

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Save the Children says proposed five-hour daily truce not good enough as new video emerges of aftermath of bombing in Eastern Ghouta

Partners of the aid agency in Syria say children remain stuck in makeshift shelters
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Berlin, 27.02.2018 Save the Children says the proposal by the Russian President to implement a five-hour daily ceasefire in besieged Eastern Ghouta is not good enough and the ceasefire agreed by the UN Security Council must be immediately implemented.

New video verified and released by Save the Children shows the dramatic aftermath of the shelling of a Syrian aid group's office hours before the UN Security Council voted on a 30-day ceasefire on Saturday. The video conveys the terrifying chaos in the basement of the office, where 46 families have been sheltering. People scramble to respond as children scream and the dust slowly clears.

Three people were injured in the attack, including two young girls.

Despite the Security Council adopting the resolution over the weekend, partners of Save the Children say the bombing continues till today with many people killed, including a family of 10, as thousands of families remain cowering in basements. People are unable to bury their loved ones due to the ongoing shelling.

The families in the video continue to shelter in the basement. The nearly five year-long siege also remains in place and has tightened in recent months, with supplies running dangerously low.

Local aid workers say 4,100 families are now living in a network of underground basements and shelters – more than half without water, sanitation or ventilation systems, making children vulnerable to the spread of disease. More than 350,000 civilians remain trapped in Eastern Ghouta.

Meanwhile, women are giving birth under horrendous circumstances. Photos have emerged of one girl, Amal* who was born yesterday in a dark and overcrowded underground shelter, as well as a little boy, Tamer*.

On Thursday, a young boy Ahmed* had been trapped in a makeshift shelter for four days amid intense bombing.

“We’ve not been able to go to school, they shelled the school, the teacher was killed,” he said.

“There is no food and we can’t go outside, the shops are closed, the planes are bombing.”

His older sister Mona* was recently injured in fighting.

“I got injured and I stayed one month in the hospital and could not leave. There is no food or water. I still don’t feel well, my bones feel weak.”

Recent satellite images of one neighbourhood in Eastern Ghouta show up to 71 percent of buildings destroyed or damaged.^[1]

Sonia Khush, Save the Children’s Syria Response Director, said: “The five-hour daily truce and the imposition of a so-called humanitarian corridor proposed by the Russian President is not good

enough. The UN Security Council had already unanimously agreed to stronger actions over the weekend, including the cessation of hostilities for at least 30 days and the immediate delivery of humanitarian aid as well as medical evacuations. Children and their families are living in hell as they desperately try to protect themselves from this horrifying and never-ending violence.

“As this conflict enters its eighth year, it’s clear that it is far from being resolved, and all parties involved continue to show utter contempt for children’s lives and wellbeing. The fighting must cease and aid agencies must be allowed to deliver lifesaving humanitarian assistance or more children will die.”

Notes to editors:

Save the Children works through partner organisations in Syria, which are helping more than 28,000 people in Eastern Ghouta – the agency is looking for funds to scale this up further. This includes:

- Providing families with **emergency distributions** of things like hygiene kits, food and things to help them keep warm.
- Providing **cash payments** to the poorest and most vulnerable families, setting up child malnutrition screening and supplementary/therapeutic feeding programmes.
- Plans to provide **counselling and advice for pregnant and lactating women**, supporting them to breastfeed and providing information on child and maternal nutrition
- Supporting **education** by repairing damaged classrooms, providing winter heating, providing stationery kits and other educational materials, and paying monthly stipends for teachers. With many schools forced to close due to the bombing, we are starting a self-learning programme working with teachers and parents to support children who are unable to attend school to keep learning at home or in shelters.
- Running **child protection activities** - providing psychosocial support sessions, psychological first aid and working with communities to prevent key protection problems such as children being separated from their families during attacks. Many of these projects have had to be suspended due to the current insecurity, but we are working with partners to resume as soon as possible

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About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. Around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach.

We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.