

## Syria: Uptick in violence exacerbates already dire situation, says UN food relief agency

16 January 2018 – On top of the already-desperate conditions in Syria’s war-ravaged East Ghouta and north-west Idlib governorate, a violence upsurge is intensifying insecurity, the United Nations food relief agency said Tuesday.

“Since the end of last year, airstrikes have destroyed numerous civilian buildings, killing hundreds of people in both places and, in the case of Idlib, displacing some 100,000 people,” said UN World Food Programme (WFP) Senior Communications Officer Bettina Luescher at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

In Idlib, armed clashes between Government forces, their allies and opposition armed groups have intensified, with insecurity also spreading to parts of northeast Hama, western rural Aleppo and southern Idlib – forcing 100,000 people to abandon their homes near the frontline and move towards safer areas. Conditions in Idlib are dire, with many displaced people forced to stay out in the open during the winter period.

“WFP had assisted a total of 70,000 displaced people in Idlib in December and January with ready-to-eat, five-day rations; [and] there were plans to distribute additional ready-to-eat rations in the coming days,” Ms. Luescher said, adding that WFP had prepositioned over 27,000 rations in Idlib and Aleppo, and that emergency supply shipments from Turkey were also ongoing.

WFP and partners are also conducting needs assessments there.

Fighting continues in the besieged enclave of Eastern Ghouta where nearly 400,000 people are living in dire conditions suffering severe food, fuel and drinking water shortages.

“A total of 417,000 people were currently living under siege in Syria, with the largest proportion of them in besieged areas of Eastern Ghouta, where almost 400,000 people lived,” Ms. Luescher continued, adding: “WFP access to Eastern Ghouta had been severely restricted for the past five years, allowing only a trickle of aid to reach families in need.”

In 2017, WFP had helped to deliver food assistance for 110,000 people in 13 parts of the enclave.

She called ending the seven-year conflict “the single greatest priority,” noting that it continues to push “ever-more people into hunger and misery.”

WFP appealed to all parties to protect civilians, respect humanitarian principles and allow the safe delivery of food to families in need, no matter where they were.