

Are Syria's broken people being forgotten after 10 years of conflict?

Ten years on, the Syrian conflict continues to cause misery for the millions who have fled and those who are still trapped inside the country. Along with the Council for International Development, 12 New Zealand aid agencies are thankful for caring Kiwis who have supported their work among Syrian refugees and for New Zealand Government funding but are urging the government to remember those who continue to suffer.

In February, the UN reported a funding gap of 9.81 billion US dollars to meet the needs of suffering Syrians. This shows the scale of the continuing humanitarian need and the economic cost of 10 years of conflict in Syria has been put at 1.2 trillion USD. At \$US19.4 billion, humanitarian aid to Syria over that time has been just 1.6 per cent of that amount.

New Zealand aid agencies are grateful for the New Zealand Government funding they received that supported their work among refugees up until May 2017. However, with no diplomatic end in sight for the devastated country, New Zealand aid agencies are asking the New Zealand Government not to abandon the people of Syria and release more much-needed funding so that they can carry on supporting Syrian refugees.

CEO of Tearfund NZ, Ian McInnes says, "On the 10th year of Syria's war, we collectively urge the New Zealand Government and the International Community to continue investing in long-term solutions for Syrian children so that the past decade does not define their future. Aid remains a lifeline for all war-affected Syrians who are still struggling to access critical services including health, nutrition, education and protection."

National Director of World Vision NZ, Grant Bayldon says, "As the war has gone on, the suffering of the people has increasingly been forgotten. As funds have dried up, so has the help that many Syrian families need to make it through."

Executive Director of Oxfam NZ, Rachael Le Mesurier says, "With the ongoing impact of Covid-19, escalating climate change and a global economic recession, aid agencies face some tough decisions but this is not the time to lose focus on Syria. We urge the New Zealand Government to renew its efforts to influence world leaders to find a political solution that could bring this conflict to an end and make further financial aid available to New Zealand aid agencies to help Syrian families and communities traumatised by ten years of war."

CEO of UNICEF NZ, Michelle Sharp says, the decade-long war in Syria has had an unimaginable toll on children. "Today, more than six million children need assistance, half a million are chronically malnourished, and in the last year alone, the reported number of children in psychological distress has doubled. Every child has the right to safety and we must urgently reimagine a better world for Syrian children."

CEO of Save the Children NZ, Heidi Coetzee, says the children of Syrian are paying the ultimate price of this deadly and prolonged conflict. We call on political leaders to urgently bring about a peaceful resolution to this conflict that has gone on 10 years too long.

Key Stats

- Over 5.5 million Syrians live as refugees in the region. More than six million Syrians are displaced within the country.
- Approximately one in four people in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee. (About 1.5m refugees)
- More than half of Syria's infrastructure has been destroyed
- Though Syria accounts for less than one per cent of the world's population, its people make up nearly one-third of refugees worldwide.
- Approximately 50 per cent of all registered Syrian refugees are under the age of 18 and millions have grown up knowing nothing but conflict.

Covid-19 cases (15-03-2021)

- Syria: 16,401 cases 1094 deaths
- Lebanon: 415,000, cases 5,334 deaths

The 12 Council for International Development affiliated aid agencies are: ADRA, Anglican Missions, Caritas, CBM, CWS, Hagar, International Needs, Oxfam, Save the Children NZ, Tearfund, UNICEF and World Vision.

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