Special Envoy for Syria Geir O Pedersen - Ceasefire Message

24-03-2020 | Edited NewsCOVID-19

Shotlist

- **SOUNDBITE (EN) - UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen:** “Today, I am appealing specifically for a complete, immediate nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria to enable an all-out-effort to suppress COVID-19 in Syria. Syrians are acutely vulnerable to COVID-19. Healthcare facilities have been destroyed or are degraded. There is a shortage of key medical equipment and health professionals. Internally displaced persons and refugees, as well as detainees and abductees, are living in conditions that are especially dangerous. I have real concerns for the impact on Syrian women, who are already at the forefront of existing health and community support systems. This common threat knows no boundaries. It does not discriminate. It does not care whether you live in areas controlled by the Syrian Government or other areas. It endangers all Syrians.”
- Medium wide shot: UN Geneva flag alley, flags fluttering gently.
- **SOUNDBITE (EN) - UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen:** “Measures are being implemented in areas controlled by the Government to address this crisis. And actions are also being taken by de facto authorities in areas outside Government control. It is essential that such efforts are scaled up now. There is not a day to lose.”
- Wide shot: UN Geneva flag alley, flags fluttering gently.
- **SOUNDBITE (EN) - UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen:** “I also appeal on humanitarian grounds for large-scale releases of detainees and abductees. There must also be immediate access for relevant humanitarian organizations to all detention facilities, and urgent steps to
ensure adequate medical care and protective measures in all places of detention.”

- Medium shot: UN Geneva flag alley, flagpoles, flags fluttering gently.

**SOUNDBITE (EN) - UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen:** “International donors will need to fully support humanitarian efforts and respond to UN appeals. They will also need to do whatever must be done so that Syrians in all parts of the country have access to the equipment and resources needed to combat the virus and treat patients. Nothing should impede this. Full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of the country will be key. And all modalities will be needed to deliver humanitarian assistance and scale up prevention and protection. To implement the nationwide ceasefire and help Syrians to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, I am ready to work with the Government of Syria and the opposition and all the relevant players on the ground, as well as key countries with weight and influence who can support a scaling-up of action and ensure that the ceasefire holds.”

- Medium wide shot: UN Geneva flag alley, flags fluttering gently either side of UN flag to rear.
UN Syria envoy appeals for nationwide ceasefire to halt COVID-19

An immediate ceasefire is needed in Syria to prevent the spread of COVID-19, top United Nations negotiator for Syria, Geir O Pedersen, said on Tuesday, as he reiterated his willingness to work with all warring parties to ensure that the truce holds.

In a recording made on his laptop computer to respect social distancing restrictions relating to the virus, Mr. Pedersen appealed “specifically for a complete, immediate nationwide ceasefire throughout Syria to enable an all-out-effort to suppress COVID-19 in Syria”.

The UN Envoy’s statement follows UN Secretary-General António Guterres’s appeal on Monday for a global ceasefire in a bid to focus on a common enemy: COVID-19.

On Syria specifically, Mr. Pedersen flagged that the country’s war-weary people were “acutely vulnerable” to the coronavirus epidemic, which has so far spread across the world, with more than 335,000 confirmed cases and over 14,500 fatalities.

Healthcare facilities have been destroyed, Mr. Pedersen said, while medical equipment and health professionals were “in short supply”. In addition, internally displaced persons and refugees were living in “especially dangerous” conditions, he cautioned.

“I have real concerns for the impact on Syrian women, who are already at the forefront of existing health and community support systems”, the UN envoy said.

Pointing out that this common threat “knows no boundaries”, does not discriminate or chose sides, Mr. Pedersen spelled out that it endangers all Syrians.

“To confront this danger, the long-suffering Syrian people desperately need a sustained period of calm throughout the country respected by all parties”, he stressed.

While welcoming precautionary measures that have been implemented in areas controlled by the Government and de facto authorities, Mr Pedersen said it was essential that such efforts “are scaled up now. There is not a day to lose.”

Returning to the obstacles standing in the way of efforts to secure a peaceful end to years of war that has likely killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions, the Special Envoy reiterated his appeal for the release of prisoners, political and otherwise.

“I also appeal on humanitarian grounds for large-scale releases of detainees and abductees,” he said. “There must also be immediate access for relevant humanitarian organizations to all detention facilities, and urgent steps to ensure adequate medical care and protective measures in all places of detention.”

Amid dire humanitarian needs on the ground in Syria, particularly in the north-west – the last opposition-held enclave - Mr Pedersen also urged international donors “to fully support humanitarian efforts and respond to UN appeals”.

He added: “They will also need to do whatever must be done so that Syrians in all parts of the country have access to the equipment and resources needed to combat the virus and treat patients. Nothing should impede this.

“Full, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of the country will be key. And all modalities will be needed to deliver humanitarian assistance and scale up prevention and protection.
To implement the nationwide ceasefire and help Syrians to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, the veteran negotiator pledged his readiness “to work with the Government of Syria and the opposition and all the relevant players on the ground, as well as key countries with weight and influence who can support a scaling-up of action and ensure that the ceasefire holds.”