

Millions in Syria face freezing temperatures without critical assistance

Damascus, Amman, 24 November 2022

The United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for Syria, El-Mostafa Benlamlih, and the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, Muhannad Hadi, have warned of catastrophic risks to vulnerable Syrians as perilous winter conditions set in across the country, bringing rain, snow and freezing temperatures.

With just a few weeks left in the year, the 2022 Syria Humanitarian Response Plan remains underfunded, with only 42 per cent of the requested funds received. Additional funding is urgently required to deliver life-saving winter assistance for 6 million people in Syria, including vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs), the elderly, people with pre-existing medical conditions or special needs, families with children with severe disabilities and female-headed households.

According to the Shelter and Non-Food Items Sector, 6 million people across the country are in need of winter assistance, of whom 2.5 million people are in the north-west. Currently, the majority of Syria's population cannot afford essential items due to high inflation and a collapsing economy. Millions of families across Syria live in perilous conditions, including those who are living in dire conditions in camps or sites of "last resort" with limited to no access to heating, health services or clean water supply. Country-wide electricity rationing, and chronic fuel shortages have left poverty-stricken families without any alternatives this winter.

"If no further funding is received, millions of people will be unprotected against severe winter conditions. We are most concerned about families who do not have the resources to buy warm clothes or heating supplies, including those living in IDP camps, deprived areas or areas of high elevation. This is the 12th year of the crisis and the 12th winter of hardship for people in Syria," said Mr Benlamlih.

"Additional funding would secure warm clothing and boots for children and adults, fleece blankets, heaters and fuel. These basic items are desperately needed by the millions of vulnerable people in Syria to protect the health and wellbeing of families during dangerous and unpredictable weather conditions," said Mr Hadi.

The funding shortfall has jeopardized critical, life-saving interventions in shelter/non-food items, education, health, nutrition, WASH and protection and long-term life-sustaining interventions, such as wheat cultivation for the 2022/2023 agricultural season.

For further information:

Olga Cherevko, Spokesperson, OCHA Syria, Damascus, cherevko@un.org
Yannick Martin, Humanitarian Affairs Officer, Amman, martiny@un.org
Madevi Sun Suon, Public Information Officer, Gaziantep, madevi.sun-suon@un.org