

Statement on the Continuation of UN-Led Cross-Border Humanitarian Assistance in Northwest Syria

On January 10th, 2023, the authorization provided by UN Security Council resolution 2642 that allows the UN and its agencies, through the current legal basis, to conduct essential humanitarian cross-border aid operations through the Bab Al-Hawa cross point will expire. This leaves more than 4.6 million Syrians living in Northwest Syria at risk of losing lifesaving aid.

The population in Northwest Syria has reached 4.6 million people, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has increased from 3.4 million in 2021 to 4.1 million in 2022, and nearly 80 percent of whom are women and children. 2.9 million people residing in Northwest Syria are internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the majority of the population is food insecure with 3.3 million struggling to meet their basic needs as prices of food items continue to increase following the conflict in Ukraine.

The upcoming vote in January takes place during the merciless winter months in Syria, affecting more than 1.8 million IDPs living in camps or informal settlements where the majority of whom live with limited or no access to heating, electricity, or clean water, and are reliant on UN cross border humanitarian aid to reduce suffering during the winter season.

In addition to the already fragile humanitarian situation, Northwest Syria is also experiencing:

- A cholera outbreak, where reported numbers have shown more than 17 deaths out of more than 540 reported positive cholera cases (however, there are about 30,000 suspected cases).
- Alarming suicide rates in which 83 suicide cases in Northwest Syria were reported between early 2021 to mid-2022.
- Ongoing hostilities in the de-escalated area, where residents who have been constantly forced to flee their homes multiple times in the past years, are now again living under threat amid increased tensions thus jeopardizing their safety and security.

A failure to renew UNSC resolution 2642 will directly and negatively impact the lives and livelihoods of those residing in Northwest Syria. Discontinuing the delivery of aid, coordination, and operating services will leave the already fragile situation in a state of catastrophe, abandoning millions to deal with massive gaps with no access to medical facilities, protection centers, educational spaces, food, water, and shelter.

Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA), the American Relief Coalition for Syria (ARCS), Syrian Networks League (SNL) and the White Helmets, urges the UN Security Council members, through the current legal basis, to continue its authorization for UN-led cross-border humanitarian assistance and coordination in Northwest Syria for a minimum of **12** months with no further changes in the resolution language that would lead to restrictive interpretation of the humanitarian life-saving activities and access. In addition, after 8 years of annual negotiations and politicization of humanitarian aid in Syria, we urge UNSC members to support the consideration of alternative legal bases that allow for the UN and UN agencies to continue providing all activities pertaining to cross-border humanitarian response, including procurement, funding, and coordination, into Northwest Syria regardless of the consensus method in line with the humanitarian needs in Syria. A continuation of humanitarian aid provided by the UN and UN agencies is essential to prevent the deepening of the humanitarian crisis and to mitigate the risks to millions of vulnerable Syrians awaiting the UN Security Council actions.

January 5, 2023

