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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, MARK LOWCOCK**

STATEMENT ON NORTHWEST SYRIA

New York, 17 February 2020

The crisis in northwest Syria has reached a horrifying new level.

We now believe 900,000 people have been displaced since 1 December, the vast majority women and children.

They are traumatized and forced to sleep outside in freezing temperatures because camps are full. Mothers burn plastic to keep children warm. Babies and small children are dying because of the cold.

The violence in northwest Syria is indiscriminate. Health facilities, schools, residential areas, mosques and markets have been hit. Schools are suspended, many health facilities have closed. There is a serious risk of disease outbreaks. Basic infrastructure is falling apart.

We are now receiving reports that settlements for displaced people are being hit, resulting in deaths, injuries and further displacement.

A huge relief operation, across the border from Turkey is underway, but it is overwhelmed. The equipment and facilities being used by aid workers are being damaged. Humanitarian workers themselves are being displaced and killed.

The biggest humanitarian horror story of the 21st Century will only be avoided if Security Council members, and those with influence, overcome individual interests and put a collective stake in humanity first.

The only option is a ceasefire.

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