

**Statement by the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria, Adam Abdelmoula, on the killing of a WHO team member in Deir-ez-Zor**

Damascus, 26 March 2024

I am deeply saddened by the tragic death of Eng. Emad Shehab, a water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) professional who served on the World Health Organization (WHO) team in Deir-ez-Zor City, Syria.

On Tuesday, 26 March, Eng. Shehab was killed in the early hours of the morning when his building in Deir-ez-Zor was among those hit by multiple air strikes across the Governorate. Several other civilians were reportedly also killed in the attacks.

Eng. Emad was a dedicated professional and an integral part of the WHO team since 2023 and has also previously served with multiple UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, overseeing various construction and rehabilitation projects, many of them related to water stations and sanitation facilities. I offer my sincere condolences to his wife and two young children, as well as to his extended family, friends and colleagues.

The Syria crisis has now entered its 14<sup>th</sup> year and Tuesday's attack is a solemn reminder of the continued danger and devastation it presents for civilians in Syria every day. Syria has seen a sharp spike in violence in several parts of the country during the past few months, killing and injuring people, causing displacement and destruction of civilian facilities. This is further exacerbating the unprecedented humanitarian situation in the country, where 16.7 million people require humanitarian assistance.

I implore all parties to the conflict to take constant care to spare the civilian population and civilian objects in the conduct of hostilities and adopt all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects in accordance with international law. This includes verifying that targets are legitimate military objectives and paying particular attention to the timing and locations of the attacks. The fact that in a number of recent incidents the strikes hit objectives that appear as prima facie civilian and often located in residential and densely populated areas raise serious concerns that the obligations to take precautions in attack may not have been respected.

I thank all humanitarian partners who continue to work tirelessly, often in very dangerous circumstances, as they provide assistance to the people in Syria and alleviate the suffering of those who have endured relentless hardship for many years.