

United Nations

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, VALERIE AMOS**

SECURITY COUNCIL BRIEFING ON SYRIA
New York, 26 March 2015

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Mr. President,

We are in the fifth year of a war in Syria characterized by breathtaking levels of savagery and it is just over one year since this Council adopted resolution 2139. The resolution demanded action by the parties to the conflict, to cease attacks against civilians and facilitate humanitarian access to those in need. We had all hoped that the resolution would compel the parties to reduce the violence and lead to a significant improvement in the situation of people in Syria.

By any measure, however, the situation in Syria has dramatically worsened.

Civilians continue to bear the brunt of this conflict. The Secretary-General has submitted report after report highlighting the failure of the parties to meet their basic minimum legal obligations. Indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, car bombs, mortar attacks, unguided rockets and the use of other explosive devices in populated areas, are the hallmarks of this conflict.

Fighting continues to escalate across the country. Increased violence in Idlib city in the past few days is particularly worrying and has the potential to displace hundreds of thousands more people. I am concerned that civilians could become trapped in the city if the fighting escalates. People must be given safe passage and be allowed to leave if this becomes necessary.

The inability of this Council and countries with influence over the different parties at war in Syria, to agree on the elements for a political solution in the country, means that the humanitarian consequences will continue to be dire for millions of Syrians.

Children are particularly badly affected with 5.6 million children now in need of assistance. Well over two million children are out of school. A quarter of Syria's schools have been damaged, destroyed or taken over for shelter. It will take billions of dollars to repair damaged schools and restore the education system.

Nutritional surveys indicate a worrying decline in the nutritional status of children. Three governorates Hama, Aleppo and Deir-ez-Zor have Global Acute Malnutrition rates above 10 percent among the children sampled: a

So far this year the United Nations has requested access to 33 locations for the delivery of aid through inter-agency convoys. Only three have been agreed. To Al Wa'er, Talbiseh and Ar Rastan in Homs. Despite the approval and support of the Governor, Syrian state security forces removed surgical and other medical and reproductive health supplies from the convoys to Al Wa'er and Talbiseh. Urgently needed medical supplies, including surgical items, are scheduled to be delivered to Ar Rastan on 30th March. I ask this Council to make it clear to the Government of Syria that these convoys must be allowed to proceed and their security forces should allow the free passage of all supplies to people in need.

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Mr. President,

There has been some confusion about the number of people in besieged and hard to reach locations. In besieged areas people cannot leave and assistance cannot get in on a regular basis.

In February, the United Nations could not deliver any food or medicines to besieged locations. UNRWA has restarted delivery of some assistance to Yarmouk on 4th March. However, food distribution takes place only three

On the issue of denial of access, where parties arbitrarily withhold consent to relief operations there must be consequences and accountability. Council members may wish to consider the concrete steps they would like to take, given the violations of the Council's demands on access contained in resolution 2139.

And on the repeated targeting of health facilities and personnel, the Syrian armed forces, non-state armed groups and terrorist groups must be held accountable for their actions.

Mr. President,

Day after day, month after month, year after year, the death, destruction and violence in Syria grows. As Council members have said many times, there is no humanitarian solution to the crisis. The international community must demonstrate greater determination to reach a long overdue political solution.

Thank you.