European Commission - Speech

Remarks at the "Inside Syria" event during the Support Syrians Conference (London)

Brussels, 4 February 2016

Check Against Delivery

Dear excellences,

Dear colleagues,

Dear friends,

It is a privilege to be here today as part of the humanitarian family.

Stephen has already given you the shocking figures of suffering. Of destruction.

Today the EU made a substantial pledge more than 3 billion Euros. But the lives saved by this money get wasted by the lack of protection and IHL violations.

We have an obligation to do all we can to protect the Syrian people. To protect humanitarians and health workers.

Today, I would like to focus on 2 areas where the impact of the lack of protection is most striking: on health and on children.

Systematic assaults on medical professionals, facilities and patients have broken Syria's health system. Making it nearly impossible to receive essential medical care.

More than every second hospital has been severely damaged. Nearly half of Syria's doctors have fled the country. Large parts of Syria are almost completely cut off from any medical assistance.

Children are the main victims of this war. All of us have seen the faces of Madaya. Unfortunately, there are too many Madayas across Syria.

More than half of Syrian school-age children are out of school. This is more than two (2) million!

One out of four schools cannot be used any longer for teaching and learning. Because they are either destroyed, damaged, converted into shelters or turned into bases for armed groups.

Attacks on schools continue daily. These must stop! Now!

We have a collective responsibility to provide these children education.

This is why I made education in emergencies one of my major priorities. And I am proud that as European Commission will meet the UN target of 4% in education in emergencies already this year.

I also intend to promote together with UNICEF Education in Emergencies projects in different parts of Syria focusing on non-formal initiatives.

This is just the beginning. We must do more. And we must do it together.

Thank you.

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