

URGENT ACTION

14 DEAD AS A RESULT OF THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT SIEGE
14 individuals have died since July in Eastern Ghouta, as the Syrian government blocks their medical evacuation and those of another 572 other severely injured and ill people. More deaths are expected if authorities do not approve their immediate evacuation to hospitals in Damascus.

According to medical personnel in Eastern Ghouta, an area near Damascus where government forces have been holding around 400,000 civilians under siege, 14 people have died while awaiting medical evacuation. The medical evacuation of 572 people suffering from severe injuries and chronic diseases has been pending approval from the Syrian government since July. According to the testimonies, a majority of patients can be saved with basic medical supplies that are available in Damascus, just 10 kilometres from Eastern Ghouta. No medical evacuation has been allowed so far.

Doctors and medical workers are unable to provide adequate medical care to the injured and ill due to lack of adequate surgical supplies, medical equipment and medicine, particularly for treatment of chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. As a result, doctors are using expired medicine from destroyed hospitals. There has additionally been a rise in cases of acute malnutrition, especially in children, exacerbated by the lack of access to food, humanitarian aid, and other life-saving necessities.

In February 2017, the Syrian government captured the areas of al-Qaboun and Barze, which border the Harasta neighbourhood of Eastern Ghouta, and closed all smuggling tunnels that had for years guaranteed a minimum flow of food, water, and medical supplies. On 3 October, the Syrian government further tightened the siege by closing the last remaining entry point to Douma, the al-Wafideen checkpoint, impeding access to medical and humanitarian aid and barring civilian movement. Only two aid convoys have been allowed in since, but both were significantly understocked to address the humanitarian needs of the population, and all medical supplies were removed by the government. Since October, the humanitarian situation in Eastern Ghouta has significantly deteriorated with prices of medicine and basic food supplies, like milk and bread, skyrocketing.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on the Syrian government to immediately lift the siege on Eastern Ghouta;
- Urging it to unconditionally allow medical evacuations to Damascus;
- Calling on it to provide unfettered access to UN humanitarian agencies and their implementing partners.

Contact these two officials by 30 January, 2018:

President
Bashar al-Assad
 Fax: +963 11 332 3410 (keep trying, if it does not go through, include your message to the president in an e-mail to the Ambassador, asking for it to be forwarded)
 Email: syria.pr@outlook.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

Permanent Representative to the UN Bashar Ja'afari
 Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
 820 Second Avenue, 15th Floor
 New York, NY 10017, USA
 Fax: +1 212 983 4439
 Email: syria.pr@outlook.com
Salutation: Your Excellency

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 275.17*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In August 2015, Amnesty International published a report documenting the unlawful siege of Eastern Ghouta and attacks on civilian objects (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/2079/2015/en/>). In November 2017, Amnesty International released a report on mass displacement inside Syria (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/7309/2017/en/>), exposing the government's strategy of prolonged sieges with the aim of forcibly displacing the local population. Simultaneously, the Syrian government forces escalated the air strikes and artillery shelling on Eastern Ghouta using Soviet-made banned cluster munitions and improvised rockets, killing and injuring civilians. According to the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor (<http://the-monitor.org/en-gb/reports/2016/syria/cluster-munition-ban-policy.aspx>), these munitions first appeared in Syria after Russia began missile strikes against anti-government groups in September 2015. Such weapons are banned by more than 100 countries due to the enormous danger presented to civilians by their indiscriminate nature. For years now, Amnesty International has been calling on all states to immediately halt the use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of cluster munitions and to join the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM).

Name: 572 individuals in Eastern Ghouta
Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 275/17 Index: MDE 24/7612/2017 Issue Date: 19 December 2017