STATEMENT

Is the world becoming numb to the killing of children?

Statement by Fran Equiza, UNICEF Representative in Syria

DAMASCUS, 26 January, 2017 – “The grim tally of children killed in Syria in the past two weeks has increased daily as violence escalates in several areas across the country.

“UNICEF received alarming reports of at least eleven children killed and many more injured in ongoing violence in Afrin district, north-west Syria. In neighbouring Idlib, at least nine children were reportedly killed in the past week alone in attacks on the towns of Saraqab and Khan Shaykhoun. In Damascus, three children were killed in an attack in the Bab Touma area of the Old City. According to reports, the attack on 22 January, the heaviest on Damascus in weeks, occurred as children were leaving school.

“In Afrin, families are fleeing to other areas within the district, seeking protection in camps already crowded with over 125,000 previously displaced people, living in shockingly difficult conditions and exposed to harsh winter weather. People attempting to flee the area in search of safety, have reportedly been prevented from leaving Afrin. Violence is reported to be so intense that families are confined to the basements of their buildings. The majority of shops are closed and UNICEF-supported child protection services, including a child-friendly space and psychosocial support activities, had to be suspended.

“Wars have laws and these laws are being broken every single day in Syria. Once again, UNICEF reminds all parties to the conflict of their obligations to protect children at all times.

“Parties must also provide safe passage to all people wishing to leave areas under attack due to fears for their own safety and security.

“Nearly seven years into the conflict, children continue to be the hardest hit by unprecedented destruction, displacement and death. They have lost lives, homes and childhoods. Enough is enough.”

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Notes to editors:
In response to the needs of children and families fleeing Afrin, two mobile medical teams have been deployed with support from UNICEF to areas in Aleppo city where displaced families are anticipated to arrive. As a response to displacement in western rural Aleppo related to displacement from Idlib, UNICEF is in the process of delivering 100 water tanks and water trucking services to these areas. Five mobile teams providing child protection services, including, psychosocial-support, mine risk awareness sessions are already operational there.

About UNICEF
UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.
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