

## **Unprecedented collaboration by 12 CEOs as humanitarian disaster in Syria worsens**

As the Syria crisis escalates, the heads of 12 New Zealand aid organisations have joined forces to call on the government to act on one of the biggest humanitarian disasters of this generation.

Together they are calling for the government to resume financial support for humanitarian aid, and to speak out against human rights violations currently taking place inside Syria.

“Aid agencies on the ground in Syria don’t have enough funding to do all the lifesaving work they want to do, to support the most vulnerable refugees. We acknowledge the generosity to date from our Government. Now we’re asking our leaders to get behind the public of New Zealand who have shown huge generosity, and recommit support for victims of the Syrian conflict, so that work can continue,” says Josie Pagani, director of the Council for International Development.”

“The government must also strengthen its condemnation of human rights violations occurring in Syria, in particular the deliberate targeting of civilians in Idlib. Schools and hospitals have been intentionally targeted, as have marketplaces and villages. Our elected leaders must continue to call on all parties to adhere to international law,” says Mark Mitchell, chair of the Council for International Development’s Humanitarian Network.

Journalists Mike McRoberts from Newshub and Miriama Kamo from TVNZ have added their voices to a video from the CEOs calling on the government to act.

“Having reported on the plight of Syrian refugees both inside and out of Syria I’ve seen first-hand the desperate need of the hundreds of thousands of families caught in the conflict’s shocking violence. says McRoberts.

“I think it’s fantastic that New Zealand NGOs and aid agencies have joined together in a unified effort and I support their calls on the government.”

Kamo agrees, saying “When it doesn’t happen in our own backyard, it’s easy to think it’s not our problem. But, at this point in human history, we know more than ever that unity of purpose is vital for solving the crises that we face. The leaders of NGOs and aid agencies are uniting in a common purpose and they have invited us all to say ‘we are watching’ and ‘you are not forgotten’. It’s powerful and it’s purposeful and it’s the right thing to join in.”

New Zealanders who want to add their own voices to the call can sign a petition by going to [NZiswatching.org](http://NZiswatching.org)

After more than eight years of conflict in Syria millions of families have been forced to flee the fighting. Alarmingly the past few months has seen increasing violence and human rights violations in Idlib, North West Syria. More than 400,000 people from their homes and left millions of children, women and men in need of humanitarian assistance. The extent of the suffering is unlike anything we have seen this century.

Mitchell says that suffering can be overcome: “New Zealand is watching – Kiwis care about the Syrian people, as generous donations over the years have proved. Our government has the chance to do the right thing, to help change the lives of millions of Syrian people, to remind them they are not forgotten,”

For more information or to organise interviews, contact [gabriel.thomas@worldvision.org.nz](mailto:gabriel.thomas@worldvision.org.nz)  
021360098.

Notes:

Watch the video: [nziswatching.org](http://nziswatching.org)

See the petition here: [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/PET\\_90974/petition-of-josie-pagani-for-the-council-for-international](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/petitions/document/PET_90974/petition-of-josie-pagani-for-the-council-for-international)

The CEOs involved in the video are:

Josie Pagani – Council for International Development

Grant Bayldon – World Vision

Ian McInnes - Tearfund

Rachel Le Mesurier – Oxfam

Vivien Maidaborn - UNICEF

Heidi Coetzee – Save The Children

Paul Brown – Childfund

Julianne Hickey – Caritas

Stuart Batty – Rotary NZ World Community Service

Pauline McKay – Christian World Service

Denison Grellmann - ADRA

Murray Sheard - CBM