

Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos

Briefing to the Security Council on Syria

New York, 30 September 2014

Madam President,

Seven months have passed since the adoption of resolution 2139, and two months since the adoption of resolution 2165 on the humanitarian situation in Syria. The resolutions aim to stop the relentless violence and violations of international human rights and humanitarian law against Syria's people. They also seek to improve access to those in need.

But the violence continues unabated throughout Syria, including in areas previously not as affected, and people are being subjected, on a daily basis, to further displacement and deprivation.

In the last few weeks international attention has been focused on the need to halt the progression of ISIL across Syria and Iraq. ISIL are accused of beheadings, mass murder and of sexually enslaving women and girls in areas under their control. There are extremely worrying reports of children being recruited into ISIL forces.

Over the past two weeks ISIL forces have advanced in northern Aleppo and over 160,000 people—mostly women and children—fled into Turkey in just a few days. Their fear was so great that many people crossed heavily mined fields to seek refuge. There is a possibility that tens of thousands more people could be forced out of Syria, if ISIL forces continue to gain ground.

The other parties to the conflict also continue to show an utter disregard for international humanitarian and human rights law. Violence, including the use of barrel bombs, car bombs, and mortars, continues to cause civilian deaths and injuries. All parties continue to fire indiscriminately on populated areas, and on markets and bakeries. Murder, execution, torture, hostage-taking and other violations of international law continue with total impunity.

The Government has continued its aerial attacks, including the use of barrel bombs. OHCHR has received information that dozens of civilians were killed in Aleppo from such attacks, including women and children. Government forces also continued their heavy shelling of the Joubar neighbourhood of Damascus, reportedly killing civilians.

In its latest report, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria states that civilians and civilian infrastructure have been systematically targeted. Nine medical facilities were reportedly attacked in August alone, including three which were hit by barrel bombs.

Armed opposition groups have fired on Government-controlled territory. Extensive shelling of the Al-Khalideah residential and commercial area of Aleppo city in early September killed at least eight civilians, including women and children. Nine days ago, mortars fired into Government-controlled areas landed near two schools and a playground. Four people were killed and 33 injured.

Madam President,

I have reported to this Council in the past the devastating consequences of this cycle of violence and destruction on Syria's people. Those who can, flee. More than 3 million Syrians have registered in neighbouring countries as refugees. The number who have left is far higher than that. Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey are hosting millions of refugees and the displaced, stretching the resources of their communities and their national economies to the limit.

Those who cannot flee remain. The whole population is affected by the loss of essential infrastructure and degradation of basic services. Millions are short of food, of medicines and almost 3 million children are not in school.

11 million vulnerable people inside Syria require urgent humanitarian assistance and of those, 6.4 million people are internally displaced. Many have been displaced several times. Sustained access to provide the most basic assistance to some 4.7 million people who have been hard to reach for months, some for years, continues to be a major challenge. And a further 241,000 people are deliberately besieged, mostly by Government forces, and are denied assistance. Each month that passes sees more people denied their basic human rights.

Intense fighting and shifting conflict lines continues to make the delivery of aid difficult and dangerous. The parties to the conflict continue to put obstacles in the way of the sustained access that humanitarian organisations require.

Nearly 600,000 people in the two governorates of Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa could not be reached by the World Food Programme last month due to ongoing violence and the presence of armed groups. It is the third month in a row that WFP could not reach people in need in Deir ez-Zor.

Parties to the conflict also continue to block aid deliveries to areas outside of their control. This includes armed opposition groups in Aleppo governorate, which have prevented aid from being delivered to areas under the control of ISIL.

The Government continues to use administrative procedures to hinder the rapid and sustained delivery of aid. While the changes introduced by the Government on loading plans and imports from official entry points are welcome, the process for deliveries to hard-to-reach areas remains far too cumbersome. And the centralisation of approval for deliveries continues to hamper our operations, as does the need to negotiate delivery routes once approval has been received.

Aid workers trying to get lifesaving assistance to people continue to face grave danger. David Haines was the 63rd humanitarian aid worker to be killed since the start of the war.

Madam President,

Despite the dangers, the United Nations and partners continue to reach millions of people in need. Last month WFP and partners delivered food for more than 4.1 million people. 16.5 million people were provided with access to clean water by UNICEF and partners. Over 400,000 people received core relief items.

With the support of the governments of Turkey and Jordan implementation of resolution 2165 has helped us to deliver food for 144,500 people, health support for 151,000, and other basic assistance for 315,000 people through additional cross-border operations, complementing the work of NGOs that have been operating across-borders not controlled by the Syrian Government for many years. The opening today of the Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing will allow the transfer of further assistance for another 225,000 people.

The humanitarian community has developed an integrated plan, initially for four governorates - Dara'a, Quneitra, Aleppo and Idlib - that covers food, health, shelter, and water and sanitation needs and coordinates the work of all humanitarian actors – UN agencies and NGOs. We continue to seek to reach the maximum number of people by the most direct and effective routes: across conflict lines, cross-border or through regular aid deliveries. This approach ensures complementarity of effort and builds upon current operations.

Despite the modest progress, sustained pressure on all parties to ensure that they respect and implement resolutions 2139 and 2165 is crucial.

We also need your financial support. I welcome the more than 1 billion dollars pledged last week for our response efforts in Syria and neighbouring countries as the United Nations and partners have already been forced to cut back on critical aid.

Without additional funds, the World Food Programme will be forced to end its operations completely within two months. Rations have already been cut in order to continue to reach as many people as possible. Winter is fast approaching and vital supplies are needed to protect people from the cold. Neighbouring countries also need urgent support so that they can continue to shelter millions of refugees.

But most critical of all, the violence that has already killed over 190,000 people must stop.

Thank you.