

All sides in Syria crisis felt impact of 'horrific' weekend attack on evacuee convoy, says UN envoy

20 April 2017 – Speaking to journalists after a meeting of the Humanitarian Taskforce (HTF), Staffan de Mistura, the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria, stated that the horrific attack on a convoy of evacuees this past weekend had impacted everyone at today's talks.

"Armed groups' representatives [present at the HTF], Government representatives and non-governmental organizations, all of them [were] affected by the explosion, all helped to make sure that [the wounded] could get to the hospital," [said](#) Mr. de Mistura.

"That was the main moment of total unity among all the members of the HTF [...] in a way the divisions were blurred by the horrific attack which was meant to do the opposite," he added.

At least 130 people, including 67 children were killed in the attack near Rashideen, western rural Aleppo, and more than 200 were wounded. [According](#) to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)), video showed children gathering around a person giving out sweets just prior to the explosion.

Mr. de Mistura also informed the media that he will be meeting with the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister on Monday, 24 April, to discuss the next steps regarding both Astana process – which yielded the December 2016 ceasefire in Syria brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran – and the UN-facilitated [intra-Syrian talks](#).

He also noted that though the trilateral meeting, involving the UN, the United States and Russia has been postponed, it "is still on the table" and there is a clear intention to maintain the forum and resume it at a later date.

Together with the Ceasefire Taskforce, the Humanitarian Taskforce was established last February by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). They have been meeting separately on a way forward in the crisis. Russia and the United States are the co-chairs of the taskforces and the ISSG, which also comprises the UN, the Arab League, the European Union and 16 other countries.

Also speaking alongside Mr. de Mistura, Jan Egeland, the UN Senior Advisor informed the media that as of mid-April, some 564,000 people across front lines, and in besieged and hard-to-reach areas were provided with relief. Compared to last year, fewer people were reached in besieged areas (160,000) but more were provided relief in hard-to-reach areas.

“So 30 per cent less access to besieged areas, 35 per cent more to hard-to-reach areas,” he said, noting that there are resources for relief in Syria and humanitarians willing to deliver them, “but the military logic is [prevailing over] the besieged areas these days [and] we are not able to go there.”

Mr. Egeland further underlined that besiegement should end by being lifted, not by places being emptied from people, and expressed hope for a breakthrough so that people are able to access urgently needed humanitarian relief as well as get back to their normal lives.

“If they follow a military logic, I think they will continue, if they follow a humanitarian logic I think a breather could be wise to ensure that there are sufficient protection guarantees,” he said. “[Sieges] belong in the Middle Ages, they do not belong in 2017, they could be lifted, you can still choose to fight a war, but without suffocation of civilians.”