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DISPLACED PERSONS**

24<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council

GENEVA, 16 September 2013



Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Colleagues and Friends,

On 15 May 2013, the United Nations General Assembly in resolution A/RES/67/262, requested my mandate, on an exceptional basis, to submit a report within 90 days on the “dire situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria in terms of safety and their basic rights and livelihoods, and to provide recommendations with a view to meeting assistance and protection needs and strengthening the effectiveness of the international response to displacement” (paragraph 21). It is this report (A/67/931) which I have the honor of presenting to you today, at the invitation of this Council in resolution 23/26 on the deterioration of the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the need to grant immediate access to the commission of inquiry.

Mr. President,

In my report to the General Assembly, I provide an overview of the humanitarian, protection and human rights situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria, an analysis of challenges in meeting the urgent needs of affected communities, and a set of initial recommendations, including considerations to guide durable solutions to internal displacement. The report is based on a comprehensive desk review of existing information and analysis on Syria, as well as various briefings and written inputs provided by a variety of stakeholders, including, United Nations counterparts, international organizations, the Government of Syria and civil society. I would like to thank all stakeholders who contributed information at very short notice, and the Government of Syria for their written inputs and comments, as well as their invitation to visit Syria. In this respect, while a country visit was agreed in principal, I will continue to engage with the Government in order to establish mutually suitable dates for a future visit, security conditions permitting.

Mr. President,

Last week, High Commissioner, Navi Pillay, in her address to this Council reiterated an urgent call for States, together with the United Nations, to find a way to bring the warring parties to the negotiating table in order to end the ongoing bloodshed now

taking place in Syria over the last two years. I, together with countless others, have made urgent pleas to the same effect, and we will continue to do so. The horrific violence already experienced by the Syrian population has claimed over 100, 000 lives. I would like to express my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of all of those who have lost their lives in this conflict. More recently serious concerns regarding the use of toxic chemicals/chemical agents in the conflict in Syria are now at issue and being investigated, even as the responsibility and circumstances of their usage must still be clarified and determined.

Mr. President,

In addition to the horrendous loss of life, there is daily ongoing suffering of ordinary Syrians that is incalculable and unimaginable. The internal armed conflict and extent of destruction in Syria continues to have far-reaching human, social and economic consequences, as well as regional and geo-political dimensions. The United Nations estimates that there are now 6.8 million people in need in Syria, of whom 3.1 million are children, and the number of persons who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries has now reached two million – placing an enormous burden of responsibility on host countries of asylum at many levels. Amongst the most vulnerable of these populations, are the estimated 4.25 million persons internally displaced within the country, who without adequate shelter and humanitarian assistance, will be at even greater risk with the coming of winter in the next few months.

While precise information on the extent of humanitarian needs in Syria is difficult to obtain due to the challenges in accessing and monitoring the situation of affected populations, as well as the rapidly changing situation – all indications suggest that humanitarian needs have risen dramatically, due to large-scale displacement, as well as the destruction of infrastructure (such as schools and hospitals), and the unraveling of public services.

We know that needs tend to be most acute in densely populated areas affected by violence, in communities hosting high numbers of IDPs, as well as amongst internally displaced Palestine refugees in Syria, and destitute people in urban and rural areas suffering from the socio-economic impact of the crisis – many of whom have had to move within the country in order to find alternative means of survival.

Patterns of displacement continue to be massive and fluid. Entire families have been displaced multiple times due to the geographic expansion of the conflict and the shifting of frontlines. Most IDPs flee their homes without the opportunity to take their personal effects or documentation. The majority (85%) stay with relatives, friends and host communities, who have provided the bulk of available support. Many hosting centres, often in urban areas, have received a large influx of IDPs. This has overstretched life-sustaining urban services to the point of potential or actual collapse, raising risks for the entire local population, particularly due to the lack of capacity to provide sufficient clean water, sanitation systems and other basic services, such as health.

Gross violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law by Government forces and dissident armed groups continue to drive mass displacement. In addition however, an increasing number of IDPs are forced to flee due to the secondary effects of conflict, including the massive destruction of homes in certain areas, the disruption of basic services, and the loss of livelihoods.

Mr. President,

While the provision of life-saving humanitarian assistance has expanded over time, it is unable to match the pace of the escalating humanitarian needs in Syria.

The UN and its partners continue to undertake significant efforts to reach and assist IDPs and those hosting them, including by employing inter-agency cross-line convoys since early 2013, that have enabled access to previously inaccessible or difficult-to-access locations (e.g., Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Idleb, Dera'a and Deir Ez-Zour). The UN has also expanded humanitarian access through additional local partnerships and the establishment of humanitarian hubs, such as in Homs and Tartous.

A consecutive series of Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plans (SHARP), have been developed in collaboration with the Syrian Government. The revised SHARP of June 2013, estimated that a total of 1.41 billion US dollars was needed to meet urgent humanitarian needs in Syria. With regard to funding, while the situation has improved

in 2013 as compared to the previous year, there is a concern that some essential sectors such as shelter, livelihoods and early recovery for example, tend to be underfunded. There are also concerns regarding the sustainability of humanitarian funding, should the conflict be significantly prolonged. Moreover, even when violence ceases and a political solution is reached, Syria will require support for its recovery. This will be critical to ensuring that internally displaced persons as well as other vulnerable persons can be assisted in finding durable solutions to their displacement and in rebuilding their lives. I urge the international community and donors to maintain their commitment and to develop innovative strategies to address these challenges, including by establishing funding from non-humanitarian budgets.

Mr. President

In my report I detail the dire situation and extremely urgent needs of IDPs in terms of protection, food, shelter, healthcare, water and sanitation, nutrition and education. Although estimates vary considerably in relation to the unmet needs and deficiencies in these sectors, the situation in relation to food insecurity, access to clean water, adequate shelter and healthcare is extremely deplorable. With multiple displacements, the passage of time and the ongoing suffering, affected populations, including children and the elderly, grow more vulnerable physically and psychologically– and less resilient.

The lack of protection of IDPs continues to be of grave concern. They are not only at great risk due to the ongoing conflict but also during flight and while in displacement. Given the near absence of areas providing safety in the country, they often remain at risk of being subjected to continued violence, including indiscriminate attacks, targeted attacks on particular communities, and attacks, or threats, against locations where they have sought safety, in contravention of international human rights and humanitarian law, as reflected in the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GP 5- 6, 10-11).

I am also very concerned about restrictions on entry imposed by neighbouring countries on Syrians fleeing the country. Internally Displaced Persons have the right to seek asylum in other countries (GP15), and I appeal to these countries to continue to respect the institution of asylum and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

For those within Syria, serious access constraints, including administrative and operational restrictions, and security concerns, continue to impede the delivery of protection and humanitarian assistance. Security-related impediments include active fighting and military operations, in complete disregard of international law, multiplicity and fragmentation of dissident armed groups, and misperceptions vis-à-vis humanitarian actors. Additionally, closure of access routes, checkpoints, and interruption of access to warehouses have been persistent obstacles. An unacceptable trend is also the increasing number of humanitarian workers and UN staff members who have been killed, injured or kidnapped, and increasing attacks on goods and facilities, including UN vehicles. Such actions violate humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, and deprive persons in need, including IDPs, of life-saving assistance.

Humanitarian assistance is further affected by limited capacity. At present, humanitarian needs in Syria are beyond the collective capacity of humanitarian actors. More enhanced humanitarian efforts are needed. But to be effective, such efforts demand easing administrative procedures for local and international humanitarian organizations to work in Syria. Capacity can only be addressed if bureaucratic and administrative constraints are addressed urgently, including proportionate lifting of restrictions on entry visas as a corollary of the international humanitarian law obligation to allow rapid and unimpeded access to populations in need, importing telecom equipment and armoured vehicles, delivery of medical equipment to opposition-held areas, and excessive administrative procedures for humanitarian aid delivery and convoys. The Government of Syria provided written information and comments, on these and other issues addressed in my report, for which I wish to thank them. Amongst other items, they stressed the serious humanitarian repercussions of the “sanctions imposed on the Syrian people”; highlighted their cooperation with the ICRC and the UN; and detailed their efforts to respond to the needs of affected populations.

Mr. President,

A political resolution to the conflict in Syria and a cessation in the fighting are pre-conditions for the stabilization of Syria, and for its social and economic recovery. Identifying solutions to the mass displacements that have taken place will also be a key

challenge in Syria's recovery – and arguably, to regional stability. While it remains difficult to provide conclusive recommendations on durable solutions to displacement in a country still torn by armed conflict, a number of key principles and considerations remain central to addressing the situation of displacement in the Syrian context.

In my report, I provide guidance with regard to some of these considerations and principles, as well as recommendations on the way forward. I consider the impact of potential movement patterns to be aware of in the future, the need for disaggregated data-collection, the importance of factoring in the urban dimension of displacement in Syria, and the crucial issues of housing, land and property. Durable solutions to displacement will require innovative measures and support by various sectors of the international community, including development actors.

Mr. President,

The humanitarian imperative to provide urgently needed humanitarian assistance must continue to prevail - including through strengthened international coordination and action by the humanitarian community. However, this must be accompanied by the recognition that humanitarian assistance alone cannot bring about a solution to the crisis.

We must continue to try to find, as a matter of absolute priority, for the sake of Syria, of all those affected by the conflict, for present and future generations, a peaceful international-led solution for Syria, with the full participation of Syrians, all stakeholders, as well as displaced persons, founded on respect for international law.

Prospects for building a stable post-conflict in Syria must begin with stabilising the population of Syria itself by providing unbridled protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, working to re-establish the normality of political and social economic circumstances that are conducive to promoting early recovery and the attainment of durable solutions for internally displaced persons.

I thank you for your attention.