

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, STEPHEN O'BRIEN**

Statement on the situation in Aleppo, Syria

I remain extremely alarmed at the severe human tragedy unfolding before our eyes in Aleppo.

In the past 72 hours, air strikes, shelling and street-to-street combat, particularly in the city's eastern neighbourhoods, have killed or injured scores of civilians. Since yesterday, thousands more fled the fighting in besieged eastern Aleppo with nothing more than the clothes on their back and their children in their arms.

I reiterate my deepest concern for the safety of vulnerable people across the city. For those trapped in the besieged part of eastern Aleppo, there is a real sense of impending doom. Tens of thousands of people unable to escape the siege are crammed together ever tighter. Hundreds of urgent medical cases need to be evacuated. Heroic humanitarian and medical workers are among these vulnerable civilians, terrified about what tomorrow will bring.

Since July, our continuous efforts to gain access to the besieged areas to deliver life-saving assistance have been thwarted by one fighting side or another. Food and water have run out. Medical care is all but finished. For those displaced, we continue to provide life-saving aid, while remaining deeply concerned about reports of reprisals and arbitrary arrest and detention.

I repeat my call for an immediate, real, and comprehensive pause in the fighting. Civilians must be allowed to safely leave besieged east Aleppo without fear of harm or harassment. I call on the parties to provide unconditional access for humanitarians to go anywhere in Aleppo where people are in need of assistance. We stand completely ready to facilitate the voluntary and safe evacuation of injured, sick and vulnerable civilians from the besieged part of the city. If this does not happen, many more will die. Even at this eleventh hour, we can save lives.

The conduct of the parties over the coming days will decide the fate of civilians in Aleppo. Parties must take all steps to protect and spare civilians. I urge them to restore basic humanity and to treat all of those fleeing the fighting with the respect and dignity they deserve in full accordance with international law.

New York, 9 December 2016

For more information, please contact:
Russell Geekie, OCHA New York, rgeekie@un.org, +1 212 963 8340
Jens Laerke, OCHA Geneva, laerke@un.org, +41 79 472 9750
OCHA press releases are available at www.unocha.org or www.reliefweb.int