay in school, including displacement, ongoing hostilities and widespread poverty. These challenges are even more acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has further disrupted access to essential education.

The UN emphasizes that children in Syria, wherever they may live, have the right to finish and complete their education, including through national examinations. We call on all parties to facilitate and support students' access to examinations; a fundamental and transformative milestone in any child's life. Any interference to education is unacceptable.

As was the case in previous years, the UN in Syria, including UNICEF and education partners, are supporting a protective environment for all students sitting national examinations across the country. This includes support to prepare safe accommodation and examination centers, and for appropriate measures to mitigate possible transmission of COVID-19.

*For further information:*

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