

We 73 NGOs working on humanitarian response to Syria and neighboring countries have signed the statement below to raise our concerns about the performance of UN agencies based in Damascus and their partners, particularly the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

It has become clear to many organizations that the Syrian government in Damascus has a significant and substantial influence on the performance of UN agencies based in Damascus as well as their partners SARC and other humanitarian actors. We are fully aware of the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people across Syria as well as in neighboring countries, and we are fully aware of the programs that UN agencies and partners including SARC are implementing in the governments areas, and we must express our concern over the manipulation of humanitarian relief efforts by the political interests of the Syrian government that deprives other Syrians in besieged areas from services of those programs. The Syrian government has interfered with the delivery of humanitarian assistance in multiple instances, including the blocking of aid to besieged areas, the removal of medical aid from inter-agency convoys, the disregard for needs-assessments and information coming from humanitarian actors in Syria, and the marginalization of other humanitarian actors in the critical planning phases of crisis response. The Whole of Syria information-sharing mechanism was created in order to prevent gaps in the response by including all humanitarian actors providing cross-border relief. Yet, UN agencies based in Damascus and their main partner, SARC, have been making the final decisions, shaped by the political influence of the Syrian government. The 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) is a very clear example of this.

We are not hopeful that UN agencies based in Damascus or SARC will take concrete action to respond to the violations of human rights in Syria in a way that might protect the Syrian people, or stop the forced evacuation from several areas including Daraya and Homs. We have little hope that the UN-coordinated humanitarian response might operate independently of the political priorities of the Syrian government. We have lowered our expectations until our requests became as basic as the mere request for the evacuation of a child in a besieged area in need of life-saving medical treatment-- medical treatment he should never have been denied in the first place. We thought it might be reasonable to pressure the UN to assist in ending the use of starvation as a weapon of war by attaining sustained and sufficient humanitarian access to besieged areas. That too has failed. This deliberate manipulation by the Syrian government and the complacency of the UN have played hand-in-hand. The people of Syria have suffered ever more as a result.

The case of the conjoined twins, Moaz and Nawras, present a very clear example of non-cooperation by humanitarian actors in Damascus and the political influence of the Syrian government. The twins were born in besieged east Ghouta and after constant pressure from humanitarian actors, they were evacuated to Damascus, where they were trapped waiting for treatment. Syrian NGOs sent a complete proposal through UN OCHA to SARC offering to provide medical treatment, We received no response and were held on standby until we received news of their death. We believe that the inaction in this case summarizes the inefficacy and inertia of the humanitarian actors in Damascus, particularly SARC leadership.

Additionally, we reported the death of 65 people resulting from malnutrition in Madaya between November 2015 and May 2016, where medical evacuations that could have saved patients' lives were not permitted. Madaya is an example of over million Syrians remain under siege with extremely limited medical evacuations today.

We, the 73 NGOs working to provide humanitarian relief in Syria, announce in this position paper:

1- A full suspension of our participation in the Whole of Syria information-sharing mechanism as a first step in response to the political influence of the Syrian government and the inaction of UN agencies and other humanitarian actors based in Damascus, until we revise the WoS process to reach a new mechanism where there is no political influence in any aspect of it.

2- We officially request a transparent and visible investigation about the information mentioned in media articles criticizing UN performance in Damascus, the death of the twins, and the political influence of the Syrian government on humanitarian actors in Damascus. We call for the installation of a monitoring body to provide oversight for the humanitarian coordination in Damascus in a mechanism that includes the participation of humanitarian NGOs in order to ensure that all Syrians have sufficient and sustained access to aid and that international law is respected.

3- We request a revision to the medical evacuation processes in Syria, including the Four Towns agreement and others in besieged areas, to establish new protocols where the process of medical evacuations remains transparent to humanitarian actors and is not subject to the political negotiations or influence of parties on the ground.

The NGOs signed onto this paper provide humanitarian assistance to over 7 millions Syrians, over 6 millions in Syria and others in the 3 neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey in all humanitarian sectors, health , education, food security, shelter, wash, protection, livelihood and many others.

Below are the names of the NGOs under the alliances and networks that they work in, and 2 NGOs that are not members of those alliances (please note that there are 8 NGOs members in both SNA & SRN):

Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA)

- 1- **Big Heart Foundation**
- 2- **Binaa Organization for Development**
- 3- **Ghiras Al Nahda**
- 4- **Ghiras Foundation for Child Care**
- 5- **Hand In Hand For Aid and Development**
- 6- **Human Appeal**
- 7- **Human Care Syria**
- 8- **Ihsan for Relief and Development**
- 9- **Masrat - The Syrian Establishment For Human Care & Enhancement**

- 10- Orient
- 11- PAC -Physician Across Continents
- 12- Qatar Red Crescent
- 13- Syrian American Medical Society - SAMS
- 14- Social Development International - SDI
- 15- Syrian Expatriate Medical Association - SEMA
- 16- Sham Humanitarian Foundation
- 17- Syria Relief
- 18- Syria Relief and Development
- 19- Takaful Alsham Organization
- 20- Union of Relief and Medical Care Organizations - UOSSM

Syria Relief Network (SRN)

- 21- Abrar Halap Association for Relief and Development
- 22- Ahl Horan
- 23- Al Seeraj For Development and Healthcare
- 24- Amrha
- 25- Attaa for Relief and Development - ARD
- 26- Attaa Association
- 27- Balad Syria Organization
- 28- Basmet Amal Charity
- 29- Bihar Relief Organization -
- 30- Bonyan
- 31- Damascene House Foundation for Society Development
- 32- Deir Elzoz United Association - FURAT
- 33- Education Without Borders - MIDAD
- 34- Enjaz Development Foundation
- 35- Ghiath Matar Foundation
- 36- Ghiras Al Nahda (both SNA –SRN)
- 37- Ghiras Syria
- 38- Help 4 Syria
- 39- Insan for Psychosocial Support
- 40- Humanitarian Relief Association - IYD
- 41- International Supporting Woman Association - ISWA
- 42- Irtiqaa Foundation
- 43- Maram Foundation for Relief & Development
- 44- The Syrian Establishment for Human Care & Enhancement – MASRRAT
- 45- Mountain Foundation
- 46- Najda Now
- 47- Nasaem Khair
- 48- Orient for human relief (both SNA –SRN)
- 49- Qitaf Al Khair Relief Association
- 50- Saed Charity Association
- 51- Save A Soul
- 52- Sedra Association For Charity
- 53- Shama Association

- 54- Snabel Al Khayr
- 55- Space Of Hope
- 56- Syrian Orphans Organization
- 57- Syria Charity
- 58- Syria Relief (both SNA –SRN)
- 59- Syria Relief and Development – SRD (both SNA –SRN)
- 60- Syria Relief Organization
- 61- Syrian American Medical Society – SAMS (both SNA –SRN)
- 62- Syrian Education Commission - SEC
- 63- Syrian Engineers For Construction and Development Organization – SECD
- 64- Syrian Expatriate Medical Association – SEMA (both SNA – SRN)
- 65- Syrian Medical Mission
- 66- Takaful Al Sham Charity Organization (both SNA –SRN)
- 67- Tuba Dernegi
- 68- Unified Revolutionary Medical Bureau in East Ghouta
- 69- Union of Relief and Medical Care Organizations – UOSSM (both SNA –SRN)
- 70- Union Of Syrians Abroad
- 71- White Hands - Beyazeller
- 72- Emaar AL Sham Humanitarian Association
- 73- International Humanitarian Relief

SHAML CSOs COALITION

- 74- Basmeh &Zeitooneh
- 75- Emissa
- 76- Kesh Malek
- 77- Local Development & Small Project Support .
- 78- Olive Branch
- 79- Women Now for Development.

Independent NGOs :

- 80- Syrian Civil Defense (White Helmets)
- 81- Independent Doctors Association IDA