EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR’S KEY MESSAGES ON SYRIA
25 October 2012 • Issue Number 8

Key Messages

1. As the crisis deepens in Syria, I am extremely concerned for the up to 3 million people who are affected by the conflict and need help. Syrians continue fleeing their homes to safer areas and at least 1.2 million people have taken shelter in public buildings, parks and with host families. Humanitarian needs are growing and will keep growing as fighting continues. Targeting of medical facilities and staff has left thousands without access to health care and education, and, as the winter approaches, families will struggle to survive without essential clothing, adequate shelter and heating.

2. All parties engaged in this conflict must do more to protect civilians and respect international humanitarian law. It is ordinary women, men and children that are caught up in the brutal violence and who suffer from the indiscriminate use of explosive weapons like cluster munitions. There are particularly horrific reports of the testimonies from children. I call on all parties to stop targeting civilians and to ensure that humanitarian organizations can provide assistance quickly, neutrally and impartially.

3. In Syria, the United Nations and humanitarian partners have managed to scale up and reach areas where people need help, despite the immense security challenges. In September WFP dispatched food for 1.5 million people and WHO delivered health assistance to 60,000 people including emergency care for the wounded, diarrhoea treatment and safe blood kits. UNHCR has helped nearly 190,000 people get essential household items, while UNICEF has helped 50,000 children with educational and psychosocial support. We are expanding our field presence and network of partners to reach even more people.

4. More than 350,000 people have left Syria since the beginning of the conflict, and thousands are fleeing across borders every day. UNHCR estimates that this number is likely to rise to 710,000 by the end of the year. Many people are reluctant to register as they worry about the safety of family members still inside Syria. At least three-quarters of the refugees are vulnerable women and children. I thank neighbouring countries for continuing to keep their borders open, and remind the international community that we must help the refugees from other countries - Palestinian, Iraqi, Somali and others - who are also caught up in the crisis.

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5. The fighting must stop before more lives are needlessly lost. While the humanitarian operation is helping large numbers of people in many areas, it is hindered by lack of funding as well as insecurity and violence. We need more resources to be able to help more people.

6. Humanitarian work is done on the basis of impartiality and neutrality. The only aim is to save lives and protect the vulnerable. These principles must be respected and it is vital that humanitarian aid remains free of any political agenda.