Statement by Anders Pedersen, UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator in Jordan, on Latest U.N. Humanitarian Assistance to Displaced Syrians Fleeing heavy violence in Southwest Syria

4 July, Amman, Jordan - The United Nations is deeply alarmed about the violence in southern Syria, which is forcing families to flee their homes and has caused civilian deaths and damage to civilian infrastructure. This is the largest population displacement in southern Syria since the onset of the crisis.

At least 270,000 people have reportedly been displaced in southern Syria since 18 June due to fighting and military campaigns. Nearly half of them are children.

The immediate needs of displaced Syrians near the border in Jordan include shelter, water, food, medical care and sanitation. Children are at particular risk of dehydration and diarrhoea.

Since the war in Syria began in 2011, Jordan, along with Turkey and Lebanon, have shouldered much of the responsibility for hosting Syrian refugees. Senior United Nations officials, including Secretary-General António Guterres, have expressed their repeated appreciation for the goodwill and generosity of the Government of Jordan.

In coordination with the Government of Jordan, United Nations inter-agency convoys in the past few days have transported lifesaving assistance including food, water, soap, sanitary items, shelter, and medical supplies and equipment for the tens of thousands of Syrians by the Jordanian border. Additional items remain on standby in Jordan until the security situation allows delivery into southwest Syria.

The United Nations had also prepared supplies in anticipation of a further escalation of conflict in the south of Syria and dispatched humanitarian assistance over the past two months. This allowed the United Nations to respond immediately at the start of conflict in Southern Syria to respond to immediate needs. Further food rations were also sent through Ramtha border crossing before the conflict curtailed cross border convoys in late June.

The United Nations reiterates its readiness to assist as much as needed but, at the same time, it also reminds all responsible parties that our effectiveness depends on facilitation of the provision of
humanitarian aid and protection to people in need, in line with the parties’ obligations under international humanitarian law.

Ultimately, to be able to reach as many Syrians as they need help, UN agencies must be able to access southern Syria through cross-line and cross border operations.

We call on all parties to take all necessary measures to safeguard civilian lives, allow freedom of movement, and protect civilian infrastructure, at all times and in accordance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The United Nations reminds all states and parties involved in the conflict that a delay in responding to the worsening humanitarian crisis could only lead to catastrophic results. We also remain mindful of the risks that local humanitarian workers in southern Syria face in these difficult and violent times. Many have been displaced, separated from their families, injured or even killed. It is essential that all parties to the conflict do their outmost to protect and ensure the safety of local humanitarian workers.

In light of the current hostilities are in Syria, it is everyone’s responsibility to work together towards reaching a political solution to the crisis.

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