



Limar is the first child of Syrian refugees Liqaa and Bassel. Her first home has been the Zaatari camp in Jordan.
Photo: Pablo Tosco/Oxfam Intermón

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Call to action ahead of Syria peace talks, and beyond

The horrifying chemical weapons attacks in Damascus in August 2013 led to ill-advised plans for a US military intervention and a flurry of diplomatic activity. Ultimately it prompted international leadership on the Syria crisis that has been sorely lacking for so long.

With long-awaited peace talks due to resume in Geneva this November, this new momentum has the potential to turn into a breakthrough only if urgent and immediate action is taken on aid and efforts are made to stop the bloodshed.

Governments must provide aid that is commensurate with the scale of the crisis. They must put concerted pressure on the Government of Syria, opposition groups, and neighbouring countries to ensure that those in need can access assistance. And they must back up their calls for a political solution to the crisis by insisting on an immediate cessation of hostilities and agreeing to halt the supply of arms and ammunition to all sides.

INTRODUCTION

The world was rightly appalled by the use of chemical weapons in Damascus on 21 August 2013. If the recent diplomatic initiatives by the USA and Russia mean that these weapons are never again used, it would be a great achievement. But it won't be enough.

The reality on the ground in Syria is that the crisis remains out of control. It has already caused more than 100,000 deaths, most from shelling, gunfire and other conventional weapons, and forced more than 7 million people to flee their homes, including 2 million who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. According to recent reports, civilian deaths may account for 36 per cent of the fatalities,² with children accounting for 7 per cent.³ Three in five Syrian workers are now unemployed. Conflict has affected 60 per cent of all hospitals, with nearly 40 per cent completely out of service.⁴

There is continued disregard for civilian life, particularly with the increased use of explosive weapons in towns and cities.⁵ There are reports of men of fighting age being singled out during massacres and for extrajudicial execution.⁶ Women are increasingly at risk of sexual violence; many cite this as a primary reason for fleeing the country.⁷ The violence, displacement, and related economic and social upheaval have profoundly impacted the traditional roles of Syrian men and women, creating new tensions and stresses for refugees.⁸ In Oxfam's long experience, this brutality creates its own logic of escalation.

During the past year, the conflict has also spread to neighbouring countries. In recent months there have been bombings and cross-border clashes in Turkey; intervention by the Lebanon-based armed group/political party Hezbollah; bombings, shelling, and rocket attacks inside Lebanon; links between opposition armed groups inside Syria and those in Iraq; deployment of Iranian troops to fight alongside government forces; and air strikes by Israel.⁹

With the conflict continuing to intensify on the ground, fuelled by supplies of arms and ammunition from abroad,¹⁰ there remains the real 'possibility of violence consuming the region'.¹¹

Undoubtedly, making progress towards a solution to a crisis of this scale will not be an easy task. After years of division, however, recent weeks have shown that the international community *can* unite to take effective action.

It now has the opportunity to build on this progress to change the situation for Syrian women, men and children by prioritising an aid response to alleviate the humanitarian situation and by backing up calls for a political resolution of the crisis by creating conditions for its success.

These two priorities could be mutually reinforcing, and must guide the actions of the international community in the crucial weeks and months ahead – in the run up to the Geneva talks due to resume in November, and beyond. They must be pursued with the same urgency as the response to the use of chemical weapons.

Oxfam, as a humanitarian agency, seeks to ensure that those affected by crisis can access life-saving assistance and be free from violence. It also calls for an end to the policies that fan the flames of conflict and drive humanitarian crises. This paper details Oxfam's calls for action from the international community on, first, aid, and then on the fundamental imperative to stop the bloodshed and take steps towards a just, sustainable peace in Syria.

'The most important thing for us to ask for is for the outside world to help end the fighting in Syria, for the conflict to end. For the world to see our situation and feel our suffering with us; to support us.'

Najah, 38, mother of seven, Mafraq, Jordan

'We have not seen a refugee outflow escalate at such a frightening rate since the Rwandan genocide.'

António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 16 July 2013¹

HALF MEASURES ON AID

A crisis on the scale being witnessed in Syria requires a massive humanitarian response. The UN has launched its largest ever humanitarian appeal, for \$5bn. By the end of March 2014, Oxfam aims to reach 650,000 people affected by the crisis, both inside Syria and in neighbouring countries where refugees have fled. The response to the crisis is the organisation's top priority.¹²

Governments and the public have, in many cases, given generously, but it is not enough to meet the massive needs. In fact, the UN's appeals are only 51 per cent funded at the time of writing. According to Oxfam's latest 'fair share' analysis¹³ for key donors to the UN appeals, in September, some countries had already given over and above what they could have been expected to; these include Denmark, Kuwait, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. However, more than half of the members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and Gulf countries analysed in September 2013 had reported giving less than 50 per cent of what would be expected, including a number of G20 and regional governments such as Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Russia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The announcement of a donor pledging conference in January 2014 is welcome news. As well as increasing their funding commitments, donors must show greater flexibility and impose minimal bureaucratic restrictions on aid agencies, given the complexity of humanitarian operations inside Syria. Funding should be given through a variety of channels including UN, governments, international NGOs and local organisations to ensure that assistance reaches as many people as possible.

Donors must also ensure that aid is delivered in a co-ordinated and transparent way to reach those most in need. This means sharing information on where and to whom funding is given, to avoid duplication of effort, and ensure that assistance does not create localised conflict either within camps or between refugees and host communities.

Humanitarian access and an impartial response

Recent months have seen the increased use of siege warfare and other tactics which have made it extremely difficult for people to access water, food, medical and other supplies.¹⁴ In an entrenched, politicised and bitter conflict such as this, a well-funded and co-ordinated humanitarian response is only part of the issue. In addition, those in need must be able to access aid, as the recent UN Security Council Presidential Statement highlights.¹⁵ Therefore, it is critical that the Syrian Government and opposition groups¹⁶ immediately halt tactics of warfare that deny civilians their right to assistance; they should remove bureaucratic obstacles, ensure the safety of humanitarian workers, and allow unhindered access for humanitarian organisations and aid to all areas of Syria where people are in need of assistance. They must also allow civilians to flee areas of active conflict. All states must exert whatever influence they have over the warring parties to these ends.

'Assistance isn't reaching the people who really need it back in Syria. There are people there who can't get out... No one is helping them.'

Amany Mohammad, aged 27, refugee in Lebanon, May 2013

Support to neighbouring countries, and the right to seek asylum

The countries bordering Syria have shown extraordinary generosity in hosting those who have fled the conflict – now numbering more than 2 million people.¹⁷ Turkey alone has spent approximately \$2bn on its refugee response. In recent months, however, there have been increasing reports of restrictions on the movement of refugees across borders, particularly in Jordan, Iraq (with the exception of flows into Kurdish areas in August 2013) and Turkey, as the governments of these countries become more concerned about security and the economic and social impact of hosting so many refugees.¹⁸

Oxfam is calling on international donors to support host countries with funds, both for the immediate humanitarian response and in the longer term. But crucially, neighbouring countries must keep their borders open for those fleeing the violence in Syria, and ensure that the rights of refugees under international law are respected. Governments beyond the region must also significantly increase the number of refugees they are willing to host or resettle to ease the pressure on Syria's neighbouring countries.¹⁹

A different scale of aid effort needed

Humanitarian aid can only go so far in meeting the enormous needs created by the crisis, as Oxfam, along with other agencies and the UN,²⁰ has consistently highlighted. The crisis in Syria is now the dominant political, security and economic issue facing neighbouring countries (see Box 1: The cost of war), and there must be a review of international donor policies to take account of this new reality. At a minimum, this must include a review of policies which risk exacerbating economic instability or undermining social cohesion in light of the refugee crisis. For example, UNHCR in Jordan has found that 'economic reforms encouraged by the international financial institutions, such as the withdrawal of electricity and fuel subsidies, have made life even more difficult for the people of Jordan and have helped to fuel resentment towards the presence of refugees'.²¹

Box 1: The cost of war

Although the total cost of the conflict in Syria is almost impossible to measure with accuracy given the continuing fighting and scale of destruction, it is clear the crisis has had a devastating economic impact.

Nearly one in five Syrians is now food insecure (4 million people). Syria's 2013 wheat crop is estimated at 40 per cent below that of 2010–2011. Food and fuel price inflation means that the prices of staple commodities such as wheat flour, bread and sugar have risen by over 100 per cent compared with pre-crisis levels in some parts of the country, including the major cities of Aleppo and Damascus.²² The price of diesel rose 200 per cent in January 2013 after the Government ended subsidies.²³

The crisis has also created enormous challenges for neighbouring countries. Lebanon is hosting close to 1 million refugees – equivalent to nearly one-quarter of its own population (4.2 million).²⁴ While refugees have the potential to contribute to the Lebanese economy, the crisis in Syria may have cost the country \$7.5bn by the end of 2014.²⁵ In Jordan, officials have estimated that the country needs a \$6bn investment in infrastructure as it struggles to cope with an 11 per cent increase in its population owing to the influx of Syrian refugees.²⁶

Beyond having a duty to help resolve Syria's conflict, it is also in the best interests of the international community to do so – particularly as many countries are struggling to emerge from recession. According to London-based ETX Capital, the recent increase in oil prices linked to regional instability ‘will put a halt to the pace of economic momentum we are currently experiencing in major parts of the world’.²⁷ At the same time – in the days following 21 August – as the chief market strategist of US-based Jones Trading warned, the Syria crisis is ‘the largest geopolitical risk since the start of the Iraq war’,²⁸ contributing to stock market falls in the USA, France, Germany and the UK.

The World Bank’s recent support package to Jordan is a step in the right direction,²⁹ as are attempts to develop a stabilisation plan and establish a Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Lebanon. But a radically different scale of response is needed. Donors need to provide large-scale assistance – in the form of grants, not just loans – to help regional governments shore up basic services such as health care, education and water supplies, which have all come under enormous pressure. This means providing funding for recurrent costs, such as staff and medicines, and for infrastructure, as well as technical assistance to improve financial management and tackle corruption.³⁰ Major economic reforms, such as the removal of subsidies, should be delayed.

Unless such urgent action is taken, millions of people will be left without assistance, and the unfolding crisis will engulf neighbouring countries.

‘We’d like to be able to return to Syria as quickly as possible and for the fighting to end. I want a decent, secure life; to have a life with dignity.’

Sahab, 42-year-old mother,
Zaatari refugee camp, Jordan

POLITICAL SOLUTIONS: FROM RHETORIC TO REALITY

The international community has always, on the surface, unanimously insisted that there must be – indeed, can only be – a political solution to the crisis. Statements from US Secretary of State John Kerry, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov,³¹ the communiqué issued by G8 leaders at their summit in June 2013³² and statements from regional governments, including Iran,³³ and recently from the UN Security Council,³⁴ have all reinforced this view.

But for more than a year there was little progress made on the six-point plan³⁶ laid out by Kofi Annan, the then UN/League of Arab States peace envoy, since the Action Group on Syria³⁷ agreed steps on its implementation in June 2012 and issued the Geneva Communiqué.³⁸

The renewed diplomatic urgency of recent weeks in response to the use of chemical weapons was desperately needed. It has now created an opportunity – particularly with the UN Security Council endorsement of the Geneva Communiqué for the first time and backing for a follow-up conference in Resolution 2118 – to move beyond the rhetoric of a political solution to the Syria crisis, to a real solution.

Inclusive dialogue and peace talks

During the past two years, global powers have waited for battlefield realities to either shift decisively or to place their favoured party in a better position to negotiate. This has been compounded by key leaders placing conditions on the eventual outcome of any political process.⁴⁰ At an even more basic level, there is disagreement over which parties, individuals or countries should be involved in negotiating a political solution. These hardening positions have further complicated the crisis, causing some observers to comment that the international community has tied itself ‘in knots largely of its own making’.⁴¹ Ensuring that all relevant national, regional and international powers are represented at the Geneva II follow-up conference would help to break down these divisions.

In addition, too often the voices of belligerents have monopolised the agenda of politicians and the media. But inside Syria and across the region, there are many activists working for peaceful political change. In August 2013, for example, 265 organisations in Syria, Turkey and across the Arab region wrote to the G20 leaders calling for an immediate ceasefire and the prioritisation of peace talks and a political solution.⁴²

Non-militarised civil society groups should be present at the peace negotiations. The international community must listen to those voices, and those of refugees such as Liqaa, 23, who recently gave birth in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan. She told Oxfam: ‘What I wish from the international community is to help the Syrian people to find a political solution, to help us to go back to our country, to our life, to our future... Now that I've given birth to Limar it's even more important for me and for her to have our country back, for her to grow up there with our family. I look forward to going back to Syria as soon as possible.’

‘The issue can be resolved only by political and diplomatic means.’

Vladimir Putin, Russian President, 16 June 2013³⁵

‘I do not believe that military action by those within Syria or by external powers can achieve a lasting peace.’

Barack Obama, US President, 24 September 2013³⁹

Cessation of armed violence

An effective peace process will mean little to Syrian civilians without immediate action to end the killing now. The increased collaboration between the USA and Russia, and the action at the UN Security Council, offers an opportunity for a sustained and monitored cessation of hostilities in Syria. This key aspect of the Annan peace plan in 2012 quickly crumbled, culminating in the withdrawal of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), and ushering in a new, more intense phase of the conflict. A fractured and divided response by the international community, at the very least contributed to this escalation. In contrast, pressure from the international community secured a local ceasefire for the safe passage of UN chemical weapons inspectors in late August 2013, reinforcing the point that concerted pressure at the international level can yield results on the ground.

While there would be difficulties in co-ordination, monitoring and control, particularly given the number of opposition groups, a ceasefire would tangibly improve the humanitarian situation by halting the ongoing bloodshed and allowing people to move in order to access life-saving assistance. It may also build confidence between belligerents if it is respected.

Halting the flow of arms and ammunition

The vast majority of casualties in Syria have been caused by conventional, not chemical weapons. These arms are being used to commit violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and continued transfers are fuelling the conflict and undermining a political solution to the crisis. Russia, the USA and the UN Security Council have finally shown that there can be united international action on weapons that cause massive civilian suffering. The logical next step is to extend this unity to all arms and ammunition and ensure a complete halt to transfers to Syria.

The Security Council has the authority, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to impose a total ban on the transfer of arms and ammunition from any country to any party in Syria. Yet politics prevents it from doing so. Indeed, more than 90 per cent of the arms being used in Syria were manufactured in countries that are Permanent Members of the UN Security Council,⁴³ including Russia and, to a lesser extent, the USA, which has reportedly started recent transfers of arms and ammunition.⁴⁴ Beyond these countries, there is the continuing flow of ammunition and heavier munitions from Iran to the Syrian Government, and from Gulf states to some opposition forces.⁴⁵

Whether the Security Council fulfils its responsibility on arms remains to be seen. The absence of an embargo, however, is no excuse for inaction, and its members – and all other governments – must stop supplying ammunition or arms to any side now.

The violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Syria, documented by the UN, attest to the risk of misuse. In addition, it is now more vital than ever to cease these supplies to send a strong signal to the parties to the conflict that every outside power is serious in the pursuit of a political solution to the crisis – and to live up to the principles of the newly adopted Arms Trade Treaty that the USA and 111 other governments have now signed.

'We left when we couldn't stay any longer; our house was surrounded by snipers, thieves and destruction. It's all gone now; our house has been bulldozed. I've seen people I knew killed on the streets. My children are still terrified to this day. But we are lucky that we are together. My six-year-old daughter, Tayba, tells her mother not to be afraid. This crisis has made children grow up before their time.'

Muhaiber, 37, arrived in Jordan a year ago with his wife and five children. He now volunteers with Oxfam, as a community facilitator.

'The world is focused on the vital work of reinforcing the norm against the use of chemical weapons. It is just as vital to reinforce the principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law that are at the heart of the ATT, and ensure that there are no further transfers of arms to any warring party in Syria'

Oxfam's Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima, ATT High-Level Event, UNGA, 25 September 2013

Protecting civilians

Refugees that Oxfam works with consistently cite the use of explosive weapons, which have been used by all sides, as the main reason for fleeing the country. Khadija, a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, told Oxfam: 'When the fighting and shelling got too heavy we would move to another village until the fighting and shelling got too heavy there. Eventually we had no choice but to go and live in a place underground...Then bombings from the air started in that area. That's when we finally decided to leave Syria.'

UN inquiries and international human rights groups have found strong evidence that widespread and systematic violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed inside Syria.⁴⁷ The UN has noted that the increased brutality in the country in recent months was 'bolstered by an increase in the availability of weapons'.⁴⁸

The call for increased supplies of arms and ammunition to opposition forces is sometimes framed as necessary to protect civilians.⁴⁹ However, in Oxfam's long experience of delivering humanitarian assistance in conflict zones, as well as its research and campaigning on arms control issues,⁵⁰ it has found that the ready supply of weapons tends to exacerbate the threats that civilians face. In the short term this leads to the intensification of violence and strengthening the belief that warring parties can – or must – press home military advantage, which in turn creates 'the illusion of victory'.⁵¹ It is also true in the lingering after-effects of the ready availability of weapons in post-conflict situations, which are often characterised by weak and compromised institutions.

Sending the right message

Agreeing a complete halt to arms and ammunition to Syria would not only keep them out of the hands of those committing human rights abuses. It would send a message that the international community is serious about the need for peace talks and a ceasefire as part of a longer-term plan for a political solution to the crisis.

Despite arguments by some in the USA that sending arms to the opposition would 'level the playing field' in favour of the rebels and therefore make a political solution more likely, what is more probable is that sending more arms risks sparking an all-out arms race. Russia's response to the lifting of the EU arms embargo in late May 2013 was to announce that it would transfer advanced surface-to-air missiles to the Syrian Government.⁵² In addition, US officials have expressed concern that their government's decision to send arms will be seen by Qatar and other Gulf nations as a 'green light to drastically expand' their own transfers to opposition groups.⁵³

Put simply, agreement by those attending the Geneva II conference to halt the supply of arms and ammunition to parties to the conflict in Syria will give the talks the maximum chance of success.

'The response to the heinous use of chemical weapons has created diplomatic momentum – the first signs of unity in far too long. Now we must build on it to get the parties to the negotiating table.'

*UN Secretary-General
Ban Ki-moon,
24 September 2013⁴⁶*

'We were the last of our relatives to leave Syria. By the time we left, it was impossible to live there. Our house was destroyed, we couldn't even find food to buy. Some 100,000 Syrians have been killed. Isn't that enough? We have to go back in peace as brothers, as we have always lived. We would go back home tomorrow if only we could.'

Hussein, father of five from Hama, currently living in a tent on a farm in Tneeb, Jordan.

Keeping military intervention off the table

The recent agreement on chemical weapons has meant military intervention has been put aside. However, the USA has been clear that military intervention is an option it may return to. There is a strong possibility that any such military intervention in Syria by the USA would make the humanitarian situation considerably worse,⁵⁴ escalating the conflict and exacerbating regional instability, while providing intangible benefits in terms of protecting civilians. Oxfam has opposed the proposed military intervention by the USA for that reason, as well as the fact that diplomatic and other avenues are clearly not exhausted. The risks and potential and actual negative impacts of military intervention apply to all external actors.

If all governments – especially the USA, France, Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Israel and Iran – were to stop arms transfers to Syria and/or to cease sending fighters or launching air strikes, it would dramatically increase the prospects of a successful ceasefire and meaningful negotiations. Priority should be given to alleviating the suffering of civilians caught up in the crisis.

Box 2: The Dabbour family: life as refugees, and hope for the future

The Dabbour family of five, from Hay Al Tadamon, a neighbourhood of Damascus, have been living for the past year in a room in Wavel Palestinian refugee camp, Lebanon (also known as Al Jaleel camp), which they rent for \$100 a month. They had been living in Syria as Palestinian refugees; they say they were forced out of their home after their neighbourhood was surrounded by snipers from all sides, and eventually bombed.

'I hate living here, I keep thinking of going back,' said Seif, 50, the father who used to work as a manager in a foreign petrol company in Syria. 'After the market closes down, I go to look for the rotting fruits and vegetables left in the street. I found a teddy bear in a rubbish bin, which I washed and brought for my daughter. I have no idea how I'll pay next month's rent... I'm hoping for the Geneva peace conference... I just want my sons to be able to play football, my daughter to play with her friends, to live in peace again.'

CONCLUSION

The international community must recognise the central role it has played in exacerbating the Syrian crisis, and learn the lesson that diplomacy, while difficult, can be made to work. If the needs of Syrian men, women and children are truly to be prioritised, there must be no return to the half measures and hypocrisy that have marked the past two years and a rejection of the false choice between military intervention and doing nothing.

Instead, the international community must urgently dig deep to meet the overwhelming humanitarian needs of Syrians – those inside the country as well as those who have fled to neighbouring countries. It must actively work to make sure that those in need of help can access humanitarian aid while also making firm commitments to support people in the longer term. But beyond that, there needs to be an unequivocal message sent to those who are fighting: that they will not be provided with weapons, and must instead commit to an immediate halt to the fighting as the only basis for engaging in a genuine process of political change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Syrian Government and all opposition groups must:

- commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities;
- engage in a Syrian-led, internationally mediated political process in good faith, based on the Geneva Communiqué and the six-point plan, and without further preconditions on participation;
- immediately end all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;
- allow those who need humanitarian assistance to receive it. This includes allowing unimpeded and unrestricted operations for humanitarian organisations and UN agencies. It also includes an immediate halt to tactics of warfare which intentionally or effectively deny assistance to civilian populations.

The international community – in particular Russia and the USA, other members of the UN Security Council, neighbouring countries, Iran, and the Gulf states – must unite behind a *political solution* to the crisis by:

- calling for an immediate halt to violence, and unequivocally condemning violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, and calling on all warring parties to adhere to their obligations;
- ensuring there is full accountability for war crimes and other serious human rights violations to counter impunity and help deter future violations;
- halting all ongoing and planned military actions in Syria and withdrawing any outside forces;
- building on recent cooperation and providing the resources and political backing to ensure peace talks happen in mid-November, as announced;

- unequivocally reiterating public backing for the Geneva Communiqué as the basis for peace talks and dropping all other international preconditions, including those about who should be invited and the agenda for the conference;
- ensuring that the peace processes are Syrian-led and internationally mediated, and guaranteeing that the voices of civil society representatives of all communities are heard, not just those of the government and armed opposition groups, while ensuring the fair and effective participation of Syrian women as well as men.

Regardless of whether the UN Security Council lives up to its responsibility to impose an arms embargo, all governments, including Security Council members and all regional powers should contribute to this prioritisation of non-military solutions to the crisis by ensuring a **halt to the supply of ammunition and arms to all sides**, through:

- publicly committing to halting any planned transfers of arms and ammunition to the Government of Syria or to the opposition forces, and halting the facilitation of any such transfers, or allowing them to pass through their territory; and
- bringing all possible political pressure to bear on those who are continuing to supply arms to stop transfers immediately, suspending all defence and military co-operation programmes with countries supplying belligerents.

The international donor community should ensure that the **aid response** meets the scale of the crisis and humanitarian needs, *is of adequate quality, and reaches those who need it most*, by:

- fully funding the UN humanitarian appeals, including ensuring that each donor country provides at least its 'fair share' of the total aid needed (based on its gross national income (GNI));
- pressuring all parties to respect, protect, and fulfil people's right to life through facilitating access to aid, including calling on the parties to the conflict to facilitate safe, unhindered and effective access by impartial aid agencies to all parts of Syria;
- providing the support needed to ensure that neighbouring governments maintain open borders for refugees fleeing the conflict, and accepting refugees for resettlement in third countries;
- significantly increasing long-term support to Syria's neighbouring countries, including through international financial institutions and bilaterally. This should include technical support to line ministries and measures to monitor and address corruption.

NOTES

- 1 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, during a briefing to the UN Security Council, 16 July 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/07/16/us-syria-crisis-un-idUSBRE96F11120130716> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 2 A. Cowell, 'War deaths in Syria said to top 100,000', *The New York Times*, 26 June 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/27/world/middleeast/syria.html?_r=0 (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 3 United Nations Radio, 'Situation remains dire for children in Syria: Special Representative', 7 August 2013, www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2013/08/situation-remains-dire-for-children-in-syria-special-representative (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 4 Revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP), January–December 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Revised%20SHARP%2006June2013.pdf> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 5 Recent research published by Action on Armed Violence estimates that 93 per cent of fatalities due to explosive weapons in Syria are civilians, and that 40 per cent of all deaths recorded in Syria have been caused by explosive weapons. See 'Syria and Explosive Weapons', <http://aoav.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Syria-fact-sheet-FINAL.pdf?6ad0f2> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 6 See, for example, 6th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Annex II, pp. 30-32 and Amnesty International (2013) 'Syria: Civilians in al-Baydah and Banias exposed to summary executions', 26 July, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE24/037/2013/en/0ce5eccc-8ba6-499e-9977-800f935db975/mde240372013en.pdf> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 7 UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura, briefing to the UN Security Council, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc10981.doc.htm> (last accessed 14 October 2013).
- 8 See C. Harvey, R. Garwood and R. El-Masri (2013) *Shifting Sands: Changing gender roles among refugees in Lebanon*, Oxfam Research Report, Oxford: Oxfam International.
- 9 David Barnett, Long War Journal, 28 April 2013, Israeli Air Force struck SSRC facility without entering Syrian airspace <http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/04/israeli-air-force-struck-ssrc.php> (last accessed 8 October 2013).
- 10 SIPRI Yearbook 2013, Chapter 5, Arms transfers to Syria <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/files/sipri-yearbook-2013-chapter-5-section-3A>. (last accessed 14 October 2013).
- 11 5th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, p. 5 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICISyria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 12 Since April 2013 the Syria Crisis response has been classified as a 'Category 1' emergency in Oxfam, based on criteria related to the scale of human suffering and the complexity of the situation, and therefore the size of response needed from the humanitarian community. It is also an internal directive for staff to urgently prioritise above all else.
- 13 Oxfam, 'Fair share analysis for revised Syria Crisis appeals', http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/oxfam-fair-share-analysis-un-syria_appeal-17sept2013.pdf (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 14 5th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, A/HRC/23/58, p. 22 paras 143-148, and 6th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session24/Documents/A_HRC_24_46_en.DOC (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 15 UN Security Council (SC/11138) , 2 October 2013 <https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11138.doc.htm> (last accessed 8 October 2013).
- 16 As an impartial humanitarian agency, Oxfam does not extend or withdraw recognition from any of the conflicting parties.
- 17 UNHCR (2013) 'UNHCR and Syria's neighbours announce joint push for expanded international support for countries hosting large refugee populations', UNHCR press release, 4 September, <http://www.unhcr.org/522747799.html> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 18 S. Al-Khalidi, Reuters website (2013) 'Plight of Syrian refugees stranded near Jordan border worsens', 29 May, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/29/us-jordan-syria-refugees-idUSBRE94S0ZK20130529> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 19 Within the EU, only Sweden and Germany have accepted Syrian refugees. Germany has agreed to accept 5,000 refugees in an effort to express solidarity with countries in the region that are hosting refugees and to 'lead by example' for other European nations. 9770 Syrian have been granted asylum by Sweden. The US will reportedly accept around 2,000 refugees. http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/08/08/exclusive_us_will_now LET_in_thousands_of_syrian_refugees#.UgSZyDWySAw.email

- 20 L. Freund, Voice of America website (2013) 'UN Official Warns Syrian Fighting Could Ignite Mideast', 16 July, <http://www.voanews.com/content/un-official-warns-syrian-fighting-could-ignite-mideast/1703191.html> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 21 UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service PDES (2013) 'From slow boil to breaking point: a real-time evaluation of UNHCR's response to the Syrian refugee emergency', p. 11 para 64, <http://www.unhcr.org/51f7d9919.html> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 22 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/World Food Programme (WFP), *Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic Special Report*, 5 July 2013 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/aq113e/aq113e.pdf>; see also OCHA, "Syria: Humanitarian Needs Overview." <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Syria%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview%20April%202013.pdf> (last accessed 14 October 2013).
- 23 FAO/WFP, *Crop and Food Security Assessment*, p.6 <http://www.fao.org/docrep/018/aq113e/aq113e.pdf> (last accessed 14 October 2013).
- 24 World Bank Data from 2011, 'Population, total', <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 25 D. Evans, 'Syria war, refugees to cost Lebanon \$7.5 billion: World Bank', Reuters website, 19 September 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/19/us-syria-crisis-lebanon-idUSBRE9810T320130919> (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 26 M. El Amin, 'Syrian, Lebanese economies remain linked', *The Daily Star Lebanon*, 5 July 2013, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Lebanon/2013/Jul-05/222590-syrian-lebanese-economies-remain-linked.ashx#axzz2ZCdnw3yQ> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 27 T. Macalister, 'Markets hit by fears that Syria attack could raise fuel prices', *The Guardian*, 28 August 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/aug/28/market-fears-syria-oil-price> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 28 BBC News website, 'Markets hit as Syria fears spark shares sell-off and oil price rise', 27 August 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-23848721> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 29 World Bank (2013) 'Emergency Assistance for Jordan to cope with Impacts of Syria Crisis', World Bank press release, 18 July, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/07/18/emergency-assistance-jordan-cope-impacts-syrian-crisis> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 30 This approach can include MDTFs, but also working with individual line ministries, supporting municipalities hosting the largest numbers of refugees, working through civil society
- 31 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Speech and answers to questions from the mass media by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during the press conference on the topic of chemical weapons in Syria and the situation around the Syrian Arab Republic, Moscow, 26 August 2013, http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/7426DF843775ABD244257BD500611D38 (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 32 G8 Communiqué, Lough Erne, 2013, Paras 82-87, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207771/Lough_Erne_2013_G8_Leaders_Communique.pdf (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 33 See, for example, Statement by H.E. Mr Golamhossein Dehghani Ambassador, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations, 29 July 2013, <http://iran-un.org/en/2013/07/29/29-july-2013/> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 34 UN Security Council Resolution 2118 states that 'the only solution to the current crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012' and emphasised "the need to convene the international conference on Syria as soon as possible'.
- 35 Syrian rebels should not be armed Putin warns Cameron ahead of G8 Summit', *The Huffington Post*, 16 June 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/06/16/syrian-rebels-not-armed-vladimir-putin_n_3450772.html (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 36 The six steps were for parties to (1) work with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process; (2) commit to stop the fighting and achieve urgently an effective United Nations-supervised cessation of violence in order to protect civilians and stabilize the country; (3) ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting, including a daily humanitarian pause; (4) intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons; (5) ensure access and freedom of movement for journalists; and (6) respect freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully.
- 37 The Action Group meeting comprised the Secretaries-General of the UN and the League of Arab States, the Foreign Ministers of China, France, Russia, the UK, the USA, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait, and Qatar, and was chaired by Kofi Annan.
- 38 Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué, 30 June 2012, <http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Syria/FinalCommuniquéActionGroupforSyria.pdf> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 39 Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 24

- September 2013 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly> (last accessed 26 September 2013).
- 40 Today's Zaman website, 'Obama, Erdoğan reaffirm Assad must go', 16 May 2013, <http://www.todayszaman.com/news-315653-obama-erdogan-reaffirm-assad-must-go.html> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 41 Syria's Metastasising Conflicts, International Crisis Group, p.i <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/egypt-syria-lebanon/syria/143-syrias-metastasising-conflicts.aspx> (last accessed 14 October 2013).
- 42 See Oxfam International press release, 'Break-through at St Petersburg summit needed to give hope of a better future for millions of Syrians', 5 September 2013, <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2013-09-05/break-through-st-petersburg-summit-needed-give-hope-better-future> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 43 Oxfam calculations based on information drawn from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Military Balance 2012, and from www.globalsecurity.org. The arms and equipment of the Syrian government armed forces are almost entirely of Russian or Soviet origin. Syrian forces also fielded more than 5,000 anti-tank weapons of French origin and the Syrian Air Force counts 36 French Gazelle attack helicopters. Between 2007 and 2010, the government of Syria received deliveries from China worth \$300bn. Iranian transfers to the government have continued despite an arms embargo on the country. Despite the clear position of the US government that no arms should be supplied to the Syrian government, the US Department of Defense has contracts worth \$367.5m with Rosoboronexport, the Russian state arms export company, for delivery, parts and support of 21 Mi-17V5s, to Afghanistan. In June 2013, the US Department of Defense signed a further contract, worth up to \$500m in total. See B. McGarry (2013) 'Army buys Mi-17s from Russian exporter', DoD Buzz (Online Defense and Acquisition Journal), 4 April 2013, <http://www.dodbuzz.com/2013/04/04/army-buys-m-17s-from-controversial-russian-exporter/> and 'Army-technology.com 'US DoD orders additional Mi-17 helicopters from Rosoboronexport', 18 June 2013, <http://www.army-technology.com/news/newsus-dod-orders-additional-mi-17-helicopters-from-rosoboronexport> (links last accessed 11 September 2013).
- 44 E. Londoño and G. Miller, 'U.S. weapons reaching Syrian rebels', *The Washington Post*, 12 September 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-begins-weapons-delivery-to-syrian-rebels/2013/09/11/9fcf2ed8-1b0c-11e3-a628-7e6dde8f889d_story.html (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 45 See SIPRI Yearbook 2013, note 9 and, for example, Barnard, 'Syrian rebels say Saudi Arabia is stepping up weapons deliveries', *The New York Times*, 12 September 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/13/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-say-saudi-arabia-is-stepping-up-weapons-deliveries.html?gwh=732D47374F83865631B3A5541FAFE19D> (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 46 UN News Centre (2013) Address by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the General Assembly, 24 September 2013, http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/speeches/statments_full.asp?statID=1985#.UkHAMz-GdGM (last accessed 27 September 2013).
- 47 In addition to the reports of the UN Commission of Inquiry, numerous reports by international human rights groups have documented violations. See, for example, Human Rights Watch (2013) *Death from the Skies: Deliberate and Indiscriminate Air Strikes on Civilians*, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2013/04/11/death-skies>; and Amnesty International (2013) Syria: Government bombs rain on civilians, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/009/2013/en> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- Further to earlier UN findings, Amnesty International warned in March 2013 that abuses by opposition forces were rising ('Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups', <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/008/2013/en>). These included hostage taking, use of child soldiers, and the torture and summary killing of combatants and civilians.
- 48 5th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, p. 24, para 157.
- 49 Statement by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 'The Russian Position and a Call to Action', 3 September 2013, <http://www.etilaf.org/en/newsroom/press-release/item/595-the-russian-position-and-a-call-to-action.html> (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 50 See, for example, Oxfam (2007) *Africa's Missing Billions: International arms flows and the cost of conflict*, Oxfam Briefing Paper 107, Oxford: The International Action Network on Small Arms and Oxfam International, http://www.oxfam.org/en/policy/bp107_africas_missing_billions (last accessed 10 September 2013).
- 51 6th Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic p.23 para 198 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session24/Documents/A_HRC_24_46_en.DOC
- 52 USA Today, 'Russia blasts EU for lifting Syria arms embargo', 28 May 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/05/28/us-russia-discuss-syria-as-eu-nixes->

[arms-embargo/2364873/](#) (last accessed 11 September 2013).

- 53 M. Mazzetti, C.J. Chivers and E. Schmitt (2013) 'Taking outside role in Syria, Qatar funnels arms to rebels', *The New York Times*, 29 June, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/30/world/middleeast/sending-missiles-to-syrian-rebels-qatar-muscles-in.html?pagewanted=all> (last accessed 11 September 2013).
- 54 ICRC Resource Centre (2013) 'Syria: A human tragedy with alarming consequences', press release, 29 August, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2013/08-29-syria-civilians.htm> (last accessed 11 September 2013).

© Oxfam International October 2013

This paper was written by Daniel Gorevan with Martin Butcher, Noah Gottschalk, Martin Hartberg and Claire Seaward. It is part of a series of papers written to inform public debate on development and humanitarian policy issues.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

This publication is copyright but the text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such use be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, or for re-use in other publications, or for translation or adaptation, permission must be secured and a fee may be charged. E-mail policyandpractice@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Published by Oxfam GB for Oxfam International under ISBN 978-1-78077-498-5 in October 2013.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 17 organizations networked together in 94 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty:

Oxfam America (www.oxfamamerica.org)

Oxfam Australia (www.oxfam.org.au)

Oxfam-in-Belgium (www.oxfamsol.be)

Oxfam Canada (www.oxfam.ca)

Oxfam France (www.oxfamfrance.org)

Oxfam Germany (www.oxfam.de)

Oxfam GB (www.oxfam.org.uk)

Oxfam Hong Kong (www.oxfam.org.hk)

Oxfam India (www.oxfamindia.org)

Intermón Oxfam (www.intermonoxfam.org)

Oxfam Ireland (www.oxfamireland.org)

Oxfam Italy (www.oxfamitalia.org)

Oxfam Japan (www.oxfam.jp)

Oxfam Mexico (www.oxfamMexico.org)

Oxfam New Zealand (www.oxfam.org.nz)

Oxfam Novib (www.oxfamnovib.nl)

Oxfam Quebec (www.oxfam.qc.ca)

Please write to any of the agencies for further information, or visit www.oxfam.org. Email: advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

