Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UK pledges redoubled efforts to end the Syrian conflict and alleviate humanitarian suffering

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In advance of the third anniversary of the start of the Syria conflict on Saturday 15 March, Foreign Secretary William Hague and International Development Secretary Justine Greening have issued the following joint statement:

Three years of conflict in Syria is a terrible landmark to reach. Over 140,000 people have been killed since the initial brutal repression by the Assad regime of peaceful protesters in Damascus on 15 March 2011. Millions more have had their lives ruined, been forced to flee their homes and 2.6 million made refugees, putting huge strain on neighbouring countries who have generously taken them in. Staggeringly, the UN estimates that in addition to refugees there are over 9 million people in need of urgent help inside Syria – in total, over half of the pre-crisis population of Syria.

The people of the UK can feel proud that we are at the forefront of the international humanitarian effort.

The UK has committed £600 million in aid in response to the Syria crisis

, more than any other country apart from the US. This support is saving lives on the ground. Overall, British support inside Syria, is giving 1.4 million people access to clean water and providing medical help to nearly quarter of a million. We are helping to provide food to up to 320,000 refugees every month, along with trauma counselling and education for thousands of children.

As the conflict enters its fourth year, we are continuing to do everything we can to prevent another year of suffering.

Yet the Assad regime and some extremist groups are still stopping aid reaching many in desperate need. Over 3.5 million people in hard to reach areas are not receiving help, 240,000 as a direct result of being under siege, the vast majority by government forces. The UK government is clear in its condemnation of those stopping aid from reaching people in need. This is utterly unacceptable. It must now change.

Last month’s unanimous UN Security Council resolution on humanitarian access inside Syria was a vital step forward. The UK played a decisive role. The Security Council sent a clear

message to Assad that he must end the abhorrent and indiscriminate use of barrel bombs which have caused the deaths of thousands of innocent Syrians and condemned the arbitrary detention and torture of prisoners in regime facilities. Critically it demanded that all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. This includes across conflict lines and across borders in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches people in need.

This resolution will only have real impact once these words are turned into action. The UK stands ready to work with the UN and other partners to reach those in need. In parallel we will intensify our efforts in support of a political settlement – which is the only way this conflict and the appalling humanitarian suffering it is causing can be brought to a sustainable end.

Further information

Follow the Foreign Secretary on Twitter:

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Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-pledges-redoubled-efforts-to-end-the-syrian-conflict-and-alleviate-humanitarian-suffering