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Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. This thirteenth report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2191 (2014), 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 in the report is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground and reports from open sources and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Data from United Nations agencies on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 December 2014 to 28 February 2015. More recent data have been included, when available, including on cross-border operations and deliveries to besieged communities.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in February, particularly in the governorates of Aleppo, Homs, Deir ez-Zor, Rif Dimashq, Damascus, Al-Hasakeh, Idlib, Dar'a, Quneitra and Raqqa. Indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by government forces and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed groups and extremist and listed terrorist groups¹ resulted in deaths, injuries and displacement of civilians. The conduct of hostilities by all parties continues to be characterized by widespread disregard for the rules of international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians.

¹ On 30 May 2013, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusra Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council under resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.



4. On the basis of analysis of satellite imagery, Human Rights Watch reported at least 450 distinct major damage sites in 10 towns and villages outside government control in Dar'a governorate and more than 1,000 major damage sites in Aleppo governorate between 22 February 2014 and 25 January 2015. The organization reports that the impact sites have damage signatures strongly consistent with the detonation of large, air-dropped munitions, including improvised barrel and conventional bombs dropped by helicopters. Damage resulting from the use of rockets, missiles or fuel air bombs is also likely in a number of instances. Human Rights Watch has also documented violations by armed groups opposed to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic committed between January 2012 and April 2014. Human Rights Watch highlights indiscriminate attacks using car bombs, mortars and unguided rockets in heavily populated, government-controlled areas that have killed hundreds of civilians in Damascus and Homs. In areas that Human Rights Watch could visit, it found that neighbourhoods under government control inhabited predominately by religious minorities were subject to more indiscriminate attacks by opposition groups than areas that were largely majority Sunni.

5. Fighting intensified in Dar'a governorate from 8 February, after some 3,000 government and pro-government forces launched an operation against opposition areas in north Dar'a, as well as southern Rif Dimashq. Some 5,000 families reportedly fled to the border areas of Quneitra as a result. Government forces also carried out aerial bombardment, including with barrel bombs, on different areas of Dar'a governorate. According to reports received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), more than 90 civilians, including 8 women and 14 children, were killed as a result of attacks by government and allied forces on areas controlled by non-State armed groups opposed to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in February.

6. In Aleppo, government forces continued their campaign of shelling and aerial bombardment, including with barrel bombs. Information received by OHCHR indicates that as many as 137 civilians, including 19 women and 24 children, were killed as a result of attacks by government forces and affiliated militias. Among the casualties, at least 58 were killed as a result of barrel bombs dropped on residential areas. For example, on 1 February, at least five civilians, including four children, were killed by barrel bombs dropped on the neighbourhood of Baydeen, in the northern part of Aleppo, an area controlled by non-State armed groups opposed to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. On 5 and 6 February, at least 33 civilians were killed as a result of barrel bombs dropped on the same neighbourhood. As at 20 February, fighting between pro-government forces and non-State armed groups north of Aleppo city had obstructed the Bab al-Salam-Aleppo city route but did not cut all access to eastern Aleppo city.

7. Non-State armed groups carried out mortar shelling against government-controlled areas in Aleppo, including densely populated areas. Human rights defenders reported that at least 70 civilians, including 20 children and 5 women, were killed in February as a result of attacks by non-State armed groups on government-controlled, civilian-populated areas in Aleppo. For example, on 17 February, 10 civilians, including 3 children, were killed in the government-controlled west Aleppo neighbourhood of Al-Serian as a result of mortar shelling by non-State armed groups. Dozens of other civilians, including women and children, were injured, some seriously.

8. In the governorate of Rif Dimashq, government forces continued shelling and aerial bombardment on densely populated towns in the area of eastern Ghouta, particularly the towns of Douma, Kafr Batna and Erbin. For example, from 5 to 11 February, government forces carried out indiscriminate aerial attacks on the town of Douma reportedly using barrel and vacuum bombs. According to information gathered by OHCHR, more than 300 civilians were reportedly killed as a result of the attacks on Douma and other towns in eastern Ghouta during February.

9. On 4 February, Jaish al-Islam issued a statement in which it warned that it intended to carry out attacks against government positions in the city of Damascus in retaliation for the escalation of attacks by government forces in eastern Ghouta. On 5 February, Jaish al-Islam shelled Damascus, including civilian areas. The attacks reportedly killed three civilians, including two children, and injured four children, among others. On 23 February, it carried out another wave of shelling. Human rights defenders and eyewitnesses interviewed by OHCHR reported that some mortar rounds fell in the vicinity of the main gate of Damascus central prison (Adra prison), injuring a number of civilians who had gathered outside while waiting to be allowed in to visit friends and family members.

10. In Al-Moadamyeh, Rif Dimashq, the ceasefire agreement in force since late 2014 has been broken. Repeated clashes have been reported in the northern and southeastern areas of Al-Moadamyeh, with deaths and injuries. It was reported that the Government had blocked access to the city through the main road since 16 February, allowing the movement of public servants and students only, raising concerns about the humanitarian situation of an estimated 7,300 families currently living there.

11. Government forces continued to shell the neighbourhoods of Jobar and Yarmouk in Damascus. OHCHR was unable to document the number of civilian casualties related to those attacks. The shelling has resulted in further destruction of infrastructure in both areas.

12. Government forces carried out shelling and aerial bombardment against opposition-held areas in Homs, including northern rural Homs, the cities of Al-Rastan and Talbiseh, the village of Al-Houla and the Homs city neighbourhood of Al-Waer. According to information received by OHCHR, as many as 24 civilians, including 2 women and 4 children, were killed and dozens injured as a result of government attacks in Homs in February. Negotiations continued between the Al-Waer committee and the government delegation over a local agreement.

13. Government aerial bombardment continued throughout February against ISIL-controlled cities and towns, resulting in damage to residential areas and public infrastructure, including ISIL-occupied government buildings, highways and oil fields. For example, on 7 February, government aerial bombardment of the ISIL-controlled city of Al-Mayadin, Deir ez-Zor governorate, reportedly resulted in the killing of four civilians and injury to others after missiles struck the Al-Nadi roundabout in the centre of the city.

14. Fighting, including government aerial attacks with barrel bombs, intensified in a number of villages in Quneitra governorate. For example, on 22 February, at least nine civilians were reportedly killed by barrel bombs in Sweisa and Naba al-Sakhr, near the border with Dar'a governorate.

15. Use of improvised explosive devices and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices continued. For example, on 23 February, during religious festivities on the occasion of the birthday of the granddaughter of the Prophet Mohammad, a complex attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device — claimed by the Nusra Front — on a checkpoint at the entrance to the central area of Sayyida Zeinab, Rif Dimashq, left at least 10 killed and dozens injured. On 27 February, a similar device detonated in Dmair, eastern Ghouta, killing at least 11 people. On 2 March, an explosive device detonated near a military car in the old city of Damascus and claimed the lives of Brigadier General Ali Darwish, a senior government officer, and two of his companions. Ahrar al-Sham claimed responsibility for the assassination.

16. Civilian infrastructure continued to be targeted, and basic services, including electricity and water, continued to be cut. For example, water supplies to Dar'a city and western Dar'a governorate were cut from 12 to 24 February, affecting some 450,000 people, after the Nusra Front seized a government diesel tanker during a routine delivery of fuel to water pumps in Mzayrib. The affected communities negotiated with the parties to connect the water pumps to an alternative electricity supply.

17. Schools were also affected by violence. In January and February, two attacks on schools and/or education personnel were documented and verified by United Nations teams. In addition, ISIL has closed all primary and secondary schools in Raqqa governorate, with the exception of 24 ISIL-run schools. Recent reports also suggest that ISIL opened an English-language school for children who do not speak Arabic. ISIL agreed to reopen schools in Deir ez-Zor provided that the existing curriculum was modified.

18. Tens of thousands of people were displaced by fighting in February. For example, fighting between government forces and the Kurdish People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel/Jinê) (YPG/YPJ) and between YPG/YPJ and ISIL in Al-Hasakeh governorate forced an estimated 50,000 people to flee to other parts of the governorate. Tens of thousands more have been displaced by heavy fighting in Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo governorates.

19. In its resolution 2199 (2015), the Security Council, inter alia, condemned the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic. A study of satellite images by the Operational Satellite Applications Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, released in December 2014, showed destruction to World Heritage Sites and those on the tentative list, with 24 specific sites destroyed and 99 sustaining severe damage and 143 sustaining moderate or possible damage.

20. On 17 February, the Special Envoy briefed the Security Council and announced the readiness of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to suspend for six weeks all aerial attacks and artillery shelling throughout the city of Aleppo. The Special Envoy travelled to Damascus for further consultations on 28 February, and consultations also continued with representatives of the opposition. The Special Envoy also held meetings in Istanbul and Ankara, and a delegation then travelled to Gaziantep between 26 February and 4 March. Opposition representatives suggested that they would support the freeze if the proposal was clearly linked to a comprehensive political solution to end the conflict based on the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. Separately, another delegation led by the Office of the Special Envoy's Head of Office in Damascus travelled to Aleppo in order to

assess the situation and identify the elements required for the implementation of a freeze. On the basis of the assessment provided to him by both missions, the Special Envoy will review whether conditions are in place for the implementation of the freeze initiative for an initial six-week period.

B. Human rights

21. OHCHR continued to receive allegations and document cases of arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and death in custody inside government detention centres, including in Hama governorate, in centres run by the National Defence Forces. Young people have also been subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention by government security branches. For example, on 13 February, the Military Intelligence Branch reportedly detained a number of young people living in the Al-Matar neighbourhood in Dar'a al-Mahata. The following day, a number of houses in the same area were reportedly raided, during which young people were detained, belongings looted and abandoned houses destroyed.

22. Information gathered by OHCHR during the reporting period shows that a number of detainees have been transferred back and forth between the Damascus central prison (Adra prison) and different security branches in Damascus, including the Political Security Branch. In addition, a number of detainees were transferred from Adra prison to prisons in other government-controlled areas, including Hama, Latakia and Al-Sweida. The transfer of detainees has made legal follow-up and family visits even more difficult. Families have reported their intention to appoint new lawyers from the governorates in which detainees are being held, as lawyers face particular challenges travelling between governorates, given the risks at checkpoints.

23. OHCHR is investigating reports of the execution by government forces and affiliated militias of at least 22 civilians, including 3 women and 3 children, following their takeover of the village of Raitan, in Aleppo governorate. That figure remains indicative, since other sources have cited higher numbers.

24. The Nusra Front and ISIL continued to violate international humanitarian law and commit human rights abuses in areas in which they exercised control, including executions, abductions and restrictions on fundamental freedoms. For example, on 16 February, the Nusra Front reportedly tortured to death a civilian who had been detained for two weeks. On the same day, two journalists working for a local media agency were detained by Nusra Front militants in Idlib governorate. The location of their detention remains unknown.

25. ISIL executed a number of men, some of whom were beheaded, in areas that it controlled, for allegedly collaborating with the Government or YPG. Human rights defenders report that a man accused of practising sorcery was beheaded in Raqqa on 7 February. On 10 February, ISIL stoned a man to death reportedly on the basis of his sexual orientation. On 23 February, ISIL militants punished a man in Al-Sarb, Al-Hasakeh, on the grounds that his wife apparently did not meet the strict dress code applied by ISIL. A number of people in Deir ez-Zor governorate were publicly flogged for alleged alcohol and drug consumption.

26. ISIL abducted a number of civilians during the reporting period. Between 23 and 26 February in Al-Hasakeh governorate, ISIL militants attacked about a dozen villages in the area of Tal Tamer and abducted more than 200 Assyrian

inhabitants. ISIL militants have reportedly accused Assyrians of collaborating with both government and YPG forces. The ISIL attacks on Assyrian villages have triggered the displacement of Assyrians to areas under the control of YPG. It is alleged that a number of the Assyrian detainees were released on 6 March.

27. In addition, eight civilians from Ayash, Deir ez-Zor, were abducted on 1 February. On 9 February, ISIL militants reportedly prevented civilians in the area of Al-Jneina, in Deir ez-Zor city, from fleeing the area following aerial bombardment by government forces. At least 30 civilians, including 7 women, were turned away from the checkpoint, in effect preventing them from fleeing to safety. A human rights defender informed OHCHR that the civilians were escorted by ISIL militants to an undisclosed location. Their fate remains unknown at the time of writing.

C. Humanitarian access

28. Some 12.2 million people require humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic. About 7.6 million people are internally displaced, and more than 3.9 million people have fled the Syrian Arab Republic to neighbouring countries and North Africa.

29. Despite significant deliveries of humanitarian assistance to people in need, unhindered access and the delivery of aid remain extremely difficult and are, in some cases, becoming even more challenging owing to violence and insecurity, shifting conflict lines, deliberate interference by parties to the conflict, including the closure of operations by ISIL, and administrative procedures that constrain effective aid delivery.

30. Violence and insecurity, as well as shifting conflict lines, continued to inhibit deliveries to a number of governorates in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period, including in Aleppo, Damascus, Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Al-Hasakeh, Idlib, Latakia, Raqqa and Rif Dimashq. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was unable to send water treatment materials to Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates owing to the deteriorating security situation in February. Distributions by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were also inhibited in the northern governorates of the Syrian Arab Republic, which are considered the agricultural belt of the country. As a result, distribution to 26,500 people in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor governorates was interrupted or suspended.

31. Deliberate interference and restrictions have also prevented aid delivery. For example, following the closure by ISIL of a number of humanitarian operations in January, the World Food Programme (WFP) halted deliveries to ISIL-controlled territory. As a result, some 700,000 people in need in Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa were once again not reached with food assistance in February. ISIL restrictions preventing access to government-controlled areas of Deir ez-Zor city have increased significantly since mid-January. There are reports of shortages of food and medical supplies and price hikes affecting hundreds of thousands of people.

32. New procedures, a lack of response to convoy requests, and other government administrative obstacles have also limited aid delivery. Three United Nations humanitarian staff have been declared persona non grata since the beginning of February. As from 17 February, additional procedures are required to establish partnerships between United Nations agencies and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Government, at different levels, has insisted that the

United Nations share beneficiary lists. In particular, the Governor of Al-Hasakeh has made the receipt of beneficiary lists a condition for the issuance of facilitation letters. On 10 February, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked for details of all beneficiaries of cash assistance. On 19 February, it informed the Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator that all communication with government ministries and other public entities should be made through it, adding another layer between implementers and the line ministries. On 9 March, the Governor of Homs informed United Nations agencies working in the health sector that they could liaise with national NGOs only through the government health department.

33. While two additional international NGOs have been approved since December, bringing the number to 16, such NGOs remain restricted in their ability to partner with other humanitarian organizations, open sub-offices, conduct missions, join inter-agency convoys and conduct needs assessments. In addition, their implementing capacity is limited by the lack of agreement to grant additional visas for the staff required to boost capacity at a time of increasing need.

34. There has been an increase in the number of national NGOs authorized to partner with agencies of the United Nations, increasing from 107 as at 1 December 2014 to 114 as at 28 February 2015. Such organizations continue, however, to operate under complex procedures.

35. A total of 258 visa applications (requests for new visas or visa renewals) for United Nations staff were submitted between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015. A total of 250 requests, including a number of requests submitted prior to December, were approved during the same period, 108 in February. As at 15 March, 42 visa requests remained pending, of which 29 were within the limit of 15 working days and 13 had exceeded the limit. Between 1 January and 15 March, some 16 visa requests for United Nations staff were rejected, compared with 28 rejections in 2014.

36. In mid-February, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Local Administration was named Chair of the High Relief Committee. In its official communication to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of 2 March and during a meeting on 12 March, the United Nations raised its concerns with regard to access challenges, administrative procedures, limitations on the ability of the United Nations to partner with NGOs and constraints on the ability of NGOs to operate with the Chair of the High Relief Committee. United Nations agencies emphasized the importance of a more decentralized decision-making process with regard to humanitarian access and sought a constructive engagement to facilitate the delivery and scale-up of humanitarian assistance throughout the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular in addressing access challenges.

37. Funding has also failed to keep pace with growing needs. The 2014 response plan for activities in the Syrian Arab Republic was 48 per cent funded, and the 2015 Strategic Response Plan was 6 per cent funded as at 15 March. The Pledging Conference, to be hosted by the Amir and the Government of Kuwait, will be crucial in helping to raise some of the funds required for 2015.

38. The combination of the aforementioned factors continues to make the delivery of assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic even more challenging. The situation of

the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas,² especially the 212,000 people in besieged areas, remains a grave concern.

39. Between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015, United Nations agencies and partners reached a monthly average of 38 of the 131 hard-to-reach and besieged locations. On average, United Nations agencies and partners reached 21 locations with food assistance and agricultural support for about 564,000 people per month; 10 locations with health support for nearly 59,000 people per month; 7 locations with water and sanitation for some 320,000 people per month; and 20 locations with shelter and core relief items for about 180,000 people per month. Of the 131 hard-to-reach locations, 74 (56 per cent) were not reached, 21 (16 per cent) were reached in one of the past three months; 15 (11 per cent) were reached twice; and 21 (16 per cent) were reached in all three months.

40. Between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015, the United Nations requested access through inter-agency convoys to reach up to 876,000 people in 33 besieged, hard-to-reach and other areas located across conflict lines in Aleppo, Idlib, Homs and Rif Dismashq governorates. A total of 31 locations with 719,000 people have been denied access or are waiting for approval by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic at the national and governorate levels. Some 155,000 people were reached through inter-agency cross-line convoys to Al-Waer and Talbiseh in Homs with multisectoral assistance. In addition, a convoy with assistance for approximately 3,000 people was delivered to government-controlled Mamoura, in Rif Dimashq, early in December.

41. Cross-border deliveries have also continued. As at 17 March, the United Nations and its partners had sent 85 shipments — 60 from Turkey and 25 from Jordan — to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The shipments included the equivalent of food assistance for nearly 1,432,000 people; non-food items for about 1,089,000; water and sanitation supplies for about 405,000; and medical supplies for about 628,000. Many of the medical supplies shipped were reusable and will benefit more patients in the next few months. Other assistance (including school supplies) was delivered to some 9,900 people. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of each shipment, including details of the content, destination district and number of beneficiaries, confirming the humanitarian nature of the shipment.

42. Overall, significantly more relief items were dispatched across the border by the United Nations in line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) during the reporting period, compared with the period between September and November 2014. Specifically, food rations for 771,060 people were dispatched between December 2014 and February 2015, compared with 170,000 people between September and November 2014. Non-food items were dispatched for 779,000 people between December and February, compared with 183,000 people between

² As accessibility to different parts of the country, including through cross-border operations, has evolved, and as the conflict dynamics, including shifting conflict lines and control by parties, have changed, humanitarian partners have revised the list of hard-to-reach locations. United Nations agencies previously reported against a list of 287 hard-to-reach locations. In November 2014, taking into account the new access dynamics, the list was refined to 131 locations and areas in the Syrian Arab Republic that are hard to reach both from within the country and across borders.

September and November 2014. The number of water, sanitation and hygiene supplies also increased to 251,000 from 87,000, and health supplies increased to more than 372,500 from 181,500.

43. The United Nations monitoring mechanism continued its activities in Jordan and Turkey. A security incident near the border resulted in the closure of the Bab al-Hawa crossing from 26 to 31 January. Increased fighting in February resulted in the postponement of delivery of 14 trucks of supplies through the Bab al-Salam crossing. The monitoring mechanism's operations in Iraq remain pending owing to continued insecurity. The monitoring mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with and support from the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

44. Despite the extremely challenging operating environment, overall deliveries of United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need in February from within the country and across borders, pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). In February, WFP delivered food assistance for more than 4 million people in 12 of 14 governorates, fulfilling 95 per cent of the monthly plan. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies for 922,699 treatments in five governorates in February. UNICEF reached 913,657 people in 13 governorates with a range of multisector support, including water and sanitation, nutrition, winter clothes for children, education and child protection services. In addition, chlorine deliveries allowed some 15.6 million people to regain access to safe water. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reached 408,450 people in 12 governorates with core relief items, in addition to protection services. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reached more than 32,300 people, mostly women and girls, with reproductive health and psychosocial services. In the same month, the International Organization for Migration reached 282,643 people in eight governorates with multisectoral assistance. FAO distributed agricultural supplies to support almost 220,000 people in eight governorates. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continues to provide support to up to 480,000 Palestine refugees on a monthly basis.

45. NGOs continued to deliver urgent food, health, sanitation and other assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, reaching some 2 million people in February, including through the provision of ongoing services. This included aid to more than 880,000 people in Idlib, 615,000 people in Aleppo, more than 220,000 people in Dar'a, some 124,000 in Al-Hasakeh and nearly 88,000 people in Hama. NGOs continued to experience challenges in passing checkpoints and providing assistance to people in need in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. As a result, NGOs delivered aid for 8,821 people in Raqqa and 1,636 people in Deir ez-Zor governorates, fewer than targeted.

Besieged areas

46. Of the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas, some 212,000 people remain besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic, including 185,500 people besieged by government forces in eastern Ghouta, Darayya and Yarmouk and 26,500 people besieged by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahraa. During the reporting period, parties further restricted access to besieged and other areas in the country.

47. In February, no food, non-food items or medical assistance reached any besieged locations. UNICEF provided polio vaccinations to implementing partners,

which reported reaching some 6,000 children under 5 years of age in Nubul, Zahra and Yarmouk.

48. In eastern Ghouta (specifically in Douma, Harasta, Erbin, Zamalka, Saqba, Kafr Batna, Ain Tarma and Hammura), some 163,500 people remain besieged. The United Nations was not able to provide assistance in February.

49. In Darayya (Rif Dimashq), about 4,000 people remain besieged. People in the area were last assisted by the United Nations in October 2012.

50. In Yarmouk, about 18,000 people remain besieged. Armed conflict, including frequent exchanges of fire and the use of heavy weapons, have prevented or interrupted the distribution of assistance. UNRWA was not able to provide assistance in February. On 5 March, the Syrian authorities directed UNRWA to use an alternative entrance to the area, which facilitated distribution on a number of days in March.

51. In Nubul and Zahraa, about 26,500 people remain besieged by opposition forces. United Nations agencies have not been able to deliver humanitarian assistance to the two villages since 8 May 2014.

52. Between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015, of the 212,000 people besieged, some 2,848 people received food from United Nations agencies and partners, compared with 17,508 in the preceding three months. A total of 2,740 people received non-food items, compared with 16,812 people during the same period, and some 300 people received health assistance, not including polio vaccines, compared with 79,136 during the same period.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

53. Between 1 December and 28 February, WHO and its implementing partners dispatched medicines and medical supplies for nearly 2 million treatments³ in 13 governorates. This included the distribution of 366,151 treatments across lines to Aleppo, Al-Hasakeh, Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Homs, Rif Dimashq and Quneitra governorates. Surgical supplies for some 47,820 treatments were not delivered across lines during the period owing to the lack of approvals.

54. Between 15 and 19 February 2015, a nationwide vaccination campaign against poliomyelitis was conducted, reaching 2.9 million children under 5 years old. Post-vaccination independent monitoring found that 90 per cent of children were vaccinated. Coverage rates were lower in Raqqa (72 per cent), Rif Dimashq (82 per cent), Dar'a (80 per cent) and Deir ez-Zor (90 per cent) governorates. The main reason for low coverage was the insecurity.

55. Access to medical supplies and equipment continued to be restricted by insecurity and constraints imposed on humanitarian operations by parties to the conflict. For example, WHO has supplies in warehouses in Aleppo ready to be delivered to Nubul and Zahraa, but ongoing fighting did not allow access. Between 1 December and 28 February, six requests to the Government went unanswered, preventing medical deliveries to areas in Al-Hasakeh, Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Aleppo, Hama and Rif Dimashq. In addition, surgical supplies were denied access, as in the case of Douma in Rif Dimashq in January, or removed by security forces from inter-agency convoys in

³ One standard treatment course is considered as treatment for one person. Treatment courses are determined for each medicine distribution on the basis of international WHO standards.

Al-Waer and Talbiseh in Homs in January and February, despite — in the case of the Homs convoys — the approval and support of local government authorities. UNFPA could not send reproductive health kits, dignity kits and other female hygiene materials for 117,000 people in Madaya, Douma and Harasta.

56. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances and medical personnel continued during the reporting period. In February, Physicians for Human Rights documented five attacks on medical facilities, four by government forces and one by an unidentified non-State armed group. Three attacks occurred in Rif Dimashq, one in Idlib and one in Latakia governorates. All four government attacks were carried out with missiles and rockets, and the attack by the non-State armed group with a car bomb. Physicians for Human Rights also documented the deaths of five medical personnel in February, two of whom were targeted or killed in the line of duty. Four of the personnel were killed by government forces and one by an anti-government armed group (whose identity was unknown). Four were killed by bombing and shelling and one by shooting. Two deaths occurred in Rif Dimashq and one each in Aleppo, Dar'a and Latakia governorates.

57. Between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015, Physicians for Human Rights documented 17 attacks on medical facilities. Government forces perpetrated 13 attacks, non-State armed groups perpetrated one, and unknown forces perpetrated three. Five attacks occurred in Rif Dimashq, four in Idlib, three in Dar'a, two in Deir ez-Zor and one each in Aleppo, Damascus and Latakia governorates. Government forces used rockets and missiles in 10 attacks, barrel bombs in 2 attacks and unidentified aerial bombardment in 1 attack. The attack by a non-State armed group was carried out using a car bomb, as were two of the attacks by unknown forces. The third attack by unknown forces was carried out using an unidentified explosive device. Attacks by car bombs are increasing; of the 10 car bomb attacks that Physicians for Human Rights documented throughout the conflict, 8 had occurred in the past year.

58. Between 1 December 2014 and 28 February 2015, Physicians for Human Rights documented the deaths of 18 medical personnel, of whom at least 11 were targeted or killed in the line of duty. Government forces were responsible for 16 deaths, an unidentified non-State armed group for 1 death, and unknown forces for 1 death. Five deaths were recorded in Dar'a, four in Rif Dimashq, two in Deir ez-Zor, two in Idlib and one each in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Latakia and Tartous governorates. Of the 18 personnel, 10 were killed by shelling and bombing, 4 by torture, 3 by shooting and 1 by execution.

Safety and security of staff and premises

59. Mortar and rocket attacks on Damascus by non-State armed groups led to heightened insecurity in Damascus, including for United Nations staff.

60. A complex attack carried out on 23 February, using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, at the checkpoint at the entrance of Sayyida Zeinab area located on the Damascus Airport highway killed 10 and injured 30 and has affected United Nations agencies' ability to conduct monitoring visits to the surrounding areas.

61. A total of 35 United Nations staff members, 31 of whom are UNRWA staff, continue to be detained or are missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 72. This includes 17 staff members of the

United Nations, 42 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, 7 volunteers and staff members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and 6 staff members of international NGOs. Of the 72, 3 have been killed since 1 December.

III. Observations

62. The Syrian people feel increasingly abandoned by the world as they enter the fifth year of the war that has torn their country apart. Today, more than 220,000 Syrians have been killed. Almost half of the country's men, women and children have been forced to flee their homes. Some 4 million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, while a further 7.6 million are displaced within the Syrian Arab Republic. Every day brings more death, displacement and destruction.

63. While global attention is focused on the threat to regional and international peace and security that such terrorist groups as ISIL and the Nusra Front pose, our focus must continue to be on how best to help and support the Syrian people. Bringing the deadly conflict to an end would be an important first step. It is imperative that we extinguish the fires of violent extremism and sectarianism that now burn throughout the entire region.

64. Despite the demands of the Security Council to end the conflict, events and attacks that should shock our collective conscience and spur us into action have become a daily occurrence, often without comment or attention being paid to them. Explosive weapons continue to be fired into populated areas, leading to indiscriminate killing and injury to people. The destruction and damage to housing and vital civilian infrastructure on which ordinary Syrians depend is also deeply worrying.

65. Conditions continue to deteriorate for the 212,000 people besieged. Education and medical facilities continue to be attacked. Health workers continue to be killed. Medical and surgical supplies cannot pass unrestricted to people in need. Cuts to essential basic services are used by parties to the conflict to punish whole communities.

66. While humanitarian actors continue to deliver assistance to millions of people in need each month, their task remains challenging and dangerous. We must find ways to de-escalate and stop the violence. A political solution must be found. I therefore call once again upon the parties to the conflict and the international community to take the steps needed to end the conflict.

67. My Special Envoy continues to work to bring about a suspension of violence in Aleppo. The proposed freeze is not an end in itself; rather, it is meant as a confidence-building step leading to an inclusive, Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva communiqué of 2012. The ultimate objective is ambitious but achievable: an end to violence and a credible political transition to a country in which the rights of all communities are protected and the legitimate aspirations of all Syrians to freedom, dignity and justice are met.

68. The lack of accountability in the Syrian Arab Republic has led to a rise in allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other human rights violations. We have an obligation to the Syrian people to help to ensure that the serious crimes committed over the past four years do not go unpunished.