

UN, partners voice deep concern about 750,000 civilians as battle sets to begin in western Mosul

24 January 2017 – A hundred days after the start of military operations to retake Mosul from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh) militants, humanitarian partners are expressing deep concern about the plight of the estimated 750,000 civilians who are currently living in the western sections of the city where fighting is expected to start in coming weeks.

Up until now, eastern Mosul has been the main battleground. To date, 180,000 people have fled the city's eastern sections; more than 550,000 civilians have stayed in their homes.

“We are relieved that so many people in the eastern sections of Mosul have been able to stay in their homes. We hope that everything is done to protect the hundreds of thousands of people who are across the river in the west. We know that they are at extreme risk and we fear for their lives,” said Lise Grande, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, in a statement signed also by other humanitarians from UN agencies and the civil society.

“The reports from inside western Mosul are distressing,” said Ms. Grande, noting that humanitarian partners are unable to access these areas and the prices of basic food and supplies are soaring. Water and electricity are intermittent in neighbourhoods and many families without income are eating only once a day. Others are being forced to burn furniture to stay warm, she added.

“We don't know what will happen in western Mosul but we cannot rule out the possibility of siege-like conditions or a mass exodus,” said Ms. Grande. “They can be killed by booby-traps and in cross-fire and could be used as human shields.”

The Iraqi security forces have adopted a humanitarian concept of operations putting civilian protection at the centre of their battle plan. Humanitarian partners welcome this approach and renew their collective call on all parties to the conflict to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and ensure they have access to life-saving assistance.

“The world's attention is fixed on the military campaign in Iraq. But once this is over, there will still be a humanitarian crisis,” Ms. Grande said, noting that as many as three million Iraqis, maybe even four million depending on what happens in Mosul, Hawiga and Tel Afar, may be displaced from their homes as a result of the conflict.

“These families will need to make crucial choices about how to rebuild

and re-establish their lives. And we will need to be here to help them. We hope and trust that the international community will not walk away after Mosul. It would be a mistake – a very big one – if this were to happen,” she added.

[In Helsinki, UN appeals for nearly \\$5B to help Syrians and host communities](#)

24 January 2017 – The United Nations and partners today appealed at an aid conference in Finland for \$4.63 billion to help people inside Syria, those who fled and the communities hosting them.

“Unless these additional funds are promptly secured, the UN and its partners will have to scale back life-saving assistance, not only for Syrians but also refugees and host communities, with catastrophic consequences,” said Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien.

“It will force families to try to survive with inadequate food intake; it will stop short nutrition programmes to bring babies back to health; it will mean families having to sleep without even plastic sheeting to protect them,” added Mr. O’Brien, who also heads the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which co-organized the conference alongside the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Hosted by Finland, the *Helsinki Conference on Supporting Syrians and the Region* focuses on key humanitarian priorities: saving lives, protection, and building resilience, according to a press release from the organizers.

“The international community must send a clear message that it stands with them and provides the urgently needed support,” Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said in reference to displaced Syrians and host communities in remarks ahead of the funding appeal.

Some 13.5 million people urgently need protection and life-saving aid, according to OCHA, including 2 million children under the age of five.

Within Syria, there are 13 besieged areas with some 650,000 men, women and children cut off from aid.

Those people who have been able to flee to neighbouring countries continue to struggle, along with their host communities, to meet the challenges of the political, economic and social spill-over from the Syria crisis.

“As millions have fled Syria, we have seen extraordinary generosity and

solidarity on the part of host countries and communities and they must not be left to cope alone," said Helen Clark, Administrator of UNDP. "UN agencies and NGO partners are committed to helping governments and host communities build resilience in the face of this crisis. We've made important strides, but we need more support."

The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for 2017 and 2018 launched today aims to assist over 4.7 million refugees from Syria and 4.4 million people hosting them in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.

The appeal is in addition to the \$3.4 billion that the 2017 humanitarian response plan.

[Disease-led poverty 'hardest nut to crack'](#)

Addressing poverty caused by illness is the most difficult task in China's poverty alleviation campaign with about 40 percent of the country's rural poor in that situation, said a senior official on Monday.

The central government subsidy for medical aid reached 15.5 billion yuan (2.26 billion U.S. dollars) in 2016, up 10 percent year on year, to address this problem, said Liu Xitang, director of the social assistance bureau under the Ministry of Civil Affairs, at a press conference.

Financial aid allocated by provincial governments also shot up by 31 percent in 2016, Liu said.

In addition, the central government launched a poverty alleviation project through health promotion in 2016, pledging universal access to basic medical and health services by 2020.

Liu said the Ministry of Civil Affairs would improve its medical aid system to offer more help and ensure "the last line of defense" in medical security for the poor.

[New 'carrier killer' delivered to fleet](#)

The People's Liberation Army Navy on Sunday commissioned its fifth Type 052D

guided missile destroyer to the North Sea Fleet.



Rear Admiral Zhang Wendan, commander of the North Sea Fleet, views the guard of honor on the CNS Xining in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Sunday. [Photo/China Daily]

The PLA Navy said in a news release on Monday that the CNS Xining, which has a hull number of 117, was delivered to a destroyer flotilla of the North Sea Fleet at a naval base in Qingdao, Shandong province.

The fleet's new commander, Rear Admiral Zhang Wendan, who was deputy chief of staff of the PLA Southern Theater Command, conferred the flag to Captain Zhou Minghui, commander of the Xining.

The news release said that the Xining has a stealth design and can act as a flagship for a strike group. It is capable of conducting anti-ship, anti-submarine and air defense operations, it said.

The Type 052D class is deemed by military experts to be the mightiest destroyer and the most capable fleet escort deployed by the PLA Navy. With a large load of anti-ship and land attack cruise missiles, it has been described by some Western observers as a "carrier killer".

According to military sources, a Type 052D destroyer has a full displacement of nearly 7,000 metric tons and a wide range of weapons, including a single-barrel 130-mm naval gun and a close-in weapon system as well as a total of 64 HHQ-9 long-range anti-aircraft missiles and YJ-18 or YJ-83 anti-ship cruise missiles. Adopting a host of cutting-edge technologies, the vessel features a low radar signature, a high information level and a state-of-the-art phased array radar.

The first Type 052D destroyer, the Kunming, joined the PLA Navy in March 2014. The second, the Changsha, started active service in August 2015. The third, the Hefei, was delivered to the Navy in December 2015 while the fourth, the Yinchuan, was commissioned in July last year. All of them belong to the South Sea Fleet. The Xining is the first such vessel to serve with the North Sea Fleet.

A Navy officer told China Daily on condition of anonymity that compared with other Chinese warships he has served with, the Type 052D class features better performance in terms of target detection, air defense, strike precision and joint operations.

[China to start 15 new major water conservation projects](#)

China will start 15 new major water conservation projects in 2017 amid efforts to boost investment and stabilize growth, the country's top economic planner said Monday.

Total investment in major water projects under construction should exceed 900 billion yuan (\$131.3 billion) by the end of this year, compared with the current level of 800 billion yuan, said Wu Xiao, an official with the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), at a conference.

In 2016, 21 major water projects were started.

With its economy slowing, China views infrastructure investment as significant in boosting growth.

China's fixed-asset investment continued to cool in 2016, growing 8.1 percent year on year, down from 10 percent in 2015 and 15.7 percent in 2014.

However, investment in infrastructure construction accelerated by 0.2 percentage points, growing 17.4 percent year on year in 2016, official data showed.