

Protection of civilians in Syria must be ensured, stresses UN chief Guterres

21 June 2017 – Expressing alarm over the suffering of people Syria, in particular those in Raqqa and in other locations where fighting continues, United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called on all those conducting military operations in the country to ensure the safety and protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure.

“Civilians continue to be killed, injured and displaced at a terrifying rate [and] places of refuge, such as hospitals and schools continue to be targeted,” said the Secretary-General in a statement today.

“[I make an urgent appeal](#) to all those conducting military operations in Syria to do everything in their power to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure,” he added.

In the statement, the UN chief voiced particular concern for the civilians in Raqqa as well as those stuck in other besieged and hard-to-reach areas, some of whom have been deprived of food and basic medical assistance for years on end.

According to estimates, more than 430,000 civilians are in need across the larger Raqqa governorate, in areas either cut off from relief or where transporting aid is extremely difficult. In all, [the crisis now it in its seventh year](#) has left more than 13.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, displaced 6.3 million internally, and forced more than 5.1 million to flee across Syrian borders.

Further in the statement, Mr. Guterres hailed the efforts of UN and humanitarian workers, who he said are “all they can to stem the suffering in Raqqa and across Syria, often at great personal risk.”

“It is critical for all parties [to the conflict] to facilitate improved humanitarian access to allow aid to reach those in urgent need of life-saving assistance without delay,” he said.