

Peace in Syria must be built on dignity, human rights for all Syrians, UNHCR envoy Angelina Jolie

29 January 2018 – With nearly 5.5 million war-weary Syrian refugees sheltering in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, Angelina Jolie, the United Nations refugee agency's envoy, visited on Sunday Jordan's Za'atari camp, carrying the message that peace in Syria must be built on human rights.

"It is heart-breaking to return to Jordan and witness the levels of [hardship and trauma among Syrian refugees](#) as the war enters its eighth year," said Ms. Jolie, Special Envoy for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

On behalf of UNHCR, she voiced appreciation to the country for its generosity and humanity, says that Jordanians are "an example to the world, at a time when solidarity with refugees is in short supply."

She asserted that the Syrian crisis has raged for years, saying that UNHCR does not have the funds to fully provide even the most basic necessities for survival for many families.

"Last year, the UNHCR response for the Syria crisis was only 50 per cent funded. And so far in 2018, it is only seven per cent funded," she elaborated, adding that there is nothing more devastating for UNHCR staff than to be unable to help the people.

After seven years of war, most Syrian refugees have exhausted any savings and the vast majority live below the poverty line, on less than three dollars a day.

"Imagine what that would mean for your family," implored Ms. Jolie. "Here, it means families going without sufficient food; children unable to get medical treatment; young girls vulnerable to early marriage; and many Syrians facing their seventh winter without proper shelter."

"This is the reality of those displaced by the conflict in Syria," she added.

Thanking the journalists who bring the situation to the world, Ms. Jolie underscored the fundamental issue as being "the lack of a credible political and diplomatic process – based on human rights and international law – to bring the violence to an end."

"A viable political settlement is the only way to create the conditions for Syrians to return to their homes, and to end the human suffering and the strain on host countries," she stressed.

She maintained that humanitarian aid is not a long-term solution, underscoring "and to be clear, no one wants to get off aid relief more than

Syrian families.”

“For such an educated, capable people, it is soul-destroying to be made this dependent,” she elaborated.

Recalling that the war began with Syrians’ demands for greater human rights, she pressed that peace must be built on that.

“It cannot be built on impunity for the targeting of civilians by all sides, the bombing of schools and hospitals, barrel bombs, torture, chemical weapons and rape used as a weapon of war,” she held sway, adding: “It must be built on accountability – for instance, justice and recognition for the years of violence that women in Syria have faced.”

Ms. Jolie summarized her message to the international community to do more to help meet the needs of desperate Syrian families and the hosting countries, but “above all,” to provide the leadership and strength needed to negotiate a principled end to this senseless war – without sacrificing the dignity and human rights of Syrian families.

“That is non-negotiable,” she concluded.