

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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