

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and
Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien**
Message on the Syria crisis

The conflict in Syria has entered its seventh grim year. Since March 2011, its people have watched huge parts of their beloved country reduced to rubble.

The toll taken on civilians is inexcusable. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed. Almost five million people – the majority of them women and children – have fled the grotesque violence and deprivation and are now living as refugees. Too many who set out on perilous journeys to escape the war perished on the way.

As I speak, more than six million people are displaced within Syria. They are among the 13.5 million people in Syria who are in dire need of humanitarian aid. Families and entire communities are struggling to meet their most basic food needs. While food shortages worsen, a seemingly endless supply of bombs and artillery shells continue to extinguish lives.

A generation of children in Syria have known nothing but brutal conflict and fear during their short lives.

We know the conflict will never end without a genuine political commitment to peace. Yet even if a political agreement were to succeed tomorrow, millions of Syrians will still require critical humanitarian assistance for months and likely years to come.

Brave humanitarians will continue to stand with the people of Syria to deliver aid to millions of civilians who are most in need – regardless of which side they are perceived to be on. We join Syrians in hoping that 2017 will be the year the carnage finally ends:

The year the parties to the conflict – and those that support their actions – regain their sense of humanity.

The year medieval sieges are lifted and life-saving aid pass unhindered to reach those in dire need.

The year the bombing of hospitals gives way to rebuilding and restocking them.

The year lives saved are not put at risk again, and people begin to regain their resilience at the start of the long road to recovery.

We owe this and so much more to the millions of battered and beleaguered women, men and children who have suffered through this most uncivil war.
