



AS OLYMPIC GAMES OPEN IN SOCHI, 37 HUMANITARIAN, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND PEACE ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR UNSC RESOLUTION TO OPEN SYRIA TO AID

(February 7, 2014 | Paris) To the Foreign Ministers of UN Security Council Member States

Dear Foreign Minister:

As the world comes together in Sochi to open the Olympic Games, Syrians are living under siege. In the spirit of the ancient tradition of an Olympic truce, echoed by the United Nations Secretary General in January, we call on the United Nations Security Council to put an end to these inhumane and illegal methods of war by supporting a Resolution demanding full and unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas of Syria. As the Winter Olympics open, Syria must be opened to life-saving humanitarian aid.

Words fail to convey the horror and suffering Syrians are enduring on a daily basis: 9 million people, approaching half of Syria's pre-war population, have fled their homes. 6.5 million are internally displaced. 37 percent of hospitals have been totally destroyed and 2 million children have been forced out of school. At least 110,000 people have been killed in the conflict, according to a recent report by the Oxford Research Group.¹

While these numbers are staggering, they do not even begin to tell the whole story.

In some parts of Syria, civilians are being held hostage in their own cities. The United Nations estimates that at least 242,000 people are being subjected to this medieval method of war, which violates international humanitarian law. After more than a year under siege, people in these areas are running out of food and medicine. Children and women are facing acute malnutrition and, in some cases, starving to death because food and medical aid has been prevented from coming in and people from getting out. In so-called "hard to reach" areas, another 3 million people eke out a desperate existence where shelling of civilians, shifting front lines, targeting of humanitarian workers, and bureaucratic restrictions on aid delivery mean Syrian civilians in acute need are unable to access basic goods and services. In a Presidential Statement on October 2, 2013, the UN Security Council unanimously agreed to specific steps all parties to the conflict must take to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law to facilitate aid. More than 4 months later, and

¹ Oxford Research Group (2013) 'Stolen Futures: The Hidden Toll of Child Casualties in Syria' by Hana Salama and Hamit Dardagan,

despite ongoing negotiations that have marginally eased access to Yarmouk and may allow for partial access to Homs, it is clear that the October statement is being largely ignored by the parties.

As the world unites to celebrate the spirit of the Olympic Games, we call on all members of the Security Council to support a binding resolution demanding all parties to the conflict guarantee safe, full and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need in all areas of Syria. The resolution should incorporate all elements of October's presidential statement and go further. It must also:

- create a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on any party blocking access, including monitoring impediments to aid delivered directly from neighbouring countries;
- demand immediate access to all besieged areas;
- demand humanitarian pauses in the fighting to allow life-saving food and medicine to be delivered to people in areas most severely affected by the fighting, and for civilians to safely move to other areas if they wish; and
- request the UN to support impartial humanitarian organizations that are delivering aid into Syria across borders

Too many Syrians are dying because they cannot access life-saving aid. The Security Council must turn this Olympic moment of international solidarity into action on behalf of the Syrian people. It must adopt a Resolution demanding full and unimpeded humanitarian access across Syria to save lives now.

Signed:

1. Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) (France)
2. Arab Program for Human Rights Activists
3. arche noVa e.V. (Germany)
4. Broederlijk Delen/Pax Christi Flanders (Belgium)
5. Catholic Committee Against Hunger And For Development (France)
6. Center for Victims of Torture (USA)
7. Christian Aid (UK)
8. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (India)
9. Conectas Human Rights (Brazil)
10. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) (Egypt)
11. Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (REMDH) (France)
12. Fellowship of Reconciliation USA
13. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (USA)
14. Human Appeal (UK)
15. Human Rights First (USA)
16. Human Rights Information & Training Center (Yemen)
17. Human Rights Watch (USA)
18. International Alert (UK)
19. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) (France)

20. International Rescue Committee (USA)
21. Islamic Relief UK
22. Islamic Relief USA
23. Kontras (Indonesia)
24. Médecins Du Monde (France)
25. medico international (Germany)
26. Middle East and North Africa Partnership for Armed Conflict Prevention
27. Non-violence Network in the Arab Countries
28. Norwegian Refugee Council (Norway)
29. Open Society Foundations (USA)
30. PAX (The Netherlands)
31. Pax Christi International
32. People in Need (Czech Republic)
33. Permanent Peace Movement (Lebanon)
34. Physicians for Human Rights (USA)
35. Solidarites International (France)
36. Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) (USA)
37. Tearfund (UK)