

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 29, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to convey our grave concern over the prolonged suffering of the Syrian people, and our strong support for your efforts to maintain and expand cross-border humanitarian access to Syria during the upcoming United Nations Security Council (UNSC) vote on the renewal of UNSC Resolution (UNSCR) 2585.

Eleven years into Assad's war on the Syrian people, more than 14 million Syrians require humanitarian aid, a nearly ten percent increase from last year. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Assad regime's chronic economic mismanagement have only served to further exacerbate the existing food insecurity and lack of access to both water and medicine. Cross-border aid delivery is critical in providing lifesaving food and medical care, particularly to vulnerable communities in the northwest, as humanitarian needs continue to rise.

Efforts by Russia and the Assad regime to route all aid through regime-controlled Damascus constitute a further reach for power and influence in Syria and the region. The cross-line mechanism has proven woefully inadequate in meeting the acute humanitarian needs of the Syrian people and can be cut off by the Assad regime at any time. The UN Secretary-General explicitly stated in a recent report that "cross-line convoys, even if deployed regularly, cannot replicate the size and scope of the UN's cross-border operation – which remains a lifesaving modality for millions of people in need in north-west Syria." In May, cross-line delivery from the Assad regime provided food for only 43,500 people while UN cross-border aid through Bab al-Hawa delivers enough food for approximately 1.4 million people every month. The Bab al-Hawa crossing must remain open to ensure the continued delivery of humanitarian assistance to millions of Syrians across the country.

It is imperative the United States continues to exert diplomatic pressure in favor of continued humanitarian access to the 14 million Syrians dependent on life-saving assistance.

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We are deeply appreciative of Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield's March efforts in this arena, including her recent remarks to the UNSC advocating on behalf of a continued UN cross-border operation and her visit to the crossing at Bab al-Hawa. Partner countries must be engaged as part of any effort by the United States to protect the authorization for cross-border aid deliveries from a potential Russian veto. High-level diplomatic engagements should press home to our partners that this is a whole-of-government priority for the United States.

We oppose and condemn efforts by the Russian government to hinder the delivery of badly needed aid to the Syrian people and to normalize and continue the numerous atrocities being committed against the Syrian people by the Assad regime, Russia, and Iran. Simultaneously, we reiterate strong support for U.S. diplomatic efforts with member states to maintain and expand vital cross-border humanitarian access to Syria, without concessions, at the upcoming UNSC vote on the renewal of UNSCR 2585.

We look forward to continuing to work together to secure humanitarian access and address critical needs in Syria and around the world.

Sincerely,



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee



ROBERT MENENDEZ
Chairman
Senate Foreign Relations Committee



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Foreign Affairs Committee



JAMES E. RISCH
Ranking Member
Senate Foreign Relations Committee