



Security Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2017

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the thirty-fifth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Council resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2258 (2015) and paragraph 5 of Council resolution 2332 (2016), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, other Syrian sources and open sources. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 to 31 December 2016.

Box 1

Key points in December 2016

(1) After a fierce escalation of fighting throughout the month, on 30 December a nationwide ceasefire went into effect that, notwithstanding some breaches, reduced levels of violence.

(2) More than 116,000 people were displaced from formerly besieged areas of eastern Aleppo. Some 80,000 people registered in government-controlled areas, including areas formerly besieged, and 36,000 people were evacuated from eastern Aleppo to the western Aleppo countryside and Idlib between 15 and 22 December. The United Nations provided life-saving assistance to those who were displaced from or who have since returned to eastern Aleppo. After the removal of eastern Aleppo from the list of besieged locations, some 700,000 people remain besieged across the Syrian Arab Republic.



- (3) One inter-agency convoy delivered assistance to 6,000 of a total of 930,250 people requested under the December inter-agency convoy plan for the month (less than 1 per cent).
- (4) The fighting that led to civilian deaths and the displacement of 7,000 people in the Wadi Barada area also cut off an estimated 5.5 million people in Damascus and surrounding areas from the main water supply.
- (5) The United Nations and health partners received credible reports of 12 attacks against medical facilities, and the United Nations verified 5 attacks against educational facilities.

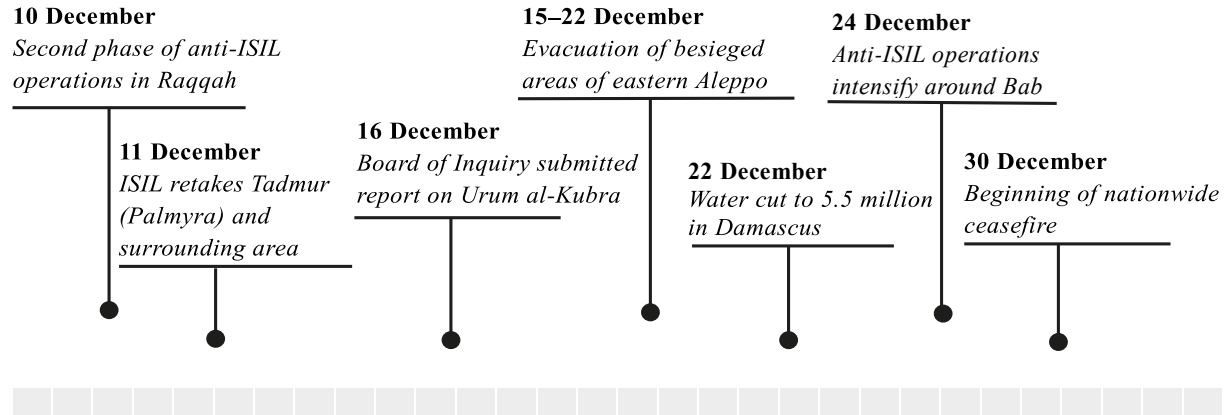
II. Major developments

3. There was intense military activity throughout the country, in particular in and around the city of Aleppo, but also in the Aleppo countryside and in Damascus, Dayr al-Zawr, Homs, Idlib, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq governorates. Hospitals and schools continued to be attacked. On 30 December, however, a nationwide ceasefire went into effect that, notwithstanding some breaches, reduced levels of violence. The Russian Federation and Turkey, the ceasefire guarantors, wrote to the Security Council indicating that the ceasefire is aimed at fostering the conditions necessary for establishing political dialogue, reducing violence, preventing casualties among civilians and providing unhindered humanitarian access. The Council unanimously adopted resolution [2336 \(2016\)](#) on 31 December, in which it welcomed and supported the efforts undertaken by the Russian Federation and Turkey.

4. The ceasefire was brokered a week after the complex and large-scale evacuation of civilians from the eastern part of the city of Aleppo. The evacuation, which began on 15 December, occurred after a month of heavy aerial bombardment and ground operations in which 95 per cent of the formerly besieged areas of eastern Aleppo were retaken by government forces and non-Syrian allied forces. Heavy fighting resulted in significant death and destruction, with abuses and violations documented by both sides. Hundreds of civilians were reported missing by their families after leaving areas previously held by non-State armed opposition groups. Their fate remains unknown. The exact number of those missing or killed in the airstrikes and ground fighting is impossible to assess.

5. Between 15 and 22 December, 36,000 people were evacuated to the western Aleppo countryside and Idlib in 294 buses, 1,262 private vehicles and 61 ambulances. The evacuation was undertaken by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and observed by the United Nations at a point controlled by the Government. In areas beyond the city, humanitarian organizations and health actors provided assistance to the evacuees, which was coordinated by the United Nations.

Figure I
Key dates in December 2016



6. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution [2328 \(2016\)](#) on 19 December, in which it called for the evacuations to be conducted in accordance with international humanitarian law and principles and requested that the United Nations and other relevant institutions observe the evacuations and the well-being of civilians in the eastern districts of the city. The role of the United Nations in the evacuation consisted of four main elements: observation of the evacuation from a point along the exit corridor, support for evacuees once they had left, the provision of assistance to those remaining in the formerly besieged areas of the city and ongoing humanitarian support for those in need in the remainder of the city. Before and after the adoption of the resolution, the United Nations ensured that it had a 24-hour presence to observe the evacuation.

7. Once the evacuees had left government-controlled areas, cross-border support was provided by the United Nations and its humanitarian partners. A total of 13,951 people visited the reception centres set up in Atarib (Aleppo) and Sarmada (Idlib) for humanitarian assistance and information centres in Urum al-Kubra and Kafr Naha to receive basic services and details about additional humanitarian support. The World Health Organization and its health partners arranged medical evacuation and treatment in hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic and coordinated with the Government of Turkey to transfer some urgent cases to Turkey. A total of 811 patients were medically evacuated to hospitals for treatment, including 100 critical cases who were evacuated to hospitals in Turkey. In addition, 26 mobile clinics visited 80 locations and provided 8,836 consultations. The World Food Programme (WFP) and partners provided food to those displaced. Some 18 United Nations partner organizations provided winter kits and other essential items. Water trucking was increased to cover 18 informal settlements and two communities, and diesel, chlorine and infrastructure rehabilitation was provided to informal settlements.

8. For those displaced to government-controlled areas, support was provided from the United Nations hub in Aleppo, in close collaboration with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and local partners. From 24 November to the end of December,

80,158 civilians were registered in government-controlled areas, including 37,271 in eastern Aleppo neighbourhoods and 38,637 people in western Aleppo, while 4,250 were displaced to the Jibrin collective centre. The number of those registered as displaced in government-controlled areas is expected to increase further. Those who registered were provided with food, with some 20,700 of those displaced receiving a hot meal twice a day in the old city, in the Hannanu and Mahalij neighbourhoods, as well as at the Jibrin collective centre. A total of 40,000 bread bundles were distributed daily, as were food baskets and ready-to-eat rations. Nearly 70,000 people received non-food items, such as winter kits. A total of 250 tons of emergency medical supplies were provided, along with seven mobile clinics and 12 mobile teams to provide medical care.

9. The evacuation of Aleppo was negotiated alongside a parallel evacuation of 4,000 people from the besieged villages of Fu'ah and Kafraya. Those evacuations were initiated, but only 15 buses were able to evacuate 1,226 people. A total of 21 buses and their drivers that had entered the towns to undertake further evacuations remained stranded inside the besieged area after negotiations broke down and they were not permitted to leave. Those who were able to leave went to the Hisyah subdistrict in Homs and Ladhqiyyah. The United Nations and its partners provided support to the 769 people who went to the Hisyah camp, including food rations, family clothing and children's clothing kits and medical support.

10. The evacuation of civilians also occurred as local agreements were reached between the Government and non-State armed opposition groups in several areas in Rif Dimashq and Homs governorates. Following an agreement in the hard-to-reach location of Tall al-Jayir, an estimated 2,700 fighters and accompanying family members were evacuated to Idlib between 2 and 4 December. Further implementation of the agreement moved slowly, with civilian and commercial movement remaining limited after the agreement was reached. Other local agreements were reached in Kanakir on 14 December, in Zakiyah and Dayr Khabiyah on 17 December and in Talbisah on 20 December, but they were related primarily to settling the legal status of individuals and ending hostilities and did not involve movements of people.

11. On 15 December, fighting intensified in the Wadi Barada area outside Damascus, displacing an estimated 7,000 residents who fled to nearby villages amid reports of a lack of water, food and basic services. Since 22 December, the fighting has also cut off an estimated 5.5 million people in Damascus and surrounding areas from the main water supply after the two primary sources of drinking water, Wadi Barada and Ayn-al-Fijah, were damaged. They normally provide water to 70 per cent of the population in and around Damascus.

12. Within the city of Damascus, the water authority has initiated a rationing system under which each neighbourhood receives water through the supply network every five to six days for three to four hours. This water is provided from groundwater wells located across the city. Nevertheless, the water provided is sufficient to meet only some 30 per cent of the daily water needs of residents. Many people are resorting to purchasing water from private companies, with prices and quality not subjected to regulation. In addition, at least 715,000 people living in elevated areas on the outskirts of Damascus are not reached regularly with water. The United Nations Children's Fund is supporting and equipping the wells, trucking

water to 84 schools in Damascus and the surrounding areas and providing 15,000 litres of fuel daily to operate water facilities. Negotiations continue between the parties to resume the water supply, although the United Nations is not a party to these talks.

13. Fighting continued around Bab and Aleppo governorate, intensifying in late December with reports of attacks resulting in the deaths of more than 100 civilians since 22 December. The fighting also displaced an estimated 30,000–35,000 civilians from Bab and surrounding areas towards the districts of I‘zaz, Jarabulus and Manbij. An estimated 5,000 to 8,000 civilians remained in Bab and were reportedly facing difficult conditions under the control of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), including severe restrictions on movement.

Box 2

Wa‘r

(1) Wa‘r is a neighbourhood in the north-west of Homs, with some 50,000 inhabitants, and is the only remaining neighbourhood in the city not under the control of the Government. It had seen regular humanitarian access from December 2015 to March 2016 under a local agreement that included the evacuation of at least 300 fighters and their family members. The agreement broke down in March, in part as a result of disagreements on its implementation, including the release of detainees, which led to increased constraints on access and freedom of movement. As a result, Wa‘r was classified as besieged in May 2016.

(2) The United Nations team in Homs conducted a joint humanitarian assessment on 7 December in Wa‘r with ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Access was made possible under an agreement with relevant parties. Participants noted a significant deterioration in the overall humanitarian situation since the previous inter-agency mission, on 26 October. Immediate humanitarian intervention is required to prevent the people of the besieged neighbourhood from facing acute shortages of basic and life-saving materials and the collapse of the already limited medical services.

(3) Since 26 November, access has been severely restricted, with medical evacuations not being permitted. Previously, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent was able to transport urgent cases out of Wa‘r, with the approval of local authorities. Public sector employees, students and non-governmental organization (NGO) volunteers were allowed to move in and out but prevented from carrying food with them through the checkpoints.

(4) Although the security situation was relatively calm, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported two ground-based strikes on civilian infrastructure, including the Hasan ibn al-Haytham elementary school, the Syrian civil defence centre and a charity working with orphans. There had previously been reports of shelling from Wa‘r into other parts of Homs.

14. The anti-ISIL operation in Raqqah led by the Syrian Democratic Forces entered its second phase on 10 December and continued to displace civilians. The Forces were active in the western countryside, gaining control of the Jarniyah subdistrict, in fighting that displaced some 10,000 people. Most of them were able to return after fighting had subsided. Nevertheless some 30 civilian homes were reportedly destroyed. The United Nations continues to request approval from the Government to move supplies out of the Qamishli hub to provide assistance to those displaced by the fighting.

15. The United Nations and its partners continued to deliver assistance to those along the berm on the Jordanian-Syrian border. Since the resumption of that assistance on 22 November, 33,992 individuals have received food and non-food items, including winterization materials. The health clinic at the new service facility near Rukban became fully operational and is providing health assistance to the most vulnerable cases within the berm community. Newly constructed water infrastructure was on schedule to begin providing water at the new distribution site in February 2017.

16. On 9 December, ISIL launched a broad offensive on eastern rural Homs. On 11 December, the Governments of the Russian Federation and the Syrian Arab Republic confirmed that Tadmur (Palmyra) had fallen back under ISIL control. Additional areas saw fighting, including Huwaysis, the Jazal and Arak oilfields, Burj and Muhr hills, the Tar mountains and the village of Bi'r Marhitan, displacing a total of 5,165 people in December. This total includes the majority of the 2,750 individuals who had returned to Tadmur (Palmyra) earlier in 2016. An estimated 1,500 people moved to Homs, where they received food and other support from the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. WFP provided food rations to 2,754 newly displaced persons both in the city of Homs and eastern rural Homs governorate. Some civilians reportedly remained in Tadmur (Palmyra) and faced protection concerns. More displacement was expected as fighting continued.

17. The United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry into the attack on a United Nations-Syrian Arab Red Crescent relief operation to Urum al-Kubra on 19 September submitted its report to the Secretary-General on 16 December. The United Nations released to the public a summary on 21 December, which was also brought to the attention of the Security Council ([S/2016/1093](#)). In the public summary, the United Nations stated that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent compound had been subject to an attack from the air, using multiple types of munitions deployed from more than one aircraft and aircraft type. The Board found that 17 trucks had been struck, at least 10 individuals killed, including 5 drivers who had been part of the convoy and the head of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent in Urum al-Kubra, and at least 22 other individuals injured. Most of the humanitarian supplies carried by the convoy had been damaged or destroyed in the incident, with the losses incurred by the United Nations country team totalling almost \$650,000. The Board noted that aircraft operating as part of the forces of the international coalition, the Russian Federation and the Syrian air force had the capabilities needed to carry out such an attack. It found that no party had alleged the involvement of international coalition forces aircraft and, accordingly, their involvement was highly unlikely. In addition, it stated that it had received reports that information existed to the effect that the Syrian air force was highly likely to have perpetrated the attack but was unable to draw a definitive conclusion in the absence of access to relevant raw data.

Protection issues

18. The protection of civilians has been consistently identified as a significant area of concern in all governorates, with some 13.5 million people in need of protection and assistance. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure continued, including against medical personnel and facilities, and against schools, education staff and school children. Threats from explosive ordnance, threats against women and the most vulnerable civilians, such as children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as other violations and human rights abuses, were also reported.

19. On the basis of information received by OHCHR, the reported killing of civilians and other abuses and violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law continued. Violence occurred in various locations, including Aleppo, Damascus and Dar'a, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah, Homs, Idlib, Raqqah and Rif Dimashq governorates (see table 1). OHCHR documented incidents by all parties to the conflict, including government forces, non-State armed opposition groups and designated terrorist groups.

20. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government continued to provide OHCHR with information on alleged violations. In a note verbale dated 27 December, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic provided OHCHR with a list of incidents that had allegedly occurred in from 5 to 12 December in Aleppo, Damascus, Dayr al-Zawr and Hama governorates. A total of 51 civilians were reportedly killed and dozens injured, including women and children. Casualties were reported as a result of mortar and rocket fire. In a second note verbale dated 28 December, the Permanent Mission provided OHCHR with a list of incidents that had allegedly occurred from 19 to 26 December in Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a and Dayr al-Zawr governorates. A total of 17 civilians were reportedly killed and dozens injured. Casualties were reported as a result of mortar and rocket fire, explosive gas canisters, landmines and cluster munitions.

Table 1
Reported strikes against civilians, December 2016^a

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of attack</i>	<i>Number of people killed, including women and children</i>	<i>Number of people injured</i>	<i>Infrastructure or site type</i>
<i>Aleppo governorate</i>					
4 December	Hallak (eastern Aleppo)	–	4, and 1 abduction	–	–
6 December	Masakin al-Firdaws (eastern Aleppo)	Air strike	5	At least 12	Residential
7 December	Maysalun	Ground strike	3, including 2 children		
8 December	Kallasah, Ma'adi, Firdaws and Sayf al-Dawlah (eastern Aleppo)	Air and ground strikes	At least 40	Scores	–

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of attack</i>	<i>Number of people killed, including women and children</i>	<i>Number of people injured</i>	<i>Infrastructure or site type</i>
9 December	Bab	Air strikes	At least 18, including 2 women and 6 children	At least 8	Residential
9 December	Jalum (eastern Aleppo)	Air strikes	At least 25, including 6 women and 9 children	–	–
12 December	Various districts of eastern Aleppo	Gunshots	At least 82, including 11 women and 16 children	–	–
14 December	Jamiliyah (western Aleppo)	Ground strike	3, including 1 child	–	–
18 December	Bab	Ground strike	3, including 1 child	At least 2	Residential
22 December	Bab	Air strike	At least 95, including women and children	At least 47	Residential
23 December	Bab	Air strike	At least 24, including women and children	68	–
27 December	Bab	Air and ground strikes	4	6	Residential
28 December	Bab	Mines	At least 4 women and 1 child	–	–
29 December	Bab	Mines	6 children	–	–
30 December	Bab	Air and ground strikes	At least 10	15	Residential
<i>Damascus governorate</i>					
21 December	Maliki and Abu Rummanah (Damascus city)	Ground strike	–	At least 2	Residential
29 December	Jawdat al-Hashimi (Damascus city)	Ground strike	–	At least 6	–
<i>Dar'a governorate</i>					
11 December	Dar'a al-Balad (Dar'a city)	Ground strike	2 children	–	Residential
<i>Dayr al-Zawr governorate</i>					
2 December	Jurah (Dayr al-Zawr city)	Ground strike	1 woman and 1 child	4	Residential

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of attack</i>	<i>Number of people killed, including women and children</i>	<i>Number of people injured</i>	<i>Infrastructure or site type</i>
5 December	Border area (Syrian Arab Republic/Turkey)	Gunshot	1	–	Border area
7 December	Harabish (Dayr al-Zawr city)	Gunshot	1 child	–	–
11 December	Khusham	Air strikes	At least 4	–	Residential
13 December	Jurah (Dayr al-Zawr)	Ground strike	1 woman and 1 child	–	Residential
20 December	Muh Hasan	Air strikes	4, including 1 woman	2	Residential
23 December	Hatla	Air strikes	3 women and 2 children	–	Residential
27 December	Hajnah	Air strikes	At least 14, including 2 women and 3 children	15	Residential
<i>Hasakah governorate</i>					
7 December	Qamishli	Improvised explosive device	6	3	Road
<i>Homs governorate</i>					
19 December	Wa‘r	Ground strikes	–	2 children	School
<i>Idlib governorate</i>					
18 December	Fu‘ah	Gunshot	1	–	Buses 15 km south of town
<i>Raqqah governorate</i>					
5 December	Jarniyah	Air strike	6	–	–
5 December	Border area (Syrian Arab Republic/Turkey)	Gunshot	1	–	Border
6 December	Abbarah	Air strike	3, including 1 child	–	–
7 December	Mushayrifah	Air strike	18, including women and children	8	Residential
9 December	Muzaylah	Air strike	At least 28, including 3 women and 4 children	–	Residential
12 December	Dallah (ar-Raqqah city)	Air strike	At least 21, including 1 woman and 5 children	–	–

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Type of attack</i>	<i>Number of people killed, including women and children</i>	<i>Number of people injured</i>	<i>Infrastructure or site type</i>
20 December	Hay al-Thani (Tabaqah city)	Air strike	4 including 1 woman and children	At least 10	–
<i>Rif Damashq governorate</i>					
5 December	Madaya	Ground strike	4, including one child	20	–
11 December	Duma	Air and ground strikes	At least 4	–	Residential
23 December	Wadi Barada	Ground strike	At least 8	Up to 10	Residential
29 December	Duma	Air and ground strikes	At least 14, including 2 women and 6 children	–	Residential
29 December	Irbin	Air strike	4, including 1 woman and 2 children	19	Residential

Source: OHCHR.

^a In line with resolution 2258 (2015), the present description of developments on the ground relates to the compliance with resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Ceasefire of the International Syria Support Group. The list is not exhaustive.

21. The United States Department of Defense publicly confirmed that, in December, the coalition led by the United States of America had carried out at least 303 strikes against ISIL targets in Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr, Hasakah, Homs and Raqqah governorates, 145 of which were said to have taken place near Raqqah. The Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation continued to publicly confirm the presence of Russian forces in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 20 December, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation and Turkey issued a joint statement on agreed steps to revitalize the political process to end the Syrian conflict, in which they reiterated their determination to fight jointly against “ISIL” and “Jabhat al-Nusra” and to separate them from non-State armed opposition groups in the Syrian Arab Republic.

22. OHCHR documented violations and abuses committed by government forces and their allies and by non-State armed opposition groups during the final days of the government offensive in the city of Aleppo and during the subsequent evacuations of civilians and fighters out of areas recently taken over by government forces and their allies. There are concerns that many people who lived in eastern Aleppo during the besiegement remain unaccounted for to date. An unknown number of people died during the besiegement, in particular during the final days of the conflict when strikes intensified.

23. Reports indicated that some non-State armed opposition groups had actively prevented civilians from leaving areas under their control. For example, between 30 November and 1 December, non-State armed opposition groups fired on civilians from the vicinity of Bustan al-Qasr attempting to leave towards government-controlled Mashariqah. OHCHR received preliminary information on similar

incidents and is investigating them. During the first weeks of December, prior to the Government taking full control of Aleppo, an unknown number of civilians were reportedly abducted and others killed by non-State armed opposition groups, apparently after the civilians had asked them to leave. OHCHR also received credible reports of civilians being killed by militias allied with the Government. The killings allegedly occurred when the militias took control of the Bustan al-Qasr, Firdaws, Hallak, Kallasah and Salihin neighbourhoods that had previously been held by non-State armed opposition groups and where a significant number of civilians remained after the groups' sudden withdrawal on 12 December.

24. Hundreds of civilians were reported missing by their families after having left areas previously held by non-State armed opposition groups; their fate remains unknown. On 26 December, the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation announced the discovery of mass graves containing bodies bearing signs of torture in areas previously not under government control. OHCHR was unable to confirm or deny those allegations at the time of writing and was investigating them. Hundreds of government soldiers held by non-State armed opposition groups in areas of Aleppo previously under their control also reportedly went missing and their fate remains unclear.

25. During the evacuations from Aleppo, Fu'ah and Kafraya, there were reports of civilians being attacked. The United Nations received credible reports of Iranian pro-government militias stopping a 20-bus convoy of some 800 people on 16 December. Two fighters and a member of the civil defence were reportedly killed. All valuables, along with identity cards and mobile phones, were removed from the individuals in the convoy. The men were forced to lie face down and insulted and beaten. After approximately four hours, the convoy was allowed to proceed, except for 14 people who were ordered to return to eastern Aleppo, along with the bodies of the three men killed. On 18 December, a convoy of empty buses en route to the besieged towns of Fu'ah and Kefraya was attacked at a checkpoint in Sarmin, some 15 km to the south of the towns. Non-State armed opposition groups allegedly set fire to eight buses and shot and killed a driver who was attempting to escape. Seven other drivers were reportedly being held by the groups responsible.

26. In addition to the immediate threats, there are also longer-term protection concerns for those who have been displaced following months or years of concentrated military activity. It is imperative that the property rights of displaced persons be respected and that displaced persons have the right to voluntarily return in safety to their homes or places of habitual residence as soon as is feasible.

27. In blatant disregard for the protected status of medical facilities under international humanitarian law, further articulated by the Security Council in its resolution [2286 \(2016\)](#), such facilities continued to be damaged or destroyed as a result of fighting. The United Nations and health partners received credible reports of 12 attacks against medical facilities in December, comprising 4 on hospitals (2 in Aleppo, 1 in Dar'a and 1 in Idlib), 2 on primary health-care centres (1 each in Aleppo and Rif Dimashq), 1 on a mobile field hospital (Aleppo) and 5 on ambulances (4 in Rif Dimashq and 1 in Aleppo). Primary, secondary and tertiary health-care services continued to experience severe gaps in performance and service delivery, owing to the extensive damage caused to health facilities, the rapid turnover of health staff and the lack of qualified professionals in different

specialized medical fields. Paediatric and maternal health services, including routine vaccinations, remained negatively affected.

28. Educational facilities also continued to be subject to attacks, with five attacks reported by the United Nations. On 5 December, the Nusha primary school in Karm al-Nusha, Aleppo, sustained serious damages in an air strike. On 6 December, a mortar bomb landed on the roof of a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) school, which is also used as a distribution facility at the Neirab camp in the government-controlled area 13 km east of the city of Aleppo. Although no injuries were reported, material damage was caused to the facility. Educational activities in the camp were suspended until 12 December. On 19 December, in the Wa'r neighbourhood of Homs, the Hasan ibn al-Haytham elementary school and a teacher training institute were among the buildings damaged by ground strikes. Two children in the school were also lightly injured. On 22 December, a school in Atarib, Aleppo, was hit by an air strike and partially damaged. On the same day, sporadic shelling occurred in the city of Dar'a, with a mortar bomb landing near the Kafr Kina governmental school during an UNRWA-run afternoon shift. One UNRWA teacher was injured and taken to hospital and the school evacuated.

Humanitarian access

Box 3

Key points

- (1) An inter-agency convoy delivered assistance to 6,000 of a total of 930,250 people (less than 1 per cent) requested under the inter-agency convoy plan for December. More than 23,000 medical items were removed from the convoy.
- (2) On 21 December, the Security Council adopted resolution [2332 \(2016\)](#), in which it authorized the extension of the cross-border mandate until 10 January 2018.
- (3) The inter-agency convoy plan for January was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19 December. A response was received on 29 December, in line with the agreed review period under the current two-step approval process. A total of 697,700 of the 914,000 requested beneficiaries (76.3 per cent) under the plan were approved in full or in part. Five locations in Rif Dimashq, Hajar al-Aswad (besieged), Wadi Barada, Qabun, Tadamun, and Bayt Jinn, were denied.
- (4) Some 697,000 beneficiaries were assisted with food commodities by the United Nations and its partners via cross-border operations from Jordan and Turkey.
- (5) The United Nations continued its airlift and airdrop operations to Qamishli and the city of Dayr al-Zawr. Since the beginning of operations in 2016, the United Nations has completed 168 airdrops of food commodities and humanitarian assistance over the city of Dayr al-Zawr and more than 248 airlift rotations to Qamishli from Damascus.

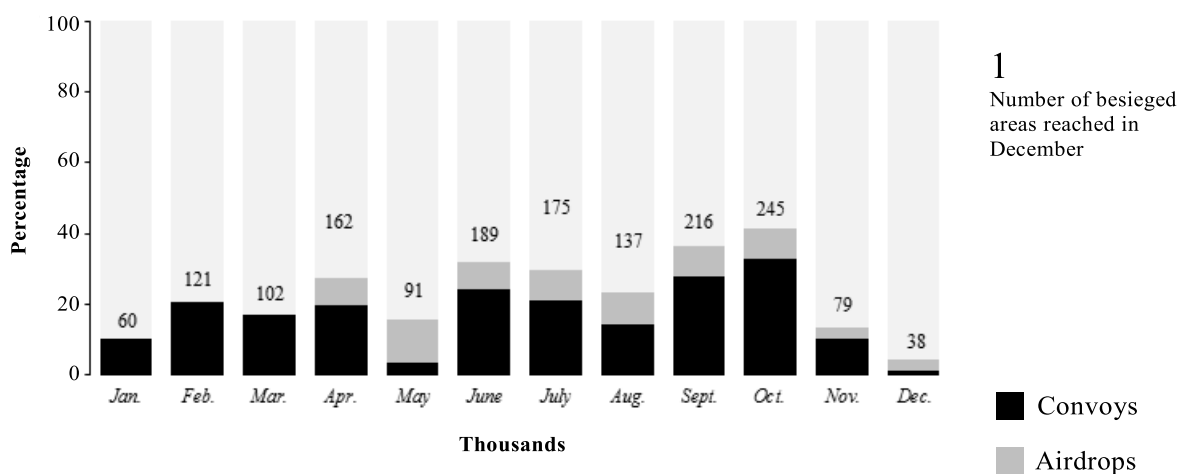
29. The delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need of such assistance remained extremely challenging in many areas as a result of active conflict, shifting

conflict lines and deliberate restrictions on the movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict.

30. Access to the millions of people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained of critical concern. As a result of delays in the issuance of facilitation letters, requirements for additional government and security approvals above and beyond the two steps agreed to with the Government in April, lack of adherence to agreed-upon protocols at checkpoints and insecurity, only one inter-agency convoy reached a total of 6,000 people in Khan al-Shih, Rif Dimashq (see table 5). This total constitutes less than 1 per cent of the 930,250 people to whom access had been requested under the plan. However, in addition to that inter-agency road convoy, the United Nations continued to provide assistance to besieged and hard-to-reach areas through single-agency convoys, airdrops and airlifts. Moreover, NGOs continued to provide medical, education and protection services, as well as some support in other sectors, in hard-to-reach locations under extremely challenging circumstances.

Figure II

United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations: number of people reached each month in besieged areas, including via airdrops to the city of Dayr al-Zawr

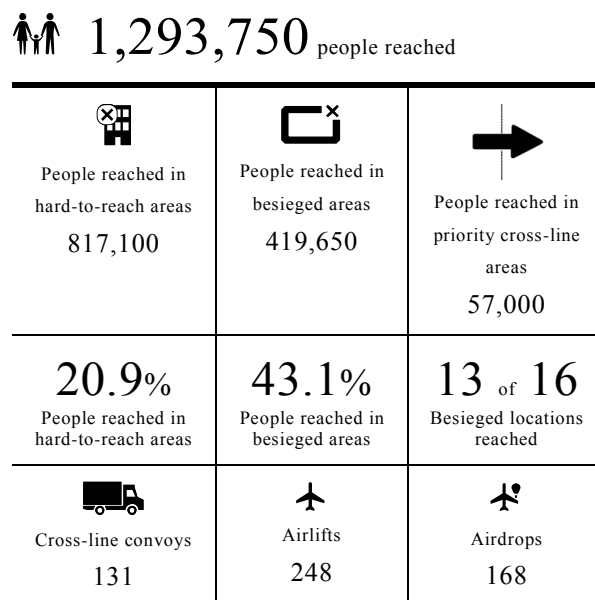


31. Deliberate interference and restrictions by the parties to the conflict continued to prevent aid delivery. WFP continued to be unable to gain access to populations in need in ISIL-controlled areas, given that all plans to deliver assistance to those areas had been suspended owing to the inability to work independently and monitor activities. This situation is preventing WFP from reaching Raqqah and most of Dayr al-Zawr governorates, as well as pockets of northern rural Aleppo, southern rural Hasakah and north-western rural Hama governorates. Meanwhile, in Hasakah governorate, airlifts to Qamishli were temporarily put on hold during the first week of December for aircraft maintenance. Consequent delays in replenishing food stocks in WFP warehouses in Qamishli meant that only 32 per cent of the dispatch plan for the month could be achieved during the December cycle. Moreover,

UNRWA has been unable to return to Yalda/Yarmouk since 25 May 2016, owing to security concerns on the ground.

Table 2

United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations from 1 January to 31 December 2016



32. The removal of life-saving medicines and medical supplies from humanitarian aid convoys continued. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for 23,207 treatments were removed from the inter-agency convoy to Khan al-Shih. The treatments and supplies removed from that convoy during the month of December are shown in table 3.

Table 3

Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys in December 2016

<i>Location</i>	<i>Number of treatments</i>	<i>Type of supplies</i>
Khan al-Shih	23 207	Pneumonia kits A and B; minor surgery instruments (surgical kit); injectable analgesics, antiseptics, bronchodilator (inhalers), antipyretic/analgesics syrup

33. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for December, access was requested to 21 locations, including besieged locations, with the aim of reaching 930,250 people. In its response on 1 December, the Syrian authorities approved access to 798,200 of those requested beneficiaries (85.8 per cent) in full or in part. A total of 132,050 beneficiaries (14.2 per cent) requested under the plan were denied or not included.

34. On 19 December, the United Nations submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the inter-agency convoy plan for January, which comprised 19 requests to reach 914,000 people in need across 21 besieged, hard-to-reach and priority cross-line areas. A response was received on 29 December, in accordance with the agreed two-step approval procedures. A total of 697,700 of the requested beneficiaries (76.3 per cent) were approved in full or in part, while 216,300 requested beneficiaries (23.7 per cent) were not included.

35. The Nusaybin/Qamishli crossing in Hasakah governorate has been temporarily closed by the Turkish authorities since 27 December 2015 because of security concerns. Hasakah also remains largely inaccessible by road for United Nations agencies from within the Syrian Arab Republic owing to insecurity and the presence of ISIL members along the routes. The United Nations continues with airlifts from Damascus to Qamishli airport to deliver multisectoral assistance, with some 59,000 people reached in December, including 7,500 Iraqi refugees from Mosul assisted in the Hawl refugee camp.

Humanitarian response

36. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need through all modalities from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders (see table 4). NGOs also continued to deliver valuable assistance to people in need in line with previous months. The Government continued to provide basic services to those areas under its control and in many areas beyond its control.

Table 4

Number of people reached by United Nations organizations, December 2016

<i>Organization</i>	<i>People reached</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	146 934
International Organization for Migration	89 320
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	710 891
United Nations Children's Fund	>2 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	1 126 679
United Nations Population Fund	253 522
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	450 000
World Food Programme	3 540 000
World Health Organization	1 061 510

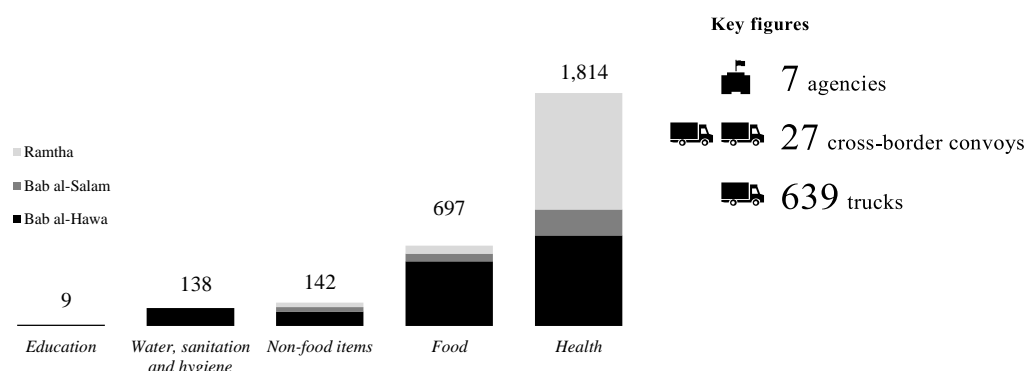
37. Cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan into the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#) and [2258 \(2015\)](#) (see figure III). In addition, on 21 December, the Security Council adopted resolution [2332 \(2016\)](#), in which it authorized the extension of the cross-border mandate until 10 January 2018. In line with these resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its content, destination and number of beneficiaries. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations, monitoring 639 trucks used

in 27 convoys, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment. The Mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

Figure III

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners per cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, December 2016

(Thousands)



38. The inter-agency convoy to the besieged location of Khan al-Shih listed in table 5 was completed on 16 December, providing multisectoral assistance to 6,000 beneficiaries. Moreover, from 10 April to the end of December, the United Nations completed 168 airdrops of food commodities and humanitarian assistance over the city of Dayr al-Zawr. In addition, the logistics cluster continued airlifts to Qamishli from Damascus, with more than 248 airlift rotations having been completed since 9 July. United Nations agencies also undertook single-agency deliveries to cross-line and hard-to-reach locations or reached those locations through their regular programmes.

Table 5

Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoy, December 2016

Date	Location	Requested target (number of beneficiaries)	Targeted people reached	Type of assistance
16 December	Khan al-Shih	6 000	6 000	Multisectoral

39. The United Nations implemented the accelerated routine immunization campaign via cross-border operations in the northern Syrian Arab Republic. As a result, some 104,000 children were vaccinated in Jarabulus and elsewhere in Aleppo governorate. In addition, 279,118 children under 1 year of age were vaccinated with DTP3, 287,289 with polio III and 367,873 with the measles/mumps/rubella vaccine. In eastern Aleppo, six mobile teams comprising 40 health workers reached 2,823 children with routine immunizations, 10,355 children with polio vaccines and 5,748 women with tetanus vaccines.

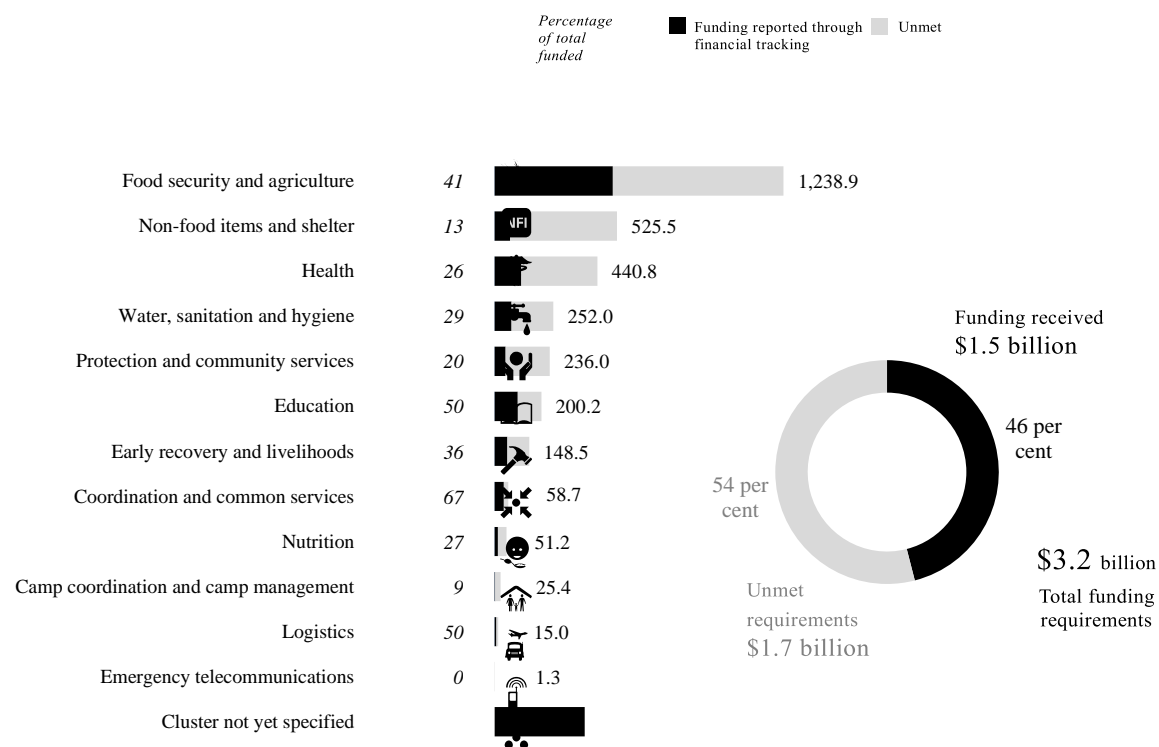
Humanitarian response plan funding

40. The status of the funding of the humanitarian response plan as at 31 December is shown in figure IV.

Figure IV

Humanitarian response plan funding, 31 December 2016

(Millions of United States dollars)



Visas and registrations

41. A total of 14 new visa requests from United Nations staff members were submitted to Syrian authorities. A total of 18 requests were approved, comprising 2 submitted in December and 16 older applications, while 42 applications made over a period of several months remain pending. Moreover, a total of 31 visa renewal requests were submitted during the month. A total of 67 renewal applications were approved, of which 26 were submitted in December. No visa renewal requests were rejected. Some 10 visa renewal requests remain pending, of which 5 were submitted in December.

42. A total of 17 international NGOs are registered with the Government to operate in the country. Four more are completing registration. Those organizations continued to face administrative hurdles and restrictions that affect their ability to operate, including in gaining permission to undertake independent needs assessments. Some 206 national NGOs are authorized to operate, including 12 added in December.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

43. A total of 27 United Nations staff members, 26 of whom are UNRWA staff and 1 from the United Nations Development Programme, are still detained or missing. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 20 staff members of the United Nations, of whom 17 were UNRWA staff members. Among those killed were also 54 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. In addition, many staff members of international and national NGOs are reported to have been killed.

III. Observations

44. As I take office, the Syrian Arab Republic is entering the sixth year of a conflict that has devastated the country and left hundreds of thousands of its people dead. The magnitude of the suffering is difficult to take in. Some 13.5 million people, including 5.8 million children, are in need of humanitarian assistance every day. Nearly half the pre-conflict population of the country is displaced. Some 6.3 million people have been displaced within its borders and another 4.8 million have become refugees abroad. Vulnerable groups, in particular, are suffering without support structures in place to ensure their protection. An entire generation of children is growing up knowing nothing but war. I am determined to work to alleviate the suffering and help to bring the conflict to an end.

45. During the period under review, nowhere was the complexity of the conflict more manifest than in besieged eastern Aleppo, which was destroyed largely by relentless bombing, whose citizens were terrorized from without and within, and many areas of which were taken over by military force before the final few areas were evacuated in December. The destruction was catastrophic. There were distressing reports of killings, disappearances and forced conscriptions. I am particularly concerned about the fate of those whose whereabouts remain unknown. While the United Nations continues to remind all parties to the conflict of their obligations under international humanitarian law, I also reiterate the call that my predecessor made many times, namely, for the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

46. For those who were displaced within the city of Aleppo or to the western Aleppo countryside and Idlib, their challenges are far from over. The cold winter has exacerbated an already dire situation. The United Nations and its partners, in particular ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, but also the Syrian organizations working from Gaziantep, Turkey, have been heroic in their efforts. We must ensure that we continue to provide the support needed to the displaced but also that longer-term protection concerns, including the right to return, and property rights are taken into account.

47. In Aleppo and nationwide, humanitarian needs continue to outstrip our ability to respond. Security continues to restrict access in some areas, but governmental bureaucratic delays have also limited the ability of the United Nations to reach those most in need. It is imperative that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners be granted safe, unimpeded and sustained access to all those in need. This includes

the millions who remain in besieged or hard-to-reach locations. Such access has not been forthcoming in recent months, culminating in December, when the United Nations reached less than 1 per cent of beneficiaries included in the monthly inter-agency convoy plan. I call upon all those with influence to do their utmost to allow the United Nations to do its work and assist those in need.

48. Notwithstanding these significant challenges, 2017 has begun with a moment of respite from violent attacks for some. Diplomacy by the Russian Federation and Turkey led to a nationwide ceasefire on 30 December, which, notwithstanding some isolated breaches, appears to be holding, by and large. As with all efforts to save civilian lives in the country, the United Nations welcomes this ceasefire. I express my hope that it will bring with it the stated goal of ensuring unhindered humanitarian access, and I look forward to working with all parties in seeing the ceasefire translate into concrete humanitarian gains, which have yet to materialize.

49. The upcoming meeting in Astana represents an opportunity for a meaningful contribution to the development of an inclusive political process and a potential step towards intra-Syrian negotiations to be convened in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations. Negotiations stand the greatest chance of success if they take place with a clear agenda to address the political root causes of the conflict. In preparation for the such negotiations, I have been in contact with stakeholders in the Syrian crisis, including by writing to the Presidents of Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkey to express United Nations support for their efforts and to seek their assistance in attaining our shared goal of preparing the Syrian parties to negotiate genuinely and constructively on the establishment and executive powers of a credible and inclusive governance arrangement that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and enables them to independently and democratically determine their own future. Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the Geneva Communiqué remain the foundation of and contain the guiding principles for United Nations mediation efforts in this regard.
