

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**WORLD HUMANITARIAN DAY 2024: HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS ON PARTIES IN SOMALIA TO RESPECT CIVILIANS AND AID WORKERS**

**Mogadishu, 19 August 2024** – On the occasion of the 2024 World Humanitarian Day, the humanitarian community in Somalia, led by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mr. George Conway, has called on all parties to protect civilians and humanitarian workers in areas of conflict.

“The World Humanitarian Day theme for this year, *#ActForHumanity*, urges the world to do a better job of protecting civilians and humanitarians, especially in conflict zones,” said Mr. Conway. “It implores us to reflect and honour aid workers, who around the world, are targeted or obstructed as they work to help people in need.”

Somalia is one of the world’s most serious humanitarian crises with millions of people exposed to unimaginable suffering due to recurring and intensifying climate shocks, protracted conflicts, disease outbreaks, and economic shocks. These conditions have led to widespread food shortages and water scarcity, displacement and proliferation of diseases. While the number of people in need of assistance has reduced from 8.3 million in 2023 to 6.9 million in 2024, the need for lifesaving humanitarian assistance and resilience building remains high. Those who are most vulnerable include the 3.8 million people who are internally displaced, many displaced several times.

“On this day, every year, we shine a spotlight on humanitarian workers and the millions of civilians around the world whose lives have been caught up in humanitarian crises,” said Mr. Conway. “I pay particular tribute to Somali aid workers who, despite immense challenges, have demonstrated their commitment to serve those in most need of assistance and protection.”

Humanitarian partners are committed to assist all those in need in Somalia, but bureaucratic constraints and operational impediments are major challenges. Aid worker security is a key concern because humanitarian staff are regularly exposed to violence directly or indirectly. This year, 124 incidents affecting humanitarian access have been recorded in Somalia including 12 aid workers injured in the process of delivering aid and 13 incidents of physical assault, harassment and intimidation. In addition, cases of interference have been reported during aid delivery. In 2023, globally, 280 aid workers were killed in 33 countries including four in Somalia, making 2023 the deadliest year on record for the global humanitarian community so far.

“Authorities and non-state armed groups have clear and long-established international legal obligations in conflict, including to protect civilians from harm, spare schools and hospitals and ensure the safe passage of humanitarian workers,” said Mr. Conway. “Every time these rules are broken, human suffering intensifies and civilians are pushed into greater despair. Every time these lines are crossed, humanitarian needs grow.”

**About World Humanitarian Day:**

World Humanitarian Day takes place every year on 19 August. It was designated by the UN General Assembly in 2008 to commemorate the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq, which killed 22 aid workers. The day serves to honor the relentless efforts of humanitarian workers and acknowledges the challenges faced in providing assistance to those in need.

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