

Press release: UK aid provides lifeline to defenceless and wounded Syrians to help them return to a liberated Raqqa

The International Development Secretary Priti Patel called for urgent international action to end the “death sentence” that innocent people of Raqqa city still face from explosive booby-traps and wounds inflicted by war.

Ms Patel’s plea came as she announced UK support to clear deadly landmines and restore hospitals and medical treatment for victims of this bloody conflict, helping them to return home safely.

As Raqqa is set to be liberated from Daesh, the first steps are being taken to make the city safe, with UK aid support giving a “glimmer of hope” to the people of Raqqa that one day they will be able to return home and rebuild their lives.

Hundreds of thousands of defenceless men, women and children have fled Daesh brutality and fighting in Raqqa. Many have been forced to leave with nothing and have been left suffering from life-threatening injuries and trauma from years of relentless violence, bombing and landmines planted across the city. Others have been held hostage by the Daesh regime or forced into hiding within the city itself.

Ahead of liberation, Ms Patel announced that the UK is stepping up to:

- clear lethal landmines and explosives, to allow families to return unharmed to their homes, and ensure that humanitarian experts and aid agencies can reach those in desperate need
- restock hospitals and mobile surgical units in the area with essential medicines and equipment to help restore crippled health facilities
- provide 145,000 medical consultations, including for those that have been wounded or starved, and psychological support for 1,600 people who have been traumatised by the horrors of war
- provide immediate relief for innocent people who have been displaced, with 31,000 relief kits including cooking equipment and blankets to keep them warm for winter
- improve access to clean water for 15,000 people, with jerry cans and water-purifying tablets to prevent the spread of deadly disease and sickness
- help pregnant women with 1,000 clean delivery kits to ensure safety for mothers and babies during childbirth.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Daesh's iron grip on the city of Raqqa has stolen the lives of too many innocent people and now that this evil regime has been driven out, it is absolutely crucial that the international community actively helps them rebuild their lives.

After years of barbaric and indiscriminate violence by Daesh, the liberation of Raqqa offers a glimmer of hope – but defenceless men, women and children still face a brutal death sentence from lethal landmines or wounds inflicted by the conflict.

UK aid is providing a lifeline for countless Syrians who have lost absolutely everything, giving life-saving medical treatment, water and blankets to those that have escaped and destroying deadly explosives to ensure people can return safely once Raqqa has finally been freed.

Today's announcement comes as liberation of Raqqa city is set to be declared.

The brutal Syrian civil war, now in its seventh year, has already cost an estimated 400,000 lives, with over 11 million people displaced by conflict and causing a severe shortage of food, clean water and healthcare.

Britain has been at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis and already we have delivered 20.9 million food rations every month, 8.8 million relief packages, 3.3 million vaccines against deadly diseases and 8.1 million medical consultations for those in need in Syria.

Notes to Editors

Today's £10 million package of support is a new allocation from the UK's response to the Syria crisis and will be provided to partners already working in the region, including UN agencies and the World Health Organisation working on the frontline within and around Raqqa governorate.

This includes £5 million for the World Health Organisation and £5 million for other NGOs. For safety and security reasons, DFID does not name a number of our partners operating in Syria.

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.

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>