

‘Ending the cross-border mandate would cut off the last lifeline into the country for millions of vulnerable Syrians in the northwest’

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Thank you, Mr President, and I thank the Secretary-General and our briefers today.

As we start deliberations on the cross-border mechanism, humanitarian need should be front and centre of our decision-making.

13.4 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance across Syria. That's more than the entire population of London or Moscow.

Seven years ago, we came together to pass resolution 2165, authorising the cross-border mechanism. As we heard from Sonia Khush of Save the Children in February and Dr Amani Ballour in March, this created a vital system whereby humanitarian assistance could reach all Syrians, wherever they lived.

Earlier this week, 27 NGOs operating in Syria wrote to this Council asking for an expansion of the mandate to ensure continued delivery of food, shelter, protection and other lifesaving services.

The UN has repeatedly outlined the implications of non-renewal: the UN's vaccination program would cease, the provision of food assistance to 1.4 million people each month would end, and critical medical items that supported 10 million treatments in 2020 would stop.

Ending the cross-border mandate would cut off the last lifeline into the country for millions of vulnerable Syrians in the northwest.

The issue of cross-line access continues to be debated. Let me be clear: the UK supports all efforts to improve cross-line.

But we should recognise the impact of the loss of the Yaroubiyah crossing in the northeast, where needs have risen by 38% since January 2020. Health facilities now face chronic shortages of medications such as insulin, painkillers, and drugs used to treat chronic diseases.

The loss of Bab al Salam in the northwest has had a similarly huge impact. Assistance now travels across lines of control and multiple checkpoints. Airstrikes in areas facing conflict have damaged warehouses and destroyed trucks carrying humanitarian supplies. If deliveries are able to make it through undamaged, there are persistent delays, often lasting up to three weeks.

Without expansion, therefore, we cannot tackle the growing food crisis, nor overcome the impact of COVID-19 and fulfil the requirements of Security Council Resolution 2565 to ensure equitable access to vaccines.

This is why we continue to insist that we should approach this mandate, this issue, on the basis on humanitarian need, renew the mandate for Bab al-Hawa, and re-authorise the crossings at Bab al-Salam and Yaroubiya. Anything less would be a dereliction of our responsibility to the 13.4 million Syrian people that remain in need of assistance.

Thank you, Mr President.

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