



Syrian Crisis United Nations Response



**A Weekly Update from the
UN Department of Public Information**

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Security Council supports Special Envoy's way forward towards political solution

In a presidential statement issued on 17 August, the Security Council expressed its support for the approach set out on 29 July by Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, to work towards political negotiations and a political transition based on the Geneva communiqué. The Council members supported the proposal to hold consultations and discussions among the Syrian parties in four thematic working groups. These are: safety and protection for all; political and legal issues; military, security and counterterrorism; and continuity of public services, reconstruction and development. The Security Council also called on all parties "to engage in good faith in the efforts of the Special Envoy, through his good offices, and to continue consultations and thematic discussions, and notes that these efforts can build on recent initiatives, including the meetings in Cairo, Moscow, Paris and Astana".

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/PRST/2015/15

<http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniqueActionGroupforSyria.pdf>

Special Envoy for Syria condemns air raids on Douma

Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura expressed his utmost condemnation of air raids on a marketplace in the town of Douma on 16 August. In a statement, the UN Envoy recalled that attacks on civilian areas with indiscriminate aerial bombing, such as with vacuum bombs, are prohibited under international law. "Hitting crowded civilian markets killing almost one hundred of its own citizens by a government is unacceptable in any circumstances," Mr. de Mistura said. "Humanitarian access must be allowed unconditionally and the killing must stop. This conflict will have no military solution, as has been proven over the recent years," he said. The Special Envoy called on all Syrian parties to urgently cease all acts of violence and start dialogue towards a political solution to this crisis.

<http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=4047>

UN Human Rights Office calls bombing of Douma marketplace outrageous

Echoing the Special Envoy's condemnation, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) described as outrageous the bombing in Douma. The agency noted in a statement on 18 August that the attack had deepened the intense suffering of the civilian population in the area, which has been under siege by Government forces since 2013. At least 111 civilians have reportedly been killed and at least 200 others were injured -- many of whom are in serious condition, OHCHR said. It stressed that any intentional direct attack against civilians or civilian objects as well as the use of indiscriminate weapons in densely populated areas are serious violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and may amount to a war crime for which individuals can be held criminally responsible.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16329&LangID=E>

UN Relief Chief horrified by total disregard for civilians

On 17 August, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien wrapped up his first visit to Syria aimed at stepping up relief operations. While in Damascus, the UN relief chief met with Syrian officials. He also visited refugee families in Homs. Speaking to reporters afterwards, Mr. O'Brien condemned the aerial attack in Douma and emphasised the need to protect civilians. "I am absolutely horrified by the total disregard for civilian life by all parties in this conflict. Attacks on civilians are unlawful, unacceptable and must stop. I appeal to every party engaged in violence and fighting to protect civilians and to respect international humanitarian law", he stressed. Following his meetings with Government officials on ways to strengthen aid operations, the UN official expressed hope that concrete steps will be taken to provide vital assistance to people in need. "The United Nations and our partners are providing assistance to millions of Syrians in need, including by crossing conflict lines and international borders, and we are ready to help many more", Mr. O'Brien said.

<https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/USG-ERC%20OBrien%20Syria%20press%20statement%2017Aug%202015.pdf>

UNESCO Director-General deplores the loss of two leading scholars of Syrian antiquity

On 19 August, UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova expressed sadness and outrage following the murder of archaeologist Khaled Assad in Palmyra. "In no uncertain terms I condemn this horrific act. They killed him because he would not betray his deep commitment to Palmyra," Ms. Bokova said. The Director-General was also saddened to learn of the killing of Qasem Abdullah Yehiya, who was an Assistant Director in Syria's Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM). He died in a rocket attack on the Damascus Citadel and the National Museum last week.

<http://en.unesco.org/news/director-general-irina-bokova-deplores-loss-two-leading-scholars-syrian-antiquity>

UNRWA reports typhoid outbreak in Yarmouk Palestine refugee camp

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) reported on 19 August a typhoid outbreak in the Yarmouk region, with at least tens of cases reported in Yarmouk, Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahem. UNRWA said it was authorized to conduct a humanitarian mission to Yalda to provide limited health assistance, as well as water and sanitation items. UNRWA medical personnel established a mobile health point, providing 211 consultations over the course of the day, including six cases of typhoid.

<http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/yarmouk-situation-update-39>

Number of refugees arriving in Greece is growing dramatically, says UNHCR

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) warned on 18 August that the number of refugees and migrants arriving in Greece is increasing dramatically and has now reached the 160,000 mark. A UNHCR spokesperson told reporters in Geneva that in recent weeks the pace of arrivals has been steadily rising. More refugees and migrants arrived in Greece during the month of July (50,242) than during the whole of last year (43,500). The majority of last week's arrivals were Syrians (16,997 persons or 82% of the total), Afghans (2,847 or 14%) and Iraqis (582 or 3%), confirming that the overwhelming majority of arrivals are likely to qualify for refugee status.

<http://www.unhcr.org/55d3098d6.html>

International Commission of Inquiry welcomes the release of three human rights activists

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria welcomed on 14 August the release from Syrian Government custody of Hussein Ghreer and Hani Al-Zaytani in mid-July and of Mazen Darwish on 10 August. "The release of the three human rights defenders is something to be welcomed. In Syria, where a culture of impunity has taken

hold, such good news is all too rare," said Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission. Ghreer, Al-Zaytani, and Darwish had been imprisoned by the Syrian Government since February 2012, following their arrest at their workplace, the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression. In March 2014, the three men were charged with "publicizing terrorist acts" and "promoting terrorist activities" under Article 8 of the Syria's 2012 Counter-Terrorism legislation. Their trials have been repeatedly adjourned, without explanation. The Commission notes that the charges against the three men remain, as does the spectre of further imprisonment.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16321&LangID=E>

UN Radio in Arabic

William Spindler: "Lack of leadership" in Greece to deal with the refugee crisis, exacerbates the problem

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/176113/#.VdSaU IVhBc>

OHCHR: Assault on a local market in Syria may amount to a war crime

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/176103/#.VdSa5vIVhBc>

Security Council expresses its alarm about the Syrian crisis turning into the largest humanitarian crisis in today's world

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/176082/#.VdSbGfIVhBc>

de Mistura: The government bombing of civilians in a crowded market is unacceptable under any circumstances

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/176032/#.VdScCvIVhBc>

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs condemns the recent air strikes in Syria

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/176026/#.VdScZPIVhBc>

More than 12 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs to visit Damascus and Beirut

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/175950/#.VdScpPIVhBc>

International Commission of Inquiry on Syria welcomes the release of three human rights defenders in Syria

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/175921/#.VdSc6 IVhBc>

de Mistura: instead of the indiscriminate shelling, all Syrian efforts must focused on finding a political solution

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/175915/#.VdSdFPIVhBc>

Syrian refugees ask Ertharin Cousin to remind the world of their plight

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/175847/#.VdSdX IVhBc>

de Mistura welcomed the release of Syrian journalist and human rights activist Mazen Darwish

<http://www.unmultimedia.org/arabic/radio/archives/175757/#.VdSfR IVhBc>

UN Twitter

United Nations @UN -19 August

Wednesday in Damascus: @OCHA_Syria #ShareHumanity event at Opera House

<http://j.mp/16SaZgK>

United Nations @UN -17 August

Security Council backs Special Envoy's plan to move Syrian political process forward
<http://j.mp/1TQFbOy>

United Nations @UN – 18 August
Wrapping-up visit in Syria, @UNReliefChief pleads for protection of civilians
<http://bit.ly/1NnHRpb>

United Nations retweeted
UNOCHA @UNOCHA - 17 August
I'm absolutely horrified by total disregard for civilian life by all parties in this conflict -
@UNReliefChief <http://ow.ly/QZJoe> #Syria

United Nations retweeted
UN News Centre @UN_News_Centre- 17 August
Wrapping-up visit in war-torn #Syria, UN official pleads for protection of civilians
<http://bit.ly/1NnHRpb>

United Nations @UN – 17 August
Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura expressed his utmost condemnation of
yesterday's air raids in Duma <http://bit.ly/1LeXayd>

Ongoing social media campaigns on Syria

#4Syria campaign was launched on 20 March 2015 on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to highlight the Syrian conflict, which has entered its fifth year. The campaign calls for an end to the conflict and seeks to raise funds for UNRWA's programmes to support Palestinian refugees from Syria. It features testimonies of Palestine refugees; voices that, amid the tragedy, brim with positive energy and determination, as well as documents highlighting UNRWA's emergency work in the region. View the campaign at: <http://www.unrwa.org/syria-crisis/syria4thanniversary>

#SaveYarmouk was launched in January 2015 to shed light on the grave deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Yarmouk, following the escalation of fighting. The campaign includes stories and updates from Yarmouk as well as recorded voices of residents describing the horrible conditions in which they are living. With no access to regular food supplies, clean water, health care, electricity or heating fuel, Yarmouk's civilian population is on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe. For those who wish to support UNRWA's work in Syria, donation is possible through the campaign's website: <http://www.unrwa.org/crisis-in-yarmouk>.

#ChildrenofSyria

UNICEF and its partners are committed to keeping Syrian children from becoming a 'lost generation'. Critical efforts are being made to minimize the impact of the crisis on children – including in the life-saving areas of health, nutrition, immunization, water and sanitation, as well as in the future of children, through education and child protection.
<http://www.unicef.org/emergencies/syria/>
<http://childrenofsyria.info/>

Relevant links to UN Secretariat, Agencies, Funds and Programmes on Syria

DPI Focus Page on Syria:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=146&Body=Syria&Body1=>

UN System agencies :

UN Women: <http://www.unwomen.org/>

UNICEF: <http://www.unicef.org/media/index.html>

WFP: <http://www.wfp.org/countries/syria>

OCHA: <http://unocha.org/syria> , twitter.com/ocha_syria , facebook.com/UNOCHA.Syria

WHO: <http://www.who.int/countries/syr/en/>
UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f86c2426.html>
OHCHR: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/NewsSearch.aspx?CID=SY>
UNRWA: <http://www.unrwa.org/>

UN on social media:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/UN>
Flickr: http://www.flickr.com/photos/un_photo/
YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/unitednations>
Tumblr: <http://united-nations.tumblr.com/>

Photo galleries:

UNHCR: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c25d.html>
UNRWA: <http://www.unrwa.org/photogallery.php>
OCHA: <http://www.unocha.org/media-resources/photo-gallery>
UNICEF: http://www.unicef.org/photography/photo_2013.php#UNI82253
IRIN: <http://www.irinnews.org/photo/>