



UNITED NATIONS

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Office for the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia

Aid agencies in Somalia responding to civilian displacement and emergency needs in Mogadishu

(Nairobi, 26 September 2008) Despite a dire security situation, aid agencies in Somalia are intensifying their response efforts for vulnerable populations in and around Mogadishu after shelling and fighting over the past five days displaced an estimated 15,000 people in the capital. More than 80 civilians were reportedly killed and hundreds more are suspected wounded in the conflict.

“We are managing to get aid to those who desperately need it. We have stepped up response for those who have been uprooted by the violence in the past few days and there is no break in ongoing assistance programmes,” stated the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Mark Bowden. “The renewed fighting in Mogadishu over the weekend worsens an already desperate and deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia. A huge proportion of the population is in dire need of assistance.”

Those displaced since the weekend are receiving food aid along the Afgooye corridor and the World Food Programme is currently transporting more food to the outskirts of Mogadishu. Hospitals, Mother and Child Health Clinics and Outpatient Departments in the capital have been supplied with drugs and supplies. Working with NGO partners on the ground, UNICEF will distribute non-food items (NFI) to 8,000 families in need and the ongoing blanket supplementary feeding programme for 10,000 children under five on a monthly basis in and around Mogadishu and the surrounding IDP camps will continue. The UN Refugee Agency is working with Norwegian Refugee Council to provide shelter materials for thousands of those who have been forced to flee.

According to the UNHCR Population Monitoring Tracking, the number of displaced is expected to rise as more reports are received. The majority of the 15,000 displaced moved to relatively safer districts in Mogadishu, while others moved to the Afgooye corridor, increasing the burden on an area already inundated with more than 300,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) who fled Mogadishu previously. Some of the displaced moved to neighbouring districts of Marka, Qoryooley and Jowhar.

All of this is occurring in the context of an acutely deteriorating humanitarian situation in Somalia. An assessment released by the Food Security Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSAU) in August paints a grim picture, calling it one of the worst humanitarian situations in the last 17 years. The number of people in urgent need of food and other humanitarian assistance is now a staggering 3.2 million. This is an increase of 77 percent since the beginning of 2008, representing approximately 43 percent of the total population.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and cease indiscriminate attacks on civilian neighbourhoods and allow humanitarian access wherever assistance is required. “I strongly condemn the actions which have led to an unacceptable number of civilian casualties and massive displacement,” said Mr. Bowden. “Tragically, ordinary Somali citizens, who have no part in the violence, continue to bear the brunt of conflict and insecurity in the country.”

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