



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

Commissioner Georgieva condemns killing of first-aid volunteer in Syria

Brussels, 27 April 2012 - The Syrian government must guarantee the safety of humanitarian aid workers and grant unfettered access to conflict zones within the country, Commissioner Georgieva said today.

The Humanitarian Aid Commissioner was speaking after being briefed on the death of Mohammed Khadra, a first-aid volunteer with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, who was killed while trying to save the lives of others in Douma, near Damascus. The circumstances of his death are still unclear.

"The continuing violence is fuelling a humanitarian crisis with ever growing needs that must be urgently addressed. I appeal to the Government of Syria to cooperate with the international humanitarian organisations and allow greater and unhindered access for international humanitarian aid workers".

She added: "I am very shocked and saddened by news of the killing of a humanitarian worker in Syria where he was providing relief to people in need. Humanitarian aid is about saving lives without fear or favour to any creed. Its impartiality is sovereign. Attacks on relief workers are unacceptable. As Europeans we applaud the valuable work of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and call on everyone in Syria to respect aid workers who are risking their lives to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable."

Background

Since the beginning of 2011, Syria has been experiencing violent unrest opposing anti-government street protesters and the security forces. According to the United Nations, killings and human rights violations in Syria have resulted in more than 11,000 deaths. It is estimated that between 1.5 and 3 million people are affected by the violence.

More than 47,000 people have already sought refuge in neighbouring countries, mainly Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, but also to Iraq and Libya. Host countries have been working to meet the basic needs of refugees and to ensure their protection.

The intensification of violence has hindered the capacity of humanitarian workers in Syria to provide essential relief to populations in need.

The European Commission has supported the relief operations inside Syria and the assistance to refugees from the country with 10 million EUR. To date, the Member States of the European Union have also contributed over 22 million EUR in humanitarian funding for this crisis.

For more information

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

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