

## Press release: Alistair Burt calls for urgent and unhindered humanitarian access to Eastern Ghouta

Calling for urgent and unhindered humanitarian access to the Syrian enclave of Eastern Ghouta, Alistair Burt, Minister of State for the Middle East, said:

One year on from the fall of Aleppo, it is appalling that the Asad regime's callous 'surrender or starve' tactics are still being used across Syria in a blatant breach of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Despite being a so-called de-escalation zone, an estimated 400,000 people trapped in Eastern Ghouta are suffering from indiscriminate airstrikes and artillery shelling which, as well as destroying their homes, have struck schools and medical facilities.

The Asad regime has made aid a weapon of war by restricting humanitarian access to the besieged population. Because of these restrictions and increased violence, the humanitarian situation has rapidly deteriorated over the last three months. Around 500 people are in desperate need of medical evacuations – including 137 children – and 12 people have already died waiting for treatment.

The UK strongly condemns recent attacks and the continued siege of Eastern Ghouta. We urgently call on all parties to the conflict to facilitate humanitarian access, allow for emergency medical evacuations and take all feasible measures to protect civilians, as required under international humanitarian law.

We continue to press the Asad regime and its backers for unhindered access, and stand ready to deliver the life-saving assistance that is so desperately needed. Without a political solution to the conflict, this is the only way to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta.