

# Syria still suffering 'staggering levels' of humanitarian need, Security Council hears

Speaking on behalf of UN emergency relief chief Mark Lowcock, Reena Ghelani, OCHA's Director for Operations and Advocacy, said that this year, an estimated 11.7 million people will require life-saving humanitarian assistance across the country.

- Some 25,000 people displaced from this the south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate to the Al Hol camp.
- The humanitarian situation in Rukban continued to deteriorate, additional humanitarian assistance is being prepared to accommodate 42,000 people.
- Heavy flooding in the north-east and north-west destroyed IDP camp shelters and secondary displacements of already extremely vulnerable people.
- In Idlib, changes in control in some areas, led to funding suspensions, reducing health services cover for some civilians.
- Humanitarian organizations continued to report attacks on educational and medical facilities, include eight incidents targeting schools and hospitals.
- UN humanitarian assistance fed an average of 3.37 million people each month and provided treatment for nearly three million people.
- The UN and NGOs continued to deliver assistance to more than 700,000 people each month in the country's north-eastern part.

Nearly eight years on since mass-protests first began against the Syrian Government in 2011, she painted a picture of what life is like for some 41,000 displaced mainly women and children in Rukban camp, near the Syria-Jordan border, calling it "a dire humanitarian situation" where people struggled for survival, face hunger and lacked the most basic necessities.

Although the UN and Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered essential aid, as part of the largest convoy of the entire war – vaccines and logistical items in 133 trucks during a 10-day mission earlier this month – "the gravity of the situation for civilians in Rukban means that sustained humanitarian access is needed moving forward", she explained, noting that supplies are expected to last "only 30 days."

Moreover, she flagged that internally displaced persons (IDPs) expressed concerns over their lack of documentation, safety and security, worrying particularly about detention and military conscription.

The UN remains "extremely concerned" for civilians who remain in the last ISIL-held areas in south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor Governorate, and for those who were able to flee the fighting, Ms. Ghelani told the Council.

She pointed out that since late last year, over 37,000 people fled from Hajin to the Al-Hol camp some 300 kilometres to the north, where “three-quarters of the total population...is now made up of women and children under the age of five.” Moreover, thousands more are expected to arrive at in the coming days.

“Response efforts are being scaled up in Al Hol camp, but also in Hajin and surrounding areas, despite considerable security challenges,” she stated. Adding that the UN had established a transit centre midway between Hajin and Al Hol.

Meanwhile, although the demilitarized-zone agreement between Turkey and Russia to protect millions of civilians in [Idlib](#) staved off an immediate escalation of fighting in the last rebel-held enclave in Syria, dozens of civilians have still died or been injured due to conflict increased fighting over the last few weeks.

She thanked donors for their generous \$5 billion support in 2018 and urged Member States to “ensure timely funding” for humanitarian operations in Syria and neighboring refugee-hosting countries in 2019.

“The [pledging] Conference in Brussels on 12-14 March will be a critical marker in this regard”, Ms. Ghelani said.

## **Yemen sanctions renewed**

Earlier on Tuesday, the Security Council adopted a resolution renewing for a year, financial and travel ban sanctions against any actors who threaten the peace, security and stability of Yemen.

The Council also reaffirmed a 2015 arms embargo against the Houthi rebel group and forces loyal to the deceased former president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and his son Ahmed Saleh.

In addition to renewing the sanctions, it extended the mandate of the Yemen Panel of Experts until March 2020, requesting that an update be presented to the Yemen Sanctions Committee by the end of July, and a final report to the Council by 28 January next year.

Last week, the Council issued a [press statement](#) stressing the “critical importance” of the parties’ implementing their commitments under the [Stockholm Agreement](#), and called for “the immediate implementation” of the first phase of the redeployment of forces.