

26 April 2013



# Secretary-General

## SG/SM/14986

Department of Public Information • News and Media Division • New York

**WITH ENTIRE GENERATION OF SYRIAN CHILDREN AT RISK OF BEING SCARRED FOR LIFE,**  
**SECRETARY-GENERAL URGES UNIFIED POSITION TO PERSUADE ACTORS TO NEGOTIATE**

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks, as prepared for delivery, at a reception and concert for the children of Syria, in New York, 25 April:

Thank you for organizing this event on behalf of the children of Syria. Last December I visited camps in Jordan and Turkey for the refugees who have fled the conflict. I will never forget what I saw and the stories I heard.

As we drove into Za'atari Camp in Jordan, my first impression was just how many children there were — lining the road, cheering, running, full of fun and mischief. They displayed the irrepressible spirit of children.

Later I visited a schoolhouse. I talked with pupils and the dedicated UN staff and humanitarian partners working to provide some semblance of normalcy. The school was well appointed. The children were eager to study.

But there was no disguising that their lives have been massively disrupted. Most had fled with their families with only what they could carry. Often they had seen their homes destroyed. Many had witnessed or endured unspeakable atrocities.

I asked one young girl what she wanted. Her answer was simple: "I want to go home," she said. Sadly, more and more children in Syria are being denied that simple wish. Almost 2 million children are internally displaced. More than 600,000 children have fled as refugees.

Where the fighting is most intense, access to water has fallen by two thirds. Hospitals and health centres have been wrecked. Skilled staff has fled. Twenty per cent of schools have been destroyed, damaged or are being used to shelter displaced families. In Aleppo, only 6 per cent of children are in school. Classes are sometimes crammed with up to 100 children.

The UN and our partners are working against this relentless tide, supplying safe drinking water, vaccinations and help with education. But we are constrained by a lack of resources. Last week, Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos told the Security Council that half the \$1.5 billion needed to cover Syria's humanitarian needs until June has been received. But that leaves a massive gap, and a void of uncertainty for the coming months. With no end to the conflict in sight, needs are only going to grow.

It is imperative that the Security Council and the countries of the region agree on a unified position that can persuade all actors to come to the negotiating table. The Government of Syria cannot win by military means. Nor can the opposition. The only thing they will succeed in is to drag the country further into an abyss from which it will already take many years to recover.

The casualties are many and growing. We risk an entire generation of children being scarred for life. Tonight our thoughts are with the children of Syria. I hope the moving music on tonight's programme can help to move hearts and minds so we can end the suffering.

The children of Syria are our children. They need our help. Thank you.

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