UN in Syria and SARC provide humanitarian relief to thousands of internally displaced Syrians in Rukban

**Damascus, 12 September 2019** – Yesterday, the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) finalized the delivery of much-needed humanitarian assistance to 15,000 internally displaced Syrians in Rukban in south-eastern Syria. Food was distributed to all civilians in Rukban and nutritional supplies were provided for children.

The delivery of assistance started on 6 September and lasted till yesterday afternoon. The UN/SARC convoy consisted of 22 trucks, carrying food rations and 50 kilogram sacks of wheat, as well as high-energy biscuits. This is the third time the UN and SARC provide humanitarian assistance to Rukban; the first delivery taking place in November 2018, the second in February 2019.

The distribution was the second phase of an extensive operation aimed at easing the suffering of thousands of people who have been stuck along the Syrian-Jordanian border for years. The first phase was a preparatory mission in August 2019, to determine the priority needs of the Rukban population and to identify civilians wanting and seeking support to leave the area.

The upcoming third phase is to support the departures of families who wish to leave voluntarily to government-controlled areas. The entire operation is conducted in line with humanitarian principles and minimum protection standards.

“Our main objective during the distribution of aid was to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to the people of Rukban. Half of them are children who have suffered an indescribable hardship,” said Corinne Fleischer, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in Syria.

Conditions in Rukban have gradually deteriorated in past months, with a number of children reported to have died of preventable causes, due to lack of access to health services. Conditions at Rukban are dire and humanitarian actors have limited access or means to provide basic supplies and services.

The aid distribution was based on the joint UN/SARC August assessment, where the vast majority of people reported food to be their main concern, supported by World Food Programme food security information with an alarming number of people found to be food insecure. Humanitarian supplies were distributed directly to those in need and under rigid monitoring, regardless of whether people choose to stay or leave.

Since February 2019, around half of the camp’s estimated total population, or 18,000 people, have left the camp through the government-established transit point, primarily towards collective shelters in Homs where the UN and SARC provide services, before moving onwards.

In past months, the number of people leaving Rukban on their own has slowed down, since many of those that wish to leave can’t afford the transport, a 55km route to the transit point into government area, while others fear for their safety if they were to leave Rukban. The UN and SARC will assist those voluntarily wishing to leave Rukban to do so in line with humanitarian principles.

“The United Nations thanks all the parties who have facilitated our convoys to reach Rukban. And now we call on all of them to find durable solutions for the displaced population, based on their informed consent”, said Corinne Fleischer, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. in Syria.

The United Nations urges all parties to show continued commitment to the principled position of finding safe, dignified and sustainable solutions for the people of Rukban.

**For more information, please contact OCHA Syria or the Office of the RC/HC in Syria:**

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