



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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SYRIA CRISIS: COMMISSIONER KRISTALINA GEORGIEVA'S VISIT TO REFUGEES IN IRAQ MARKS TRAGIC THIRD ANNIVERSARY

Kristalina Georgieva, the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, is in the North of Iraq to meet with the Kurdish Iraqi Authorities, EU humanitarian partners, and most importantly, with Syrian refugees who have fled the conflict in their country.

Her visit underlines the European Union's firm commitment to maintaining its assistance to the most vulnerable and to the host nations generously taking in millions of victims of a conflict which reaches its third anniversary this week.

The Commissioner said "Since the start of this terrible conflict, more than 2.5 million men, women and children have fled Syria, of whom 230,000 are being sheltered right now by Iraq. The country has its own problems, but despite this, its door has been open to vulnerable Syrians fleeing from their own Hell. Europe has always demonstrated its solidarity with internally displaced Iraqis but it has also provided assistance to cope with the ever-growing flow of refugees from Syria. I take advantage of my visit here to call for an end to the violence in the region, unlimited access to those in need, respect for International Humanitarian Law, and most important of all, a sustainable political solution to the crisis.

I also appeal to all the generous hosting countries to keep their borders open. It is vital that to avoid a further massive outflow to neighbouring countries, access to those in need inside Syria is improved. For this reason it is vital that tangible progress be made on implementing the UN Security Council Resolution on the humanitarian situation in Syria.

We must not let this tragedy slip into political oblivion because of other crises. On this third and shameful anniversary of the Syrian conflict, it is my heartfelt wish that there will not be a fourth."

Since the outset of the conflict, the European Commission has provided €21 million to assist more than 225 000 Syrians, mainly of Kurdish origin, who have fled the violence inside Syria and crossed to the Kurdish region of Iraq. About 30% are hosted in camps, of which Domiz is by far the largest. The remaining 70% are living in urban areas across the three Kurdish Governorates, often under very difficult circumstances. The funding provided through the Commission's Humanitarian and Civil Protection department (ECHO) has provided assistance including registration, protection, shelter, water and sanitation, food and other items for the most vulnerable. Aid channelled through its humanitarian partners has supported Domiz Camp in Dohuk governorate and also urban refugees.

In addition, under the Children of Peace initiative launched with the prize money of the Nobel Peace Prize received by the European Union in 2012, ECHO also launched two specific projects to provide basic education to refugee children, one in 2013 and another in 2014.

The European Commission provides humanitarian assistance through its partners which include UN agencies, International Organisations such as the Red Cross/Red Crescent family, and international NGO's while fully respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

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

& in Arabic : <http://echo-arabic.eu>

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

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

Contacts :

[David Sharrock](#) (+32 2 296 89 09)

[Irina Novakova](#) (+32 2 295 75 17)

For the public: **Europe Direct** by phone **00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11** or by [e-mail](#)