

# [Press release: Middle East Minister condemns violence against innocent Syrians as new report reveals 9 in 10 live in daily fear](#)

A child is assessed for malnutrition in Eastern Ghouta, October 2017.  
Picture: Linda Tom/OCHA

The scale of fear and suffering in Syria, as well as the extreme measures people are taking to survive the relentless conflict, has been confirmed by a new report from global aid organisation [Mercy Corps](#), backed by the Department for International Development, which has been released today (22 February 2018).

Speaking at the launch of the report, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt called out the “callous” Assad regime for using food as a weapon of war and announced an emergency UK aid package to provide safe water to 575,000 people in Idlib, where violence against innocent Syrians has intensified in recent weeks.

As the crisis enters its eighth year, the new report reveals that 9 in 10 people live in daily fear for their own safety and the safety of their families.

It finds that military attacks continue to affect millions of innocent men, women and children still living in Syria. They typically experience serious violence – which would result in death, injury or destruction of property – twice a week.

Desperate parents are taking extreme measures, such as selling their homes and sending children to work in order to raise money, while a few have even joined armed groups and forced young daughters into marriage.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Middle East Minister Alistair Burt said:

As the brutal conflict enters its eighth year, this important report lays bare the horrific reality of daily life in Syria. With food still being used as a weapon of war by the callous Assad regime, families are driven to desperate measures to survive and their bravery and resilience are clear.

Millions of innocent Syrian men, women and children rely on UK aid and they need our help now more than ever. That’s why we’re providing an emergency clean water to hundreds of thousands of people that have fled the violence in Idlib, to help keep them

alive and stop the spread of deadly and preventable diseases.

But aid alone is not enough. All parties must stop the bloody violence, protect civilians, respect international international law and allow immediate and unhindered access for much needed aid convoys to get to those in need. Whilst the international community works towards a political solution to the conflict, which is in all our interests, emergency aid is the only way to alleviate the crisis inside Syria.

The research shows how civilians have learned to adapt. Although, more than two-thirds of those surveyed have lost their jobs, at least a third of those have been able to find new sources of income.

However, two in three households still don't know where their next meal is coming from, underlining the importance of getting immediate and unfettered aid access to stop people starving.

One family told Mercy Corps that they suffered from poisoning after eating animal fodder because it was the only way they could feed themselves.

Arnaud Quemin, Country Director for Mercy Corps in Syria said:

This study backs up with evidence what we have seen in our daily work in Syria. The resourcefulness of people in the midst of extreme violence is remarkable and a testament to the immense adaptive power of humanity. These are dire events, and yet there are still glimmers of hope.

With the vital support of UK aid, Mercy Corps has been helping Syrians since the war began almost seven years ago, and has saved many lives. We believe that the findings from this report offer us new ways to adapt that support to help Syrians in the best way possible.

Since the conflict began in 2011, 11 million people have fled their homes and 6 million of those are still sheltering inside Syria.

Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis and we have delivered 21 million food rations, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.

UK aid continues to provide vital food, water and shelter to those most in need – including in Eastern Ghouta, where 400,000 people are under siege by the Asad regime, and in Idlib, where more than 300,000 people have fled their homes in the last two months.

The package of support announced today will provide fuel and oil to open 49 pumping stations to get clean drinking water to 575,000 people in over 122

villages in Idlib. This will give a vital lifeline to hundreds of thousands that have fled their homes in recent weeks and face death, disease or serious illness without a clean water supply.

It will also send water trucks, hygiene kits and emergency supplies to the most vulnerable people if the fighting intensifies to the point that they cannot get access to the water that they so desperately need.

### **Notes to editors**

1. 'The Wages of War' report published today (Thursday 22 February) was produced by Mercy Corps and is backed by the Department for International Development. It is the result of surveys with 1600 people in more than 120 communities across Syria, including areas under siege. The report can be viewed here: <http://bit.ly/2EEypBJ>
2. The UK aid package announced today will provide up to £15 million for an NGO to deliver clean water to people in the region of Idlib. It is a new allocation from the UK's response to the Syria crisis. For safety and security reasons, DFID does not name a number of our partners operating in Syria.
3. The UK is a leading donor in the humanitarian response. To date we have committed over £2.46 billion in humanitarian funding to the region. We have already delivered 20.9 million food rations, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.
4. As well as delivering vital aid, we have helped renew United Nations Security Council resolution 2165, which allows aid to be delivered cross-border into Syria without the consent of the regime. Since the UK sponsored the resolution in 2014, it has allowed desperately needed aid to reach over 3 million people.
5. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response to the Syria crisis, visit:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>
6. Mercy Corps is an independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian organisation with a mandate to deliver urgent aid to civilians in need, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. For more, visit: <http://www.mercycorps.org.uk>

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## [News story: UK ranked 8th least corrupt country in the world](#)

The [Transparency International index](#) (published today – 21 February), drawn up by the leading civil society organisation fighting corruption worldwide, ranks 180 countries on how corrupt a country's public sector is viewed as. In the last year, the UK has moved 2 places from 10th least corrupt in the world to joint 8th.

Drawing on evidence from 13 surveys of business people and expert assessments, the index analysis highlights links between corruption, press freedom and the decline of civil liberties around the world.

Security Minister Ben Wallace said:

I am pleased that Transparency International has ranked UK as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. Our improved position clearly reflects the proactive role this government has taken to combat corruption both at home and abroad.

But we are not complacent and recognise there is more to do. That is why we published the UK's first anti-corruption strategy which establishes an ambitious longer-term commitment to tackle corruption.

I am determined that law enforcement and the government should work together to drive out dirty money and its corrupting effect.

The UK is making concerted efforts to tackle corruption and published the first [UK anti-corruption strategy](#) in December 2017. The strategy contains over 100 fully-resourced commitments to guide government efforts and establishes a 5-year plan to reduce corruption.

The strategy builds upon the UK's strong anti-corruption drive. The UK: was the first G20 country to publish the details of who owns and controls UK companies; was the first G7 country to undergo an international monetary fund fiscal transparency evaluation; and, in 2017, passed the [Criminal Finances Act](#) which established new anti-corruption tools and powers such as Unexplained Wealth Orders. These investigative orders require certain individuals – either politically exposed persons or individuals reasonably suspected of involvement with or connected to serious and organised crime – to explain the source of their wealth, supporting the UK's effort to tackle corruption.

Alongside the department's efforts, the Prime Minister announced the

appointment of John Penrose MP as the new anti-corruption champion. In his role, Mr Penrose will be responsible for challenging and supporting the government in implementing the strategy, as well as promoting the UK's response to corruption both domestically and internationally.

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## Speech: The Responsibility to Adhere to the UN Charter's Ideals

Thank you Your Excellency for convening this session and focusing the Council's attention on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

And thank you to the Secretary General and his Excellency the former Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for their briefings today.

This session, as you've said, takes place around the 27th anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait. This is a clear example of the United Nations fulfilling its purposes through maintaining international peace and security.

As UN Member States, we have a responsibility to adhere to the Charter's ideals and to work within the UN framework to solve the most challenging global problems.

When the horrific violence in Rakhine forced the Rohingya to flee, the Security Council played a vital role, focusing the world's attention on the situation and encouraging action by the authorities on the ground. We must now take further action to ensure safe and voluntary return to take place, and we should visit the region.

Mr President,

The Council must work together to achieve the Charter's purposes. When we do, we are successful.

We have remained united in our commitment to providing the tools to achieve peace in Colombia and in our support for Cyprus's peace process. We were successful in Liberia and Cote de Ivoire. We have remained united in our condemnation of Daesh and the need for accountability for their atrocious actions.

And we have remained united in our condemnation of the DPRK's flagrant violations of international law, where we have used sanctions to constrain the DPRK's pursuit of illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. In this context sanctions play a crucial role in maintaining international peace and security.

The implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which balances

sanctions relief with strict nuclear restrictions, is another significant achievement of this Council and marks a major step forward in preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capability.

However, there are instances where Council disunity halts our progress.

We cannot ignore Russian attempts to redraw the boundaries of Europe. This month marks the fourth anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea in breach of Article 2 of the Charter. We remain deeply concerned by the degradation of human rights in eastern Ukraine and we call upon Russia to abide by the Minsk Agreement commitments that it signed up to. It is crucial that we uphold the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Nor can we ignore the conflict that continues to rage in Syria, or its causes. The Syrian conflict, in all of its abhorrent acts and human misery, is an example of what we all set up this United Nations to prevent.

We have proved that we can work together to ease the suffering of the Syrian people. When we adopted Resolution 2393 it enabled the United Nations to continue to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid across conflict lines and borders. Knowing that we can deliver results makes our failures even more frustrating.

These failures are having devastating consequences. The Assad regime's brutal assault of Eastern Ghouta, including reports of chemical weapons use, is causing unprecedented levels of suffering. Targeting of civilian infrastructure is a violation of international humanitarian law. Eastern Ghouta is not a de-escalation zone, it is a zone of death and destruction.

We must work together to end the conflict and prevent further suffering of the Syrian people, and I hope this Council will soon be able to pass a resolution to that effect. The Geneva talks represent the only sustainable path to peace. The opposition continues to engage constructively and in good faith and without preconditions. The Assad regime must do the same.

We must also hold the Syrian regime and others to account for the repeated use of chemical weapons. Our failure here is unacceptable. We must demonstrate that such abhorrent actions have consequences. An independent expert international investigation, set up by this Council, concluded that the regime and Da'esh have used chemical weapons. We must not allow Russian actions to force the closure of this investigation to deter us from pursuing accountability.

Mr President, despite our differences in this Council, we have demonstrated our capacity to show unity in the face of adversity. We must strive to do this more and to think creatively about how we find common solutions.

The United Kingdom is a proud signatory to the ACT Code of Conduct and we are committed to never voting against a credible draft resolution on preventing or ending a mass atrocity.

We fully support the Secretary-General's efforts and proposals to improve the

United Nation's ability to prevent and respond to conflict and promote development. This includes reforms to peacekeeping and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the millions of military, police and civilian personnel who have helped to protect civilians around the world.

We must also continue to tackle relentlessly the scourge of sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, and recognise the disproportionate adverse effect of conflict on women, and the important role of women in peacebuilding.

And we must encourage increased cooperation with regional organisations and arrangements, as set out in the Charter, whether with AMISOM in its fight against Al Shabaab in Somalia, ECOWAS in its resolution of conflict, or the G5 Sahel Joint Force to combat terrorism in West Africa.

Mr President,

Our predecessors drafted the United Nations Charter in the name of the peoples of the world to help save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. In some places, we are succeeding. Elsewhere, we are falling woefully short. Let us all reflect on what more we can do to live up to the Charter's – our Charter's – ideals.

Thank you Mr President.

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## **[Press release: PM meetings with the leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein: 21 February 2018](#)**



A No 10 spokesperson said:

This afternoon, the Prime Minister had meetings with the leaders of the DUP and Sinn Fein on restoring devolved government to Northern Ireland.

In both meetings, she said it was important for everyone to reflect on the circumstances which have led to this and their positions, so a way forward could be found to restore an Executive.

She made clear how the UK government remains steadfast in its commitment to the Belfast Agreement and its successors and reiterated that devolved government is in the best interests of the people in Northern Ireland.

On next steps, she set out how the Northern Ireland Secretary would continue to work intensively with the parties on the basis for an agreement.

The Prime Minister also made clear how challenging decisions lay ahead as the UK government has a responsibility to ensure the continued delivery of public services in Northern Ireland.

On the weeks ahead, she said she will be working closely with the Northern Ireland Secretary and will continue to engage with the parties and the Irish Government.

Published 21 February 2018

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## **Press release: PM meeting with the PM of the Netherlands: 21 February 2018**



A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister Theresa May hosted Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands for a working lunch at Downing Street this afternoon.

Mrs May began by welcoming the new Eurostar route between the UK and the Netherlands, noting that this will bring the two countries



who already share close ties, even closer.

She then gave an update on Brexit negotiations with both leaders agreeing on the importance of concluding the terms of the implementation period in March and the terms of the future partnership as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister set out her vision for a bold future economic partnership with the Netherlands and the whole of the EU after the UK leaves, stressing that we should all be optimistic and flexible to achieve a trading relationship which is as frictionless as possible, which Prime Minister Rutte welcomed.

Finally, both leaders discussed the importance of the role that the UK and Dutch forces were both playing in the Baltics and expressed their wish to continue to work closely together on their shared security issues.

Published 21 February 2018