

8th anniversary of the Syrian conflict: 70% of Syrians still in need of humanitarian aid

Montreal, March 12, 2019. March 15 marks the 8th anniversary of the Syrian conflict. **11.7 million Syrians, 70% of the population, are still in need of emergency humanitarian assistance. Access to basic services (health, food, clean water, shelter, etc.) remains an absolute priority, while the country's contamination with explosive remnants - unprecedented in the history of mine clearance - prevents the return of populations and will considerably complicate the country's reconstruction. For the past 7 years, HI has been assisting Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon through psychosocial support and rehabilitation projects.**

- In eight years of war, massive bombardments in populated areas have had terrible **humanitarian consequences**: families torn apart, life-changing injuries, psychological trauma, forced displacement, destruction of essential infrastructure (hospitals, ports, bridges, etc.) and ever worsening poverty. **HI is working in Jordan and Lebanon with victims who have lost everything and need humanitarian aid to survive.**
- The intensive use of explosive weapons in populated areas has destroyed the country's essential infrastructure and economy: **80% of Syrians currently live below the poverty line.** Continued attacks on medical facilities have significantly reduced the delivery of health services while the number of people with medical needs, due to conflict-related injuries or recent disabilities, has increased.
- The bombings also leave a deadly legacy: contamination with explosive remnants of war. **More than 10 million people are exposed to the risks posed by explosive remnants of war,** according to organizations involved in mine action in Syria. These figures are certainly underreported due to difficulties accessing many areas - the true extent of the contamination remains unknown.
- **187 surveys conducted by humanitarian organizations in 2018 showed that more than 80% of those asked have witnessed bombings or ground fighting.** All of them report incidents related to contamination with explosive remnants. Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) reports that nearly **80,000 people were killed or injured by explosive weapons between 2011 and 2018. 87% of them were civilians.**
- **Contamination with explosive remnants of war is one of the main obstacles preventing the return of refugees and displaced persons,** according to an investigation by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published in July 2018. It will also be a major obstacle to the reconstruction of the country, and to the redevelopment of its economic and social fabric.
- *"The consequences of the bombings in populated areas are terrible: families torn apart, devastated cities, entire populations fleeing en masse, explosive remnants contaminating entire neighbourhoods, etc. Syrians are in a dire situation and will need humanitarian aid for*

many years to come. The country's infrastructure is being destroyed, making access to basic services such as health is a top priority for humanitarian organizations", precises Jerome Bobin, Director of Humanity & Inclusion Canada.

- As part of its **"Stop Bombing Civilians" campaign, launched in March 2016**, HI calls on States to develop a political declaration to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas in order to improve the protection of civilians when they live in conflict areas and to assist victims. The organization is asking the general public to sign its international petition (<https://www.change.org/p/bombing-civilians-is-not-war-it-s-a-crime>).

About Humanity & Inclusion

HI is an independent international aid organisation. It has been working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for 30 years. Working alongside people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our actions and voice are focused on responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions and promoting respect for their dignity and basic rights. Since it was founded in 1982, Humanity & Inclusion (formerly Handicap International) has set up development programmes in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. There are eight national associations within the network (Germany, Belgium, Canada, United States, France, Luxembourg, UK and Switzerland), working tirelessly to mobilise resources, co-manage projects and increase the impact of the organisation's principles and actions. HI is one of six founding organisations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), co-recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize and winner of the Conrad N. Hilton Award in 2011. HI takes action and campaigns in places where "living in dignity" is no easy task.

For more information: www.hi-canada.org

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