

Syria: UN health agency calls for immediate and unimpeded access to save lives in Ghouta

12 November 2017 – Amid worsening humanitarian, health and security situation in Syria's besieged eastern Ghouta, the United Nations health agency has demanded that all parties to the conflict stop attacks on civilians, facilitate immediate medical evacuations, and allow safe passage of medical supplies.

"The situation is heartbreaking," said Elizabeth Hoff, the head of the UN World Health Organization (WHO) operations in Syria, in a [news release](#) Sunday.

"We have now reached a critical point, where the lives of hundreds of people, including many children, are at stake. If they do not immediately get the medical care they urgently need, they will most likely die."

Severe food and medical shortages are reported in eastern Ghouta, rural Damascus, where as many as 400,000 people remain besieged and cut-off from life-saving assistance. Among them, over 240 people require urgent advanced medical care, including 29 "priority" patients "mostly children in critical condition who need immediate medical evacuation."

According to the UN agency, plans are in place for medical evacuations from Ghouta to hospitals and medical facilities in the capital, Damascus, and elsewhere. Medicines have also been prepared for immediate dispatch.

"At this stage, however, no formal approval for evacuations has been received from the responsible national authorities," added WHO in the release.

SEE ALSO: [Syrian conflict has now lasted longer than World War II](#) "UN humanitarian envoy

In addition to the medical necessities in the region, malnutrition "especially among children" is reported to be rising, leaving them at a higher risk of life-threatening infectious diseases.

Safe drinking water is also reportedly hard to find and diseases like [Brucellosis](#), [Hepatitis A](#) and [tuberculosis](#) have reappeared.