

Children of Syria

A UNICEF update

UNICEF helps children leave Homs



Courtesy of epa european pressphoto agency

UNICEF helps the most vulnerable civilians out of the fighting in Homs.

HOMS, Syria – At least 500 children were among civilians evacuated from the besieged old city of Homs during the ongoing humanitarian operation being undertaken by the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

The humanitarian pause, which began on February 7th, was the first the UN has brokered in the embattled old quarter of the city which has been under siege for more than 600 days.

“The children who came out looked frail and emaciated,” said UNICEF’s Tarek Hefnawy, who took part in the operation.

Despite coming under attack on 8 February, the humanitarian convoy managed to deliver supplies, including water purification tablets provided by UNICEF to support the remaining population.

UNICEF staff also ensured that children arriving at the reception centre outside the old city were immediately given high-nutrition supplements. A total of 380 children

“The children who came out looked frail and emaciated”

received on-the-spot vaccination against polio, DPT, Hepatitis B, measles and other preventable diseases. Staff reported the presence of about 20 pregnant women among the evacuees.

UNICEF staff accompanied children identified as vulnerable until they

reached safety to ensure they were not separated from their families or otherwise placed at risk.

Before the humanitarian operation began, UNICEF estimated there were more than 1,000 children trapped in Homs.

“This is a very positive break-through but it can only be the beginning,” said UNICEF Syria Representative Youssouf Abdel Jelil.

“We remain extremely concerned over the fate of the children who are still trapped in Homs and in other besieged communities across Syria. Parties to the conflict must protect children, respect humanitarian pauses and abide by international humanitarian law principles to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who desperately need it,” he added.

Much needed aid arrives in northern Syria

Field diary by Michele Al Kaae

Areha, Idlib governorate/Tartous—Calm has returned to Areha, a town in northern Syria, but the tell-tale signs of heavy fighting are all too visible.

Thousands of children and families have fled Areha, many escaping to nearby Idlib city. Displaced from their homes and communities, they moved to shelters in schools or other public buildings, or squeezed into the apartments of friends or family.

In early February, I was part of a UN inter-agency convoy that brought much-needed emergency supplies from Tartous to Areha, and the



A boy carries a UNICEF family hygiene kit that has just been delivered to Areha town by a UN convoy.

nearby town of Muhambel. It has been months since humanitarian assistance has been able to get through.

No one knows how many people have been displaced, but more than half of the town's population may be gone. Before the conflict began there were approximately 13,000 families in Areha. Now the Syrian Arab Red Crescent estimates there may only be 5,000. The destruction is particularly severe along the former

conflict line, where many buildings are completely destroyed or riddled with bullet holes.

This convoy was part of a comprehensive plan by UNICEF and other partners to reach mostly hard-to-reach areas with vital emergency supplies. There were 22 trucks in total, half of them filled with UNICEF supplies; enough for 2,800 families. They included blankets, winter clothes, hygiene kits for babies and families, basic water kits, and soap.



A worker moves UNICEF family hygiene kits from a truck into a warehouse at Areha.

UNICEF Jordan gets financial boost from Germany

Amman, Jordan – UNICEF's response to the Syria crisis in Jordan has received a new financial boost, with the announcement of a new €10 million donation from the Government of Germany.

On a visit to Jordan, the German Minister for International Cooperation, His Excellency Gerd Müller, announced the new grant at Queen Zein Al Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID) in Hashemi Al Shemali, where UNICEF supports a Child and Family Protective Place, in partnership with INTERSOS and the

Jordan Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD).

Minister Müller praised the Jordanian people for their hospitality and generosity in hosting such a large number of Syrian refugees.

"This conflict and refugee crisis is the biggest humanitarian crisis in 20 years," he said. "Children and young people are most affected by this terrible war. We are giving additional support because the children of today are the adults of tomorrow. The work carried out now is critical for the future."

The funds will finance programs that provide education opportunities and psychosocial support to Syrian children, adolescents and youth up to the age of 24 years, in camps and host communities, as well as vulnerable Jordanian children across the country this year.

The new grant will increase Germany's contribution to UNICEF's emergency response to the Syria crisis in Jordan to €45 million since 2012 and will help meet the ever increasing needs of Syrian refugee children and vulnerable Jordanian children in the country.

UN report highlights abuse of Syrian children

New York, USA – The first report of the UN Secretary General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic provides a chilling account of the brutality and abuses that children have suffered for nearly three years, and a clear reminder of why this horrific conflict must end.

Children have been killed, arrested, abducted, tortured, mutilated, sexually abused, and recruited by armed groups; children have been

used as human shields; schools and hospitals have been attacked and used for other purposes. Humanitarian access has been blocked and impeded, deepening the suffering of children and civilians.

The grave violations against children cited in the report demand a response. UNICEF joins the Secretary General in calling for an immediate end to the targeting of innocent children and civilians, including the use of weapons that cause indiscriminate

and disproportionate harm, such as those employed in a deadly wave of attacks across Aleppo this week.

In a meeting of the UNICEF Executive Board today, UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake said that all those involved in the conflict and those who have influence over them have an obligation to do everything possible to protect children from violence – violence that is not of children's making, and in which they should play no part.

Aliya finds a safe haven in Lebanon

By Salam Abdulmunem

Bekaa Valley, Lebanon- Two years ago 7-year old Aliya and her brother Ali watched their older siblings pack up and leave the conflict in Syria, for a safer life in Lebanon. Being the youngest, it was decided the two children should stay behind in the care of their parents.

A year later, as the fighting intensified in Idlib, in the northwest, their village came under heavy fire. "There were many missiles and rockets. Every day they would fall on us. I was afraid. My brother and I would hide in my room. I would hide in one corner and he would hide in another," says Aliya.

Then, the house took a direct hit and their parents died in the attack.

Neighbors contacted their eldest brother, Abu-Thamer, in Lebanon, to deliver the sad news. Abu-Thamer says, "We had a large house. When I went back to get my little sister and brother all I found was a mound of rubble, that's all that was left of the house. My little brother Ali didn't speak at all until we got to Lebanon."

Aliya and Ali now live with their brother, his wife and 13 others, in a



Aliya (centre) has breakfast before going to school in the Dalhamieh camp.

single tent in the Dalhamieh informal tented settlement in the Bekaa Valley. Aliya says, "My favorite thing about being here is waking up in the morning, putting my sleeping mattress away and getting dressed for school. Sometimes we have bread dipped in oil and dried thyme for breakfast and sometimes we have a tin of sardines or a can of beans."

Social workers are monitoring Ali's health and providing him with psycho-social support to help him

recover from the trauma of war. Aliya is happy to be going to school in the camp, saying, "Our school is closed now because of the rain, but I'm waiting for it to re-open, because I want to learn."

UNICEF is active at the Dalhamieh tented settlement. Through our partner "Beyond" those living in the camp have access to mobile clinics providing basic health care services, as well as non-formal education opportunities.

Refugee life is a bitter pill to swallow



©UNICEF/Iraq-2013/Noorani

Sheendar heads out to class at the Arbat refugee camp school and wants to be a teacher.

The second in a series of stories about children caught up in the crisis in Syria.

By Chris Niles

SULIMANIYAH, Iraq — Fifteen-year old Sheendar isn't afraid to share his feelings when asked about the conflict in his country. "Many children have been killed in the war. Houses and schools have been damaged. War is not a justification for all that. It doesn't matter who wins or loses, ordinary people have to pay," he says.

Sheendar has a medical condition, which is the reason he's become a refugee. He wasn't able to get medication or blood transfusions in Syria. So he, along with his parents and older sister, crossed into Iraq last August, shortly after the border opened. Sheendar suffers from thalassemia, a genetic disorder, and needs to live near a hospital where he can receive blood transfusions.

"A few days before the treatment session I feel tired, and my body is weak," he says. "Otherwise, I'm okay."

Unlike others at the Arbat refugee camp, Sheendar is allowed to leave every three weeks so he can travel to

"Syria was so difficult for me because I had to look for medicine"

a hospital in Sulimaniyah, where his transfusion can take up to four hours.

"Syria was so difficult for me because I had to look for medicine. Here, I like that I can get medicine," he says.

Sheendar has resumed his studies in the camp school and spends

his spare time playing football and singing. One day he hopes to become a teacher.

But right now he misses his house in Syria and his old routine. "It was a very normal, quiet life," he says.

Sheendar believes that a normal life is what all children have the right to.

Refugees by numbers*

Lebanon	930,000
Jordan	571,000
Turkey	612,000
Iraq	222,000
Egypt	133,000
North Africa	18,000
Total	2,488,000

(UNICEF estimates that 50% of these refugees are children.)

- Figures have been rounded

*UNHCR registered refugees and individuals awaiting registration as of 23 February 2014