

For the attention of:

The Right Honourable, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, and the Right Honourable Ulf Kristersson, the Prime Minister of Sweden,

19th of March 2023

**Subject: Addressing the affected population needs in the acute complex emergency in Syria following the Türkiye-Syria earthquakes**

The devastating earthquakes that struck southern Türkiye and northern Syria on February 6th, 2023 highlighted access vulnerabilities in northwestern Syria where access is limited and complicated. Channeling lifesaving assistance, medical aid, equipment and search & rescue teams in a timely manner would have saved many lives. The situation in northwestern Syria has been dire for years, and before the earthquakes: 90% of the local population is dependent on aid, over half of whom are IDPs.

The earthquakes have increased the need for humanitarian assistance in the cross-border region: The number of partially or completely damaged buildings exceeded 10,000 including health facilities, schools, water stations, and other civilian infrastructures. Displacement movements exceeded 86,000 in northwest Syria, and there is still an urgent need for tents, mattresses, and winterization kits, Yet, Syrian organizations were the immediate responders addressing the needs of affected communities, using their available capacities and resources.

The Türkiye-Syria earthquakes, described as the biggest natural disaster in the past decades, has struck a region carrying one of the most complex humanitarian emergencies in the world, in a national context of continuing humanitarian decline, protection crisis, and the biggest refugee crisis in the world. The earthquake increased the suffering of Syrian refugees with more complicated catastrophes including non-accompanied children, missing people, and unidentified decedent.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge the organizers and participating States to the upcoming *Donors' Conference for the people of Türkiye and Syria*, to consider the following recommendations:

**1- Syrian NGOs values the EU position that the humanitarian support for the victims of the earthquake should not come at the price of legitimizing or normalizing with the Syrian government before achieving accountability for IHL violations , and a political solution as per the UNSCR 2254**

**2- Syrian NGOs should be engaged in the discussions on humanitarian and recovery aid to affected populations by the earthquakes; they should be part of the decision making process on aid programs and mechanisms, and should receive the required support to heal quickly, and be able to respond to the dire needs;**

**3- Equitable and sustainable humanitarian access to northern Syria should be guaranteed through all border crossing points, to respond to the mid and long-term consequences of the earthquakes in northwestern Syria, and to strengthen aid capacities in both the Northeast and the Northwest of the country;**

**4- The humanitarian aid system should adopt a localized approach allocating more resources to Syrian NGOs and communities in the Northwest to increase their capacity and leverage to respond to such emergencies;**

**4- We urge the EU and the donor countries to ensure that aid is distributed with enough transparency to the most affected areas by the earthquake, which usually fails to appear under the whole Syria approach.**

**5- The mechanism for distribution of aid should address the consequences of the earthquakes in terms of rehabilitating damages to key public facilities, economic difficulties, and supporting the resilience of affected communities. The mechanism should ensure accountability to affected populations, and the development of local capacities.**

**6-The mechanisms for aid distribution should work in no-state areas such as the non-government-controlled areas in northwest Syria. This can be done through engagement with Syrian humanitarian and civil society organizations including those who are doing quasi-governmental roles that have a technical focus without political affiliation (such as the White Helmets and the Health Directorates), and grassroots organizations and community groups.**

**7- Support the establishment of a mechanism to work across the border for the missing people, the disconnected families, the unaccompanied children, and work with Turkish authorities to support people on both sides of the borders to reveal the destiny of their beloved ones, and ensure family reunion. Furthermore all the rights of Syrian refugees in Turkey, including their legal status and freedom of movement should be guaranteed.**

### Coalitions and networks:

1. American Relief Coalition for Syria ( ARCS)
2. Shaml coalition
3. Syrian Network in Denmark
4. Syrian NGOs Alliance (SNA)
5. Voices for Displaced Syrians Forum (VDSF)

### Organizations:

1. Al Sham Humanitarian Foundation
2. All Together
3. And hope remains
4. ATAA Humanitarian Relief Association
5. Basmeh and Zeitooneh
6. Baytna
7. Big Heart Foundation
8. BINAA Organization for Development
9. Bousla for Development & Innovation
10. Dozana
11. Finjan
12. Freedom Jasmine
13. Ghiras Al-Nahda
14. Hand in Hand for Aid and Development
15. Horan Foundation - HF
16. Humanitarian Relief Association - IYD
17. Humanitrian care Charity
18. Hurras Network
19. Ihsan Relief and Development
20. Independent Doctors Association "IDA"
21. International humanitarian relief-IHR
22. Jana Watan
23. LACU
24. Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights ( LDHR)
25. Local Development & Small Projects Support (LDSPS)
26. MARS for community development
27. Maternity Association ( for women's)
28. Mattar
29. MedGlobal
30. Olive Branch
31. Orange Organisation
32. Physicians Across Continents - Turkey
33. Rahma Worldwide - Aid and Development

34. Sadad Humanitarian Organization
35. Safa Development Association
36. Shafak Organization
37. SKT Organization
38. Social Development International
39. Swasia charity foundation
40. Syria Relief - Turkey
41. Syria Relief & Development (SRD)
42. Syria Relief/ Action For humanity
43. Syrian Expatriate Medical Association - SEMA
44. Syrian Memory Institution
45. Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)
46. Syria emergency team
47. Takaful Al-Sham Charity
48. The White Helmets - Syria Civil Defence
49. Together to build the country association
50. Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations
51. Violet Organization for Relief and Development
52. Volunteer future team
53. White Hats Organization for Sustainable Development
54. Women and Child Protection Network in Kafr Takharim
55. Women Now for Development