



Statement by the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UN Representatives in Syria on the impact of the compounded humanitarian crisis in Syria

Damascus, 6 February 2018

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and the UN Representatives in Syria call, in this extreme situation, for an immediate cessation of hostilities lasting for at least one month throughout Syria to enable the delivery of humanitarian aid and services, evacuation of the critically sick and wounded, and alleviation of people's suffering, to the extent possible, wherever they are.

The United Nations humanitarian team in Syria warns of the dire consequences of the compounded humanitarian crisis in several parts of the country.

In Afrin, the ongoing military operations, on one hand, and the reported blockage of exits by other forces, on the other hand, have virtually trapped many civilians preventing them from accessing safer areas. So far, 380 families have reached surrounding villages and Aleppo city neighborhoods while thousands of people have been displaced within Afrin. As the fighting escalates, the number of civilians affected by violence is bound to increase.

In Al-Hasakah, an agreement was reached to allow some UN partners to resume their work, after a month in which most humanitarian assistance came to a complete halt. This is a positive first step; however, the agreement is only for a period of two months and covers a limited number of partners. It is critical that in the long run all humanitarian partners can continue providing much needed assistance to affected people in camps and towns without restriction.

In Ar-Raqqah, the city's devastation is unparalleled and conditions remain unsafe. Many civilians trying to return home have been killed and injured by unexploded ordinances. Services are absent. Access for humanitarian workers to the city is almost impossible due to unsafe conditions.

In Idlib, the military operations resulted in increased casualties and movement of civilians to safer areas. Some of them have been forced to move several times to escape fighting. With the high concentration of displaced people, the Governorate may not be able to withstand the consequences of renewed fighting. At the same time, Foah and Kafraya in Idlib continue to be besieged by non-State armed groups, without access to much needed humanitarian supplies and medical treatment.

In the south, civilians in Al-Rukban camp remain inaccessible to the humanitarian team in Syria. The last time the camp was supplied with food and non-food items was from across the border in early January. Regular and sustained access to the camp population is critical to meet urgent needs that cannot be addressed with sporadic deliveries.

In ISIL-held areas, in Yarmouk Camp and other locations in Syria, civilians continue to be held captive, subjected to violence and coercion.

In east Ghouta, humanitarian needs are increasing and life-saving aid is urgently required, but people in need have not been reached with inter-agency assistance since late November 2017. Meanwhile, fighting and retaliatory shelling from all parties are impacting civilians in this region and Damascus causing scores of deaths and injuries. If there was a sufficiently long pause in hostilities, medical evacuations and humanitarian convoys could resume in east Ghouta, saving the lives of hundreds who need urgent medical attention, including many critically ill children.

In the meantime, the agreed inter-agency bi-monthly plan to reach besieged and hard-to-reach areas is paralyzed due to access restrictions or lack of agreement concerning locations, supplies and number of beneficiaries. If access was granted, three convoys could be dispatched each week, reaching over 700,000 people in these areas in two months.

The conflict continues to take its toll on civilians wherever they live in Syria and continues to claim lives. The humanitarian response has become a hostage to fighting and competing politics which is a shame for all.

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