

UN Humanitarian and Human Rights Chiefs urge immediate safe passage for civilians and aid workers in Homs and Aleppo

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GENEVA/NEW YORK (12 July 2013): The following joint statement has been issued on Friday by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos:

“We are extremely alarmed at the escalating violence in Homs and Aleppo, and the humanitarian and human rights impact on ordinary people.

We understand that up to 2,500 people remain trapped inside Homs, where there are reports of continuing shelling, use of long-range weapons and ground attacks using tanks. The presence of armed opposition groups inside residential areas also increases the risk for civilians.

We call on all parties to immediately halt all actions that might result in civilian loss of life, to grant immediate safe passage to allow civilians to leave Homs and to allow humanitarian aid to get in. Negotiations on this continue but neither the Government nor armed groups have provided sufficient safety or security guarantees for civilians or aid workers.

We continue to urge all parties to respect their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian laws to protect civilians and to allow neutral, impartial humanitarian organizations safe access to all people in need, wherever they are in Syria.

UN agencies and humanitarian partners are helping people who have managed to leave Homs for safety in nearby towns and villages. Food and other basic supplies have been pre-positioned so that they can be delivered in Homs as soon as safe access is permitted, while humanitarian agencies continue to bring vital aid to communities in need in Aleppo and elsewhere.”

For further information and media requests, please contact:

Liz Throssell – UN Human Rights Media Unit, Geneva (+ 41 22 917 9434 or +41 79 752 0488) / ethrossell@ohchr.org)

Amanda Pitt – OCHA, New York (pitta@un.org/ +1 917 442 1810)

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