UN RENEWS CALL FOR THE SAFETY AND PROTECTION OF LOCAL AID WORKERS IN SYRIA

(Amman, 30 July 2018): The UN has reiterated its call for the safety and protection of local aid workers inside Syria, who remain on the frontline in delivering life-saving assistance to millions of women, children and men in all areas.

“Syrian aid workers risk their lives on a daily basis and work tirelessly to provide life-saving assistance to fellow Syrians in need in accordance with humanitarian principles,” Panos Mountzis, Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, said. “All parties to the conflict in Syria are obliged under international humanitarian and human rights law to respect and protect humanitarian workers and other civilians.”

Aid workers report fearing an increased risk of arrest and detention as lines of control shift. In southwestern Syria, most humanitarian staff have reportedly already stopped working with Syrian aid organisations – significantly impacting the response capacity at a time when they are needed most and leaving a vacuum behind.

“Syrian aid workers, including members of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, have paid the ultimate price losing their lives in their efforts to help those in need. With their highly technical skills and operational knowledge, they remain the backbone of the response effort,” Mountzis said. “It’s critical all steps are taken to increase the protection of aid workers and ensure the continuation of services in support of an effective sustainable humanitarian response to the people in need.”

Syria is one of the most challenging and dangerous environments for humanitarians to operate in. Since the start of the crisis in Syria in March 2011, hundreds of humanitarian workers and service providers, including health workers, have been killed in the course of duty.

Across Syria, humanitarian actors, including UN agencies and NGOs, are doing everything they can to reach some 13 million people in need, including some 6.5 million internally displaced persons, wherever they are, in both government and non-government controlled areas, in line with humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, and the humanitarian imperative to save lives.

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