

Syrians still living on 'razor edge' as UN launches \$8.8 billion dollar appeal

An \$8.8 billion funding appeal has been issued by the UN to help millions of Syrians who live a "razor-edge existence" inside and outside the war-torn country, along with the communities struggling to host them.

Eight years since the war began, 12 million Syrians are either refugees or displaced inside Syria; adding up to around half the pre-war population.

Violence has lessened in recent months but the "bombs are still falling", the chair of a [Human Rights Council](#)-appointed probe, Paulo Pinheiro, told the forum on Tuesday, his comments coming amid airstrikes in opposition-held north-west Idlib governorate and reports that ISIL extremists are close to defeat in eastern Syria.

'Agonizing choices' for displaced families

"Around 70 per cent of Syrian refugees live a razor-edge existence below the poverty line," said [UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#), Filippo Grandi in a [joint statement](#) on Wednesday, who recently visited Syria and Lebanon, where refugees make up a quarter of the population.

"Reduced assistance due to funding cuts means that refugees are forced to make agonizing choices every day," Mr. Grandi added, "such as taking children out of school to work, or reducing meals."

Under the UN appeal, \$3.3 billion is required for the response inside Syria, and \$5.5 billion is needed for refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries.

Warning that "the crisis is not over", [UN humanitarian chief](#) Mark Lowcock said that without "immediate and substantial" funding, life-saving assistance would likely be affected.

"Every woman, man, girl and boy in Syria who need our help" should get it, Mr. Lowcock insisted.

Echoing that message, Mr. Grandi insisted that Syria's neighbours "who have been sheltering millions of Syrian refugees for the past eight years" require "no less support".

UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) Administrator, Achim Steiner, also warned of "soaring" poverty inside Syria, before highlighting the need to support Syria's neighbours too.

"In Syria, poverty is soaring, basic service infrastructure is damaged or

destroyed, and the social fabric is strained to the limit," Mr Steiner said. "Host governments and communities in countries neighbouring Syria need our support to stay the course in extending their generosity to refugees while at the same time maintaining the momentum of their own development path."

'Bombs are still falling', Human Rights Council hears

At the Human Rights Council, the head of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria spoke of the "staggering" number of desperate Syrians forced to flee violence.

"Bombs are still falling and civilians continue to pay with their lives for the objectives of the parties to the conflict", Paulo Pinheiro said, noting that ongoing hostilities "threaten the lives and livelihoods of those daring to return".

Insisting that the conflict – now in its ninth year – continues to cause scores of civilian casualties, Mr. Pinheiro said that Syria's displaced population continues to face many other problems, including in areas retaken by Government forces.

"Persecution, discrimination, and other forms of ill-treatment continue in Idlib, Douma, Dara'a, and northern Homs," he said. "Arbitrary arrests and detentions continue in Government-controlled areas, including eastern Ghouta, Dara'a, and northern Homs."

Executions and deaths in detention have also continued, the [Commission](#) chair said on Tuesday, detailing "ad hoc and anti-terror courts of the Syrian Government", along with "makeshift justice mechanisms" of armed groups and terrorist organisations.

Speaking as the concerned country, the Syrian delegation criticized what it called the politicized climate of the debate and insisted that its Government was simply trying to protect Syrian citizens from terrorism.