

United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Syria, Imran Riza, statement on visit to north-east Syria

Damascus, 17 August 2022

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) for Syria, Mr Imran Riza, today concluded a four-day mission to north-east Syria, where he visited multiple projects in Al Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa Governorates and met with the Governor of Al Hasakeh, Dr. Louay Sayyouth, to discuss humanitarian priorities and how to best address them.

The north-east is facing a severe water crisis in all respects - from drinking water, to irrigation, food production, and power generation, all of course impacting health and livelihoods. Mr Riza reaffirmed the United Nations' commitment to comprehensively address this crisis and with all parties concerned - both in immediate terms and seeking longer-term solutions.

RC/HC Riza visited several camps for internally displaced people (IDPs), including Areesha camp in Al Hasakeh and Mahmoudli in Ar-Raqqa, where he spoke to the camp residents about their experiences, intentions and needs.

"It is clear to me, having visited and spoken to communities both in and out of camps, that the path of early recovery and resilience we are pursuing is the right one. Without sustained access to services and livelihoods, it will not be possible for families to break the cycle of poverty and crisis and live their lives in dignity," Mr Riza said.

Addressing the complexities of the populations of Al Hol and Ar Roj camps, Mr Riza discussed the efforts by the Government of Iraq in repatriating nationals, including medical and vulnerable cases. He advocated for moves to also encourage the returns of Syrian IDPs and called for those Member States who have women and children in these camps to urgently find means of repatriating those who wish to come back to their countries.

On Al Hol, Mr Riza expressed concern about increasing levels of violence among the resident population. Already this year, at least 26 people have been murdered in the camp, including three this week, and 20 of them women. Criminality, gender-based violence and attacks against humanitarian workers are also commonplace in the camp. The humanitarian community has developed a strategy to address these challenges but is currently US\$45 million underfunded.

Amid this already worrying backdrop, the RC/HC also expressed his alarm at the recent uptick in military action in the north which has included drone strikes and shelling resulting in civilian casualties. This has already led to heightened anxiety and some movements. Continued military action will lead to further major displacements.

Mr Riza reminds all parties of their obligations under International Humanitarian Law and urges them to take all necessary precautions to avoid further hostilities. What is needed is a political

solution, not more military operations. And of course more, much more humanitarian assistance.

During this visit Mr Riza and his team were shown projects including Al Hikmah Hospital in Al Hasakeh, a Directorate of Health immunization centre in Raqqa City, a Pregnant and Lactating Women distribution point in Tabqa City and a center for women and children that included safe spaces, psychosocial counseling and vocational training in Qamishli. The RC/HC also visited a number of health points in the IDP camps and mine risk awareness activities for children.

*Areesha camp's population is approximately 14,526 people, with 85 per cent women and children. Mahmoudli camp has 8,944 people, with 81 per cent women and children. Al Roj camp population is 2,506 people with 97 per cent women and children, and Al Hol is over 56,000 people, of whom 94 per cent are women and children.

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