SYRIA: UN HUMANITARIAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEFS URGE IMMEDIATE SAFE PASSAGE FOR CIVILIANS, WOUNDED, TRAPPED IN AL-QUSAYR

(New York / Geneva, 1 June 2013) We are extremely alarmed by reports that thousands of civilians are trapped amidst the heavy fighting that has engulfed the besieged Syrian town of Al-Qusayr. We understand there may also be as many as 1,500 wounded people in urgent need of immediate evacuation for emergency medical treatment, and that the general situation in Al-Qusayr is desperate. We are also receiving reports that civilian neighbourhoods continue to be indiscriminately attacked, and that other major violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are being committed.

We call on all parties to immediately halt all actions that might result in civilian loss of life and damage, and to permit civilians to move to safer areas. We urge the parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire to allow humanitarian agencies to evacuate the wounded and provide life-saving treatment and supplies.

It is not known how many people remain trapped in Al-Qusayr. More than ten thousand have already fled to towns in the region including Hasiya and Al-Dumina, where they have sought temporary shelter in schools and unfinished buildings. They urgently need food, bedding, clean water and medical care.

We remind the Government and other parties to this conflict that they have an obligation under international human rights and international humanitarian law to protect civilians and allow neutral, impartial humanitarian organizations safe access to all people in need.

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