



ICVA, VOICE, and the Humanitarian Forum call for humanitarian access to populations in distress in Syria

27 February 2012

As the respective global and European NGO networks for humanitarian response, our NGO members, collectively, have a significant capacity to respond to the humanitarian needs in Syria. Today, too few are working inside the country.

The further escalating armed conflict in Syria is putting the civilian population at immediate risk and creating untenable living conditions. The UN estimates that between 100,000 and 200,000 people have been forced to leave their homes, while another 500,000 are trapped by the immediate fighting. Providing these populations with essential life-saving assistance has become near to impossible, with food and medical assistance as the most pressing needs.

We urge all parties to **comply with international humanitarian law** and to ensure full and **unhindered access of impartial humanitarian agencies** to the victims of the current crisis. We join others in calling on the Syrian authorities and all others involved in the conflict to implement a daily cessation of fighting in all areas affected, to allow the prompt delivery of impartial humanitarian assistance.

We also urge all relevant international actors to **recognise and honour the independence of humanitarian action**. The risk of humanitarian agencies being perceived as aligned with political or other agendas could have serious consequences for our ability to act. We call on all international actors, therefore, to **avoid any confusion between humanitarian action and other agendas**. Our motivation is strictly humanitarian and based on the imperative to provide relief to those who need it most.

We call on the relevant Syrian authorities to **answer the requests from humanitarian NGOs** that have the capacity to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs in the country. The authorities should **engage with them** in order to agree on appropriate humanitarian programmes and projects. In particular, we urge Syrian authorities to register those NGOs, which follow internationally-recognised principles and standards aimed at preserving the independent and impartial character of humanitarian response, as well as the quality and accountability in delivery.

VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing 83 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. Seeking to involve its members in advocacy, lobbying and information exchange, VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU on emergency aid, relief and disaster risk reduction and promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.

Tel: +32(0)25411360
E-mail: voice@ngovoice.org
www.ngovoice.org

The Humanitarian Forum is a global network of key humanitarian and development organizations from Muslim donor and recipient countries, the West and the multilateral system. We improve the effectiveness and efficiency of aid by addressing identified gaps between humanitarian communities through training, dialogue and cooperation.

Tel: +44(0)207 845 7602
E-mail: info@humanitarianforum.org
www.humanitarianforum.org

The International Council of Voluntary Agencies is a global network of non-governmental organisations whose mission is to make humanitarian action more principled and effective by working independently and collectively to influence policy and practice.

Tel: +41(0)229509600
E-mail: secretariat@icva.ch
www.icva.ch