

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

(New York, 10 February 2014) I welcome the news that the parties to the conflict have agreed to extend the humanitarian pause in Old Homs City, for a further three days. I hope this will allow us to evacuate yet more civilians and deliver much needed additional supplies. The protection of civilians caught up in this horrendous conflict in Syria is the greatest priority for UN agencies and humanitarian partners.

Since 7 February, humanitarian teams working with the local authorities, representatives of all sides and community leaders, in extremely dangerous circumstances, have managed to evacuate more than 800 people from Old Homs and bring vital food and medical supplies to people who have been besieged in by fighting and with little aid for nearly two years.

It is absolutely unacceptable that UN and Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid workers were deliberately targeted. I am deeply disappointed that the parties were unable to hold their ceasefire in Homs. This led to 11 people losing their lives needlessly as the operations were carried out. People seeking refuge and those carrying out humanitarian operations should not be fired on. The international community must press for full accountability of the Syrian Government and Opposition forces and demand that the ceasefire is held so that all who want to leave can do so safely.

UN and Red Crescent workers told me that many of the people who left Old Homs were traumatized and weak. They also said that they witnessed terrible conditions at the field hospital in the Old City, where the equipment is basic, there are no medicines and people are in urgent need of medical attention. All wounded and sick - whether they are civilian or combatant - have the right to medical assistance under International Humanitarian and Human Rights laws. Most of those evacuated went to Al Waer, but a number of men and their families are still being processed. UN protection officers continue to monitor their safety and wellbeing.

Humanitarian pauses are vital to allowing aid to be delivered and people to leave in communities which have been blockaded for months but it is very important that they are not a one-off event. As a political solution is sought to end this crisis, I hope that those negotiating in Geneva agree to allow the sustained delivery of aid to the 250,000 people in besieged communities in Syria and all those who are in desperate need across Syria. I also hope that they will respect humanitarian pauses, and abide by their obligations under International Humanitarian Law. The people of Syria want peace, security and stability. I hope the parties hear their voice.

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