

United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim for Syria, El-Mostafa Benlamlih statement on the Aleppo International Airport strikes

Damascus, 8 March 2023

I am deeply concerned about the implications of the closure of Aleppo International Airport due to damages sustained in an airstrike. On 7 March, several airstrikes were reported early in the morning that impacted the Aleppo Airport and forcing it to shut down until further notice.

The closure could have severe humanitarian implications for people in Aleppo, one of the worst earthquake impacted governorates in Syria. Because of the strikes, according to the Syria Ministry of Transport, all flights carrying earthquake aid had to be diverted to either Damascus or Lattakia.

The closure has also resulted in suspension of all flights from Aleppo for the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) – the key enabler of access for humanitarian operations in Syria and in many other crisis countries. The suspension is expected to last until at least 10 March. UNHAS transports humanitarian partners and humanitarian cargo, including life-saving health supplies like tetanus vaccines, testing equipment for blood transfusion and diabetes medication across Syria.

The impact of this closure impedes humanitarian access and could have drastic humanitarian consequences for millions of people who have been affected by the earthquake. Even more so, it could have adverse effects on the wider vulnerable population in need of humanitarian assistance.

Attacks must never be directed against civilians or civilian objects. The humanitarian community has been responding to one of the worst crises that hit Syria since 6 February against the background of 12 years of conflict, economic decline and a desperate humanitarian situation. We call on all parties to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law, including by taking all feasible precautions to spare civilians and civilian objects in the conduct of hostilities. In addition, humanitarian air services must resume without delay so that emergency assistance can continue to reach those in need.

For further information:

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