

UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR

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STATEMENT TO THE MEDIA ON SYRIA

NEW YORK, 30 APRIL 2014

As delivered

Good afternoon everyone.

I would like to make a brief statement following my briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

It is now two months since Resolution 2139 was adopted. As you know, the Secretary-General presented his report to the Council last week. It makes very grim reading.

Far from getting better, the situation is getting worse.

Violence has further intensified over the past month, taking a horrific toll on ordinary Syrians. In the past weekend alone, scores of women, men and children were killed and injured by bombs and mortars in both opposition- and Government-held areas of Aleppo.

I told the Council that I am extremely concerned by the continued evidence of violations, by all parties, of the most fundamental provisions of human rights and humanitarian law.

These are not just words. We have all seen the appalling impact: heartrending pictures of children pulled from the rubble, of families cowering in ruined buildings and medical teams racing to save lives under fire.

UN agencies and their partners continue to provide millions of Syrians with humanitarian assistance. Over three million children were vaccinated as part of the polio campaign in April. Food aid was dispatched for just over four million people, and nearly 17 million people got water and sanitation support.

However, this is far from enough.

I am extremely concerned that less than ten per cent of the 242,000 people living in besieged areas received assistance in the past four weeks.

I told the members of the Council that there has been little progress since my last briefing on the delivery of urgently required medicines and supplies to hard-to-reach areas. During this time,

some 216,000 people were denied medical assistance because convoys that did not take place or because medicines and medical supplies were removed from trucks.

Concerted efforts to reach the 45,000 people besieged in Nubl and Zahra remain unsuccessful, despite humanitarian staff negotiating for over a week with opposition groups to secure safe passage.

Humanitarian workers risk their lives every day to try to help others, but there is less access and less predictable assistance to the ever-increasing numbers of people in extreme need.

Small pockets of progress – like the Government’s new procedure for clearance of convoy trucks – are welcome. But overall the picture gives little cause for optimism.

I told the Council that it is unacceptable that the parties to the conflict continue to deny besieged communities food, medicines and freedom of movement. And it is unacceptable that convoys with life-saving supplies are still prevented from entering hard-to-reach areas.

The time for waiting is over.

I asked the Council members to do all they can to put people before politics - to help us get urgently-needed aid to people, supported by all those with influence over the Parties, across all lines.

We need pragmatic and sustainable arrangements which result in substantially greater cross-line and cross-border access particularly to besieged locations. We need them now. And we need security guarantees to enable this to happen.

I told the Council that we can only do this with the support of Council members and all those with influence over the parties.

Every day that the international community fails to prevent the harming of Syrians for military gain, we allow the achievements of 150 years of humanitarian principles to be further eroded.

Thank you.