

Open Letter to the United Nations Security Council on the renewal of the Syria cross-border resolution

Excellencies,

The United Nations Security Council's reauthorisation of cross-border assistance through the Bab al Hawa crossing on 9 July 2021 means that the mechanism will continue to provide a vital lifeline, ensuring food, shelter, water, protection, critical medical services and other lifesaving support reaches millions in the northwest in need.

However, we remain concerned that the 6+6 formulation of the renewal creates unnecessary uncertainty for humanitarian actors and the millions of Syrians relying on assistance. There must be no question about the continuation of the mandate in six months. We are also disappointed that the Council did not heed the calls from humanitarians working across Syria to reinstate the Bab al Salam and Al Yarubiyah crossings.

Today, the needs and challenges people are facing across Syria are greater than ever before. 81% of people in the northwest and 69% in the northeast are in need of aid, an estimated half of whom are children¹. A decade of conflict has created one of the worst protection crises in the world; left 12.4 million people food insecure and reliant on aid²; forcibly displaced millions of Syrians who continue to live in dire conditions; and significantly increased protection risks for persons with disabilities and women and girls specifically, such as, the normalization of sexual violence. Millions suffer from lack of access to healthcare, income, education, gender-based violence services and, ultimately, a future. Over the last 18 months, these conditions have been exacerbated by an economic crisis escalating across the country, the spread of COVID-19, an insufficient vaccination campaign and, now, drought conditions. **The complexity and scale of needs is escalating, and the response needs to be able to keep pace. Cross-border and cross-line humanitarian assistance are complementary ways for humanitarians to be able to meet needs where they are, across the whole of Syria.**

The reauthorization of Bab al Hawa is vital in our ability to try to meet critical needs. But **being reliant on one crossing point, and without an unequivocal 12 month renewal continues to put people's access to aid at risk.** As we warned in our [last](#) Open Letter, which we shared only three weeks ago, airstrikes in the vicinity of the Bab al Hawa border crossing caused damage to NGO warehouses and destroyed relief items for people in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Over the past month, we have seen increased attacks in the northwest, displacing families, damaging schools and health centers, and killing civilians including our fellow humanitarian workers. When we are reliant on a single crossing, any further escalation of violence could cut off the only remaining access to food, vaccinations, and other critical supplies for millions.

¹ [Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021](#).

² Ibid.

In the northeast, the closure of the Al Yarubiyah crossing point will continue to have dire consequences. Drought and water scarcity in the region have led to an increase in waterborne diseases. Cases in some areas have increased by 300%³. Limited water supply impacts people's ability to adhere to COVID-19 prevention measures. As COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the northeast and spread across densely populated displacement camps such as Al Hol, NGOs remain unable to fill the gaps that have been left, facing shortages of PPE, essential medicines, COVID-19 testing kits and medical supplies. **Overall humanitarian needs have grown 38% since that crossing was closed in January 2020⁴.**

We look to the Security Council to ensure the vital lifeline of cross-border assistance remains functional and is expanded. Millions of civilians depend on our organizations' ability to maintain and expand humanitarian aid and services. We urge you to put politics aside and to put the humanitarian imperative at the center of your actions.

Yours sincerely,

1. ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association
2. Binaa Organization for Development
3. Bonyan Organization for Youth and Development
4. Bousla Development and Innovation
5. CARE International
6. Dünya Doktorları Derneği (MDM Turkey)
7. GOAL
8. Humanity and Inclusion (HI)
9. Hope Revival Organization
10. International Humanitarian Relief (IHR)
11. International Rescue Committee (IRC)
12. Médecins du Monde (MDM France)
13. Médicos del Mundo. (MDM Spain)
14. Mercy Corps
15. Nasam Khair organization
16. Oxfam
17. People in Need (PIN)
18. Relief International
19. Save the Children
20. Solidarités International
21. Syria Relief
22. Syria Relief and Development (SRD)
23. Urnammu for Justice and Human Rights
24. VIYAN Organization for Medical Relief and Development

³ "Humanitarian impact of low Euphrates water levels and Drought in Northeast Syria." NES Forum. June 2021.

⁴ [Syrian Arab Republic Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021](#)

25. War Child
26. Welthungerhilfe
27. White Hands
28. White Hats Organization for Sustainable Development (WHOSD)
29. Women Support Association
30. World Vision