



## **Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA) Statement on the Renewal of UNSCR Cross-Border Resolution**

The humanitarian situation in Syria continues to deteriorate as the conflict entered its tenth year. Increased levels of violence and rapidly changing frontline continued to put vulnerable people at risk. The number of people in need in the beginning of the year amounted to 11.1 million across Syria, including 2.8 million living in northwest Syria and 1.4 million in the northeast; many of these vulnerable people have been displaced multiple times and took refuge in areas outside the control of the Government of Syria; therefore, they can only be reached through Cross-Border assistance which has been authorized under Security Council resolutions since 2014. IDPs live in densely populated areas and over-crowded camps that cannot cope with any extra pressure on the already depleted resources.

With the threat of a COVID-19 outbreak compounding an already difficult situation, and the shortage of basic goods and food due to the greatest devaluation of the Syrian Pound since the beginning of the conflict, now more than ever is the time to fight for principled and sustained humanitarian access to those in need across Syria. The SNA urges the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to take all possible steps to ensure the renewal of UNSCR 2165 (2504) in July.

Of the four million people in northwest Syria, 2.7 million people are estimated to be internally displaced. Most recently, some 840,000 of the nearly 1 million people displaced in northwest Syria between last December and early March reportedly remain in displacement, including some 500,000 children and nearly 180,000 women. Longer-term needs are increasing, including for health, nutrition and education services, even as urgent needs for shelter, food, water, sanitation, hygiene and protection persist. For instance, more than 100,000 people who have been displaced during the latest wave of violence were not able to receive emergency food assistance. Displacement not only means the loss of homes for displaced families in northwest Syria, but also the loss of livelihoods for a predominantly agricultural population who no longer have access to their field or have lost their livestock during displacement.

Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions remained a vital part of the humanitarian response. It is essential that vulnerable people can be reached effectively with humanitarian aid by all available means. Therefore, consensus among UNSC members on the humanitarian imperative to renew the resolution, needs to be the highest priority in all conversations and to guide any decision making regarding the evolution of the resolution over any political concerns. Meanwhile and based on experience, cross-line assistance is in no means a replacement, covering only 2% of the needs and facing delays in reaching the targeted areas.

UNSC Members are expected to fully recognise the ever-increasing needs throughout Syria and the unending indispensability of cross-border access and the Whole of Syria mechanism. The volatility and insecurity that persist in many places in Syria makes it crucial for the renewal to take place in line with core humanitarian standards.

In the absence of timely access via cross-line, it is vital to maintain the cross-border access as it has proven its effectiveness since 2014. A non-renewal of UNSCR 2165 (2504) would lead to the disruption of much needed life-saving humanitarian aid. If the Cross-Border resolution is not renewed, funding through the UN, including the SCHF, will stop meaning that potentially \$300 million per year worth of humanitarian aid can no longer transfer through the UN, and the UN's role in negotiating access will be significantly reduced, if not lost; unlike the UN-led coordination which was confirmed by UN Officials to be continued. In addition, 50% of local organizations operating

in Northwest Syria are almost completely dependent on UN funding to implement projects. The absence of UN funding will effectively shut down a large proportion of the current response delivered by local NGOs. The UN has invested a lot in the development and capacity building of Syrian NGOs and has been depending on them to implement its projects and deliver aid, therefore, the non-renewal of the Cross-Border resolution would not only mean the loss of UN funding to Syrian NGOs but also losing the accumulated experience built over 8 years of continuous investment by the UN in these NGOs.

Humanitarian actors have played a major role in preventing and responding to different forms of child abuse, neglect, violations, and exploitation in north west Syria. While repeatedly massive waves of internal displacements, deteriorating security situation, and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic; has led to the sounding of danger bells for the magnitude threats, like physical and emotional maltreatment, mental health and psychosocial distress, unaccompanied and separated children, social exclusion, child labour, and early marriage. Hence, worsening the suffering of children, girls and women within already fragile communities and the shortage of immense basic protection and prevention services in north west Syria. The non-renewal of the Cross-Border resolution could ultimately lead to a protection crisis including a drastic increase in disruption of the environments in which children grow and develop. The many risks facing these girls and boys have a devastating impact on their well-being, physical security, and future.

OCHA plays a key role in advocating to UNSC Members, the Government of Syria and neighbouring countries for continued cross-border access to Syria. Closing down Al-Yarubiyah border crossing in January, and the decision of OCHA and other UN agencies to suspend cross-border shipments and funding to NGOs, have caused major challenges to the humanitarian response in the northeast. As a result, we fear a similar fate for northwest Syria in the case of non-resolution considering that the northwest has double the number of people in need.

We, therefore, urge members of the UN Security Council voting on the renewal of UNSCR 2165 (2504) to:

- Renew the two remaining named crossing points in northwest Syria – ensuring any efforts to include new crossing points do not put at risk the likelihood of a renewal of existing access points;
- Include Tal Abyad border crossing due to the people's need for humanitarian assistance especially as Turkey has given NGOs access to the area.
- Renew the resolution for a minimum of 12 months to ensure effective humanitarian response planning and to minimize uncertainty and disruption to operations.
- Consider the ongoing challenges of cross-line access inside Syria

Syrian NGO Alliance,

21/06/2020