Syria(/country/syr)

Statement from Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva on worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria

News and Press Release

Source: ECHO(/organization/echo)

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The European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, made the following statement:

"Syria is sliding into a large scale humanitarian tragedy that brings back awful memories of Ex-Yugoslavia. For the sake of people subjected to daily violence and horrors, we must not let this happen. Parties to the civil war are bound by International Humanitarian Law to spare non-combatant civilians, especially women and children. Civilians in Syria must be given the possibility to leave the areas of fighting in an organised and safe manner without having to fear for their life.

Similarly, humanitarian organisations must be granted safe access to combat zones to proceed with the evacuation of the wounded and civilians. I call for full and unimpeded access for all impartial and neutral humanitarian organisations, irrespective of whether they belong to the United Nations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement or the non-governmental sector.

This applies in particular to those humanitarian organisations specialised in the provision of emergency medical care. To ensure this vital care, I call on all sides of the conflict to respect the humanitarian symbols and to cease and desist from prosecution of medical personnel, the use of hospitals as places of detention and interrogation, and any impediment to the provision of medical care under international humanitarian law.

I would like to commend the courage and professionalism of humanitarian workers on the ground, the vast majority of whom are volunteers, and who continue to deliver vital humanitarian assistance to people in need across the country. Six of them have already been killed in the service of their people. It is high time that their safety is fully respected and protected as demanded by International Humanitarian Law.

To guarantee the safety of civilians, the wounded and humanitarian workers, it is paramount to secure humanitarian pauses in fighting. This would be the humane thing to do, but also the right thing to do, under International Humanitarian Law. The protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers, is an obligation for all parties involved in the fighting. Violations of humanitarian law, such as, for instance, the targeting of medical facilities and staff clearly protected by humanitarian symbols constitute war crimes.

Humanitarian aid is no solution to the conflict; but should neither be taken hostage by the conflict. I appeal to the international community and in particular the United Nations Security Council to focus on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and support my call for humanitarian pauses and respect for International Humanitarian Law".

Primary country:

Syrian Arab Republic(/country/syr)

Source:

European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations(/organization/echo)

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