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COVID-19 crisis 'unlike any we have dealt with', as new tragedy looms for Syria



WFP/Photolibrary | Many towns in northwestern Syria have been destroyed in the conflict.

2 April 2020 | [Humanitarian Aid \(/en/news/topic/humanitarian-aid\)](#)

The risk of the COVID-19 pandemic having a devastating impact on war-torn Syria is intensifying, where six million are displaced, living in conditions that make them particularly vulnerable to the deadly virus, the Senior Humanitarian Advisor to the UN Special Envoy (<https://dppa.un.org/en/mission/special-envoy-syria>) to Syria warned (<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2020-04->

02/note-correspondents-statement-attributable-ms-najat-rochdi-senior-humanitarian-adviser-the-united-nations-special-envoy-for-syria-covid-19-syria) on Thursday.

“The current situation is new and unlike any we have dealt with in Syria for the last nine years. All Syrians – and all those who provide (humanitarian) assistance – are at risk,” Najat Rochdi told the International Syria Support Group Humanitarian Task Force, headquartered in Geneva, which met via video-teleconference.



UN in Syria
@UNinSyria

[@UNinSyria](#) & partners adjusting programmes in response to [#COVID-19](#) in [#Syria](#) 📍 latest update here by [@OCHA_Syria](#)
[twitter.com/OCHA_Syria/sta...](https://twitter.com/OCHA_Syria/status/1248971111111111111)

OCHA Syria @OCHA_Syria
Syria #COVID-19 Update 4

- 16 people confirmed by MoH to have COVID-19
- UN, partners adjusting aid programs for safety of families and workers
- UN, partners, especially in health and sanitation, working rapidly to support response.

Full report here:reliefweb.int/report/syrian-...

2 11:29 AM - Apr 2, 2020

[See UN in Syria's other Tweets](#)

She urged members of the Group – which brings together the United Nations, the European Union, the Arab League and several Member States - to do all they can to ensure that help reaches Syrians across the country as soon as possible.

Throughout Syria, she said, efforts are being stepped up to prepare laboratories and isolation wards and to raise public awareness of COVID-19 (<https://www.un.org/coronavirus>) mitigation and prevention measures. Health facilities and selected intensive care units are being prepared and communities most at risk identified.

In its 1 April situation report (https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200401-sitrep-72-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=3dd8971b_2), the World Health Organization (WHO (<http://www.who.int/en/>)) said there were 10 confirmed cases – all imported – and two fatalities, so far, in Syria.

Ms. Rochdi's remarks echoed those made on Monday by Geir Pedersen, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria, who told the Security Council that Syria – with a badly devastated healthcare system - is at “high risk” of being unable to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ceasefire essential

Participating in today's video-teleconference, Mr. Pedersen reiterated his appeal for a complete and immediate ceasefire throughout Syria – one that would enable an all-out effort against the novel coronavirus (<https://www.un.org/coronavirus>) and to spare all Syrians more suffering.

Coronavirus Portal & News Updates

Readers can find information and guidance on the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) from the UN, World Health Organization and UN agencies here. (<https://www.un.org/coronavirus>)

For daily news updates from UN News, click here. (<https://news.un.org/en/events/un-news-coverage-coronavirus-outbreak>)

He expressed his readiness to work with all parties to the conflict - now in its tenth year – and acknowledged the efforts made so far by the Syrian Government, the Syrian opposition coalition and de facto authorities in areas outside government control to respond to the outbreak.

The Special Envoy also saluted front-line humanitarian workers and doctors and nurses across Syria who are responding to COVID-19 at great risk to their own lives.

Emphasizing that Syria's public health system is fragile and in need of considerable support to reinforce its capacity, Ms. Rochdi said that additional medical equipment, devices and supplies are urgently needed.

Millions of Syrian refugees hosted in neighbouring countries – such as Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan - also need assistance, she said, especially those living in overpopulated camps and informal settlements.

Speedy cooperation is critical

“It is absolutely critical to work cooperatively and move quickly”, she added, stressing the importance of keeping borders and internal crossing points open for the shipment of humanitarian workers and relief items.

For their part, donor countries – including those which have imposed sanctions – must ensure that exemptions for medical care be fully and immediately utilized and all obstacles put aside, as the crisis unfolds, she added.

Also participating in today's video-conference was the UN humanitarian leadership in Syria and the Organization's regional hubs in Turkey and Jordan, as discussion focused on urgent humanitarian access needs.

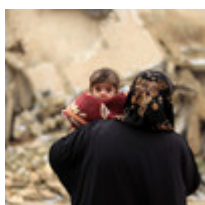
Officials from the WHO meanwhile spoke more specifically on emergency preparedness and response to the pandemic.

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'Immediate nationwide ceasefire' needed for all-out effort to counter COVID-19 in Syria (</en/story/2020/03/1060672>)

30 March 2020 | Peace and Security (</en/news/topic/peace-and-security>)

Syria is at “high risk” of being unable to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Special Envoy for the country said on Monday, reiterating calls for a “complete, immediate nationwide ceasefire” to enable an all-out-effort to counter the march of the new coronavirus.



(/en/story/2020/03/1060402)

Life-saving vaccinations must not ‘fall victim’ to COVID-19 pandemic – UNICEF chief (/en/story/2020/03/1060402)

26 March 2020 | **Health** (/en/news/topic/health)

Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic is overstressing health services, medical goods are in short supply, and transport disruptions have left supply chains facing “historic strain”, according to the head of the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF.