

## With humanitarian catastrophe looming, civilians in Syria's 'Four Towns' need support now – UN relief official

13 February 2017 – A senior United Nations relief official has today called on all parties to come to an agreement and allow immediate and unfettered humanitarian access to more than 60,000 civilians trapped in four Syrian towns of Al-Zabadani, Al-Fu'ah, Kafraya and Madaya.

These four locations were referred to specifically in the so-called 'Four Towns' Agreement to facilitate humanitarian access to the people in need. However, these places have remained inaccessible for humanitarian workers since November last year.

"The unfair and totally unjustified besiegement is compounded by the tit-for-tat arrangement between the Four Towns, which makes humanitarian access prone to painstaking negotiations that are not based on humanitarian principles," Ali Al-Za'tari, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, said in a news release.

Mr. Al-Za'tari stressed that the situation is a looming humanitarian catastrophe and called on all those directly involved forces and all parties which have influence on them to convince them to allow urgent humanitarian assistance, including medical evacuations, to take place without delay.

"This has prevented medical cases from receiving proper treatment and evacuation. People are in need, and they cannot wait any longer. We need to act now," he underlined.

Recalling that the principle of free access to people in need must be implemented the news release noted that civilians trapped in the four towns continue to suffer a cycle of daily violence and deprivation, where malnutrition and lack of proper medical care prevail.

The moral and ethical accountability befalls all those who hinder this access, the release read, adding that the UN and humanitarian partners stand ready to provide humanitarian assistance to the Four Towns as soon as negotiations with the parties to the conflict come to conclusion.