



EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

More EU support for the victims of Syria's humanitarian crisis

Brussels, 22 March 2012 - Responding to the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and on its borders, the European Commission is allocating an additional €7 million to finance life-saving assistance to those who have been wounded or forced to flee the ongoing violence in the country. This brings the overall contribution by the Commission to €10 million.

Kristalina Georgieva, Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, who has repeatedly called for full and independent access for humanitarian workers, said: *"Every day, the situation inside Syria becomes more and more dramatic. One year of escalating violence has caused massive suffering among the Syrian population. Too many civilians have died. Too many families are forced to flee their homes. A large part of the population now experiences shortages of food, fuel and medical care."*

"I am gravely concerned for those who urgently need humanitarian support to survive. It is for their sake that we are boosting our support to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other humanitarian organisations and that we are supporting all initiatives aimed at facilitating urgent humanitarian access. A daily humanitarian truce is absolutely vital in order to provide assistance when people are in most dire need of help. The European Commission is fully mobilised to help meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people both inside and outside the country through the work of humanitarian organisations in accordance to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality".

This new funding will continue to help the tens of thousands of Syrians who have fled beyond the borders to seek protection in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq. It will also provide more help to those who have remained in Syria once unimpeded access is possible.

Information on the situation on the ground in Syria still remains scarce, due to the severely limited access of humanitarian agencies to the areas where violence is most prevalent. However, through partial access to victims, the first funding decision of €3 million was used to protect medical missions and to give medical assistance to hospitals and medical facilities, as well as for protection to people who had fled their homes and found safety in neighbouring countries.

The Commission will channel the funding through its humanitarian partners including the ICRC and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

Funding will provide emergency health assistance, protection activities (mainly visits to detainees) and food assistance inside Syria. In neighbouring countries the aid will include emergency health assistance, the registration of refugees, food assistance to both the Syrian refugees and host families and the distribution of items such as blankets, kitchen equipment, fuel. In addition, it is planned to fund trauma support.

Background

Since the beginning of 2011, Syria has been experiencing violent unrest opposing anti-government street protesters and the security forces. According to the UN, killings and human rights violations in Syria have resulted in more than 9,381 deaths. It is estimated that between 1.5 and 3 million people are affected by the violence.

More than 36,000 people have already sought refuge in neighbouring countries, mainly Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, but also to Iraq and Libya. Host countries have been working to meet the basic needs of refugees and to ensure their protection.

The intensification of violence has hindered the capacity of humanitarian workers in Syria to provide essential relief to populations in need. Lack of information has so far prevented the international community from analysing and monitoring the full extent of the needs and has hampered a full humanitarian response.

The European Commission has been active in providing humanitarian aid to Iraqi refugees inside Syria since 2003. This assistance included psychological care for traumatized children and their families, access to primary health care and food assistance through cash and vouchers.

For more information:

Commissioner Georgieva's website:

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

The European Commission's humanitarian aid and civil protection:

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

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