



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

*As delivered*

**Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang**

**Statement to the Security Council on Syria**  
**New York, 28 August 2014**

Mr. President,

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos.

It has been six months since resolution 2139 was passed with the aim of pressing the parties to the conflict in Syria to abide by basic international legal obligations and to reduce the suffering of ordinary people caught up in the conflict.

Mr. President,

Over the past six months, the plight of people in Syria has not reduced but has deepened. The violence and conflict continues unabated, with more deaths of women, children and men. The social and economic fabric of the country has been ripped to shreds. According to data collected by human rights organizations from various sources, July 2014 was a particularly harrowing month since the start of the conflict for civilians in Syria, with over 1,000 civilian deaths and injuries. On 22 August, the High Commissioner for Human Rights issued updated casualty figures for the conflict. More than 191,000 people were killed between the onset of the conflict and April 2014. As appalling as it is, that is a minimum number. The real death toll is likely to be much higher.

In Aleppo Governorate, a marked increase in the indiscriminate use of barrel bombs by the Government was registered in residential neighbourhoods, where civilians, including women and children, with no means to leave, still struggle to survive. The Governorates of Dar'a, Hama and Idleb continued to be particularly affected by barrel bombs. In Dar'a, for example, over 30 barrel bombs were reportedly dropped on Da'el city between 22 and 31 July, killing 10 civilians, including 5 children. Opposition and extremist groups continued to launch mortar attacks, shelling and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices against residential areas, killing and injuring scores of people including children. In Damascus, around 225 mortars and missiles targeted the capital between 3 and 7 August, killing more than 17 people and injuring at least a hundred, including children.

The collective punishment of civilians continues, in flagrant violation of the most basic principles of international humanitarian law. Almost a million people in Aleppo are deprived of water because of attacks against vital infrastructure. The Islamic Front has cut the water supply to an area for displaced people in Aleppo several times. Medical

facilities and personnel also continue to be targeted. The number of people fleeing Syria in search of safety continues to increase. Almost one Syrian in two is either internally displaced or is a refugee.

The advancement of ISIL into central Syria is taking the violence meted out to unprotected civilians to a new level. The group continues to commit horrific atrocities against those opposing its rule. In Deir-Ez-Zor, for example, community sources report that up to 700 members of the Al-Sheitaat Arab tribe, whom ISIL accused of apostasy, have been killed or kidnapped over the past two weeks, some beheaded or crucified. Reports also indicate that women from the tribe are being sold in markets in Iraq.

Mr. President,

In the face of total impunity, grave human rights violations have become the norm in Syria. Parties to the conflict are oblivious of their obligations to protect civilians and abide by international humanitarian law as they continue to commit terrible crimes against civilians, young and old, women and men. The perpetrators must be held accountable. The impunity must end.

Mr. President,

For the first time in six months, there has been some improvement on humanitarian access. We are reaching more people in need in hard-to-reach areas as a result of the adoption of resolution 2165 by this Council.

The monitoring mechanism is now operational at the three border crossings of Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salam and Al Ramtha. The deployment of monitoring teams to Iraq remains pending due to insecurity in the north-western part of the country, but the situation is constantly being assessed.

Access across borders has resulted in broader coverage in hard-to-reach areas in Aleppo, Dara, Rural Damascus, Idleb, Quineitra and Lattakia Governorates. The UN has now sent nine shipments to Syria from neighbouring countries pursuant to Security Council resolution 2165. This included seven shipments from Turkey - four through the Bab al-Salam crossing and three through the Bab al-Hawa crossing; and two from Jordan through the Al-Ramtha crossing.

The shipments included food assistance for some 69,500 people; Non-Food Items for approximately 120,000 people; water and sanitation supplies for around 82,500 people; and medical supplies for some 190,000, including surgical supplies for 700 people. All of the shipments crossed without incident and the distribution of relief supplies is ongoing.

These shipments were made possible due to the full cooperation of the Governments of Turkey and Jordan. The Government of Syria was notified 48 hours in advance of the crossing of the shipments and of the humanitarian nature of the shipments.

More shipments are planned over the next month in close coordination with the humanitarian team in Damascus, in line with the UN's whole-of-Syria approach where

cross-line and cross-border access complement each other to maximize our reach to those in need.

There have also been new openings in access across conflict lines, notably in Aleppo Eastern Rural area, Dar'a and Rural Damascus Governorates, including to besieged areas. Food was dispatched to approximately 97,500 people throughout Aleppo Governorate and to 10,000 civilians trapped in rural opposition-held areas of Dar'a, notably in al-Yadoudah, Tal Shihab and Zaizoun, that had not been assisted since the beginning of the crisis.

Of particular note, medical supplies, including surgical items, reached a number of opposition-held areas this month, mostly through cross-line access. Around 10 metric tons of surgical supplies and chronic disease medicines for 22,300 people were delivered to hospitals in eastern Aleppo city. In Yarmouk camp, the Syrian authorities authorized the distribution of medical supplies, including antibiotics and medicines for non-communicable diseases. On 28 July, WHO [the World Health Organization] and SARC [the Syrian Arab Red Crescent] delivered five metric tons of medical assistance to the besieged area of Madimayet Elsham in Rural Damascus to support a population of 24,000 people in need. Other deliveries were made to hard-to-reach areas of Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor and Al-Hassakeh Governorates.

Mr. President,

Despite these developments, much more needs to be done by the parties to ensure that access is rapid, regular, safe, and unhindered. 241,000 people remain under siege. Administrative hurdles imposed by the Government of Syria continue to hamper the delivery of aid. Governors are still not allowed to approve the delivery of humanitarian assistance in their governorates without first consulting Damascus. The operational constraints placed on NGOs have not been removed. Designated terrorist groups, as well as armed opposition groups, continue to block access to the hard-to-reach eastern governorates of Syria. ISIL and the Al-Nusra front are advancing towards the border crossings of Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa along the main access routes in Syria. This could threaten the additional cross-border operations authorized under Security Council resolution 2165.

I must highlight that the funding situation for humanitarian operations in Syria is dire. The Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan is severely underfunded with only 30 per cent of the requirements met. The Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan is 45 per cent funded. This adds to the challenges we face in our ability to help those in need.

Mr. President,

Insecurity poses a serious risk to our operations and our staff.

Last week we commemorated World Humanitarian Day. It was an occasion to remember the humanitarian workers in Syria who put their lives on the line every day to deliver assistance to those in desperate need in Syria. On 6 August, an 18-truck convoy of WFP food en route from Deir-Ez-Zor to Ar-Raqqa came under attack from an unknown group. Two truck drivers were killed and two were injured, and the contents of four trucks were damaged or destroyed. 62 humanitarian workers have been killed since

March 2011, including 38 SARC volunteers, 15 UN staff members - 13 from UNRWA alone - and two NGO staff.

Humanitarian workers should not have to risk their lives to save others. I remind this Council that all parties have a responsibility to ensure the safety and security of those engaged in humanitarian operations.

Mr. President,

The progress in access during the past month has shown that where there is political will, there is a way to improve the situation for millions of civilians in Syria. We must all redouble our efforts until we reach everyone in need with humanitarian assistance.

Mr. President,

Each day results in more lives lost and more families and communities destroyed. The rise of extremist groups, with complete disregard for even the most basic norms of humanity, threatens what remains of secularism and tolerance in Syria. Now more than ever before, the Council must do all it can to end the conflict and ensure that humanitarian access increases so that we can reach all those who are desperately in need in Syria. UN humanitarian agencies and our partners are doing everything we can to meet those needs, but, as we have repeatedly said, the solution to this crisis does not rest with us.

Thank you very much.