

**Statement by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, on behalf of the co-penholders for the Syria humanitarian file  
– Belgium, Germany and Kuwait –  
at the UN Security Council Briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria  
24 April 2019, New York.**

*Check against delivery*

Thank you Mr. President,

I will deliver this statement on behalf of the three co-penholders: Belgium, Germany and Kuwait. Let me thank Assistant Secretary-General Ursula Mueller for her valuable briefing on the humanitarian situation in Syria. We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and deep respect to all humanitarian and medical workers throughout Syria, in the region and at headquarters for their tireless efforts to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you Nujeen Mustafa for sharing your story with us. Your optimism and bravery in facing the challenges you have encountered is inspiring, and you have reminded this Security Council of the struggles young refugees face, especially those with disabilities. It is important that the Council does not lose sight of the perspective of the people living through the conflict and, therefore, it was important that you could be with us today to share your experiences.

Mr. President,  
Nujeen's story is just one of millions of stories of Syrian civilians who have been affected by the conflict, which has entered its 9th year. It is one of the worst conflicts of our time. The humanitarian situation remains dire in Syria today, with nearly 12 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. The past few months have seen some worrying humanitarian trends as we heard just moments ago from ASG Mueller.

We are extremely worried by the recent spike of aerial bombardment and shelling in the north-west of Syria, which has affected the civilian population, forcing the displacement of more than 110 thousand civilians since February. This escalation contributes to a further deterioration of the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in the

north-western de-escalation zone. Many civilians have also been killed and injured in the north-east of Syria. We strongly condemn the loss of civilian lives as a result of the recent escalation of violence and we remind all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law, and international human rights law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure. We recall Security Council resolutions 2286 and 2427, which condemned attacks on hospitals and schools, respectively. Abuses against civilians in times of conflict are a clear and indisputable breach of international humanitarian law and remain completely unacceptable.

The fight against terrorism must not impede principled humanitarian action. We reiterate our call for the sustained implementation of the Russia-Turkey Memorandum of Understanding in Idlib. We also reiterate our call for a nation-wide cessation of hostilities in accordance with Security Council resolution 2401.

Mr. President,  
The situation in Al-Hol camp is of great concern. The camp's population has jumped from around 10,000 in December to over 70,000 this month. 92% of the residents of the camp are women and children, many of them have been exposed to violence and trauma under Daesh and are now living in conditions where they face a range of protection concerns. The special needs of the most vulnerable, including the elderly and disabled, must be urgently addressed. We call on all parties to the conflict to allow sustained access to displaced people. The UN and its partners must be in a position to provide needs-based humanitarian assistance to all people in need without delay or discrimination or bureaucratic impediments.

In Rukban, almost 40, 000 people remain in the settlement. There is a need for more durable solutions for the people of the settlement through collective efforts and arrangements in coordination with the UN. We stress that all movements of the residents of the camp must be voluntary, safe, dignified, and well-informed. In parallel, we also strongly advocate for the continued sustained humanitarian access to Rukban until a lasting durable solution is reached. This is a matter of great importance, especially as the assistance delivered to the settlement by the humanitarian aid convoy in February is running out.

In Hajin, there are reports of shortages of basic commodities and a lack of basic services – particularly health services & access to safe and clean water . Furthermore, unexploded ordnances are rife in the

area, posing a serious protection risk for civilians. Access to Hajin should be prioritized.

Mr. President, Syria has witnessed some of the most serious crimes under international law since the conflict began. Accountability must be ensured for those who have committed violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We stand firm in our commitment to fight impunity. In this context, we renew our support to the work of the IIIM.

With regards to refugees, we would like to reiterate that any return of refugees must be safe, voluntary and dignified. Measures such as arbitrary detention, and expropriation, to name but a few, hinder any efforts that would allow Syrians to return. We also reject attempts to make demographic changes in Syria.

A month following the successful Brussels conference on Supporting Syria and the region, we as penholders reiterate our commitment to delivering on our pledges announced at the conference to support the Syria humanitarian response. We kindly ask all donors to make their funding available as soon as possible.

Lastly, Mr. President, the penholders would like to emphasize the importance of ensuring humanitarian access by all parties to the conflict throughout Syria, including areas which shifted control. Humanitarian access must be provided in an unconditional, safe, timely, unhindered and sustained manner. We remind all parties to the conflict of Security Council resolution 2449 on humanitarian access and cross-border assistance adopted more than four months ago, which called "upon all parties to ensure principled, sustained and improved humanitarian assistance to Syria in 2019." It is high time for all parties to the conflict to live up to this obligation and do more to ensure sustained quality access to all in need throughout Syria.

Thank you Mr. President.