

Press release: Priti Patel statement in response to \$8bn appeal for Syria in 2017

Finland and the United Nations co-hosted an event on the Syria crisis in Helsinki today, which has seen the launch of a UN-led appeal for \$8 billion to meet humanitarian needs inside Syria and across the region in 2017.

Responding to the new appeal, International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The UN's call-out to the international community today is the single biggest appeal it has ever made, highlighting that the conflict in Syria remains the world's biggest humanitarian crisis.

The siege of east Aleppo at the end of last year reminded the world of the suffering and brutality that continues to be inflicted on the Syrian people after six years of unrelenting conflict. Schools and hospitals were hit and starvation used as a weapon of war. Hundreds were killed, tens of thousands more lost everything as they were forced to flee their homes.

Sadly, the medieval siege tactics employed were not unique to Aleppo, we are seeing them used again and again across Syria.

As many as 700,000 Syrians – nearly half of them children – remain under siege in 15 different parts of the country. Millions more have no regular access to the basic food, water and shelter they need to stay alive. Yet there is a very real risk that the barrel bombs, chlorine gas and indiscriminate violence that so shocked the world in Aleppo now becomes the new normal. We cannot become desensitised to such horrors.

Britain has repeatedly set the pace in responding to this crisis and our commitment remains unwavering. UK aid ensured blankets, medical care, clean water and food reached those fleeing Aleppo. Across Syria, our support continues to mean the difference between life and death to hundreds of thousands more. We have pledged more than £2.3 billion to support those affected by the conflict, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis.

At the same time, we continue to call on all parties to the conflict to implement fully the ceasefire announced by Russia, Turkey and Iran and to allow aid to be delivered to all of those in need. Since the ceasefire began, only one besieged area has been reached by an aid convoy. That is unacceptable.

Ultimately, only a genuine and inclusive political settlement can

deliver a lasting peace. But while we continue to push for that, the world must respond swiftly and generously to this new appeal in order to save lives of desperate Syrians. We must not let the depravities of this war become inevitable or give up hope. A new year brings a new chance for real, meaningful change and we must seize it.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. Today's conference provided an opportunity to present the objectives, contents and achievements of the UN-led Regional Resilience and Refugee Plan (3RP) to meet needs in Syria's neighbouring countries, as well as identifying the humanitarian and resilience priorities inside Syria. More detail is available here: <http://www.helsinki2017.org/>
2. The UK is at the forefront of the response to the Syria crisis, with life-saving humanitarian support reaching millions of people inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.
3. The UK has pledged more than £2.3 billion to support those affected by the conflict, our largest ever response to a single humanitarian crisis. In 2016 the UK is the third largest bilateral contributor to the humanitarian response in Syria, and the second largest overall since the start of the response in 2012.
4. For more information on the UK's humanitarian response, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/factsheet-the-uks-humanitarian-aid-response-to-the-syria-crisis>