

Federal Foreign Office on the situation in Syria's eastern Ghouta

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18.12.2017 - Press release 

A Federal Foreign Office Spokesperson issued the following statement today (18 December):

We are very concerned about the disastrous humanitarian situation in Syria's eastern Ghouta. Although this area east of the capital Damascus, which is under siege by the Syrian regime, lies in one of the "de escalation zones", it is estimated that 400,000 people are trapped there with no access to humanitarian assistance.

Despite many appeals, the Syrian regime is not allowing the evacuation of those in need of medical treatment. Instead of providing assistance, the regime is leaving the population to starve and bombards it with air strikes and artillery fire on a daily basis, also targeting hospitals and schools. The regime has used this cynical and inhumane tactic before in Aleppo and in many other cities in Syria.

We condemn the attacks and the continuing siege of eastern Ghouta and – in implementation of the Astana agreements – call for humanitarian access to be guaranteed in the "de escalation zones" with immediate effect. Furthermore, the urgently needed medical evacuations must be permitted. We believe that Russia in particular, as a supporter of the Assad regime and guarantor of the Astana principles, has a responsibility here.

It is clear to us that only a political solution can bring durable peace to Syria and alleviate people's untold suffering. We therefore support the political process facilitated by the United Nations and the Geneva talks.

Background information

Some 12 percent of people living in eastern Ghouta are suffering from malnutrition. According to the United Nations, 572 individuals, including just under 140 children and 65 young children under the age of five, are in a life-threatening condition and need to be evacuated immediately for medical treatment. Some 15 individuals have already died due to a lack of treatment.

The German Government is supporting the political process and the Geneva talks on the basis of Security Council Resolution 2254. In 2017 alone, the German Government has provided more than 300 million euros for humanitarian assistance in Syria.

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