EUROPEAN COMMISSION

STATEMENT

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The silent war: 200.000 Syrians have died due to lack of access to health care

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

"*The report by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon on the implementation of Resolution 2139 on humanitarian assistance in Syria sadly confirms what we have been seeing on the news every day: the hardship and suffering of millions of people affected by the conflict continues. Tragically, the parties to the conflict are still not complying with the terms of the resolution which guarantees rapid, safe and unhindered access to aid by all.*

Behind the images of war and destruction a silent war rages on. Not only are civilians the victims of mortar attacks, barrel bombing and cross-fire, but they are suffering from the long-lasting consequences of the conflict which has left many without access to basic medical care and claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands. In fact, reports estimate that since the start of the conflict some 200,000 Syrians have died from chronic illnesses due to lack of access to treatment and medicines, which is in fact more than the estimated 162,000 people who have died as a direct result of warfare.

Vaccination programmes have been disrupted or halted altogether and we have seen outbreaks of polio and measles. An estimated 650 000 people have been wounded in the conflict and many of these injuries have resulted in long-term disabilities. There are reports of medical equipment being withdrawn from aid convoys and more than half of Syria's doctors have left the country since the beginning of the conflict.

3.5 million people are estimated to reside in areas that are difficult or impossible for humanitarian actors and medical professionals to reach.

Denying such access is a crime. All parties to the conflict must allow unhindered access for principled humanitarian aid, including medical assistance, to reach the most vulnerable people in all areas of the country, including hard-to-reach and besieged areas, by all possible channels including cross line and cross-border. I call on the Government of Syria to take decisive action to facilitate all access channels.

The conflict is now in its fourth year and, to the horror of the international community which stands powerless while the disaster unfolds shows no sign of abating. It is clear that the only durable solution to end the suffering of the millions who are affected by this terrible conflict is a political one. I once again urge the international community to come together to find a lasting political solution to end this tragic war, and for unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance.

The EU will continue to lead international assistance efforts to alleviate the plight of the Syrian people. "

Spokespersons' Service
Service des Porte-parole

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For more information

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

ECHO website Arabic:

http://echo-arabic.eu

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm

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