

Attached is an advance copy of the **Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014)** for the information of the members of the Security Council.

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22 March 2014

IMPLEMENTATION OF SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 2139
Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), in which the Council requested that the Secretary-General report on its implementation by all parties in Syria.
2. The report provides information on the humanitarian situation in Syria and the implementation of key elements of resolution 2139, including: violations of international humanitarian and human rights law; humanitarian access to besieged and hard to reach areas, including across conflict lines and across borders; expansion of humanitarian relief operations; free passage of medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies; and safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief activities.
3. The report covers the period from 22 February 2014 to 21 March 2014. Some information is included that predates the reporting period – where full data is not yet available for the reporting period, or data presented benefits from contextualization – to give the Council as full a picture as possible of the situation in Syria. Information contained in the report is based on the limited data United Nations (UN) actors have access to, as well as reports from open sources and Syrian government sources and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (hereafter the Commission of Inquiry).

II. Major developments

4. During the reporting period, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, including aerial bombings, shelling, mortars and car bombs in populated areas, caused mass civilian death and injuries and forced displacement. Publicly available reports indicate that clashes between government and opposition forces continued in most parts of Syria. There were continued reports of artillery shelling and air strikes, including the use of barrel bombs, by Government forces. Car bombings and suicide attacks, including against civilian objects, resulted in civilian deaths and injury during the reporting period. Many of these attacks were claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) and Jabhat Al-Nusra. Clashes also took place between armed opposition groups and ISIS, mainly in the northern part of the country. Government-controlled cities and towns, including Damascus, were subject to mortar attacks by armed opposition groups. Reported daily death tolls were on average exceeding 200 people, including civilians, inside Syria.
5. Fighting was particularly intense in Aleppo, Dar'a and Rural Damascus Governorates during the reporting period. In Aleppo, at least 500,000 people have been displaced from eastern Aleppo City since late January. Around 200,000 fled to western Aleppo City and around 300,000 fled to the north of the country. Approximately 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are sheltering in camps close to the Turkish border

and around 22,300 people fled to Turkey during the reporting period. In Dar'a, fierce fighting between Government of Syria forces and armed opposition groups escalated, displacing around 159,000 people by the end of February. In Rural Damascus, around 50,000 people have fled Yabroud city, which was recaptured by Government forces on 16 March, including nearly 14,000 who have fled to Arsal in Lebanon.

6. In neighbouring countries, security incidents were reported across the Lebanese border and the disengagement line in the Golan. Jabhat al-Nusra claimed responsibility for rocket attacks in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon on 3 and 5 March.
7. Despite the worsening security environment, the UN and its partners continue to reach millions of people with life-saving assistance. In February, WFP and partners provided food to 3.7 million people across 13 governorates in the country. Approximately 180,000 people were reached with food in February and March in areas of Rural Damascus, Deir-ez-Zor, Dar'a and Ar-Raqqa that had been cut off for a prolonged period of time. Between 22 February and 8 March, UNHCR and partners delivered essential relief items for over 1 million people in all governorates, except Deir-ez-Zor. On 25 February, IOM reached Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, with basic lifesaving commodities for 13,000 IDPs; the first time since March 2013. Since 23 February, UNRWA has delivered food for 140,000 Palestine refugees and primary education to 41,500 children across Syria. During the reporting period, UNICEF and partners provided water treatment supplies benefitting approximately 1.8 million people in Tartous and Deir-ez-Zor Governorates. Also during the reporting period, WHO reached nearly 441,000 beneficiaries with medicines (excluding vaccination) in Homs, Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Damascus, Idleb and Ar Raqqa Governorates and over 46,000 IDPs have received primary health care through UNHCR in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh Governorates since 22 February.
8. During the reporting period, the fourth round of the polio vaccination campaign was carried out, reaching 2.8 million children under five. The number of children vaccinated in hard-to-reach areas increased and some previously inaccessible areas became partially accessible due to local arrangements and contacts on the ground, including Al Ghouta in Rural Damascus, Nubl and Zahra in northern Aleppo, and parts of Qamishly Governorate.

III. Violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the parties

9. During the reporting period, the Commission of Inquiry presented the findings from its report (A/HRC/25/65) to the Human Rights Council. The report, which covers investigations from 15 July 2013 to 20 January 2014, states that Government forces and pro-government militia have committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, including massacres. Armed opposition groups have also committed war crimes and other violations of international humanitarian law, including massacres.
10. The Commission of Inquiry found that torture and other inhumane acts constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed by Government forces and militia. Torture and ill-treatment were routinely committed at official detention facilities; by intelligence agencies; at checkpoints around besieged areas; in house raids; and as part of the sieges of communities which are being used to control and

contain people. The Commission also found that non-state armed groups throughout the Syrian Arab Republic inflicted severe physical or mental pain on civilians in areas under their control, during apprehension and/or detention. It noted that the increase in such patterns constitutes an emerging widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population and that the rise in torture and the inhumane treatment of civilians in areas controlled by ISIS and affiliated groups provides reasonable grounds to believe that such groups promote the widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population. In his statement to the Human Rights Council of 18 March 2014, the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry noted that in Al-Raqqa, the widespread detention of civilians and their systematic torture by identified armed groups amounted to a crime against humanity.

11. Throughout the reporting period, UN field sources reported continued air raids, including the use of barrel bombs, by Government of Syria forces in Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor, Hama and Rural Damascus. In its Oral Update on 18 March 2014, which covers violations until 10 March, the Independent Commission of Inquiry reported that, since 20 January, the Government has ramped up its campaign of dropping barrel bombs into residential neighbourhoods of Aleppo city, with devastating consequences for civilians. In launching these attacks, Government forces made no effort to distinguish civilians from military targets. Other examples reported by United Nations field sources include the dropping of barrel bombs on Hmeirat in northern rural Hama governorate on 3 March, killing at least nine civilians, and on both western (Yadudeh and Mzeirab) and eastern rural areas (Neimeh) of Deir-ez-Zor Governorate on 3 and 4 March.
12. According to the Commission of Inquiry's Oral Update, since 20 January, armed groups have shelled towns and villages in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Al-Hasakah governorates. There has been an increased use of car bombs, some of which targeted wholly civilian areas. For example, according to United Nations field sources, on 6 March at least 15 people were killed and 12 others were wounded by a car bomb blast in the Armenian district of Homs City, home to mostly Christian and Alawite communities. No group has claimed responsibility for the attack.
13. The Commission of Inquiry's Oral Update also reported that since 20 January, non-State armed groups have increasingly resorted to suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices. On 11 March, three ISIS fighters, wearing explosive vests, detonated themselves at a municipality office in Qamishly city, Al-Hasakah. Five people were killed and eight wounded. There were no military targets in the area. Its primary purpose was to spread terror among civilians, a violation of international humanitarian law.
14. During the reporting period, OHCHR received reports that in Ar Raqqa, ISIS imposed discriminatory measures on the Christian community, including prohibiting the: building or repair of churches and monasteries; display of crosses and bibles in a

visible manner; ringing of church bells; and practice of rituals outside of the church. It further called for Christian adult males to pay a jizya, a special tax for non-Muslims.

15. Hospitals, ambulances and medical staff continued to come under attack. For example, the Commission of Inquiry states that, on 23 February, a car bomb targeted the Orient Medical Clinic in the opposition-controlled town of Atmeh, near the Syrian-Turkish border, killing at least nine people. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. According to UN field sources, on 27 February, five civilians were killed and 13 injured in an explosion near Al-Zaem Hospital in the government-held Akrama neighbourhood of Homs City. Medical facilities also continue to be used for military purposes. At least 20 hospitals remain occupied by armed forces and armed opposition groups with no respect for their civilian character.
16. Children and women continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. UNICEF reported in March that by conservative estimates, at least 10,000 children have been killed during the conflict, and that the real number is likely to be higher. The Commission of Inquiry's Oral Update states that sexual violence against women and men in Government detention continues and that non-state armed groups have targeted female family members of Government forces. According to United Nations field sources, more than 300 cases of gender-based violence were recorded during the reporting period in three health clinics in Damascus and Rural Damascus alone.
17. In violation of customary international humanitarian law, World Heritage sites, including Palmyra, the Crac des Chevaliers, the Saint Simeon Church in northern Syria, and the Aleppo Citadel, have suffered considerable and sometimes irreversible damage and continued to be used for military purposes or be transformed into battle sites during the reporting period. Archaeological sites are systematically looted, especially in opposition-held areas, and illicit trafficking of cultural objects has increased dramatically.
18. On 25 February, in a briefing to the General Assembly, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated her call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

IV. Humanitarian access to besieged and hard to reach areas, including across conflict lines and across borders

19. As the conflict intensifies and fighting between armed groups increases, more people are slipping out of the reach of humanitarian organizations. Around 3.5 million people are now estimated to be in need of assistance in hard to reach areas, an increase of 1 million since the beginning of 2014.
20. Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 2139, the Government of Syria established a working group composed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Syria and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) to discuss ways to enhance humanitarian access and

implement the resolution. At the request of the UN, the working group also includes representatives of the Syrian Government security forces to expedite the implementation of agreements reached. In a letter to the Emergency Relief Coordinator dated 19 March, the President of the Syrian Opposition Coalition pledged the commitment of the Coalition and the Free Syrian Army to comply with the resolution.

21. During the first meeting of the working group on 5 March, the UN shared a detailed list of 258 priority areas across Syria where humanitarian access, if granted, would allow a significant expansion of relief operations. In subsequent meetings, detailed negotiations have focused on convoys to 29 areas in eastern and rural Aleppo, Rural Damascus, Dar'a, in addition to the governorates of Hassakeh, Deir-ez-Zor and Ar Raqqa. Discussions are also ongoing at the governorate level in Homs, Hama, Latakia and Tartous on three month assistance plans for Al Wa'er, Ar-Rastan, Talbiseh, Tir Maallah, Taldu, Al Houla, Hisn and Zara in Homs; Kafr Zeta, Latamneh, Aqraab, Helfayah, Tremseh, Qamhaneh in Hama; and Marat Al Numain, Saraqeb, Ariha, Foah and Kafra in Idlib.
22. Significant challenges to the delivery of assistance remain, including: the need for multiple requests for approval of inter-agency convoys, which often go unanswered; the Government's lack of internal communication of approvals to those on the ground, resulting in denial of access or delays at checkpoints; and continued insecurity. Increased fighting between armed opposition groups, including between Free Syrian Army (FSA)-aligned and ISIS, has complicated the delivery of assistance including the cutting off of key access routes in some locations in the northern parts of the country.

a) Access to besieged areas

23. Around 220,000 people remain besieged in Homs (Old City), Nubl and Zahra, Madamiyet Elsham, Eastern Ghouta, Darayya and other locations (see map attached). Around 175,000 people are besieged by Government of Syria forces and 45,000 by opposition groups.
24. No new ceasefires were reached in besieged areas during the reporting period. In Madamiyat Elsham, as well as in Al-Bwayda village and Qudsaya, ceasefire negotiations were unsuccessful. In Zahra and Al-Hosn citadel (rural Homs), parties to the conflict did not agree on proposals for a ceasefire by local councils.
25. In addition, a number of breaches of existing ceasefire agreements were reported. In Yarmouk camp, clashes resumed on 1 March, preventing the delivery of aid until 18 March when UNRWA was able to deliver 1,020 food parcels and other relief items. Malnutrition continues to be a serious concern for residents of the camp.
26. In Homs, following the ceasefire that allowed the evacuation of 1,366 people from the Old City in early February, shelling and bombing returned to pre-ceasefire levels during the reporting period. Since 15 March, an additional 200 people, including 35 male adults, have been evacuated from the Old City following an agreement between the parties and the Governor of Homs. An estimated 150 male evacuees, including the 35 recently evacuated adult males, remain at a screening facility pending Government

processing. On 8 March, UN protection monitoring team visits to the screening facility were suspended after the facility was hit by a mortar. Ten people were injured and hospitalized, including five children. It is estimated that 2,000 people remain trapped in the Old City of Homs.

27. In Aleppo, opposition groups are demanding that the siege on Eastern Ghouta is lifted before they lift the siege on Zahra and Nubl, where around 45,000 people remain besieged. However, 5,088 children were vaccinated against polio in March.
28. In Rural Damascus, unverified reports indicate that around 15,000 to 20,000 people returned to Madamiyet Elsham during the months of February and March following a decrease in intensity of the conflict and relative stability of the local ceasefire agreement. The UN has submitted 15 requests for Government authorization to access Madamiyet Elsham since 25 March 2013. On 1 March, the Government approved a request by the UN to access the area. However, the convoy was unable to proceed as some opposition groups asked for an additional 48 hours to prepare themselves to receive the assistance. The UN again requested access and the Government informed the UN that a convoy could depart on 15 March. However, on 14 March, although the trucks were already loaded, the Government postponed the convoy to 17 March. Lengthy searches of relief supplies destined for Madamiyet Elsham were undertaken on 17 March, during which Government security officials said that medical supplies were not be allowed, despite the approval received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The convoy attempted to reach Madamiyet Elsham on 18 March but had to turn back as pro-Government forces would only allow deliveries in Government-controlled areas.
29. An estimated 8,000 people in Darayya, Rural Damascus, have been besieged by pro-Government forces since November 2012. Increased hostilities and heavy shelling, including the reported use of barrel bombs, were reported in the past month.
30. An estimated 160,000 people have been besieged by pro-Government forces in Eastern Ghouta since late 2012. With the exception of the vaccination of around 40,000 children in Douma in March, no aid has entered the area and an escalation of conflict has been reported. On 27 February, three separate Notes Verbales for inter-agency convoys were submitted to the Government but were not answered. New Notes Verbales were submitted on 2 March. Feedback from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was received on 13 March requesting that convoys to Nubl and Zahra be prioritized. However, on 17 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs approved a convoy with limited supplies to Douma. On 20 March, a UN convoy successfully reached Douma with 600 food rations and non-food items to cover the needs of 3,000 people. All parties upheld the temporary ceasefire for the period of the delivery. The UN observed several hundreds of women and children near the front line seeking to leave Douma.

b) Access to hard-to-reach areas

31. Limited aid was delivered to a number of hard to reach areas in the reporting period for the first time in several months. In Dar'a, WFP partners reached Busra Al-Harir on 28 February with food for 10,000 people. In Ar Raqqa, UNHCR dispatched assistance to local charities to help 5,000 people on 1 March - the first relief to reach the area since November 2013. On 8 March, WFP trucks reached Ar Raqqa Governorate with

supplies for 20,000 people and on 11 March, food rations sufficient to assist a further 16,000 people for one month reached the warehouse of a WFP implementing partner. In Idleb, an inter-agency convoy dispatched assistance to SARC's warehouse in Salqin on 1 and 2 March to be distributed to 17,500 people in IDP camps in Harim, some of which have not been reached by the UN or SARC for more than nine months. In Damascus, following the truce concluded in Barzeh in January, regular deliveries of assistance have commenced. After lengthy negotiations with the Government, a UN convoy to west Aleppo City on 16 March delivered medicines and medical supplies to assist around 82,000 people; food and medicines for 32,000 Palestine refugees in Neirab camp; and non-food items for 5,000 people. On 27 February, SARC supported by WFP, sent a convoy of assistance for 13,400 families to Deir-ez-Zor City and the rural areas of Abu Kamal city, Al Mayadeen city, Muhassan sub-district and Kabayeb, which had not been reached with food for several months.

32. However, there were several instances in which aid convoys either could not proceed or were prevented from carrying essential items, such as medicines. Deliveries of supplies to Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, for example, have been on hold since 1 March as several trucks are being held at the Government's Al Sukhnah checkpoint in Palmyra town, including those carrying WFP food rations for approximately 45,000 people. In Rural Damascus Governorate, despite the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' agreement, a convoy to Adra Umaliyeh (government-held), and Adra Al Balad (opposition-held) on 12 March was held at a Government checkpoint for hours, making it impossible to reach the convoy's destination and distribute relief items by nightfall. Government officials also removed medical supplies from the convoy prior to its departure on the basis that there were no functioning health facilities in the two locations. The following day, the convoy again could not reach the two locations due to sustained shooting, shelling and the lack of sufficient assurances of safe passage from Jabat Al Nusra. In Homs Governorate, the UN delivered humanitarian assistance to 20,000 people in the opposition-held area of Al Houla and to 2,000 people in government-controlled Shaheen on 7 March. However, some medicines, initially approved by the Government, were removed from the convoy by the Government security focal point.
33. Many of the 258 hard to reach areas have yet to be reached with assistance (see map attached). These include locations that host large numbers of Palestine refugees, such as Khan Eshieh Camp, in Rural Damascus, and Mzereib and Jillin, in Dara'a Governorate. The latter have been under the control of opposition forces since 2012 and UNRWA has not, to date, been permitted to conduct cross-line missions.

c) Cross-border assistance

34. Following repeated requests from the Emergency Relief Coordinator to the Government of Syria for permission to use the shortest routes possible to get to people in need, including cross border, on 22 November 2013, the Syrian Government informed the Secretary-General in writing of its decision to allow the entry of humanitarian aid through official border crossings with Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. The Syrian Government has repeatedly said that using border crossing points from Turkey, which are not under its control 'is a red line'. Relief supplies continued to transit through the official Government controlled crossings with Lebanon and Jordan. However, the Al-Ya'rubiyah crossing with Iraq remained closed as the Government of

Syria objected to the raising of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) Kurdish flag there. Given the urgent need to deliver supplies to Al-Hasakeh, where 500,000 people have been without assistance for over six months, United Nations agencies organized numerous airlifts from Erbil and Damascus to Qamishly as negotiations continued to secure the opening of the border crossing. However, these airlifts are a limited and highly cost-ineffective alternative to land access.

35. On 6 March, following repeated requests from the United Nations, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs verbally communicated to the United Nations that the Government had approved the opening of the Nusaybin border crossing with Turkey for the dispatch of humanitarian relief supplies to Al-Hasakeh Governorate. A written agreement was received on 13 March and a Note Verbale was sent to the Government with details of the cross-border convoy request on 16 March. On 20 March, the first eight trucks of the UN humanitarian convoy reached Qamishly. The convoy includes 79 trucks carrying food, blankets, mattresses, hygiene kits, medicines and medical supplies for 268,000 people in need.
36. During the reporting period, the United Nations reiterated its request to the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that other border crossings be opened or better utilized to deliver humanitarian assistance to people in need. This includes additional crossing points with Turkey (Bab Al Hawa and Baba Al Salameh) for access to around 3.35 million people in need in Aleppo and Idleb Governorates and Jordan (Al Naseeb and Tal Shihab) for access to around 452,000 people in need in Dar'a and Quneitra Governorates. The Government restated its position that any border crossing can be opened as long as it is a "legal" official crossing point and will not compromise the sovereignty of the Government of Syria.

V. Administrative hurdles

37. Despite the formation of the working group by the Government on implementation of resolution 2139, there has been no progress in streamlining and speeding-up procedures to facilitate inter-agency convoys during the reporting period and the process for approval remains extremely complex and time-consuming. 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 SARC following the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' approval; 3) issuance of a facilitation letter by the Ministry of Social Affairs. In the case of medical assistance delivery, an additional letter issued by the Ministry of Health is required.
38. The humanitarian response in Syria also continues to be hampered by limited operational capacity. There are currently 18 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) approved to operate in Syria. The number of national NGOs currently authorized to partner directly with the UN increased by three during the reporting period to 77. However, the number of national NGOs approved to work with the UN in the most affected governorates remains limited. Restrictive requirements also continue to govern INGO cooperation with SARC and are preventing the ability of INGOs to expand humanitarian operations, including hindering the establishment of INGO sub-offices and not allowing them to work with national NGOs.

39. On 4 March, the Government communicated a new procedure for issuing UN visas, reiterating that processing requires 15 working days for non-UNDSS applications and 30 days for UNDSS applications. UN Heads of Agencies are to be issued renewable multiple entry visas of one year duration; deputy heads of agencies renewable multiple entry visas for six months; and international UN officials who have contracts to work in UN Agency offices in Syria renewable multiple entry visas for three months. In the reporting period, 27 UN visas requests (new visas and renewals) have been submitted. Of these, 18 have been approved, 8 remain pending, and one was rejected. During the reporting period, UNDSS obtained one visa but six UNDSS visa requests remain pending. Obtaining more DSS visas is essential for the expansion of humanitarian operations. The new policy announced on 4 March does not apply to INGOs, which continue to primarily receive three-month visas, often limited to single entry. 17 INGO visa applications remain pending.
40. Given the regular phone and internet outages, and the impact of growing fuel and power shortages on communications infrastructure in Syria, access to emergency communications equipment for UN staff is essential. On 16 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the United Nations that the required authorizations for approval to import and license communications equipment, which have been pending for many months, will be followed up urgently.

VI. Free passage of medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies

41. Despite the Security Council's demand that all parties respect the principle of medical neutrality and facilitate free passage to all areas for medical personnel, equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items, negotiation for the delivery of medical supplies continues to have to be negotiated with the Government of Syria on a case-by-case basis. Since the adoption of the resolution, medical supplies have been removed by government officials from inter-agency convoys to Al Houla (Homs), Adra (Rural Damascus) and Madamiyet Elsham (Rural Damascus) which would have assisted around 201,000 people. In addition, on 24 February, a WHO shipment of medicines and medical supplies destined for Ar Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor was held up at the Government-controlled Palmyra Al Sukhnah checkpoint. With the intervention of the Ministry of Health, the Ar Raqqa shipment was released on 5 March and reached its destination on 8 March. The shipment for Deir-ez-Zor, 75 per cent of which was destined for Boukamal (opposition-controlled), and 25 per cent for Deir-ez-Zor City (government-controlled), was released on 10 March and have since reached their destinations.

VII. Safety and security of personnel engaged in humanitarian relief activities

42. The operational environment continues to be extremely difficult and dangerous for humanitarian workers. On 6 March, three mortars landed in the vicinity of Damascus Community School in Abou Roummaneh neighbourhood of Damascus city, injuring two INGO staff. On 3 March, volunteers from SARC Aleppo Branch were beaten and harassed by armed opposition groups while carrying out a mission near the Aleppo prison. On 12 March, the Palestinian Red Crescent confirmed the death of one of its pharmacists working in Yarmouk Camp, shot dead outside the hospital by unknown perpetrators. On 18 March, mortars landed near the Safir Hotel in Homs, where the United Nations hub is based, damaging one UN vehicle.

VIII. Observations

43. As the conflict enters its fourth year indiscriminate and disproportionate violence and brutality continues unabated. According to most observers and reports, well over 100,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the conflict. Reports and estimates from UN agencies indicate that more than 600,000 have been injured since the onset of the crisis in March 2011. More than 9.3 million people in Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance, including 6.5 million internally displaced. Nearly 2.6 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and North Africa. Approximately 50% of the 540,000 Palestine refugees registered in Syria have been displaced within Syria, with at least another 70,000 displaced to other countries. 5.5 million Syrian children are in need of assistance.
44. Cities and villages have been reduced to rubble; communities are threatened and attacked; millions have been forced to flee. Poverty is on the rise. Weapons continue to flow into the country and are used indiscriminately against civilians. Health facilities and schools and other civilian infrastructure continue to be used for military purposes. Grave crimes go unpunished and thousands remain in captivity without recourse to due process.
45. I am extremely concerned with the ongoing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Syria and the culture of impunity which has developed. All sides in the conflict must adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law. I strongly condemn the continued heavy shelling, including the use of barrel bombs by the Syrian government forces in residential neighbourhoods, as well as the terror acts in Syria by extremist groups who are attempting to impose radical ideologies in some parts of the country. I also remain deeply concerned at the participation of foreign elements and groups in the fighting. I reiterate my firm opposition to the transfer of arms and fighters from outside the Syrian Arab Republic to either side inside the country and call on all States, organizations and groups to immediately cease supporting the violence in the country and to use their influence to promote a political solution instead.
46. One month after the passing of Security Council resolution 2139, humanitarian access in Syria remains extremely challenging for humanitarian organizations. Delivering lifesaving items, in particular medicines, remains difficult. And the assistance reaching people continues to fall far short of what is required to cover even their basic needs.
47. I strongly urge the Government of Syria to: streamline and speed-up convoy procedures, ensure the safe passage of humanitarian convoys at all Government controlled checkpoints, and ensure that security focal points comply with approvals given at the Damascus level; facilitate the passage of medicines, including surgical supplies, and desist from the removal of medical supplies from convoys; and continue to speed up the approval of visas. I urge opposition forces to: facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access and grant safe passage to convoys; strengthen control and command structures to enable the safe passage of convoys at checkpoints they control; and ensure the safety and security of humanitarian staff.

48. While localised ceasefires have led to access in a limited number of locations, the implementation of localized ceasefire agreements is hampered by the absence of a neutral third party to monitor them, lack of trust between the government, opposition groups and local communities, and proliferation of armed groups and pro-government militias. I strongly denounce the use of siege as a tactic of war and ask all parties to immediately allow assistance to besieged areas and allow civilians, who wish, to leave these areas.
49. Syria is now the biggest humanitarian and peace and security crisis facing the world. It requires an immediate end to violence and a negotiated political solution to the conflict.
50. Joint Special Representative Brahimi has continued his tireless efforts to negotiate an agreed transition. However, I deeply regret that the process initiated through the cooperation between the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Nations has produced such poor results. I call for the Syrian parties, the regional players and the international community to refocus efforts to work with stronger political will and greater unity to help the Syrian people achieve their legitimate aspirations through a revitalized political process. The United Nations does not have the option of walking away from Syria.
51. Lastly I wish to pay tribute to the United Nations staff on the ground for their outstanding courage, dedication and commitment during this particularly difficult time. I would also like to thank the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Yacoub El-Hillo, and the Head of the Office of the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative for Syria, Mokhtar Lamani, for their leadership and hard work.

Syrian Arab Republic: Besieged communities and hard to reach areas (as of 17 March 2014)



Estimated 220,000 people in besieged areas

Legend

- Hard to reach area January 2014
- Hard to reach area October 2013
- Besieged area
- Previously besieged area
- Closed border crossing
- Open border crossing
- Sporadically open border crossing

Zahra and Nubul
 45,000 people
 Besieged by opposition forces

Homs (Old City)
 2,000 people estimated to remain in besieged area
 Besieged by government forces

Damascus and Rural Damascus

Besieged by government forces

Darayya
8,000 people

Madamiyet Elsham
5,000 people

Eastern Ghouta
160,000 people in:
 Douma
 Harasta
 Arbin
 Ein Terma
 Saqba
 Kafr Bartna
 Hamoryah
 Jisreen
 Al-Maliha

Other locations: Douma, Arbin, Zamalka, Kafr Bartna, Yarmouk

Creation date: 17 March 2014 Source: Various Feedback: ochasyria@un.org
 The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Syrian Arab Republic: Hard to access locations

(as of 21 March 2014)

