

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

STATEMENT ON EASTERN ALEPPO CITY, SYRIA

2 October 2016

I am deeply alarmed by the ferocious pummeling of eastern Aleppo city where an estimated 275,000 people are besieged. Indiscriminate bombing and shelling continues in a shocking and unrelenting manner, killing and maiming civilians, subjecting them to a level of savagery that no human should have to endure.

The health care system in eastern Aleppo is all but obliterated. Medical facilities are being hit one by one. I have received reports of attacks on at least three hospitals including a pediatric hospital providing services to thousands of sick and injured children. The health system is on the verge of total collapse with patients being turned away and no medicines available to treat even the most common ailments. Hundreds of critical medical evacuations are urgently required. With clean water and food in very short supply, the number of people requiring urgent medical evacuations is likely to rise dramatically in the coming days.

Women, children and men in eastern Aleppo are terrified, trapped and with nowhere to hide. They are subjected to bunker buster bombs, barrel bombs, mortar rounds and artillery shelling. Those who use such weapons in densely populated areas know that they will cause immense harm and suffering to civilians. Yet they persist.

We are in a race against time to protect and save civilians in eastern Aleppo city. They need our urgent action to bring an end to their living hell. Words are not enough. For the sake of humanity, I reiterate the demand that the parties and those who support them immediately bring about:

- A cessation of all actions that can result in loss of civilian life or damage to essential civilian infrastructure.
- A medical evacuation system for eastern Aleppo so that the hundreds of critical cases can receive proper medical care.
- Safe, full, regular and unimpeded humanitarian access to eastern Aleppo as obliged under international humanitarian law.

I told the Security Council last Thursday that now is not the time for political grandstanding or narrowly protecting political or military positions. Now is the time to recognize the gravity of the horror before us and to act before it is too late. This conflict must end. As an absolute minimum, I reiterate my call for 48 hours weekly humanitarian pause in the fighting.

As humanitarians, we are committed and ready to reach all those who are trapped and slipping away into an unimaginable humanitarian catastrophe. The clock is ticking. Stop the carnage now.