

Mission Permanente
de La
République Arabe Syrienne
Genève



الجمهورية العربية السورية
البعثة الدائمة لدى مكتب الأمر المنحلة
جنيف

N° 80/14

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and in reference to OHCHR's notes dated February 14, 2014 and February 17, 2014 requesting comments on OHCHR's briefing entitled "Living Under Siege", would like to forward herewith the following comments on the above-mentioned briefing:

1. The Permanent Mission would like to reaffirm that the advent and presence of armed terrorist groups in several areas of Syria, and their targeting of the infrastructure and state institutions that provide basic services, remains the principle factor in the start and evolution of the humanitarian suffering in these areas. Therefore, the eradication of terrorism is the only proper way to deal with the root causes of this humanitarian suffering in a number of areas in Syria.
2. The terrorists who enter certain parts of Syria engage in cutting off main roads around these places with the intent of impeding the movement of residents. They also destroy the infrastructure, including electricity, clean water supply and grain silos among other public property and services, obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid. This issue has been the subject of numerous communications by the government of the Syrian Arab Republic to OHCHR, some forwarded more than 20 months ago specifically regarding the Old City in Homs. The Syrian government had noted that the armed groups were preventing humanitarian organizations from delivering aid into the area, and refusing to allow the evacuation of civilians; nevertheless, OHCHR failed then to react.
3. The Syrian government continuously strives to direct its resources to respond to the humanitarian needs, in cooperation with the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international and national organizations, in order to deliver humanitarian aid to those in need. The Permanent Mission notes that Syrian domestic efforts account for 75% of needed humanitarian aid provided to the Syrian people, as opposed to barely 25% provided by international organizations.
4. This Syrian domestic effort comes at a time when illegal unilateral measures continue to impair living conditions of Syrian citizens, and which have had a negative impact on the ability of the public and private sectors to provide basic humanitarian needs, including food, medicine and medical equipment. Moreover, despite the United Nations Human Rights Council and the United Nations General Assembly's reaffirmation on numerous occasions that such measures constitute a violation of human rights, OHCHR remained completely silent on this matter.
5. The briefing prepared by OHCHR contradicts data submitted by UN humanitarian agencies operating in Syria, which illustrates the extent of the cooperation the Syrian government has extended in order to facilitate the work of these agencies and organizations. In this regard, the World Food Program (WFP) was able in the month of January 2014 alone to deliver aid to 3.7 million people in need (according the latest WFP update on 17/2/2014). In 2013, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees succeeded in delivering aid to 3.389 million people

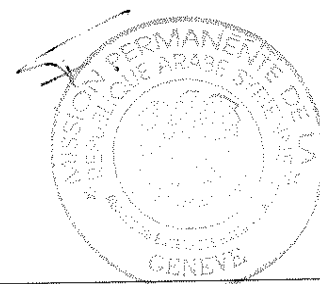
throughout the various Syrian Governorates (according to the UNHCR's annual report). These operations would not have been possible without the cooperation of the Syrian government (attached are copies of two identical letters dated 13/2/2014 sent to the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations Secretary-General regarding the humanitarian situation in certain conflict zones in Syria).

6. The Syrian government has undertaken a number of administrative and logistical measures that enabled the UN to expand the scope of its operations. On top of the list of measures is granting the permission for the opening of regional offices in five different governorates in addition to its main office in Damascus; and the permission to establish UN warehouses for aid materials in many areas of Syria, after allowing aid to enter through the legal border crossings with Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. Nevertheless, we still hear doubts in UN official's statements under the pretext of a delay in granting a few visas.
7. OHCHR completely and intentionally ignored the ordeal of more than 150 thousands civilians in Adra City in the countryside of Damascus, and the savage massacres they endured on the hands of armed terrorist groups. It also failed to note that the armed opposition groups continue to besiege the people of Adra, holding them hostage and robbing them of their food and medicine, and preventing aid from entering the city. OHCHR also failed to properly address the dire humanitarian situation in Al-Foua and Kafraya in the countryside of Idlib, Nubul and Zahraa in Aleppo, the tragedy of the governorate of Al-Raqa, and the plight of 4000 prisoners besieged in the Aleppo Central Prison.
8. The Syrian government had also addressed letters to OHCHR illustrating the fact that armed terrorist groups continuously targeted national hospitals and their medical staff, unfortunately prompting no reply whatsoever from OHCHR.
9. The timing of this briefing, despite all the information publicly available regarding the cooperation and efforts of the Syrian government in this regard, confirms the political aspect of this report and proves OHCHR's insistence on adopting a hostile attitude towards Syria; and attitude that gains momentum in conjunction with the increase in the intensity of certain country's well-known campaign of distortion against Syria.
10. The government of the Syrian Arab Republic strongly and categorically refuses the allegations contained in the briefing, and deplores OHCHR's disregard for all the information it officially receives from Syria. It reaffirms that it will continue to exercise its constitutional duty to protect the population and infrastructure, including grain silos, food warehouses and hospitals, from the attacks and aggression of armed terrorist groups.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic avails itself of this opportunity to renew to The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 19 February 2014

Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
Palais Wilson



**Actions and measures undertaken by
The government of the Syrian Arab Republic in the field of humanitarian
aid delivery and access**

December 2013 - February 13, 2014

1. UN Aid Convoys.

7 UN humanitarian aid convoys were sent to Aleppo, and to the Countryside of Damascus, specifically Ghezlanieh, Jdyedet Shebani, Al-Kesswah, Barzeh, Sabbourah, Bloudan.

2. Humanitarian action in Yarmouk Camp, Old Homs, Barzeh, Moadamiyah.

a) Yarmouk Camp:

Beginning on 30/12/2013: With the support and protection of the Syrian government, the General Organization for Arab Palestinian Refugees, in cooperation with UNRWA, delivered humanitarian aid to families in the camp that is besieged by terrorist groups.

Between 30/01/2014 and 13/02/2014, the following humanitarian effort was exerted (and still ongoing):

- Delivery of 7,100 food baskets, in addition to bread, dates, baby milk;
- Evacuation of 2586 civilians with critical medical conditions, in addition to those accompanying them as well as a number of students;
- **On 08/02/2014:** aid delivery was suspended for one day due to disruptions, shooting and sniper fire by armed terrorist groups in the evening 07/02 which resulted in the injury of a lady who was later evacuated outside the camp.
- The Syrian government looks forward to the success of the efforts of the Palestinian factions in making the armed terrorist groups leave the camp in preparation of return to normal life inside the camp.

b) Old city of Homs:

Beginning on Friday 07/02/2014: in realization of the agreement between the Governor of Homs and the resident UN coordinator in Syria, the relevant Syrian authorities in Homs, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) and the UN team on the ground, implemented the following humanitarian actions (noting that the truce was extended for a second three day term beginning on 13/02/2014):

- The evacuation of 1,400 civilians among them 80 children, providing needed urgent medical care, as well as immediate food and sanitary aid as soon as they had been evacuated.
- Transporting the evacuees to the residency destination of their choosing, among which are the areas of Al-Wa'ar, Karm Ashami, Inshaa't, Al Ghouta, Mokhayam, Shammas, Damscus Roda, al-Dablan, Al-Bir Hospital, Al-Razi Hospital.
- Securing temporary shelter and residency for 134 civilians.
- Delivery of aid on 8/2 to inside the Old city of Homs (500 food baskets that included flour, butter, 190 sanitary baskets, 30 packages for water sanitation,

medicine and vaccines). It should be noted that an aid convoy was attacked by mortar shells on its route, forcing tow trucks it to return to their point of departure after sustaining gunshots from armed terrorists. After the ceasefire, a decision was taken to allow the other trucks to enter the Old City; nevertheless, the convoy experienced once again attacks by mortar shells, causing severe damage to the trucks and their incapacitation as well as the injury of the driver. Based on this incident, the decision was taken to exit the area given the expected danger.

c) Barzeh:

From 01/02 to 10/02/2014: the following aid was delivered after order was restored to the area:

- 13,800 food baskets - 2000 water gallons and plastic containers - 1,250 cooking utensils.
- 10,350 blankets - 200 wheelchairs - 1,750 sanitary baskets.

The relevant authorities are currently working on repairing the main infrastructure and on providing all necessary services to the area.

d) Moadamyiah:

From 03/02 to 13/02/2014: the High Commission for Aid and SARC evacuated in the span of 10 days 10,000 civilians from Moadamyiah. Hundreds of families began returning to the area after the entry into force of a reconciliation agreement beginning on 04/02/2014. Technical teams are currently working on repairing the damaged infrastructure to ensure the return of the basic health and educational services to the area.

3. Latest activities related to aid distribution:

WFP distributed via SARC and other civil society organizations the following:

- **In December 2013:** 763,510 food baskets to all Syrian governorates except Deir Ezzor and Al-Raqa (each basket fulfills the needs of 5 persons).
- **In January 2014:** 3,670,835 food baskets to all governorates except Deir Ezzor and Al-Raqa. Al-Hassaka governorate received the least amount (3990 baskets) because the terrorist groups prevented the delivery of aid by land, which led to shipping aid via 13 air shipments between Irbil (Iraq) and Qamishli to 62,000 persons. **On 4/02/2014** WFP has initiated a new airlift program beginning that covers dozens of flights from Irbil to Qamishli in order to deliver food baskets for 30,000 people. Between 14/02 and 26/02/2014: another airlift campaign of 11 flights is currently being organized (with an average of one flight per day). It should be noted in this regard that this temporary measure does not negate the need to deal with the problem caused by the fact that armed terrorist groups are cutting off the land route and preventing UN aid convoys from reaching Al-Hassaka governorate.
- **From 01/02 to 06/02/2014:** The Ministry of Health has launched, in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the third vaccination campaign to combat Polio with the aim of

reaching 2,2 million children throughout Syria (as part of a series of 6 vaccination campaigns, one each month, that the Ministry has announced after the discovery of the several foreign Polio cases in Syria). On 06/01/2014, the first campaign succeeded in reaching 1,772 million children under the age of five. The largest number of vaccinated children was in Deir Ezzor (294,000) and Hama (269,000) and Al-Hassaka (247,000). Vaccines also reached areas in which terrorist have settled like Douma. Several health workers and volunteers were unfortunately killed or kidnapped during these campaigns.

- **On 05/02/2014:** UNWRA declared the start of a Polio vaccination campaign in the Yarmouk Camp where 10,000 vaccine doses were successfully delivered.
- SARC was unable to deliver food aid in January 2014 to the governorates of Deir-Ezzor, Al-Raqa, Al-Hassaka, Idleb and the countryside of Aleppo due to roads being cut off by terrorist groups; but was able to deliver humanitarian aid (food and non-food aid) to the governorates of the Countryside of Damascus, Al-Qunaytra, Daraa, Hama and areas of Aleppo.
- **On 18/02/2014:** SARC was able for the first time in several months to deliver food baskets for 6,200 people in the towns of Beit Sahem, Babila and Yalda in the Countryside of Damascus; and preparations are under way for more aid shipments to these areas.
- The armed terrorist groups continue to besiege the villages of Nubul and Zahraa in Aleppo, Al-Foua and Keffrayah in Idleb, and the city of Adra in the Countryside of Damascus, preventing any form of food and non-food aid from reaching civilians who are being held hostage. The ordeal of the civilians in these areas continues as international organizations fail to seriously react to bring relief to the civilians by attempting to deliver aid to more than 150,000 people suffering from the effects of the siege imposed by the armed terrorist groups.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to note that recent aid deliveries to the Old City of Homs, Barzeh, Ghezlanieh, Jdyedet Shebani and the Yarmouk Camp in cooperation with the United Nations is the clearest evidence showing that the government of the Syrian Arab Republic does not impede aid, but always stands ready to facilitate humanitarian aid delivery whenever it is possible to those in need in any area of Syria without discrimination.
