

UN agency gravely concerned by lack of medical services in Syria's eastern Ghouta

22 November 2017 – Despite escalating violence and increasing humanitarian needs, life-saving medicines, medical equipment, and surgical supplies are prevented from entering eastern Ghouta in Syria and the plan to transfer critically ill patients to hospitals elsewhere has not been approved, the United Nations health agency has warned.

“Continuous and [unimpeded humanitarian aid](#) to eastern Ghouta is urgently needed, and medical evacuations of critically ill patients are long overdue,” said Elizabeth Hoff, World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) Representative in Syria.

“Life-saving health supplies are available, and WHO, along with partners, stands ready to respond to health needs once access is granted,” she added.

In eastern Ghouta of Rural Damascus, local health authorities report that in just four days through 17 November, 84 people were killed, including 17 children and 6 women; and 659 people were injured, including 127 children and 87 women.

During the same period, more than 200 surgical operations were conducted in eastern Ghouta's overwhelmed and under-resourced hospitals. Hospitals and healthcare centres have been damaged, severely limiting medical care for people at a time when they need it most.

On 18 November, two resident doctors and three patients at al-Mujtahed Hospital in Damascus city were injured in an attack. The 412-bed facility is one of the main public hospitals in Damascus serving patients from eastern Ghouta and other parts of the country.

WHO is also concerned that lack of essential health services, as well as limited electricity, fuel, safe drinking-water and basic sanitation services are increasing the risk of disease outbreaks such as diarrheal diseases, typhoid and hepatitis.

Further, inter-agency convoys to the area have been irregular, and the aid provided has been insufficient to meet the increasing needs of up to 400,000 people besieged for more than 4 years.