



**United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Imran Riza, and Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Muhannad Hadi -
Statement on Essential Services in Syria**

Damascus and Amman, 17 June 2021

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Mr. Imran Riza, and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Mr. Muhannad Hadi, express deep concern over reduced water levels in the Euphrates River, which has wide-ranging humanitarian impacts for millions of people in Syria, including their access to water and electricity.

In recent months, as a result of a critically low water flow rate in the Euphrates River, important dams in the area have shrunk to historic lows, including Tishreen in north-eastern Aleppo Governorate, and Tabqa in Ar-Raqqa Governorate. This in turn has had serious ramifications impacting the well-being of civilians in the region, including limited access to clean drinking water and widespread power blackouts.

On a visit to Tishreen and Tabqa dams on 16 June, Mr. Riza met with water authorities who stressed the gravity of the current dam levels. Dam engineers who had worked on site for more than two decades told Mr. Riza that the current water deficit was the worst in memory. Local community members also told Mr. Riza that not only has the overall availability of water in the region been affected, so too has the quality of water.

Current estimates indicate over five million people, including in north-east Syria, are reliant on the Euphrates for their drinking water, and approximately three million people for electricity. Vital infrastructure, including hospitals, irrigation networks, and water stations, are also reportedly affected. Should the situation not improve, possible longer-term impacts include damage to agriculture; a worsening of already dire food insecurity; loss of livelihoods; and a severe undermining of overall public health.

Over the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that adequate and uninterrupted access to water is indispensable to safeguarding the life, health and dignity of all. At the same time, the local impacts of the global climate crisis have become ever more pronounced. Ongoing drought and other events, such as locust plagues, have affected not only Syria but the broader region, including in neighboring countries, and exacted a disproportionate cost on innumerable vulnerable people living in the area.

Mr. Riza and Mr. Hadi note that humanitarian partners, including UN agencies, are continuing essential work to stem the worst impacts of this current crisis, including daily delivery of millions of liters of emergency water to families in the affected area. They however emphasize that these measures are not and cannot be a substitute for the long-term, regular and reliable access to water, sanitation, electricity, and other basic services which the Euphrates provides. For the sake of millions of families, many already struggling to cope with 10 years of crisis, Mr. Riza and Mr. Hadi urge parties to work together to find a sustainable and equitable solution that serves the needs of all.

For further information:

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