

STATEMENT ON SYRIA

**UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND
EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, VALERIE AMOS**

(Ankara/New York, 9 March 2012) I have just completed a two-day visit to Syria. My aim was to urge all parties to agree on arrangements for humanitarian organizations to reach people in areas affected by fighting and violence.

I was able to visit Homs and parts of the suburb of Baba Amr, with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, so that I could see for myself the impact of the fighting. I was horrified by the destruction I saw. Almost all the buildings had been destroyed and there were hardly any people left there. I am extremely concerned as to the whereabouts of the people who have been displaced from Baba Amr.

In Damascus I met the Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid al-Moallem, and other Government ministers, and I raised my concerns regarding the humanitarian situation with them. We have agreed on a joint preliminary humanitarian assessment mission to areas where people urgently need assistance.

While this is a necessary first step, it remains essential that a robust and regular arrangement be put in place, which allows humanitarian organizations unhindered access to evacuate the wounded and deliver desperately needed supplies. A proposal has been submitted to the Government of Syria and I ask them to consider this matter with the utmost urgency.

I had the opportunity today to see the facilities for displaced Syrians in Hatay province on the Turkish side of the border. I also met the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mr. Davutoğlu, to discuss regional contingency planning efforts. This follows previous consultations with the Lebanese and Jordanian Governments last week. I commend all three Governments for keeping the borders open for people in distress and for providing relief to them in a sustained manner.

For further information, please contact:

Amanda Pitt, OCHA New York, pitta@un.org, Tel. +1 12 963 4129, Cell +1 917 442 1810
Elisabeth Byrs, OCHA Geneva, byrs@un.org, Tel. +41 22 917 2653, Cell +41(0) 79 473 4570
Jens Laerke, OCHA Cairo, laerke@un.org, Tel. +202 2751 5016-17, Cell +20(0) 109 555 8662
OCHA press releases are available at www.unocha.org or www.reliefweb.int.