

Taking Sides: The United Nations’ Loss Of Impartiality, Independence And Neutrality In Syria



This report is dedicated to those brave individuals who have been detained, disappeared
or killed in Syria for upholding the principles of humanitarian aid.

The following Syrian humanitarian and medical organisations, local councils and civil society groups are co-signatories to the executive summary and recommendations of the report:

-
- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1) Syria Civil Defence
(The White Helmets) | 26) Atarab Civil Centre | 48) Humena |
| 2) Basmeh and Zeitooneh | 27) Maasar Centre | 49) Golan Heights Hand in Hand
Coalition |
| 3) Local Administration
Councils Unit | 28) Union of Syrian Civil Society
Organisations | 50) Space of Hope |
| 4) Syrian Emergency Task Force | 29) Save a Soul | 51) Hooz Centre |
| 5) Kesh Malek | 30) Souriyana Al Amal | 52) Wisdom House |
| 6) Syrian Forum | 31) For All | 53) Syrian Centre for Legal Studies
and Research |
| 7) Dawlaty | 32) Fazaa Organisation | 54) Afaq Centre for Legal Studies
and Research |
| 8) Women Now for Development | 33) Huloul | 55) Trust Centre for Training
and Innovation |
| 9) Baytna Syria | 34) Emissa for Development | 56) Youth Towards the Future |
| 10) Badael | 35) International Supporting
Woman Association | |
| 11) United Medical Office
in Eastern Ghouta | 36) Free Syrian Lawyers
Association | |
| 12) The Day After | 37) Aleppo Revolutionaries Union | |
| 13) Sham Social Development | 38) Centre for Peace and
Community Building | |
| 14) Al Seeraj for Development | 39) Syrian Activists Organisation
for Monitoring | |
| 15) Syrian Network for
Human Rights | 40) Purity Centre | |
| 16) Violations Documentation
Centre | 41) Syrian Freedom Organisation | |
| 17) Amrha | 42) Sham Legal Center | |
| 18) Syrian Women's Network | 43) RMTeam - Research &
Management | |
| 19) Coastal Health Directorate | 44) Ain Al Madinah | |
| 20) Local Council of Deir Ezzor City | 45) Kawkabi Centre for
Human Rights | |
| 21) Douma Local Council | 46) The Arab Organisation for
Human Rights in Syria | |
| 22) Ariha Local Council | 47) Rasad Foundation for
Documentation and
Human Rights | |
| 23) Daraya Local Council | | |
| 24) Al Hamah Local Council | | |
| 25) Syrian Civil Defence in
Damascus Suburbs
(The White Helmets) | | |

Thank you to Tammam Azzam for the cover artwork and Daraya Local Council, Lens Young Dimashqi and Nabaal for the photography.

The Syria Campaign advocates for the protection of civilians by elevating the demands of Syrians inside the country trapped between dictatorship and extremism. We are fiercely independent and are funded entirely by individuals and foundations. Contact us info@thesyriacampaign.org

CONTENTS

04

Executive Summary

06

Methodology

07

Recommendations

09

**Introduction:
The Politicised Role Of Aid
In The Syrian Conflict**

11

**The Story Of Daraa:
How It Began**

13

**The UN's Loss Of
Impartiality In Syria**

27

**The UN's Loss Of
Independence In Syria**

35

**The UN's Loss Of
Neutrality In Syria**

42

**Appendix 1:
List Of Abbreviations
Appendix 2: Endnotes**

45

Appendix 3: References

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United Nations (UN) in Syria is in serious breach of the humanitarian principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.

By choosing to prioritise cooperation with the Syrian government at all costs, the UN has enabled the distribution of billions of dollars of international aid to be directed by one side in the conflict. This has contributed to the deaths of thousands of civilians, either through starvation, malnutrition-related illness, or a lack of access to medical aid. It has also led to the accusation that this misshapen UN aid operation is affecting - perhaps prolonging - the course of the conflict itself.

“
To date the UN has not undertaken a single aid delivery from Damascus without government consent, despite multiple Security Council resolutions sanctioning this.
 ”

This report documents a departure from humanitarian principles beginning with the UN's failure to deliver aid to the government-besieged town of Daraa at the very start of the crisis in 2011. The government of Syria used the explicit threat of removing the UN's permission to operate within Syria and withdrawing visas for its non-Syrian staff to keep humanitarians from delivering aid to Daraa. The Syrian government has used this threat consistently since then to manipulate where, how and to whom the UN has been able to deliver humanitarian aid.

Facing this attack on their humanitarian principles, UN agencies did not unite or set out red lines or conditions for their cooperation with the Syrian government. Rather, they chose to accept the government's constraints on their

operation. As a result, a culture of compliance was born. UN agencies were unwilling to push hard for access to areas outside of government control. In the words of one recent evaluation by the UN itself, agencies were “simply not willing to jeopardise their operations in Syria by taking a tougher stance with the government. The reasons for this are beyond the scope of this evaluation, but will surely be scrutinised unfavourably at a later point.”¹

That point is now. This report scrutinises not only the UN's reasons for failing to take a tougher stance with the government, but also the impact of this failure upon Syrian civilians and the conflict itself.

The UN has provided the Syrian government with an effective veto over aid deliveries to areas outside of government control, enabling its use of sieges as a weapon of war. While there are people in need all over Syria, by putting the Syrian government in charge of humanitarian aid this way, the UN has beleaguered its ability to deliver aid to those who need it most. To date the UN has not undertaken a single aid delivery from Damascus without government consent, despite multiple Security Council resolutions sanctioning this.

The UN has allowed the Syrian government to direct aid from Damascus almost exclusively into its territories. In April 2016, 88% of food aid delivered from inside Syria went into government-controlled territory. 12% went into territories outside the government's control.² Some months provide an even starker illustration of the government's use of UN aid to further its own agenda. In August 2015, the government directed over 99% of UN aid from inside the country to its territories.³ In 2015, less than 1% of people in besieged areas received UN food assistance each month.⁴

Aid deliveries from inside the country are determined through UN negotiation with the Syrian government. However the UN's failure to set red lines for its Syria operation has undermined its negotiating power. The Syrian government knows there is no sanction for denying access to territories it does not control. It will continue to receive billions of dollars in UN aid regardless. This is the main reason why UN negotiations with the Syrian government almost always fail to gain access. In the whole of 2015, almost 75% of UN requests were not even responded to by the government.⁵

Early attempts to bypass government control of aid by distributing across the borders from neighbouring countries were actively opposed by parts of the UN. Even now with the cross-border operation in place, the UN has not fully capitalised on the opportunity for fear of damaging its relationship with the government.

Safety of humanitarian staff is not the primary determinant of aid access in Syria, although UN aid chiefs often cite security concerns to deflect criticism of partial aid delivery. The UN has driven through besieged towns which have not received aid in months in order to deliver aid to other towns. They did not stop and offload because of the lack of permission, not the lack of security. A study of UN evaluations agreed that aid deliveries were limited “more for internal political and strategic reasons than for security ones.”⁶

Aid deliveries on the ground from inside Syria are implemented and overseen by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC). At the branch level, SARC volunteers maintain a reputation for self-sacrifice and integrity - many have been killed by the government for attempting to deliver aid to those most in need. However, at the senior levels where the organisation is controlled, SARC is an auxiliary

of the government. This puts the UN's independence in serious jeopardy.

The UN's acquiescence to the dominant role of the government in drafting key strategy documents, the UN's support for controversial local truces following sieges and the UN's systematic failure to recognise and classify besieged areas all contribute to further weakening of its humanitarian principles.

“
The United Nations (UN) in Syria is in serious breach of the humanitarian principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.
 ”

Signatories to this report recommend that the UN immediately define a set of public conditions under which the UN humanitarian agencies could continue to cooperate with the Syrian government and still maintain impartiality, independence and neutrality. If these conditions are not met, the UN should suspend cooperation with the Syrian government. A UN operation that violates its humanitarian principles becomes party to the conflict and stands accused of doing harm.

METHODOLOGY

In preparation for this report, researchers interviewed more than 50 humanitarians, both Syrian and international, UN officials, evaluators of UN agencies, and Syrians living under siege who have worked on humanitarian relief.

UN staff who were interviewed are current and former UN officials involved with the Syrian humanitarian operation from Damascus or neighbouring countries at the highest levels. Sources have been anonymised in order to protect their careers and security. Their ranks and their agencies have been concealed.

The “United Nations” in this report refers to the UN humanitarian agencies operating in Syria, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, (UNRWA), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Office of Migration (IOM), UN Habitat and Unicef. All of these agencies make up the UN Country Team and are led by the Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator.

Different agencies are responsible for different degrees of departure from the humanitarian principles. However while conversations indicate that agencies prefer to be judged solely for their own work, their impact in Syria is still felt under the wider umbrella of UN humanitarian aid. That is to say that even though WFP might object, for example, to being associated with the shortcomings

of WHO, or vice versa, their impact is felt as the impact of one “United Nations” by those most affected.

The “United Nations” in this briefing does not refer to the Security Council. This report addresses the UN’s humanitarian efforts inside Syria and not in the neighbouring countries. Figures in this report are accurate as of May 3, 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS

All UN staff, evaluators and humanitarians interviewed for this report were asked a variation on this question: *Has the UN to your knowledge conducted any type of assessment of whether its compromises with the Syrian government have gone too far? The answer was always no.*

A study of all public UN evaluations to date on Syria also noted that “Application of the principles of humanitarian action - in particular impartiality, neutrality and independence - received surprisingly little attention in the reports. This is particularly strange given the very obvious challenges to impartial aid delivery in Syria itself.”⁷

The UN has never, in more than five years, set any clear conditions on its cooperation with the Syrian government. The UN has never assessed how far it has strayed from its principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality.

By losing all sight of its principles and showing little appetite to reclaim them, the UN in Syria is exposed to the most serious accusation: doing harm.

TO THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL

Draw a line. Immediately define a set of public criteria under which the UN agencies can cooperate with the Syrian government while still upholding their humanitarian principles. This must focus on achieving the impartial delivery of aid to those most in need.

Draw a line. If these conditions are not met, the UN should withdraw from cooperation with the Syrian government. A UN operation that violates its core principles becomes party to the conflict and may be perpetuating the violence.

TO UN DONOR GOVERNMENTS

Be a principled donor. Demand public conditions from the UN under which it will maintain a presence in Damascus. Make your funding contingent on these conditions to ensure that your money is not fuelling the conflict through the UN’s lack of impartiality, independence and neutrality.

TO INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (INGOS)

Focus on your principles. Define a set of public criteria under which your organisation can cooperate with the Syrian government while maintaining your humanitarian principles. If this is not possible, withdraw from Damascus.

01

INTRODUCTION: THE POLITICISED ROLE OF AID IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT



1.1. Sovereign Power And Permission To Operate

Since the very beginning of the conflict in 2011, the Syrian government has used the threat of expulsion to restrict what the UN has been able to do, where it has been able to operate and who it has been able to help.

As a sovereign power, the Syrian government has the authority to give or withhold permission to operate from Damascus to the UN. It also has the authority to give or withhold visas for non-Syrian UN staff.

“
The government is involved in besieging 99% of people under siege.
”

While the UN needs permission to operate, it is also true that the government needs UN aid to support vast numbers of its citizens. David Miliband, President of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has said that “the Assad regime can’t afford to kick the UN out of Damascus. The UN is feeding so many of [Assad’s] own people.”⁸ A former UN official in Damascus echoed the analysis in talking about the UN World Food Programme (WFP): “if they threatened to leave, well something would happen. The government cannot lose that aid.” The UN has more leverage over the Syrian government than it has exercised.

As the humanitarian situation in Syria has deteriorated, the calculation of “playing the government’s game” as the UN official describes it, has been justified as necessary by the UN in order to gain access to people who need aid. An evaluation of the WFP’s work in Syria writes that “Management judged that its interests in delivering food to the maximum number of people in need are best served by maintaining close relations with the Syrian government and negotiating behind the scenes for access.”⁹

Yet humanitarian access has not increased - in fact the opposite has happened. Over one million people in Syria are now living under siege.¹⁰ The government is involved in besieging 99% of people under siege (see explanation on page 33).¹¹

There is severe imbalance in both the quantity and quality of aid provided in areas controlled by the government and areas outside their control. In some cases this is because extremist groups like the Islamic State (ISIS) have prevented UN access. In most cases it is because the government has purposefully punished areas outside of its control through deprivation of humanitarian aid.

As a consequence, thousands have died of malnutrition-related causes and lack of medical treatment, and hundreds of civilians have starved to death¹², some only a few minutes’ drive away from the five-star hotel where many international UN aid workers are based in Damascus.

1.2. Security And Consent

Security has never been the primary restriction on UN aid access in Syria.

While the UN is operating in a dangerous environment with real security concerns in Syria, the loss of its humanitarian principles has been a result of its acceptance of the restrictions of the Syrian government and not a natural outcome of the security situation.

“
UN convoys have even passed through besieged areas to reach other locations, again suggesting that Syrian government consent - not security - is the issue.
”

One UN aid official explained that security of UN staff is determined with the agreement of the Syrian gov-

ernment. It is not an entirely independent assessment undertaken by the UN. It therefore leaves the issue of security open for manipulation by the Syrian government.

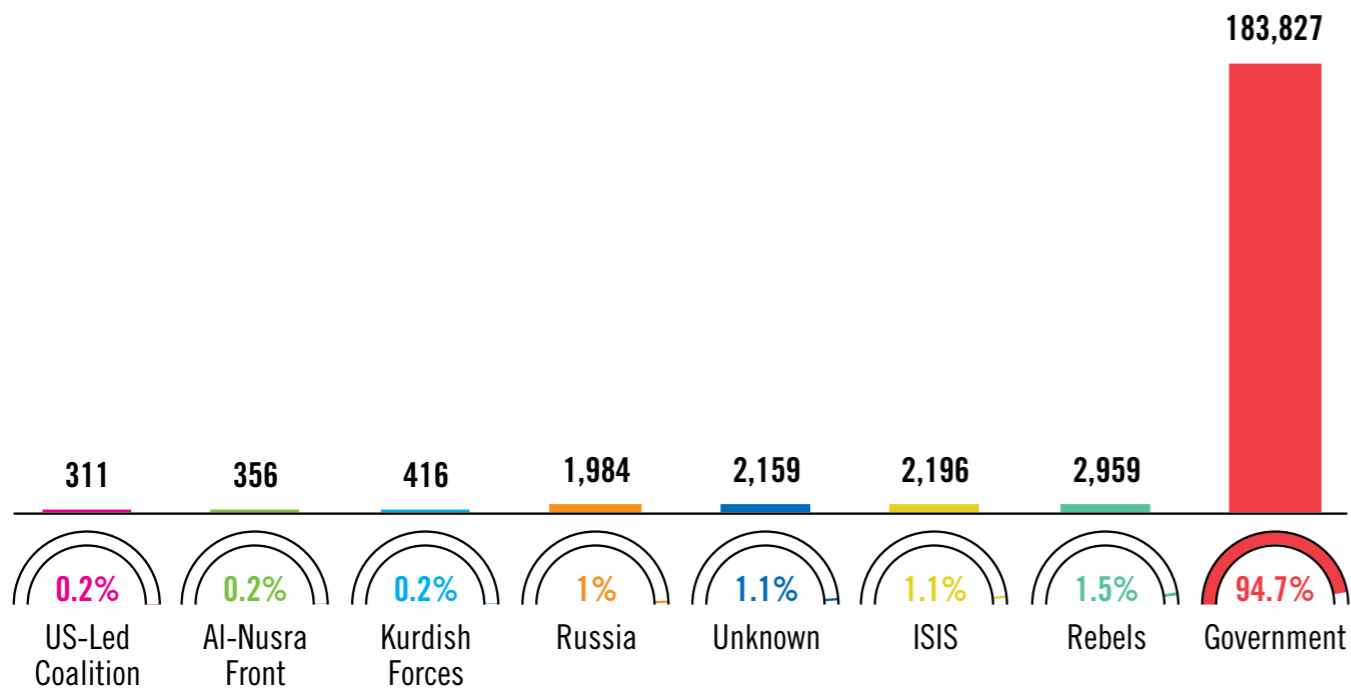
Security concerns are often cited by UN officials challenged on the issue of aid impartiality and their refusal to deliver aid across conflict lines without waiting for the Syrian government's permission. To date they have never attempted to announce a convoy and demand to be allowed access, or “named and shamed” who threatens such deliveries.

UN convoys have even passed through besieged areas to reach other locations, again suggesting that Syrian government consent - not security - is the issue. As UN advisor Jan Egeland said, “Convoys even go through Douma to Kafr Batna, why aren't they allowed

to stay and offload in Douma?”¹³

One UN-commissioned study of all publicly available evaluations finds that “space for international humanitarian action has been particularly limited inside Syria, seemingly more for internal political and strategic reasons than for security ones.”¹⁴

WHO'S KILLING CIVILIANS IN SYRIA?



*Numbers documented from 15 March 2011 to 01 March 2016, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights



02

THE STORY OF DARAA: HOW IT BEGAN

2.1. The First Siege

UN capitulation to Syrian government obstruction on vital aid deliveries began within weeks of the 2011 uprising.

In March 2011, following a wave of popular uprisings sweeping the region, people from the Syrian city of Daraa took to the streets in anti-government protests. The militarised response from the regime of Bashar al-Assad culminated in a full-scale siege of the area soon after beginning on April 25, cutting off external access to the city.

A few weeks into the siege the UN issued an appeal for urgent humanitarian access to the area, particularly for diabetic patients cut off from dialysis.

According to a UN official, there were plans from at least one agency to enter Daraa with humanitarian aid. However, the UN was threatened. The same official recounted how a representative of the Syrian government told him that if the aid delivery were to be attempted to Daraa, the visas of UN staff members would be revoked and they would therefore have to leave Damascus. This UN official was told to relay this message to his agency chief.

Another UN official present in Damascus at the time recounted how Faisal Mekdad, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Syria, made it clear to all branches of the UN operating in Syria from as early as March 2011 that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was in control and would not hesitate

to punish the UN and its staff if they challenged the government.

Mekdad condemned another UN official angrily for publicising the plight of approximately 30 diabetic patients under siege in Daraa in need of dialysis.

Another UN official described how on other visits around the country in 2011, UN staff would be followed by the “mukhabarat”, or intelligence forces. Government ministers would accompany them on their journeys. Gradually, permissions from the ministries for UN visits were no longer authorised. “Little by little the ministries, the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Social Affairs, they would refuse permissions... The ministries were afraid of giving permission because the mukhabarat took over.” The official excuse was security, but the UN official believed it was because “the mukhabarat took over the decision-making power for the ministries.”

2.2. Division Between Agencies

The UN failed to present a united front in demanding aid access at the start of the crisis, with some agencies “desperate to maintain their foothold in Damascus” according to one UN official.

In response to the physical constraints and verbal threats by the Syrian government beginning shortly after the uprising in 2011, UN agencies present in Damascus met with the aim of drawing up a common mandate in the face of these challenges. In the words of one participant, they wanted to send back a message to the Syrian government saying “We are all one UN.”

This attempt failed. Despite the efforts of two of the UN agencies present, the overwhelming feeling in the room according to one attendee was a complete rejection of that common mandate: “people were doing anything to keep happy with the government”.

“

*We should keep silent...
We should keep our heads low...
We should keep trying to be
friendly with the government.*

UN OFFICIAL

Another attendee of the meeting said the line in the room was: “Let the UN in New York speak, let our bosses speak for us. We should keep silent...

We should keep our heads low... We should keep trying to be friendly with the government.”

2.3. A UN With No Red Lines

From the very start, the UN lacked the courage, independence and unity to set conditions for its operations within Syria and to define its red lines.

The UN never broke the siege of Daraa. It decided to forego an aid delivery to the besieged city in order to avoid angering the government and risk being ejected from Damascus. This calculation would go on to set a precedent for the way the UN was to mediate its relationship with the Syrian government and the impact that would have on the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The Syrian government learned after Daraa that it could shape the UN’s aid operation without consequence. Over the next five years, the tactic of mass starvation of civilian populations proliferated to areas like Yarmouk, Homs and Madaya.

A former UN official in Damascus said “The UN should have stuck to their standards from day one. They should have taken a stand then.” The head of a major humanitarian organisation working with the UN said a rational process would have been to “set your conditions for operating in the country.”

Another opportunity for establishing operating conditions was missed at the end of 2012, when the UN produced the Syrian Humanitarian Action Response Plan for 2013 jointly with the Syrian government. This action plan set a humanitarian strategy and outlined a budget to be fundraised for at a subsequent donor conference.

In the words of one UN official: “The UN missed the boat in 2012 and showed the government that it was willing to be a partner and then its leverage was gone. The discussion should have taken place in 2012 and

we should have all stood as one. We should have said if you keep us quiet we will all leave. The UN was so eager to sell itself that it gave up the power it had at the time. Now it’s more and more difficult.”

“

The Syrian government learned after Daraa that it could shape the UN’s aid operation without consequence.

”

Now, as an OCHA evaluation writes “the Government has sought to impose itself on all aspects of the response, refusing to acknowledge OCHA’s role as coordinator of humanitarian assistance.”¹⁵

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations’ Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

The (UN)learned Lessons Of Sri Lanka

The failures of the UN’s involvement in Sri Lanka often come up as a cautionary tale in conversations with UN and other aid officials. Following criticism of the UN’s operation in Sri Lanka in 2009 during the conflict, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened an internal review panel to assess the operation and make recommendations. The panel uncovered deep flaws within the UN system that caused it to fail in its responsibilities toward the Sri Lankan people. Their report described how the UN’s relationship with the Sri Lankan government and other UN institutional shortcomings resulted in the UN’s failure to protect civilians in Sri Lanka as well as failure to address and publicise human rights issues.

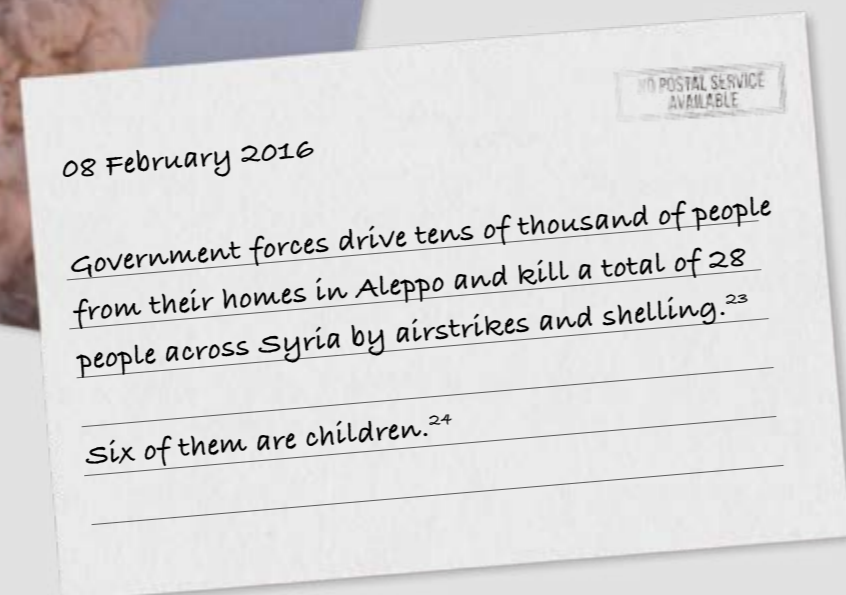
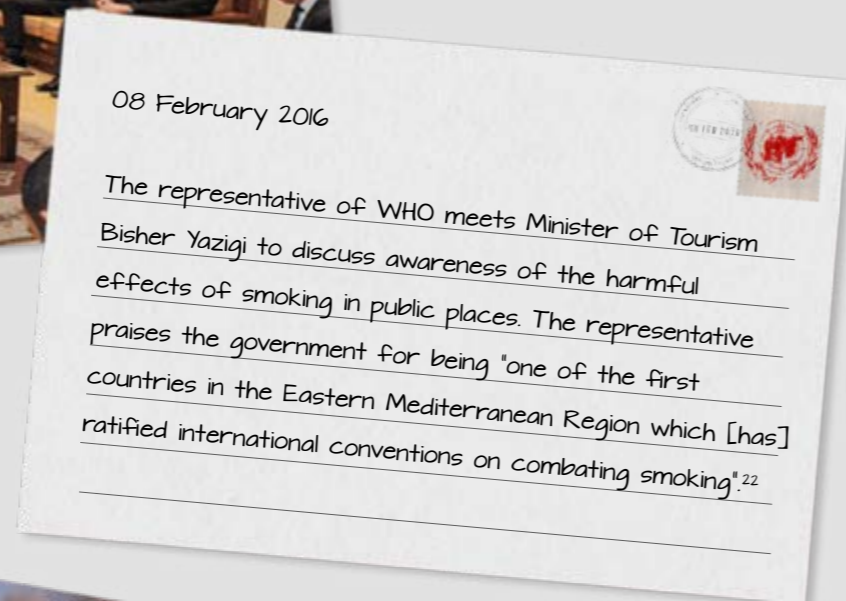
The similarities with Syria are striking. One UN official said “reading the Sri Lanka report is like reading about Syria today”. The review panel described a “culture of trade-offs” in the compromises made with the Sri Lankan government, in its self-censorship for example, in the name of gaining humanitarian access.¹⁶ Yet it found that “the UN possessed the capabilities to simultaneously strive for humanitarian access while also robustly condemning the perpetrators of killings of civilians”.¹⁷ UN staff were controlled by their fear of having their visas revoked or losing humanitarian access if they angered the Sri Lankan government. Issues of human rights were purposefully relegated. There were efforts to downplay and even conceal casualty numbers by the UN Resident Coordinator as well as the Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs. This behaviour continued even when access to affected regions “was almost non-existent”.¹⁸ The UN country team in Sri Lanka was described as “very passive” and “weak”.¹⁹

The UN director at Human Rights Watch said “The UN’s attempts to appease the Sri Lankan government while it was committing mass atrocities against its own population proved to be a deadly mistake”.²⁰

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon pledged to learn the lessons of the report and vowed that the findings would have “profound implications” for its work across the world.²¹ A policy of “Human Rights Upfront” was drawn up in order to assert an institution-wide commitment to human rights. Ban Ki-moon even used the example of Syria as a reminder for how civilians must be protected. The UN in Syria has not learned the lessons of Sri Lanka. Indeed the same institutional failures present in Sri Lanka have allowed the UN in Syria to break with the humanitarian principles.



POSTCARDS FROM A PARALLEL **UN**IVERSE: HEALTH



03

THE UN'S LOSS OF IMPARTIALITY IN SYRIA

3.1. Those Most In Need

“Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, religious belief, class or political opinions.”

UN OCHA PRINCIPLE OF IMPARTIALITY

While there are people in dire humanitarian need all over Syria, particularly among the displaced, the most vulnerable people are living in areas outside of government control.

This is due to a number of factors, including aerial attacks targeting these areas, the destruction of medical facilities, the denial of aid access, and the use of siege tactics as a weapon of war.

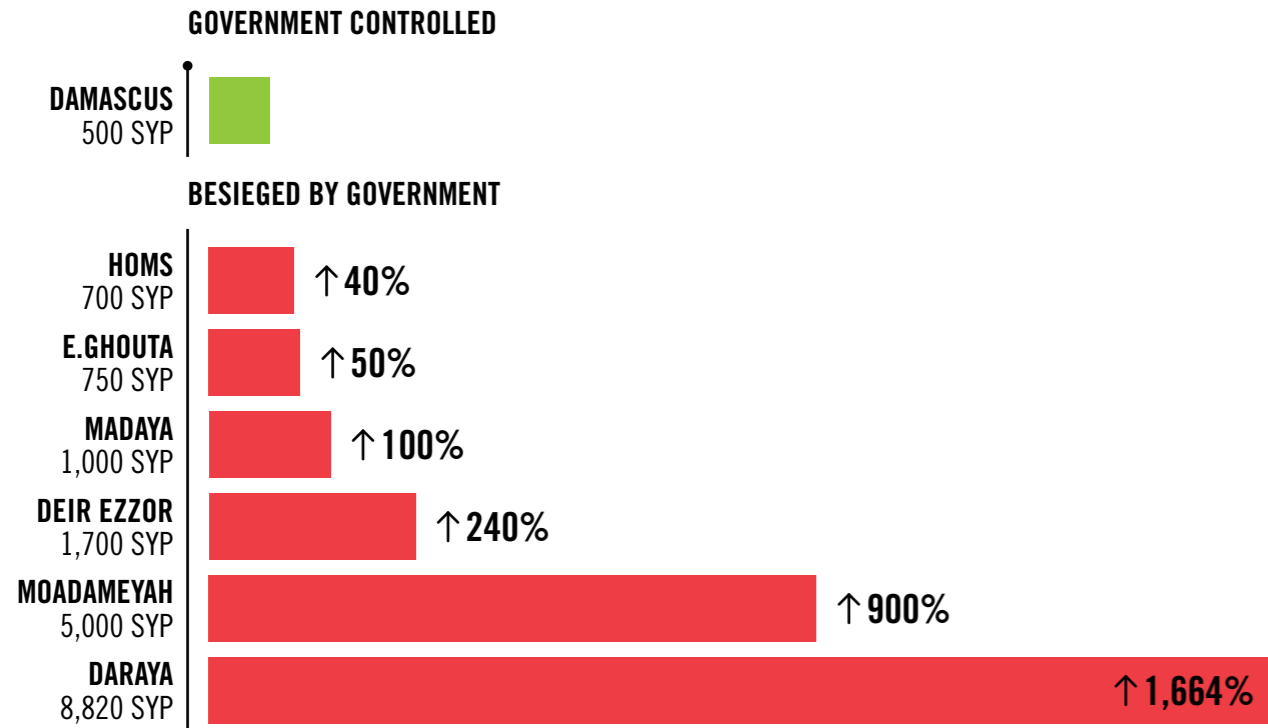
Over a million people in Syria are living under siege, cut off from food, water, medicine and electricity.²⁵ The government is involved in besieging 99% of people under

siege.²⁶ Every one of the hundreds of cases of starvation that have occurred in Syria has been in an area under siege by the government forces or its allies.²⁷

A total of 4.6 million people live in what the UN classifies as “hard-to-reach” areas²⁸ - again, the vast majority of which are in areas outside of government control.

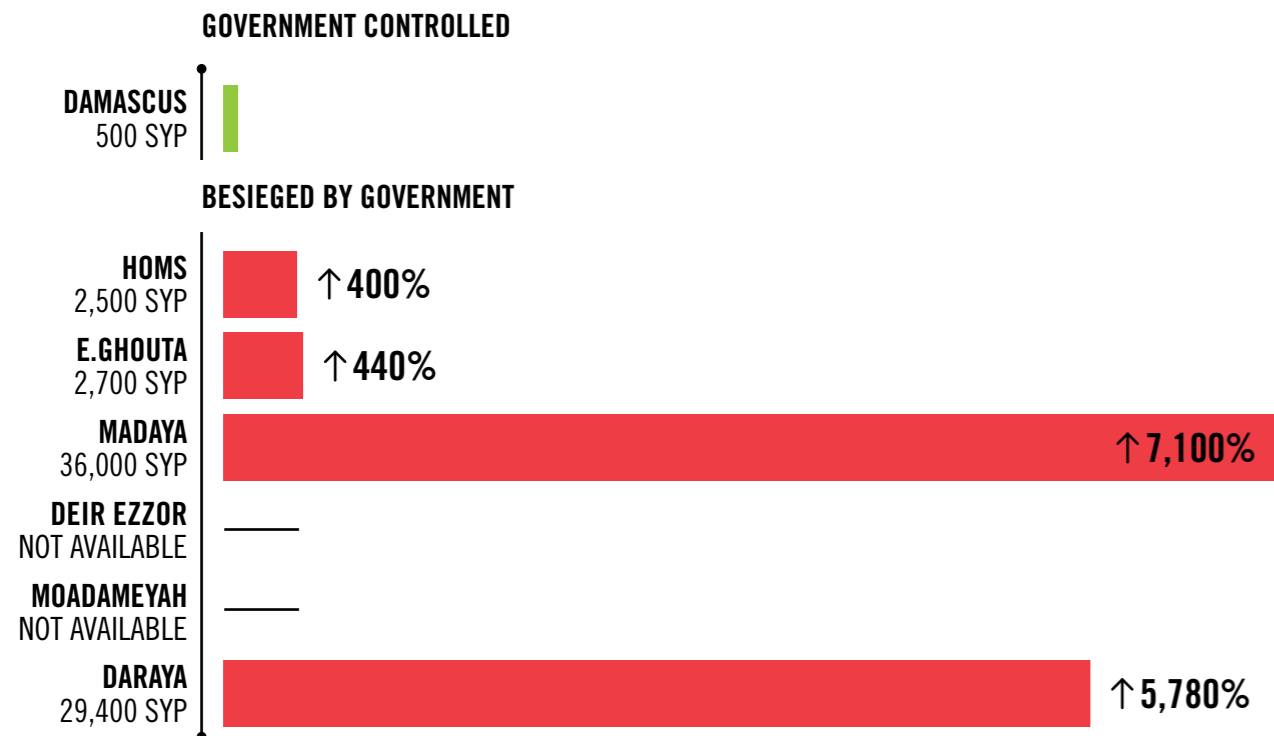


SIEGE ECONOMICS: PRICE OF 1KG RICE



*At the time of data collection, the exchange rate was 400 SYP = 1\$ in Damascus.

SIEGE ECONOMICS: PRICE OF 400g BABY MILK



*At the time of data collection, the exchange rate was 400 SYP = 1\$ in Damascus.

3.2. Cross-Line And Cross-Border Aid

THE UN'S TRACK RECORD ON CROSS-LINE AID

The UN has yet to undertake a single aid delivery to non-government areas from inside Syria without permission from Damascus, despite multiple Security Council resolutions sanctioning this.

Delivering aid across conflict lines - "going cross-line" - is the UN's only way of reaching people in besieged and hard-to-reach areas from the heart of its aid operation in Damascus.

In 2015, only 1.4% of people under siege were reached by the UN.

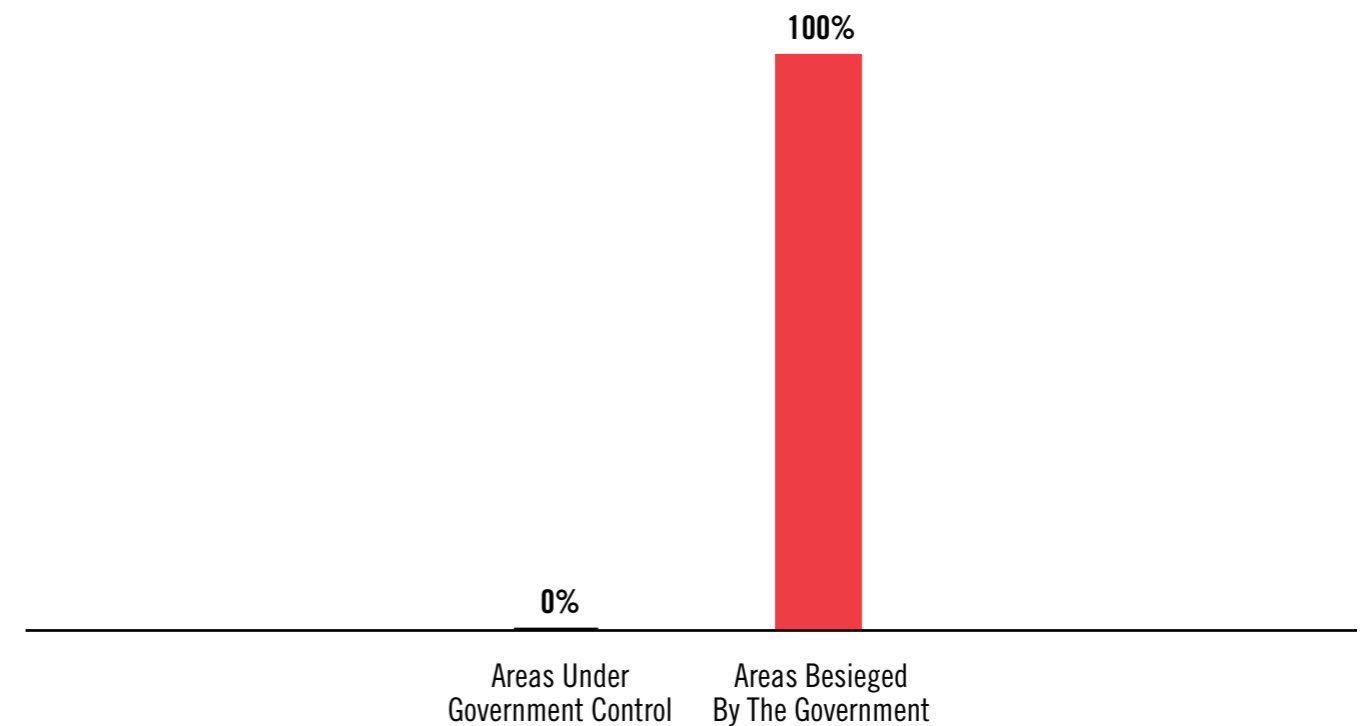
UN agencies operating in Syria adhere to a needlessly complex process for getting Syrian approval for proposed aid deliveries from inside the country. Each UN field mission or convoy still requires: 1) a request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 72 hours in advance; 2) facilitation letter from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent following the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs approval; 3) issuance of a facilitation letter by the Ministry of Social Affairs; 4) In the case of medical assistance delivery an additional letter issued by the Ministry of Health is also required.²⁹

One UN official said that this "imposed onerous system is no way to run a humanitarian programme. Having the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the first and main counterpart is the acceptance of the political nature of the interaction between the UN and the Syrian authorities."

In 2015, just over one in ten requests for permission (out of a total 113 requests) to cross into besieged or hard-to-reach areas outside of government control, resulted in delivery. Almost 75% of the requests were completely ignored.³⁰ One UN official explained that these requests were already "censored at the agency level", which is to say that the number of requests were kept low so as not to "annoy" the government. If the number of requests had reflected the severity of the situation, the proportion of denials would be even higher.

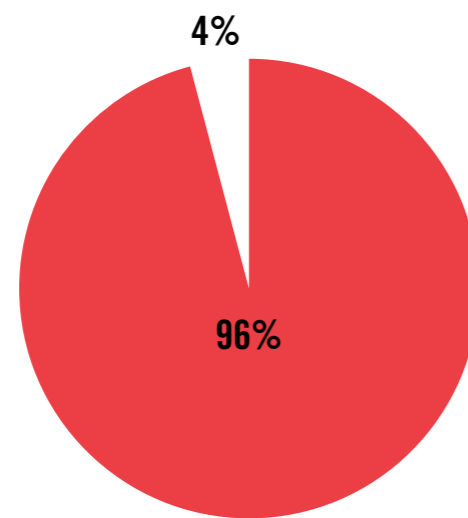
414 DEATHS FROM STARVATION



*Data provided by the Syrian Network for Human Rights

UN FOOD AID DELIVERED FROM INSIDE THE COUNTRY

■ Government Controlled Area □ Non-Government Controlled Area



*The figure represents the average number of people reached with food aid by the WFP between January and April 2016 and June and September 2015 in government and non-government areas from inside the country. These figures do not include cross-border operations. The figure is based on publicly available reports from the WFP.³¹⁻³⁸
No detailed figures were made available for October to December 2015.

The slight improvement in 2016 is a result of the access negotiated by members of the International Syria Support Group, including the US and Russia.

In the words of one former UN official, “It is a profoundly flawed and one-sided operation”.

“
It is a profoundly flawed and one-sided operation

FORMER UN OFFICIAL

In 2015, only 1.4% of people in need in besieged areas were reached by the UN, along with 8% of people in hard-to-reach areas, on average, every month.³⁹ Because the UN under-reports sieges, here using a figure of 486,700 rather than the actual one million living under siege, in reality it is reaching significantly less than 1%. Indeed, WFP figures on cross-line aid indicate that the government has channeled almost all food aid delivered from inside Syria into territories it controls.

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

Phoney Numbers

UN agencies' reporting on their impact in Syria is both opaque and misleading. The agencies use “number of people reached” as a marker for the effectiveness of their humanitarian work in Syria. But as one humanitarian who works for a consortium of Syrian and international organisations said, reaching one million people for example “doesn't mean they have received the assistance they need.”

For instance, an OCHA update released in May 2016 reported that 255,250 people were “reached” in besieged areas since the beginning of 2016.⁴⁰ There are people counted among the 255,250 people that have only been reached once. If one family of five received one food basket in January to last three weeks, they would be counted among the 255,250 people reached by May 3. The UN does not calculate its numbers based on percentage of needs met, although that percentage would be more representative of the reality on the ground. One UN official also added that the UN counts the number of boxes or supplies it sends in terms of how many people would benefit. It does not however consistently monitor that the boxes have reached the relevant people.

Following a meeting of the Humanitarian Task Force, a grouping that includes the main backers of the warring sides as well as the UN, Syria Envoy Staffan De Mistura used OCHA figures to say 220,000 people had been reached in besieged areas, “more or less” half, since February. However because OCHA drastically under-reports the number of people living under sieges, which is closer to one million, the actual percentage of people under siege reached is closer to 20%.

The numbers here are critical. Numbers of people “reached” is a poor indicator of the UN's impact or its effectiveness in Syria. We do not know what that is.



THE LEGAL CASE

For three years the UN declined to access vulnerable people in non-government areas through cross-border aid. UN agencies refused expert advice that such a move would be legal, because of concerns about antagonising the government.

In order to access those most in need in areas outside of government control, aid must be delivered either by going ‘cross-line’, which the government often denies, or go into Syria from neighbouring countries - going ‘cross-border’.

“
The UN’s decision to avoid cross-border engagement without a UNSC resolution was deliberate in order to ensure their access to government-controlled areas.
 ”

For the first three years of the conflict, the UN refused to deliver aid across the border into non-government areas from neighbouring countries without the Syrian government’s permission, publicly stating its concern over the legality of such a move, despite many holding there was a legal case for it. The Syrian government had earlier informed the UN that going cross-border was a red line that would see it ejected from Damascus. A former UN official said that the UN kept insisting that cross-line was enough, “even when the evidence was against them.”

In 2014, a coalition of leading international lawyers and legal experts issued an open letter to the UN saying that “we judge that there is no legal barrier to the UN directly und-

ertaking cross-border humanitarian operations.”⁴¹

Following the lawyers’ letter, public advocacy from prominent humanitarian and human rights organisations, the Syrian opposition, and Syrian civil society, the UN began paving the way to go cross-border.

OCHA took the lead in lobbying for a new Security Council resolution, but was opposed internally in this by several agencies in Damascus according to one former UN official, because they felt the relationship with the government should be prioritised.

In one study of humanitarian access in Syria, interviews with UN officials found that the “The UN’s decision to avoid cross-border engagement without a UNSC resolution was deliberate in order to ensure their access to government-controlled areas.”⁴² Prioritising maintaining access to government areas over gaining access where it was legally and logistically possible to those in areas outside of government control, especially when the latter comprise “the most urgent cases of distress”, is contrary to the guidance that humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, comprising a breach of the principle of impartiality.

In July 2014 the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2165, categorically giving the UN permission to go cross-line and cross-border to provide humanitarian assistance:

“The United Nations humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners are authorized to use routes across conflict lines and the border crossings of Bab al-Salam, Bab al-Hawa, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha,

in addition to those already in use, in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reaches people in need throughout Syria through the most direct routes, with notification to the Syrian authorities, and to this end stresses the need for all border crossings to be used efficiently for United Nations humanitarian operations.”⁴³

This was renewed in Resolutions 2209 and 2254, which also allowed the UN to carry out cross-line and cross-border deliveries without the Syrian government’s permission. These resolutions were voted on unanimously, including by the Syrian government’s allies China and Russia.

THE UN’S TRACK RECORD ON CROSS-BORDER AID

The UN established a cross-border programme, but has failed to take advantage of its full potential, and there are even threats that it may be scaled down as Damascus-based agencies seek to influence or control it.

Going cross-border from Turkey, Jordan and Iraq is the most effective and successful way of reaching those in non-government, although not besieged, areas in Syria, according to many experienced humanitarians interviewed. Many also advocated an increase in border crossings as a matter of priority.

“
You can have all the resolutions in the world... but if you go in and you meet [Deputy Foreign Minister] Faisal Mekdad and he says ‘if you do cross-border work you are out of here’, then you’re not going to do cross-border work.
 ”

FORMER UN OFFICIAL

Yet an OCHA evaluation published in March 2016 found that “the cross-border opportunity has yet to result in a step-change in the scale and reach of the humanitarian operation in Syria.” The same evaluation also states: “Damascus-based agencies have been slow to take advantage of the cross-border routes... and throughout they have been protective of their relationship with the [government of Syria].”⁴⁴

3.3. Comparing Government And Non-Government Areas

The UN’s timidity in going cross-border and cross-line has resulted in a severe imbalance in both the quantity and quality of aid provided inside and outside government-held areas.

The country’s most vulnerable civilians live in areas outside of government control. They suffer from a lack of services, poor livelihoods, issues of protection and the restriction of movement placed on people and supplies.

During the height of international pressure for aid access alongside the ‘cessation of hostilities’ in April 2016, 71.5% of food aid from Damascus or over the border was going to government-controlled areas.⁴⁵ The figure for the

Several former and current UN officials said that the lack of scale in the cross-border programme was an indication of a reticence to push the government too far on this issue. As one former UN official put it, “You can have all the resolutions in the world... but if you go in and you meet [Deputy Foreign Minister] Faisal Mekdad and he says ‘if you do cross-border work you are out of here’, then you’re not going to do cross-border work.”

The cross-border programme needs to be scaled up, yet there are currently fears of it being scaled down or dropped altogether. In 2016, Syrian and international humanitarian organisations reported that conversations about cross-border aid being a violation of sovereignty were surfacing again among UN staff in the region. In one Syrian organisation’s meeting with Regional Humanitarian Coordinator, he implied that they wanted to scale-up cross-line at the expense of cross-border aid. One Syrian organisation said the “threat of a scale-down of cross border aid” was a “big worry.” A UN official and several humanitarians spoke of repeated attempts by OCHA in Damascus to take control of cross-border operations away from the OCHA Turkey and Jordan offices.

same month in 2015 was 81.8%. Now that negotiations and peace talks have all but collapsed, the proportion may return to 2015 levels.⁴⁶

However, just looking at proportions is misleading. The nature of the aid is radically different to these two areas. In government-held areas, the UN is able to run rebuilding initiatives, livelihood and education programmes,⁴⁷ as well as carry out widespread food distributions.

In contrast, UN aid allowed by the government to areas outside of its control is almost limited to convoys of trucks carrying aid. Occasional convoys do not meet the ongoing needs of the civilian population. For example, a food basket may be finished in a matter of days or weeks, but



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

**Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality,
Independence and Neutrality**

The UN In The Former Yugoslavia and Syria; Two Different Approaches To Access

The timidity of the UN's humanitarian operation in Syria is thrown into relief by its outspokenness during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

British newspaper The Independent recounted how UN convoys were driven to the Bosnian-Serb border and waited eight hours for access. After being denied, "Frustrated UN aid chiefs vowed they would try again [the next day]." The Independent detailed how the UN Refugee Chief at the time, Jose Maria Mendiluce, had a "face-to-face confrontation" with Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic on the his use of starvation as a weapon. Mendiluce "declared he would present Mr Karadzic with a timetable of aid convoys that the UN intended to use to help up to 100,000 trapped Muslims in eastern Bosnia... 'We will not negotiate,' he vowed."⁵⁷ A year later in 1994, the UN decided unilaterally that it would no longer wait for permission from the warring sides before sending convoys across conflict lines.⁵⁸

The forcefulness shown by Mendiluce and the UN's determination to publicise the denial of access in the press and stand up to the leader of one of the warring parties is a far cry from the UN's mode of operations in Syria today. While a top UN aid official in former Yugoslavia made public comments to the Washington Post saying "The Serbs should not be allowed to decide when we can feed Maglaj... If there's ever a place where the UN needs to show its new toughness, then it's right there. These people are skin and bones, and they need food."⁵⁹ In Syria, by contrast, the UN withheld criticism on the siege of Madaya when people were dying of starvation, and welcomed the government's eventual approval to send in a convoy. The negotiations over sieges illustrate the manner in which the UN's operation in Syria is characterised by extreme deference to the government and self-censorship.



the next convoy may not come for months or even years. The town of Madaya for instance has been under siege since July 2015. In October 2015 a convoy was able to reach the town, yet by December people were dying of starvation.

“
Because the negotiations and deliveries are so tightly controlled by the Syrian government, convoys have had critical medical supplies and equipment routinely removed from the cargo.

Many humanitarians say that convoys do not constitute “access” as they take place occasionally and do not meet the ongoing needs of the civilian population. For example, a food basket may be finished in a matter of days or weeks, but the next convoy may not come for months or even years. The town of Madaya for instance has been under siege since July 2015. In October a convoy was able to reach the town, yet by December people were dying of starvation. The October convoy does not constitute access.

3.4. Delivering Aid Blind

LITTLE OVERSIGHT OF WHERE THE AID GOES

An OCHA evaluation published in March 2016 found: “There is still no systematic and scientific data-gathering on needs within Government territory, nor of the impact done to date, or even, arguably, where the majority of assistance has gone.”⁵² The same OCHA evaluation states “it was extremely challenging to monitor the aid that was delivered.”⁵³

According to a UN evaluator and a UN official, WFP food aid is handed over to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) or other coordinating partners who go on to do the onward distribution. WFP are allowed to monitor some of the deliveries, with permission. The missions that WFP are permitted to verify are selected by the Syrian government. A WFP evaluation says that staff monitor the situation “when feasible” but that only one-quarter of planned visits were undertaken between July 2013 and March 2014 because of “security conditions.”⁵⁴ A third-party monitoring form also had “limited direct access to beneficiaries.”⁵⁵

Convoys are as inadequate for providing for medical needs as they are for food. The medical infrastructure in areas outside of government control is close to collapse following the aerial attacks by the Syrian government and its allies on hospitals and medical centres. Yet, because the negotiations and deliveries are so tightly controlled by the Syrian government, convoys have had critical medical supplies and equipment routinely removed from the cargo.⁴⁸

The UN has such a close working relationship with the government in some areas that the World Health Organisation (WHO) was until recently housed in the Syrian Ministry of Health.⁴⁹ In addition, government-held areas benefit from projects such as a joint symposium between the Ministry of Health, WHO and Unicef on breastfeeding in the workplace,⁵⁰ or a programme organised by Unicef and the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs engaging children in environmental protection.⁵¹ Laudable projects no doubt, but hardly front-line emergency measures when people are starving as close as five miles away, and UN agencies so often speak of their struggle to fund the Syria response.

In the words of one former UN official on working with SARC, the Syrian government's prescribed implementing partner: “You give it to SARC, it's off the books, SARC may or may not do anything with it.”

OCHA's Financial Tracking Service provides no detailed reporting on where money has gone and how it has been spent inside the country.

“
*You give it to SARC, it's off the books,
SARC may or may not do anything with it.*

FORMER UN OFFICIAL

The UN has spent over \$3 billion inside Syria since 2011.⁵⁶ The UN cannot ensure impartiality of aid delivery when as per its own evaluation it has no systematic data on where assistance has gone.

3.5. The UN's Failed Negotiating Strategy

NO POWER IN NEGOTIATIONS

By refusing to set any conditions or red lines for their cooperation with the government from the beginning of the uprising, the UN forfeited much of its negotiating power.

By the UN's own admission, in 90% of cases in 2015 the UN failed to secure permissions for access that resulted in delivery.⁶⁰ For example, the UN has been negotiating for access to the town of Daraya for years. Humanitarian agencies haven't been able to deliver food aid to the town since November 2012.

In May 2016 the UN won approval to take vaccines, medical supplies, hygiene kits and baby milk - though no food - to the town. People gathered to

await the convoy on 12 May. Before it reached the town, it was held up by government forces, which demanded that the baby milk and medical supplies be removed. Negotiations between the two sides continued until evening, when the UN convoy turned back to Damascus without delivering anything to Daraya. The government then shelled the civilians who were returning home after waiting all day for aid, killing a father and son and injuring five others.⁶¹

Besieged areas are used as bargaining chips, "to be granted relief only when it becomes politically expedient."⁶² In the words of Pierre Boulet Desbarreu, Syria Programme Manager for MSF: "The different warring parties see that the more you take the population into a hostage situation,

the more you can negotiate and reach a deal."⁶³

The government understands that a UN with no red lines, which will continue operating according to its will, has no power in negotiations to secure access.

“
Besieged areas are used as bargaining chips, 'to be granted relief only when it becomes politically expedient'

The UN has therefore found itself in a weak position as it negotiates over the use of starvation as a weapon of war, which is a war crime. This negotiations-based access strategy is failing to help those most in need.

strange-looking piece of metal near an abandoned checkpoint in Madaya. A neighbour recognised it and screamed at them, whereupon they dropped it. It exploded, killing one of the boys instantly. The two survivors were rushed to Madaya's tiny and ill-equipped hospital, where one succumbed soon after to his injuries. The last boy could have survived had he been evacuated to nearby Damascus, but in "a particularly extreme example of one-for-one negotiations", according to the assessment of one Syrian organisation involved, he was refused evacuation because there was no one from Foah and Kefraya needing parallel evacuation at that time. They were unable to save him in Madaya.

UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said "we are now in a bizarre situation

where there has to be a tit-for-tat or quid pro quo for evacuations where people's medical needs are subjugated to political realities."⁶⁴ While the UN may voice concern or criticism of this situation, one Syrian organisation involved in treating the boys in Madaya holds that the UN "have essentially endorsed this because they are the ones coordinating access."

As the former head of UNRWA in Damascus says: "Aid has always been a negotiating chip used largely by the regime in this conflict... the politicised role of aid takes centre stage throwing any hint of independence and impartiality out the window."⁶⁵

'ONE FOR ONE NEGOTIATIONS' OR 'TIT FOR TAT ACCESS'

Not only is negotiation not resulting in access, at its worst it pitches areas against each other in 'tit for tat' deals, relegating humanitarian needs to political deal-making, punishing civilians, and incentivising sieges as a tactic.

The 'Four Towns' agreement negotiated in December 2016 has put in place a balancing act whereby any assistance received by government-besieged Madaya and Zabadani must be countered by support to rebel-besieged Foah and Kefraya.

This has resulted in civilian deaths, including child deaths. On 29 March 2016, three young boys picked up a

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

International NGOs, Same Restrictions

International humanitarian organisations working from Damascus with the approval of the Syrian government operate under the same constraints as the United Nations. They are therefore also at risk of straying from the humanitarian principles.

When Mercy Corps, one of the largest aid providers in Syria, began carrying out cross-border aid operations, it was forced by the government to shut its office in Damascus. Mercy Corps was obliged to choose between delivering aid to people living in government-controlled areas and those living outside of them.⁶⁶ It chose to continue its cross-border aid operations.

While it is easier for the Syrian government to force individual NGOs from Damascus, it is much more difficult with the United Nations, because of the scale of aid they provide and the reputational impact if they leave.

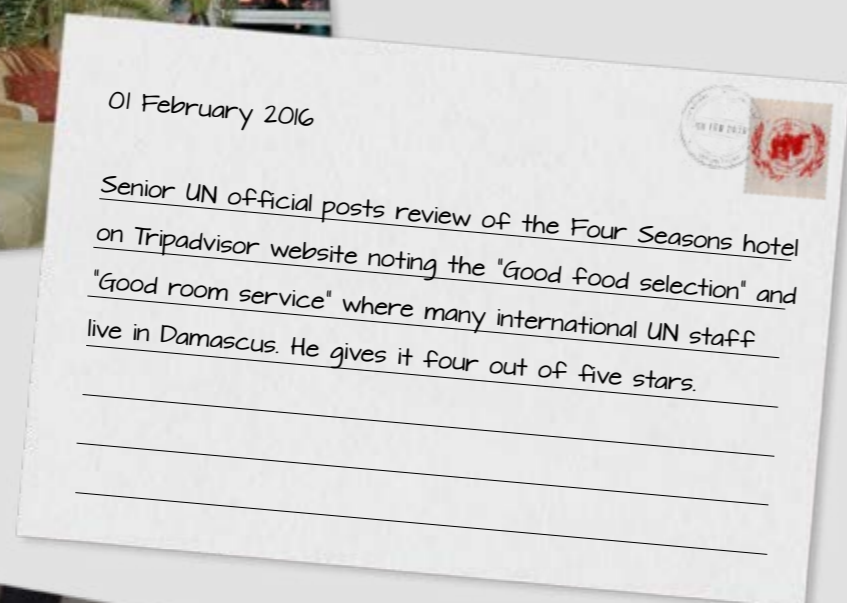
At the end of May, several humanitarians reported that a number of international organisations were considering establishing themselves in Damascus and cutting down opposition area work.



POSTCARDS FROM A PARALLEL UNIVERSE: FOOD



5-Star Room Service

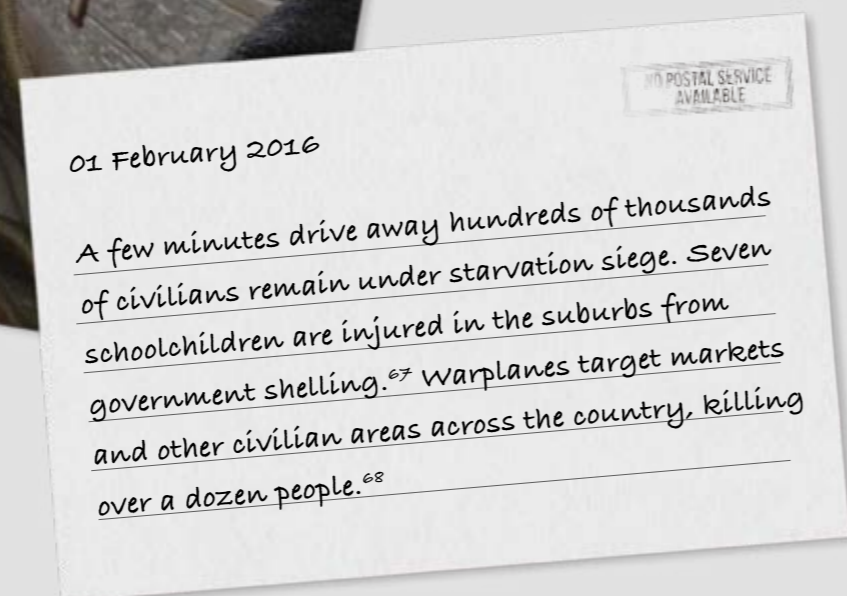


01 February 2016

Senior UN official posts review of the Four Seasons hotel on Tripadvisor website noting the "Good food selection" and "Good room service" where many international UN staff live in Damascus. He gives it four out of five stars.



Life Under Siege



01 February 2016

A few minutes drive away hundreds of thousands of civilians remain under starvation siege. Seven schoolchildren are injured in the suburbs from government shelling.⁶⁷ Warplanes target markets and other civilian areas across the country, killing over a dozen people.⁶⁸

04

THE UN'S LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE IN SYRIA



4.1. Government Influence Over UN Humanitarian Strategy In Syria

“Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.”

UN OCHA PRINCIPLE OF IMPARTIALITY

The Syrian government's ability to direct UN finances and spending extends beyond vetoing aid deliveries. The Syrian government is also able to exercise great control over the UN's humanitarian strategy, dealing a serious blow to the organisation's independence.

A key tool for the Syrian government to influence the UN's spending strategy is through the Syria Humanitarian Response Plan. The document, prepared every year, outlines the UN's financial requirements for its operation in Syria and the region and how money is to be spent. Over \$3 billion dollars were spent by the UN inside Syria between 2013 and 2015.⁶⁹ In 2016, the budget requested for the UN to implement its strategy inside the country is \$3.18 billion.⁷⁰

Humanitarians interviewed for an OCHA evaluation recounted how the Syrian government would go through the document “negotiating the substance line by line, ‘Soviet style’”.⁷¹ The evaluation puts it succinctly: “At a country level, strategy has not been the exclusive domain of OCHA. In Syria, the government has dominated.”⁷²

Governments are usually part of needs assessments and approve these funding plans. The issue in Syria is the government's excessive control on the wording of the document which has been tolerated since 2012 when the first appeal was first issued.

MENTION OF SIEGES REMOVED

The impact of having this document government-endorsed came to the fore most starkly in the preparation of the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan. The government edited the document to exclude all mention of the terms ‘siege’ or ‘besieged areas’. The UN consented.⁷³

One Syrian humanitarian who was involved in the negotiations around the Humanitarian Response Plan noted that there was significant pressure from OCHA to change the needs in certain areas to be more in line with what they could reach.

4.2. Government Influence Over Staffing

As detailed in the introduction, all foreign UN staff require visas from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be present in the country. Wherever they are in Syria, the movements of staff are closely monitored by the government's security and intelligence services. In several cases, where UN staff have not followed the government line, they have been asked to leave the country.

One prominent humanitarian working closely with the UN describes this as the Syrian government giving visas to the nationalities and people "it likes" and therefore the ones it trusts will not challenge its control. This privileges affability to the government over experience and competence and reveals another realm of government control over UN aid operations.

Several UN staff members have failed to have their visas renewed by the Syrian government. A UN official who recalled four of their cases in detail said agencies chose to accept the government decisions hoping that this would win them visas for other staff.

“
The UN has never publicly criticised the Syrian government for detaining its staff in prisons where there are widespread allegations of mass torture according to human rights groups.
 ”

In most cases, the government did not officially say that the UN staff member was declared "Persona Non Grata" and did not provide specific reasons for its decisions. In return, agencies recalled their staff on the pretext of rotation or other administrative pro-

cess. In most cases, UN staff were accused by the government of engaging in political activity and helping the "terrorists" when they were carrying out their mandate of reaching out to the most vulnerable and providing assistance to displaced populations.

A total of 35 United Nations staff members continue to be detained or missing in Syria.⁷⁷ According to one UN official familiar with the cases, almost every single one of the staff members in detention is held by the Syrian government. The UN has never publicly criticised the Syrian government for detaining its staff in prisons where there are widespread allegations of mass torture according to human rights groups.

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

The Appointment Of Shukria Mekdad

In February 2016, it emerged that WHO had employed Shukria Mekdad, the wife of Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad, to assess the mental health of people forced to leave their homes, despite her lack of experience in this field.⁷⁸ Mekdad had been working for the UN in Syria for over a year prior to her recruitment by WHO. She was first recruited to the Humanitarian Coordinator's office.

Her presence created a climate of fear and self-censorship in UN meetings according to a former UN official. Her husband, Faisal Mekdad, is often mentioned as the key official constraining the actions of the UN humanitarian operation. Mekdad has also been the government's mouthpiece in addressing accusations of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including fronting its denial of the use of chemical weapons in Eastern Ghouta in August 2013 when hundreds were killed.

Employing a close family member of someone so integral to the conflict to assess the mental health of those displaced is deeply inappropriate, and suggests more concern for finding a candidate that would please the government than appointing one qualified for the role. Shukria Mekdad's hire also demonstrates the government's sway over the day to day operations of the United Nations.

Amid controversy, including the release of the story in The New York Times, Shukria Mekdad resigned citing "personal reasons."⁷⁹





Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

A Tale of Two SARCs - The "Other SARC"

A former head of OCHA Syria in 2012, writes "At its worst, SARC is a monopolistic bottleneck, deeply compromised by pressure from the regime. At its best, especially in the field, it is an inspiring beacon of decency and service."⁸⁰

The Violations Documentation Centre, a leading Syrian human rights monitor, has documented how dozens of brave SARC volunteers have been killed by the Syrian government for defying their orders and treating injured civilians and delivering humanitarian aid. One volunteer named Nouredine Lakhuj, a medic from Damascus, was arrested at a government checkpoint and died after five days of torture in a Military Intelligence detention facility. Another medic in Homs was killed inside his ambulance when security forces shot him nine times in the chest.⁸¹

An international NGO head recounted how she witnessed two SARC volunteers crying as an injured patient was removed from their ambulance by government security forces. She said they were unable to speak out and prevent the patient from being removed - it only would have led to their arrest along with the patient.



4.3. Government Control Over Partners

The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides an approved list of organisations that the UN is permitted to partner with in the the delivery of aid inside the country and across conflict lines.

Determining local partners allows the Syrian government to oversee the implementation of the UN's aid operation, and solidifies its involvement in the procurement and delivery of goods including where and to whom they are delivered.

From the beginning of the conflict, the Syrian government has insisted that humanitarian aid distributed from Damascus go through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC). SARC must approve and oversee all these operations and acts as the implementing partner for international humanitarian organisations including the UN. A WFP evaluation has described SARC as an "auxiliary" to the Syrian government.⁸²

“
*SARC were used as a proxy to control
and spy on us and contain us.*

FORMER UN OFFICIAL

While hundreds of brave volunteers work for SARC, its central decision-making is closely controlled by the Syrian government. The head of SARC in Syria, Abdul Rahman Attar, is a wealthy Syrian businessman who has made his money in part due to his close ties with the Syrian government.⁸³ While some question his sympathies, the head of one INGO who cooperates with the UN and who was familiar with SARC's work from inside Syria said of Attar: "He is not a free man." She explained that the Syrian authorities have used brutal repression to constrain SARC and said that it was impossible for them to make decisions independently of the government.

A former UN agency head interviewed for a separate study said: "SARC were used as a proxy to control and spy on us and contain us."⁸⁴ The same study quoted a humanitarian researcher saying that "organizations had to seek approval for everything, even installing a toilet."⁸⁵

The study found that SARC has used its power to approve humanitarian access "as sticks or carrots to reward or punish an organization's behaviour. For example, one UN official in Jordan described that of 67 requests to SARC for cross-border deliveries, only 3 were approved despite

demonstrated need. Her belief is that the agency was being punished for publishing a report about civilian casualties and violations of rights."⁸⁶

Another report which interviewed more than 100 humanitarians, said "aid workers we interviewed in Syria overwhelmingly indicated that Assad's ties to SARC's top echelon have allowed the government to exert unrivaled influence when deciding which areas get what aid and when."⁸⁷

SARC's government ties have led to a backlash from some humanitarians. The Free Aleppo Health Directorate, a grouping of over a dozen hospitals and medical centres in Aleppo, outside government control, along with other hospitals in the governorate announced their refusal to work with SARC on 30 March 2016. Their declaration stated that the medical facilities had received aid from SARC, although no official request had been made. The declaration continued to say that "the aid has been offered to serve a political agenda that is not neutral; which is against the principles of governmental and non-governmental humanitarian aid work."⁸⁸

For that reason, the Directorate said it would "withdraw its trust" from SARC, refuse to work with them in all of their medical facilities in Aleppo, and called on their medical colleagues working with SARC "to submit their resignations immediately until they prove their neutrality with regards to humanitarian aid and stop politicising it." One day later, on March 31, 2016, the SARC centre in Azaz, Aleppo, which, being in a non-government area, can exercise a degree of independence from the SARC central control, announced it would close down its operations "in consideration of public interest."⁸⁹

“
*The UN actively lobbying for SARC involvement,
and therefore government interference, into its
cross-border operation in this manner calls its
impartiality and independence into question.*

The Aleppo Free Health Directorate also called on the World Health Organisation "to monitor the activities of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and to urge them to be neutral again with regards to relief in general and health-care specifically."⁹⁰

Monitoring aid through SARC has also been extremely difficult. One former UN official recounted how they provided SARC thousands of dollars worth of hygiene kits upon agreement that the UN agency would be accompanying them on the day of delivery. The official recounted how “[SARC] just went one day to the town of Jasim in Daraa and gave them to people who had nothing to do with the crisis.” The official added that the approach could be described as “just give us the stuff and don’t ask any questions.”

In a threat to the independence of the UN’s cross-border operation, memos obtained by the researchers of this report show that the UN in Damascus actively lobbied for SARC to become involved in Turkey-Syria cross-border aid delivery.

4.4. Local Truces

Local truces have typically occurred in areas that have seen heavy bombardment, long-term sieges and deprivation of food and medical aid. They have involved fighters’ surrender in exchange for a promised cessation of hostilities and provision of humanitarian relief for the civilian population.

Local truces have been criticised by many Syrians as an extension of the Syrian government’s “starvation or surrender” policy, yet they have been endorsed by the UN. The UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator in Damascus has referred to the truce of Homs in late 2015 as a “good model” that could be used for other conflict areas,⁹³ suggesting it could be used to build up to the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. The coordinator

The Office of Regional Coordinator sent a memo to SARC in March 2016 saying that the request for them to be involved in cross-border aid coordination had been approved by the government, and referred to this approval as a welcome development.⁹¹ Attached to the note was a second memo from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which makes it clear that the original request originated with the UN, and gives approval, referring to “the importance of coordinating the distribution of aid coming through the border with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, since SARC is the official partner for the UN relief activities in Syria and in order to ensure the aid’s safe delivery to citizens affected by the crisis and not to be taken over by terrorist groups.”⁹² The UN actively lobbying for SARC involvement, and

also added that “we need to be much more robust, much more bold in saying this is the only game in town for the time being.”⁹⁴

The UN has in many cases been quick to remove areas from its list of sieges when truces with the government have come into effect, despite the fact that often the terms of truces are not respected, and they do not equate with a full and permanent lifting of siege conditions.

In an example cited by Siege Watch, a joint project between Pax and The Syria Institute, the town of Moadamiyeh entered into a local truce with the government in late 2013. A single UN aid delivery was allowed into the town in July 2014. In November it was taken off the UN list of sieges. Yet “by early 2015 all semblances of the truce were completely broken.”⁹⁵ A year later, images

therefore government interference, into its cross-border operation in this manner calls its impartiality and independence into question.

Organisations currently involved in cross-border aid delivery later received assurances from the UN that it would not affect their activities, and it would only complement them. This assertion appears to differ from the expectations of the Syrian government.

of starving children and elderly people began emerging from the town once again.

“
Local truces have been criticised as an extension of the Syrian government’s ‘starvation or surrender’ policy, yet they have been endorsed by the UN.

Siege Watch finds that the UN’s underreporting of sieges, discussed further down, its participation in local cease-fires, and its delivery of aid “may validate and inadvertently encourage the expansion of the Syrian government’s ‘surrender or starve’ policy.”⁹⁶

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations’ Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

The UN-Sponsored Truce Of Homs

In the UN-sponsored truce of Homs in 2014, dozens of boys and men between the ages of 15 and 54 were arrested upon evacuation of the besieged part of the city where for months they had suffered food and medicine shortages. Most ended up being released, yet one UN official who followed up on the cases confirmed that some were forced to join the Syrian army. Another UN official said between 50 and 60 people remain missing. She added that nothing is being done to follow up on their cases.

The UN should never have agreed to a deal that would allow children to be detained.

The UN’s Humanitarian Coordinator admitted at the time that the UN was not equipped to handle the detentions and reflected that in hindsight the International Committee of the Red Cross, who have this experience, should have been involved.⁹⁷



05

THE UN'S LOSS OF NEUTRALITY IN SYRIA

5.1. Keeping Quiet On Sieges

“Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.”

UN OCHA PRINCIPLE OF NEUTRALITY

FAILURE TO CLASSIFY SIEGES

The UN has misled the world regarding the extent of the Syrian government's responsibility for what are commonly regarded war crimes - besieging civilians, collective punishment and the use of hunger as a weapon of war.

The UN's designation of sieges is opaque at best and politicised at worst. At the time when people were dying of starvation in Madaya in early 2016, the town was not classified as besieged.

Similarly, in July 2015, the UN removed the Yarmouk Palestinian camp from its besieged list, although at the time it had not been able to deliver relief in four months. It was returned to the besieged list in January 2016, along with Madaya.⁹⁸

UN figures significantly underreport the number of people living under siege. The UN revised its number of people under siege from 350,000 people to 486,700 in February after it came under criticism for underestimating the figure.

Yet Siege Watch, using OCHA's own criteria for designating sieges and based on interviews with an extensive network in besieged locations, puts the number at over a million.⁹⁹

“
The UN's designation of sieges is opaque at best and politicised at worst.
”

The correct classification of sieges is crucial for prioritising areas for humanitarian response, as well as for putting pressure on the responsible parties to abide by international humanitarian law. Underreporting sieges also warps the UN's own statistics regarding the proportion of besieged civilians it is able to reach, making it look like they are accessing a greater percentage than they are.

FAILURE TO ATTRIBUTE THE FULL EXTENT OF GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR SIEGES

The UN has also downplayed the government's role in besieging civilians by obscuring where responsibility for sieges lies.

By UN estimates in February 2016 "some 486,700 people are currently living in besieged areas – 274,200 besieged by the Government of Syria, 200,000 people by ISIL; and 12,500 people by non-State armed groups, and the Nusrah Front."¹⁰⁰

This attributes nearly half of all sieges to ISIS, based on the population of 200,000 living under siege in Deir Ezzor. According to these figures, the government of Syria would be responsible for besieging only 56% of people under siege.

In Siege Watch figures, the Syrian government is involved in besieging 99% of those under siege. According to Siege Watch:

"85% of the besieged Syrians in approximately 37 communities are besieged entirely by the Syrian government and its allies in Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Homs governorates. 14% of the besieged Syrians in approximately seven communities are besieged by a mixture of the Syrian government and armed groups. In Deir Ezzor the siege is primarily enforced by ISIS, while the Syrian government imposes further access restrictions from the inside. In the southern Damascus suburbs (Al-Qadam, Babbila, Beit Sahn, Hajar al-Aswad, Yarmouk, and Yelda), the primary siege is imposed by the Syrian government but ISIS and several other armed groups impose further access restrictions inside the siege.

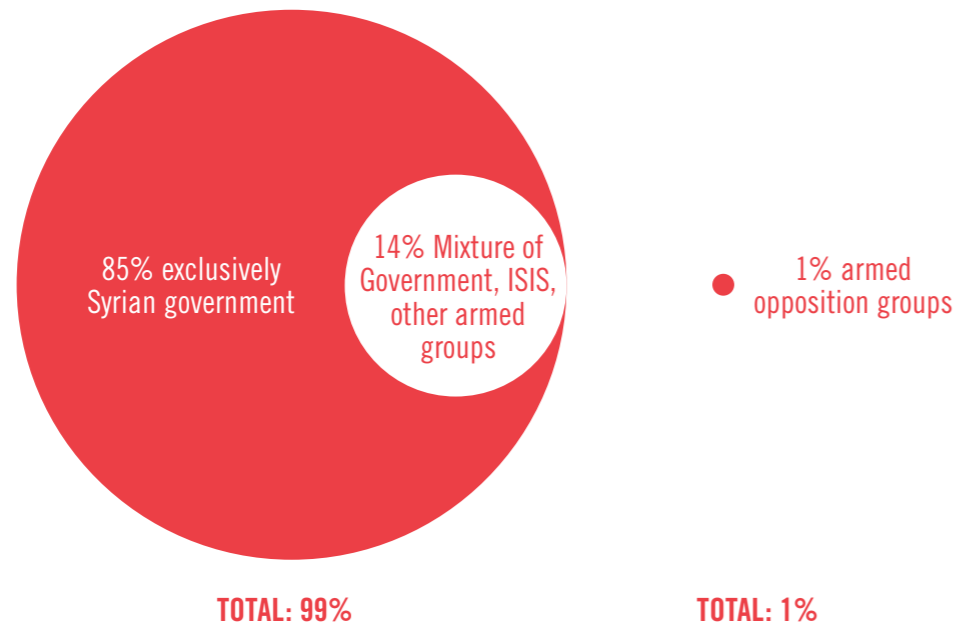
1% of the besieged Syrians in two communities are besieged entirely by armed opposition groups (AOGs), including Jabhat al-Nusra, in Idlib governorate."¹⁰¹

Residents inside Deir Ezzor say they are besieged by both Isis and the Syrian government. While Isis is besieging the government-controlled areas from the outside, people inside the pocket are not allowed to leave by government forces who also dominate decisions around aid distribution. For a long period the government denied the UN access to an airport within the town that could have been used to deliver aid and still refuses to use a helicopter base for this purpose.¹⁰²

Residents in Deir Ezzor say the government has been denying aid to the area because they want to maintain control over the local population, one of the first to rise up against Bashar al Assad's rule. There are also widespread reports of government forces extorting bribes from civilians for food and to exit the siege by helicopter.¹⁰³

WHO'S BESIEGING CIVILIANS IN SYRIA?

Breakdown Of The 1 Million Civilians According To Siege Watch



POSTCARDS FROM A PARALLEL UNIVERSE: CHILDREN



06 August 2015

The WHO and Unicef host a symposium with the Ministry of Health on breastfeeding in the workplace, featuring an all-male panel. According to government media, Unicef called for "providing mothers with the favorable conditions in the workplace in order to provide babies with the proper nutrition".¹⁰⁴



06 August 2015

In Jobar, a suburb of Damascus, a short drive away, the government launches a chemical attack on civilians. In Jisr El Shughour a school is bombed from the air. In total fifteen civilians are killed in government attacks. Neither Unicef nor WHO make statements about the attacks.¹⁰⁵

CLOAKING CONDEMNATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SIEGE TACTICS

Despite the Syrian government's involvement in besieging 99% of civilians under siege, UN heads in Damascus have avoided calling them out publicly. Even singling out the Syrian government's role in sieges has been rare, and only in exceptional cases. A statement about government responsibility in Madaya was only made in the midst of international public outcry about civilians starving to death in the town.

Deliberate avoidance of singling out the government's clear responsibility is similarly highlighted in the case of Daraya. On the 12th of May this year a joint UN-ICRC convoy was turned back by government forces from the town, where residents were close to starvation. When the convoy turned back, Syrian government forces shelled the town, killing two civilians. The UN's statement that day

made no reference to the deaths or the denial of convoy by government forces. It merely said "The UN continues to call for all parties to lift sieges on civilians in Syria."

The Madaya case similarly gives insight into the extent to which the UN has cloaked its criticism of the Syrian government's responsibility for sieges. On 6 January, after the deaths from starvation had already begun, an internal OCHA memo marked "internal, not for quotation" referred to "desperate conditions" and "severe malnutrition" across Madaya.¹⁰⁶

A day later, a public statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator began by expressing particular concern for four towns - where the situation was significantly better than Madaya - two of which were besieged by rebel forces. The statement goes on to mention credible reports of starvation in Madaya only in the second paragraph, without assigning blame. This made Madaya seem like a secondary issue, even though the previous day's inter-

nal memo demonstrates that OCHA was aware of the severity of the crisis in Madaya.¹⁰⁷

The UN finally got a convoy into Madaya, and into the two-rebel held areas at the same time, on 11 January 2016. On 12 January, UN Humanitarian Coordinator described the horrific humanitarian situation in Madaya, yet told reporters "I am quite comfortable in saying that [it] is the same in any of these settings where siege is being used as a tactic of war."¹⁰⁸

No one reading the Humanitarian Coordinator's statement would know that at the time rice cost \$256 per kilogram in Madaya, but only \$1.25 in the areas besieged by rebel forces. Tens of people had already starved to death in Madaya, no one was starving to death in the rebel-besieged areas.

In fact all of the recorded siege-related deaths have occurred in areas besieged by the Syrian government and its allies,¹⁰⁹ yet there is no reflection of this in UN statements.

THE EFFECTS OF KEEPING QUIET ON SIEGES – COMPROMISED IMPARTIALITY AND NEUTRALITY

The UN may have calculated that publicising the full extent of the government's siege tactics, through accurate classification of sieges, attribution of responsibility, and outspoken condemnation, will anger the government and lead to it 'punishing' the UN by denying further access, or even ejecting it from the country.

The Syrian government is far and away the greatest beneficiary of the

UN's public communications on sieges. The UN has aided the government's propaganda operation, misrepresenting key aspects of the conflict to the outside world.

The Syria Campaign



Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

WHO And Polio

In failing to take an independent stand from the government of Syria on the issue of polio, WHO and Unicef played a role in failing to prevent the emergence and spread of the epidemic in Syria, resulting in the suffering and disability of at least ninety children, the infection of tens of thousands more, and hindering the worldwide effort to eradicate this terrible disease.¹¹⁰

From at least the beginning of the uprising in 2011 the government of Syria de-prioritised and even stopped polio vaccinations for children in politically unsympathetic areas.

In December 2012, the World Health Organisation (WHO) left the area of Deir Ezzor out of a vaccination programme, apparently acting on government reports that the area was depopulated, despite the fact that at the time the World Food Programme (WFP) was still distributing food to residents there. According to health experts Coutts and Fouad, "ten months later, this was the province where polio re-emerged."¹¹¹

Dr Annie Sparrow, public health expert and critical care paediatrician, recounts how the Syrian Ministry of Health refused to investigate widespread reports of cases in Deir Ezzor, denying that polio had broken out.¹¹² At the start of October doctors from the opposition's aid body, the Assistance Coordination Unit (ACU) sent samples to a hospital in Turkey for testing. WHO ordered the Turkish hospital not to accept the samples, because they had been removed from WHO jurisdiction in Syria.¹¹³

Sparrow writes that Turkey's Ministry of Health took the initiative to test the samples itself, and confirmed they were positive. It was only at this point, at the end of October, that its Syrian counterpart "found" polio in its own samples and only then did WHO declare a polio outbreak.¹¹⁴

In November 2013, a group of NGOs working with ACU formed the Polio Task Force to protect 2.7 million children most at risk. But they suffered from a lack of vaccines, which the Syrian Ministry of Health, WHO and Unicef could not or would not provide. Medecins Sans Frontieres Holland tried to buy vaccines direct from a manufacturer, but Unicef "acting on the Syrian government's behalf" according to Sparrow, blocked the measure. Nor would the government allow Unicef or WHO to work with the ACU at the time, undermining prevention measures in non-government areas.¹¹⁵





Taking Sides

Distr.: Public
14 June 2016

Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 68(a)

Syria: The United Nations' Loss Of Impartiality, Independence and Neutrality

WHO And Polio (Continued)

The Syrian Ministry of Health and WHO failed to prevent or detect the polio outbreak in its early stages in spring 2013. Yet the Ministry and WHO continued to claim that the early warning system was “established and functional” as late as December. At the start of 2014, when the ACU and Turkish Ministry of Health were continuing to find new cases, WHO and the Syrian Ministry were insisting that the epidemic had been brought under control.¹¹⁶

Every single case of polio occurred in areas outside of government control where the government had deliberately prevented vaccination and the maintenance of sanitation and safe-water services wrote Sparrow.¹¹⁷ According to one official involved, only once UN agencies and the government accepted that the defeat of polio required cross-border vaccination campaigns was this ultimately facilitated.

The practical outcomes of WHO's kowtowing to the government line on polio include not being able to trace the outbreak to its source and contain it, delaying the WHO's declaration of an outbreak preventing emergency measures being taken, and not being able to use important data from the Turkish Ministry of Health. They allowed political expediency to prevent them from meeting the needs of the most urgent cases of distress and were even obstructive to others doing so. The UN allowed and even facilitated the government in the denial of vaccines and medical care, in clear breach of the principles of impartiality, independence and neutrality.



5.2. Demographic Changes

A local truce facilitated by the UN in September 2015 saw government supporters and opponents in two different areas of the country agree to trade territory, stop bombing and besieging civilians and respect a six-month ceasefire.¹¹⁸

Controversially, it also involved a sectarian population exchange, transporting Shia Muslims in Idlib to government-held areas, and moving Sunni Muslim rebels and families from Zabadani to rebel-held Idlib. This raises, as the New York Times put it, the “specter of forced demographic change.”¹¹⁹

“
How could this happen? They can't provide us with a loaf of bread, but ask them to cleanse Zabadani or Homs and they'll be ready in two minutes. The UN is participating in demographic changes.

HUMANITARIAN VOLUNTEER

5.3. Affecting Conflict Dynamics

When not delivered with impartiality and independence, humanitarian aid has a warping effect upon conflict dynamics. Like any key resource, humanitarian aid can affect population movements, the level of popular discontent and political stability of an area.

An independent analysis of the effects of emergency food aid in the country describes how people have been known to flee from areas outside government control to government areas where they know humanitarian aid will be available.¹²⁰ A violent protest in Latakia in 2014 against food, fuel and electricity shortages demonstrates to the researchers the importance of aid to the Syrian government to help it maintain control and calm even in areas that it controls.¹²¹

The same study argues that “foodstuffs distributed by UN agencies and most humanitarian organizations, despite their pretensions to neutrality, have contributed to supporting sovereignty and political outcomes at odds with those neutral aspirations.”¹²²

One humanitarian volunteer in besieged Douma, fearing the same outcome for his town, said “How could this happen? They can't provide us with a loaf of bread, but ask them to cleanse Zabadani or Homs and they'll be ready in two minutes. The UN is participating in demographic changes.”

Another humanitarian volunteer living under siege in Homs holds the UN responsible for demographic changes in Old Homs because years after the UN-sponsored truce, people have not been allowed to return to their homes.

While areas outside government control are consistently denied international aid, it continues to flow unchallenged to government areas. The effective subsidy of government areas releases resources that are likely used by the government in its war effort.

“
The UN has enabled one side in the conflict to shift more of its resources away from providing for the needs of its people and into its military campaign.

Although the UN will justify its actions by pointing to the recipients of aid that it is able to reach, it is wilfully ignoring the structural effects of an aid operation that has shifted so far from its humanitarian principles. It is not enough to say that millions are currently being reached where the UN has permission to access them. The UN has never assessed the impact of this compromise and never evaluated what role it has played in enabling an environment where hundreds of thousands of civilians are systematically starved by its key partner in Syria, the government.

Appendix 1: List Of Abbreviations

UN: United Nations

WFP: World Food Programme

ISIL: Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (UN terminology for what others call ISIS)

ISIS: Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

IRC: International Rescue Committee

ICRC: International Committee of the Red Cross

WHO: World Health Organisation

SAMS: Syrian American Medical Society

OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNRWA: United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

Appendix 2: Endnotes

- (1) OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016, p. 26
- (2) WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, April 2016
- (3) WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, August 2015
- (4) United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165, 2191 and 2258, 21 January 2016, S/2016/60, paragraph 48
- (5) OCHA, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O' Brien, Statement to the Security Council on Syria, 27 January 2016
- (6) Darcy, James, Evaluation Synthesis and Gap Analysis, Syria Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) Initiative, Report Commissioned by the Steering Group for InterAgency Humanitarian Evaluations, May 2016, p.7
- (7) Darcy, p.9
- (8) Lynch, Colum, 'UN's fear of angering Assad leaves gap in Syria aid effort', Foreign Policy, 30 December 2014
- (9) WFP Office of Evaluation, An Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis 2011-2014, April 2015, p.38.
- (10) The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: First Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria, February 2016, p.13.
- (11) The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: Table of Besieged Communities in Syria from Upcoming Siege Watch Report, February 2016.
- (12) Figures obtained by email from the Syrian Network for Human Rights.
- (13) United Nations, Note to correspondents: Transcript of a press encounter with Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria after today's meeting of the Humanitarian Access Task Force, 17 March 2016
- (14) Darcy, p.7.
- (15) OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016. p.5.
- (16) Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, November 2012, p.27
- (17) Ibid.
- (18) Ibid, p.12
- (19) Ibid, p. 110
- (20) Human Rights Watch, UN: Act on Failings in Sri Lanka, 14 November 2012
- (21) United Nations, Statement of the Secretary General on Internal Review Panel Report on Sri Lanka, 14 November 2012
- (22) <http://sana.sy/en/?p=68899>
- (23) <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/08/18102/>
- (24) <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/08/18113/>
- (25) The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: First Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria, February 2016, p.13.

- (26) See section 7.1 "Keeping quiet on sieges" for fuller explanation and background to this figure.
- (27) Information obtained over email from the Syrian Network for Human Rights.
- (28) OCHA, About the Crisis, Accessed May 1 2016
- (29) United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 24 March 2014
- (30) OCHA, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O' Brien, Statement to the Security Council on Syria, 27 January 2016, p.45.
- (31) In April 2016, more than 88% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Less than 12% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, April 2016
- (32) In March 2016, more than 95% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Less than 5% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP Syria, Country Brief, March 2016
- (33) In February 2016, more than 93% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Just over 7% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, February 2016
- (34) In January 2016, more than 96% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went into government-controlled territory. Less than 4% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, January 2016
- (35) In September 2015, more than 98% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Less than 2% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, September 2015
- (36) In August 2015, more than 99% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Less than 1% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, August 2015
- (37) In July 2015, 98% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. 2% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, July 2015
- (38) In June 2015, more than 94% of UN food aid delivered from inside Syria went to government-controlled territory. Less than 6% went into territories outside the government's control. WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, June 2015
- (39) Whole of Syria Inter-Sector Cluster Coordination Group, Final Monitoring Report of the Strategic Response Plan, 12 April 2016, p.5
- (40) Ibid.
- (41) 'There is no legal barrier to UN cross-border operations in Syria', The Guardian, 28 April 2014
- (42) Howe, Kimberly for King's College London, Feinstein International Centre and Humanitarian Policy Group, Planning from the Future. No End in Sight: A Case Study of Humanitarian Action and the Syria Conflict, January 2016, p.12.
- (43) United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2165, 14 July 2014
- (44) OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016, pp.15 & 26
- (45) WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, April 2016
- (46) WFP, Situation Update: Syria Crisis Response, April 2015
- (47) UNDP, 365 Days of Resilience in Syria, 2014
- (48) United Nations, Note to correspondents: Transcript of a press encounter with Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria after today's meeting of the Humanitarian Access Task Force, 17 March 2016
- (49) Coutts, Adam P. and Fouad, Fouad M., 'Syria's Raging Health Crisis', New York Times, 1 January 2014
- (50) 'Health Ministry, WHO and Unicef hold symposium on breastfeeding in the workplace', SANA, 6 August 2015
- (51) Said, Haifa, 'Ministry and Unicef Agree on Future Projects to Engage Students in Environment Protection', SANA, 12 February 2016
- (52) OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016, p.21
- (53) Ibid.

- (54) WFP Office of Evaluation, An Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis 2011-2014, April 2015, p. V & XI
- (55) Ibid.
- (56) United Nations, Overview: 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan & Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, 4 February 2016. \$1.25 billion of funding was received for Syria in 2015; \$1.12 billion in 2014; \$959 million in 2014; \$216 million in 2012.
- (57) Tanner, Marcus, 'Crisis for UN as Bosnian Serbs halt aid convoy', The Independent, 15 February 1993
- (58) Pomfret, John, 'Serbs bar UN Aid Convoy', Washington Post, 4 March 1994
- (59) Ibid.
- (60) OCHA, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O' Brien, Statement to the Security Council on Syria, 27 January 2016, p.45.
- (61) Interviews over Skype with members of the Daraya Local Council, 12 May 2016
- (62) Slemrod, Annie, 'All you need to know about sieges in Syria', IRIN, 12 January 2016
- (63) As told to IRIN. Slemrod, Annie, 'All you need to know about sieges in Syria', IRIN, 12 January 2016
- (64) Oakford, Samuel, 'The Syrian Regime is Blocking Aid to Hundreds of Thousands in Dire Need, despite Ceasefire', Vice News, 8 April 2016
- (65) Hearn, Roger, 'A Catastrophic Failure in Syria: Why It Is Time to Admit That the International Community Cannot Deal With Conflict', Huffington Post, 2 March 2016
- (66) Chulov, Martin and Beals, Emma, 'Aid group Mercy Corps forced to close Damascus operations', The Guardian, 23 May 2014
- (67) <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/01/17751/>
- (68) <http://sn4hr.org/blog/2016/02/01/17769/>
- (69) See p.19
- (70) United Nations, Overview: 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan & Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, 4 February 2016, p.17
- (71) OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016, p.30
- (72) Ibid, p.19
- (73) Gutman, Roy, 'How the U.N. Let Assad Edit the Truth of Syria's War', Foreign Policy, 27 January 2016
- (74) United Nations Mine Action Service, Syria Situation Analysis and Needs, March 2016
- (75) Sparrow, Annie, 'The UN's Role in the Sieges in Syria', Foreign Affairs, 29 March 2016
- (76) World Economic Forum 2016, Panel: Humanity on the Move, Video uploaded 8 February 2016
- (77) OCHA, Joint Statement by Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis on the International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members, 24 March 2016
- (78) Sengupta, Somini, 'U.N. Agency Hires Wife of Top Figure in Syrian War to Assist the Displaced', New York Times, 24 February 2016
- (79) Resignation email seen by researchers.
- (80) Parker, Ben, 'Humanitarianism Besieged', Humanitarian Practice Network, November 2013
- (81) Archives of the Violations Documentation Centre.
- (82) WFP Office of Evaluation, p.8
- (83) Kenner, David, Foreign Policy, 'Assad's War on the Red Crescent', 12 December 2012
- (84) Howe, p.20
- (85) Ibid.
- (86) Ibid, p.19
- (87) Eng, Brent and Martínez, José Ciro, 'Why international food aid can actually make conditions worse for starving Syrians', Washington Post, 26 January 2016
- (88) Declaration of the Aleppo Free Health Directorate obtained by researchers of this report.
- (89) Letter from SARC Azaz obtained by researchers of this report.
- (90) Declaration of the Aleppo Free Health Directorate
- (91) Memo from the Office of Regional Coordinator to Dr Abdul Rahman Attar, SARC on 16 March, 2016. The memo was obtained by researchers of this report.
- (92) Note verbale from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the UN Resident Coordinator on 10 March, 2016. The memo was obtained by researchers of this report.
- (93) Perry, Tom, 'Ceasefire in Syria's Homs a "good model" U.N. Official', Reuters, 11 December 2015
- (94) Ibid.
- (95) The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: Table of Besieged Communities in Syria from Upcoming Siege Watch Report, February 2016
- (96) Ibid.
- (97) Dagher, Sam, 'Fate of Hundreds of Men Evacuated From Homs and Detained in Doubt', Wall Street Journal, 11 February 2015
- (98) Slemrod, Annie, 'UN changes Syria siege list, adds Madaya and Yarmouk', IRIN, 1 February 2016

- (99) The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: Table of Besieged Communities in Syria from Upcoming Siege Watch Report, February 2016
- (100) OCHA, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O' Brien, Statement to the Security Council on Syria, 27 January 2016
- (101) Figures obtained from Siege Watch over email.
- (102) Daragahi, Borzou and Dadouch, Sarah, 'Here's How Syria's Regime Is Profiting From People Under Siege', BuzzFeed News, 11 February 2016
- (103) Ibid.
- (104) <http://sana.sy/en/?p=50684>
- (105) <http://sn4hr.org/>
- (106) Gutman, Roy, 'The UN knew for months that Madaya was starving', Foreign Policy, 15 January 2016
- (107) Ibid.
- (108) Ibid.
- (109) Information obtained over email from the Syrian Network for Human Rights.
- (110) Sparrow, Annie, 'Syria's Polio Epidemic: The Suppressed Truth', New York Review of Books, 20 February 2014
- (111) Coutts and Fouad
- (112) Sparrow, 2014
- (113) Ibid.
- (114) Ibid.
- (115) Ibid.
- (116) Ibid.
- (117) Ibid.
- (118) Barnard, Anne, 'Truce Struck in 2 Areas in Syria', New York Times, 25 September 2015
- (119) Ibid.
- (120) Eng and Martínez
- (121) Martínez, José Ciro and Brent Eng, 'The unintended consequences of emergency food aid: neutrality, sovereignty and politics in the Syrian civil war, 2012-15', International Affairs, vol. 92:1, 2016, 153-173
- (122) Ibid.

Appendix 3: References

- Barnard, Anne, 'Truce Struck in 2 Areas in Syria', New York Times, 25 September 2015
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/26/world/middleeast/syria-rebels-reach-truce-with-assad.html>
- Chulov, Martin and Beals, Emma, 'Aid group Mercy Corps forced to close Damascus operations', The Guardian, 23 May 2014
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/23/aid-group-mercy-corps-forced-to-close-damascus-operations-syria>
- Coutts, Adam P. and Fouad, Fouad M., 'Syria's Raing Health Crisis', New York Times, 1 January 2014
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/02/opinion/syrias-raging-health-crisis.html?_r=0
- Dagher, Sam, 'Fate of Hundreds of Men Evacuated From Homs and Detained in Doubt', Wall Street Journal, 11 February 2015
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303874504579377250947171122>
- Daragahi, Borzou and Dadouch, Sarah, 'Here's How Syria's Regime Is Profiting From People Under Siege', BuzzFeed News, 11 February 2016
https://www.buzzfeed.com/borzoudaragahi/heres-how-syrias-regime-is-profiting-from-people-under-siege?utm_term=.omDQjO1rk#.dIlgMAkLYV
- Daraya Local Council
<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=300477163480192&fref=ts>
- Darcy, James, Evaluation Synthesis and Gap Analysis, Syria Coordinated Accountability and Lessons Learning (CALL) Initiative, Report Commissioned by the Steering Group for Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluations, May 2016
https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/syria_call_esga_310316.pdf

- Eng, Brent and Martínez, José Ciro, 'Why international food aid can actually make conditions worse for starving Syrians', Washington Post, 26 January 2016
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/01/26/why-international-food-aid-can-actually-make-conditions-worse-for-starving-syrians/>
- Gutman, Roy, 'How the U.N. Let Assad Edit the Truth of Syria's War', Foreign Policy, 27 January 2016
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/27/syria-madaya-starvation-united-nations-humanitarian-response-plan-assad-edited/>
- Gutman, Roy, 'The UN knew for months that Madaya was starving', Foreign Policy, 15 January 2016
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/15/u-n-knew-for-months-madaya-was-starving-syria-assad/>
- 'Health Ministry, WHO and Unicef hold symposium on breastfeeding in the workplace', SANA, 6 August 2015
<http://sana.sy/en/?p=50684>
- Hearn, Roger, 'A Catastrophic Failure in Syria: Why It Is Time to Admit That the International Community Cannot Deal With Conflict', Huffington Post, 2 March 2016
http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/roger-hearn/syria-anniversary_b_9346526.html
- Howe, Kimberly for King's College London, Feinstein International Centre and Humanitarian Policy Group, Planning from the Future. No End in Sight: A Case Study of Humanitarian Action and the Syria Conflict, January 2016
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/syria_case_study.pdf
- Human Rights Watch, UN: Act on Failings in Sri Lanka, 14 November 2012
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/14/un-act-failings-sri-lanka>
- Kenner, David, 'Assad's War on the Red Crescent', Foreign Policy, 12 December 2012
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/12/12/assads-war-on-the-red-crescent/>
- Lynch, Colum, 'UN's fear of angering Assad leaves gap in Syria aid effort', Foreign Policy, 30 December 2014
<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/30/u-n-s-fear-of-angering-assad-leaves-gap-in-syria-aid-effort/>
- Martínez, José Ciro and Brent Eng, 'The unintended consequences of emergency food aid: neutrality, sovereignty and politics in the Syrian civil war, 2012–15', International Affairs, vol. 92:1, 2016, 153–173
https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/publications/ia/INTA92_1_08_MartinezEng.pdf
- Oakford, Samuel, 'The Syrian Regime is Blocking Aid to Hundreds of Thousands in Dire Need, despite Ceasefire', Vice News, 8 April 2016
<https://news.vice.com/article/the-syrian-regime-is-blocking-aid-to-hundreds-of-thousands-in-dire-need-despite-ceasefire>
- OCHA, About the Crisis, Accessed May 1, 2016
<http://www.unocha.org/syrian-arab-republic/syria-country-profile/about-crisis>
- OCHA, Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis, March 2016
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OCHA%20Syria%20Evaluation%20Report_FINAL_0.pdf
- OCHA, Joint Statement by Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis on the International Day of Solidarity with Detained and Missing Staff Members, 24 March 2016
<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/joint-statement-residenthumanitarian-coordinator-syria-and-regional>
- OCHA, Syrian Arab Republic: 2016 UN Inter-Agency Humanitarian Operations (as of 3 May 2016), 4 May 2016
[http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2016%20UN%20Inter-Agency%20Operations%20\(as%20of%203%20May%202016\).pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2016%20UN%20Inter-Agency%20Operations%20(as%20of%203%20May%202016).pdf)
- OCHA, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, Statement to the Security Council on Syria, 27 January 2016
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ERC%20Stephen%20O'Brien%20SecCo%20statement%20on%20Syria%2027Jan%202016%20CAD.pdf>
- Parker, Ben, 'Humanitarianism Besieged', Humanitarian Practice Network, November 2013
<http://odihpn.org/magazine/humanitarianism-besieged/>

- Perry, Tom, 'Ceasefire in Syria's Homs a "good model" - U.N. Official', Reuters, 11 December 2015
<http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-mideast-crisis-syria-homs-idUKKBN0TU24S20151211>
- Pomfret, John, 'Serbs bar UN Aid Convoy', Washington Post, 4 March 1994
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1994/03/04/serbs-bar-un-aid-convoy/3f60d530-2329-4426-9ff4-eb3f449dd76b/>
- Said, Haifa, 'Ministry and Unicef Agree on Future Projects to Engage Students in Environment Protection', SANA, 12 February 2016
<http://sana.sy/en/?p=28350>
- Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, Report of the Secretary-General's Internal Review Panel on United Nations Action in Sri Lanka, November 2012
http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/The_Internal_Review_Panel_report_on_Sri_Lanka.pdf
- Sengupta, Somini, 'U.N. Agency Hires Wife of Top Figure in Syrian War to Assist the Displaced', New York Times, 24 February 2016
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/25/world/middleeast/syrian-ministers-wife-named-to-assess-mental-health-of-the-displaced.html>
- Slemrod, Annie, 'All you need to know about sieges in Syria', IRIN, 12 January 2016
<https://www.irinnews.org/fr/node/255942>
- Slemrod, Annie, 'UN changes Syria siege list, adds Madaya and Yarmouk', IRIN, 1 February 2016
<http://www.irinnews.org/feature/2016/02/01/un-changes-syria-siege-list-adds-madaya-and-yarmouk>
- Sparrow, Annie, 'Syria's Polio Epidemic: The Suppressed Truth', New York Review of Books, 20 February 2014
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/02/20/syrias-polio-epidemic-suppressed-truth/>
- Sparrow, Annie, 'The UN's Role in the Sieges in Syria', Foreign Affairs, 29 March 2016
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2016-03-29/uns-role-sieges-syria>
- Syrian Network for Human Rights
<http://sn4hr.org/>
- Tanner, Marcus, 'Crisis for UN as Bosnian Serbs halt aid convoy', The Independent, 15 February 1993
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/crisis-for-un-as-bosnian-serbs-halt-aid-convoy-1473097.html>
- The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: First Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria, February 2016
<http://siegewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/PAX-RAPPORT-SIEGE-WATCH-FINAL-SINGLE-PAGES-DEF.pdf>
- The Syria Institute and Pax, Siege Watch: Table of Besieged Communities in Syria from Upcoming Siege Watch Report, February 2016
<http://siegewatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SiegeWatchTable-Final-for-release.pdf>
- 'There is no legal barrier to UN cross-border operations in Syria', The Guardian, 28 April 2014
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/28/no-legal-barrier-un-cross-border-syria>
- UNDP, 365 Days of Resilience in Syria, 2014
<http://www.sy.undp.org/content/syria/en/home/library/poverty/365-days-of-resilience-in-syria/>
- United Nations, 'Human Rights Upfront' Initiative, 2013
<http://www.un.org/sg/humanrightsupfront/>
- United Nations, Note to correspondents: Transcript of a press encounter with Jan Egeland, Special Advisor to the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria after today's meeting of the Humanitarian Access Task Force, 17 March 2016
<http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=4424>
- United Nations Mine Action Service, Syria Situation Analysis and Needs, March 2016
<http://www.mineaction.org/programmes/syria>
- United Nations, Note to Correspondents: Transcript of press stakeout by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Mr Staffan de Mistura, 21 April 2016
<http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=4483>

United Nations, Overview: 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan & Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, 4 February 2016
https://2c8kkt1ykog81j8k9p47oglb-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2016_HRP_3RP_Chapeau_Syria_FINAL_hi_res.pdf

United Nations, Statement of the Secretary-General on Internal Review Panel Report on Sri Lanka, 14 November 2012
<http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=6423>

United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 24 March 2014
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1427034.pdf>

United Nations Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 2139, 2165, 2191 and 2258, 21 January 2016
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1601118.pdf>

United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2165, 14 July 2014
<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2165>

Violations Documentation Center in Syria
<http://www.vdc-sy.info/index.php/en/>

Whole of Syria Inter-Sector Cluster Coordination Group, Final Monitoring Report of the Strategic Response Plan, 12 April 2016
<http://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-final-monitoring-report-strategic-response-plan>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, June 2015
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp276497.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, August 2015
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp277661.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, September 2015
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp278920.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, February 2016
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/Public/documents/ep/WFP282522.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, January 2016
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Syria%20External%20SitRep%20January%202016.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, April 2016
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/Public/documents/ep/WFP283918.pdf>

WFP, Emergency Food Assistance to the People Affected by Unrest in Syria, July 2015
<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Syria%20External%20SitRep%20-%20July%202015.pdf>

WFP Office of Evaluation, An Evaluation of WFP's Regional Response to the Syrian Crisis 2011-2014, April 2015
<http://www.wfp.org/content/evaluation-wfp%E2%80%99s-regional-response-syrian-crisis-terms-reference>

WFP, Situation Update: Syria Crisis Response, April 2015
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp275274.pdf>

WFP Syria, Country Brief, March 2016
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ep/wfp272609.pdf>

World Economic Forum 2016, Panel: Humanity on the Move, Video uploaded 8 February 2016
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpVKJ9EKr5M>

