

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	441
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	Human Rights Watch
Titel:	Syria: Defying Security Council on Aid Access
Udgivet:	28. marts 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	23. april 2014

[Print this page](#)

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

<http://www.hrw.org>

Syria: Defying Security Council on Aid Access ^[1]

Rejects Desperately Needed Cross-Border Routes

March 28, 2014

(New York) –The Syrian government’s refusal to allow aid to enter the country through border crossings held by opposition groups is undermining aid deliveries to hundreds of thousands of desperate people. The government’s refusal violates the international laws of war.

In a resolution adopted unanimously on February 22, 2014, the UN Security Council demanded that “all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, promptly allow rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access for UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners, including across conflict lines and across borders.”

Since that date, the Syrian government has for the first time allowed assistance to enter the country through Qamishli, a government-held border crossing on its northern border with Turkey. But the government has reiterated its categorical rejection of UN requests to ship aid through other border crossings in Turkey and Jordan that are opposition-held.

“No one should be fooled by [Syria](#) ^[2]’s agreement to open a single border crossing in the north,” said [Nadim Houry](#) ^[3], deputy Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “Syria’s refusal to consider allowing aid to enter through border crossings controlled by the opposition means that the situation of the vast majority of people in desperate need of help remains unchanged.”

The opposition-held border crossings are the only effective and secure way to reach the more than 3 million Syrians that the UN reports need assistance in opposition-held areas. While Syria’s position has limited UN humanitarian aid operations through these border crossings, non-governmental organizations have attempted to help fill this gap through aid deliveries in opposition-held areas accessible from Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq, but many needs are not being met.

Aid delivered through the Qamishli crossing is being distributed mostly by the government and government-affiliated organizations, raising concerns about whether it would reach civilians in opposition-held territory.

According to a report to be presented to the Security Council on March 28 by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Syria also continues to block aid to an estimated 175,000 civilians in areas under government siege, while armed opposition forces block aid to an estimated 45,000 civilians in other besieged areas. The secretary-general's report also estimates that 3.5 million people in 258 "hard to access" places inside Syria urgently need assistance.

Human Rights Watch conducted a field investigation in one such location, Bab al-Salam camp, near the Syrian town of Azaz, in mid-March. The camp, which can be reached in 10 minutes on foot from the Turkish border, houses over 16,000 internally displaced people, according to the camp director. The camp residents—most of whom had fled the city of Aleppo and nearby countryside because of the government's indiscriminate aerial bombardment—were not receiving adequate levels of humanitarian assistance, despite their proximity to the Turkish border. Camp residents were getting only one meal a day and did not have adequate access to medication, medical personnel, and treatment facilities. Shelter and sanitation conditions in the camp were inadequate.

Three other new camps have been built in the neighboring village of Shmareen in recent months to house the thousands of people fleeing Aleppo according to the Bab al-Salam camp director. He told Human Rights Watch that each camp housed 13,000 to 15,000 people, who were also suffering from restrictions on deliveries of humanitarian assistance.

Syria insists that assistance for opposition-held locations should enter Syria through government-controlled crossing points and then be transported across conflict lines. In practice, this means aid convoys are forced to travel circuitous routes as much as 10 times as long as the more direct routes, across dozens of checkpoints, jumping through bureaucratic and logistical hoops at every turn. Since the Security Council passed the resolution on February 22, the government has only allowed three cross-line convoys into opposition-held territory.

"It's an outrage that Syria insists that people within walking distance of the Turkish border can't get assistance by the closest and safest route," Houry said. "Syria's arbitrary refusal to agree to the use of opposition-held crossing points sentences hundreds of thousands of Syrians to deprivation and disease."

Fighting between opposition groups has also cut off delivery routes to some areas in northern Syria across conflict lines, and extremist armed opposition groups have threatened aid deliveries. The Secretary-General's report notes that in one case a convoy could not reach two locations, in part because one of the armed groups, Jabhat al-Nusra, failed to give adequate security assurances. In another case, an armed opposition group beat Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers near the central prison in Aleppo.

International humanitarian law requires all parties to the conflict to allow and facilitate the “rapid and unimpeded passage” of humanitarian aid to civilians at risk, including in areas under siege. The laws of war also require parties to the conflict to allow free passage for civilians who wish to leave these areas.

In addition to blocking humanitarian aid through opposition-held border crossings, Syria blocks humanitarian aid deliveries to areas under siege. The Security Council resolution demands that all parties “immediately lift the sieges of populated areas,” including government sieges in Homs, Moadamiya and Daraya in Western Ghouta, Eastern Ghouta, and the Palestinian refugee camp in Yarmouk in south Damascus, and sieges by opposition armed groups on Nubul and Zahra.

In one case the Secretary-General described, a UN convoy with permission to enter Moadamiya was denied entry on March 18, as pro-government forces would only allow deliveries into government-controlled areas. The previous day, the convoy was subjected to lengthy searches, and government security officials refused to allow it to carry medical supplies into Moadamiya.

Given the overwhelming needs in areas bordering Jordan and Turkey, UN humanitarian agencies should undertake cross-border operations, Human Rights Watch said. The UN should also increase support to non-governmental organizations that are delivering aid across these borders. Donors should provide expanded funding for those operations as well.

The Security Council, which explicitly expressed “its intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance with this resolution,” should impose punitive measures against the Syrian government for its clear failure to comply, Human Rights Watch said. Such measures should include an arms embargo on Syria’s government, as well as on any groups implicated in widespread or systematic human rights abuses, targeted sanctions on those responsible for serious violations, and referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

“How long will Syria’s civilians be left waiting for the most basic humanitarian assistance,” Houry said. “Rather than wait for a green light from Assad, the UN and donors should expand lifesaving operations across the borders now.”

Situation at the Bab al-Salam IDP camp

Bab al-Salam camp residents said they were getting only one meal a day, which the camp director confirmed. Human Rights Watch also saw mothers pleading with camp managers for milk coupons so they could feed their young children.

Residents were living in tents pitched on dirt that had been turned into mud by recent rain. The tents had not been winterized. The number of latrines in the camp was insufficient

because of its rapid growth. Residents were constructing improvised bathrooms that resulted in open sewage pits across the camp. An open-air sewage line, which residents said originated from the Kilis 1 camp in Turkey, runs directly through the Bab al-Salam camp. Residents had placed a footbridge across the sewage line so that they could move around the camp.

Residents told Human Rights Watch that when it rained, sewage from the Kilis 1 camp and from the improvised bathrooms overflowed into tents and pathways. “If it’s like this now imagine the smell in summer,” one resident said. The Bab al-Salam camp director also told Human Rights Watch that the camp was suffering from infestations, including mice and rats, and that camp staff did not have pesticides to curb the problem.

Residents said they didn’t have adequate access to medication, medical personnel, and treatment facilities. While people with serious war injuries were transported to Turkey for care, those with chronic or other diseases were only able to get service at two medical clinics in the camp staffed by a total of eight doctors and seven nurses.

The camp director said that in some cases patients had to be smuggled into Turkey for dialysis treatment or other care. The director also said that the hospital lacked adequate medications including for leishmania—a vector-borne disease that causes welts on the skin.

Source URL: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/syria-defying-security-council-aid-access>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/03/28/syria-defying-security-council-aid-access>

[2] <https://www.hrw.org/middle-eastn-africa/syria>

[3] <http://www.hrw.org/bios/nadim-houry>

© Copyright 2014, Human Rights Watch