



Syrian Crisis United Nations Response



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

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As the rumble for military action against Syria for allegedly using chemical weapons against civilians in a suburb of Damascus increased, on 28 August, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged that the UN investigation team on the ground be given time to establish the facts. The alleged use of chemical weapons on 21 August in which hundreds of people were said to have died set off a firestorm of reaction and condemnation from around the world, with calls for immediate investigation by the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, and others. It also led to calls for action against the Syrian regime of President Bashar al Assad by governments opposed to him. On 22 August, the Secretary-General asked for the UN Mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian conflict, led by Professor Åke Sellström, to swiftly investigate the incident. The team was able to visit the first site on 26 August and several locations in the suburbs of Damascus, including impact sites, where it collected additional information and samples on 28 August. Speaking at the ceremony marking the centennial of the Peace Palace in The Hague, on 28 August, Mr. Ban said the images coming out of Syria, "unlike any we have seen in the 21st century", raised the spectre of chemical warfare. Having noted in an earlier speech that the use of chemical weapons would amount to a "crime against humanity", he once again reiterated that the "use of chemical weapons by anyone, for any reasons, under any circumstances, would be an atrocious violation of international law." He said the UN investigation team had collected "valuable samples and interviewed victims and witnesses. The team needs time to do its job." The Secretary-General said to all parties, "Give peace a chance. Give diplomacy a chance. Stop fighting and start talking." He again urged the UN Security Council to find the unity to act and use its authority for peace.

<http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=7044>

On 28 August, the Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi said in a press conference in Geneva that what happened on 21 August in a Damascus suburb makes it even more urgent to create the conditions for a successful Geneva II conference on Syria. Responding to a question, he said under international law any military action must be taken after a decision by the UN Security Council. He agreed that some kind of substance was used that killed a lot of people. This is unacceptable and outrageous and confirms how dangerous the situation in Syria is, he stated.

<http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=2953>

On 22 August, the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, and on the Responsibility to Protect, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, condemned the reported killing of hundreds of civilians in the suburbs of Damascus on 21 August. They added that "the use of chemical weapons during armed conflict is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and a war crime, regardless of who the targets or the victims of the attacks are. There is never any military justification for the use of chemical weapons – whether by Governments or anti-government armed groups - given their horrific and indiscriminate impact."

<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/pdf/Syria23August2013.pdf>

On 23 August, in a joint statement, the Executive Director of UNICEF, Anthony Lake and High Commissioner of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), António Guterres, said that with Syria's war well into its third year, the number of Syrian children forced to flee their homeland as refugees has now reached one million.

http://www.unicef.org/media/media_70225.html

<http://www.unhcr.org/521621999.html>

Select UN stories

Humanitarian Airlift Carrying Relief Items for Syrian Refugees Fleeing To Iraq Arrives In Erbil

ERBIL, IRAQ – A chartered flight has arrived in Erbil carrying urgent relief items for the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to meet the immediate humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees fleeing violence in Syria and crossing into northern Iraq.

<https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/humanitarian-airlift-carrying-relief-items-syrian-refugees-fleeing-iraq-arrives-er>

With Syria on brink of 'abyss,' UN agencies urge neighbouring countries to keep borders open

27 August 2013 – The heads of two United Nations relief agencies today welcomed the hospitality of Syria's neighbouring countries which are currently hosting some two million refugees, and appealed to them to keep their borders open amid a growing exodus of Syrians fleeing the protracted conflict.

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45717&Cr=syria&Cr1=>

Statement by UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie on the 1 millionth Syrian Child Refugee

UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie said on 23 August that what is happening to the children of Syria is sickening. The international community must not look away from Syria, they must renew the search for peace with urgency and determination, she added.

<http://www.unhcr.org/521848679.html>

DPI Focus Page on Syria:

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

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

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

OCHA: <http://www.unocha.org/crisis/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/>