

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**Office of the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia**

Springette, Off Lower Kabete Road, 1st left after Spring Valley Police Station, P.O. Box 28832, 00200, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel. (25420) 4183640, 4183642/3/4; Fax (25420) 4183641

**WORLD HUMANITIAN DAY, 19 August 2009**

**Message from the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia**

[NAIROBI, 19 August 2009] Somalia is one of the most dangerous places for aid workers in the world. Since January 2008, 42 aid workers have been killed and 33 abducted. Today is the first World Humanitarian Day and I would like to particularly dedicate it to devoted humanitarian workers who have lost their lives or have been abducted in Somalia. I also draw attention to the continued and growing threats to humanitarian action and call upon authorities to recognise the lifesaving assistance it brings to those in need.

The 42 aid workers killed since 2008 represent a cross section of the humanitarian community. On this day, we should also take a moment to pay special tribute to all the Somali staff of humanitarian organizations who continue to work tirelessly, endure the highest risks, and suffer the harshest consequences.

On 11 August we celebrated the release of four aid workers and their two pilots who were held captive for over 9 months. These individuals showed immense courage in the face of very difficult circumstances and we are happy that they have returned to their families. Thirteen other aid workers remain in captivity, some since early 2008. I take this opportunity to ask those holding the 13 aid workers to also allow them to return to their families.

In parts of Somalia, humanitarian space is shrinking at an alarming rate. In recent months, several humanitarian aid agencies' offices and warehouses in Somalia have been entered, robbed and some occupied by armed groups. The result is a further reluctance by humanitarian agencies to put staff at risk, not to mention the loss of humanitarian supplies and equipment. The true victims of these actions are the poor and vulnerable populations that the humanitarian community is prevented from assisting.

On this day it is important to remind ourselves of the underlying principles of humanitarianism. **Humanity** is the principle that suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. This is the principle that has brought humanitarian assistance to Somalia and keeps agencies motivated to deliver lifesaving assistance despite the challenges. **Impartiality** is the principle that humanitarian assistance must be given and prioritized solely on the basis of need. It discourages humanitarian agencies from discriminating on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, nationality, political opinion, race, or religion. **Neutrality** affirms that humanitarian assistance must be

provided without engaging in hostilities or taking sides in controversies of a political, religious, or ideological nature. Operational **Independence** means that humanitarian action must be autonomous from political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.

Despite the many obstacles facing humanitarian workers, lifesaving humanitarian assistance continues to be provided throughout the country. Examples include, the distribution of 27,500 non-food item kits to people who have fled Mogadishu since May; the provision of food to an average of 2.2 million people monthly this year; the supply of clean water to over 600,000; and the hundreds of thousands who have benefited from essential medical care and vaccination programs.

On this World Humanitarian Day, I call upon all those who control territory in Somalia to recognize and respect humanitarian agencies and to support their unhindered access to populations in need.

Signed

Graham Farmer  
UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, a.i.

**Editorial Note:** Last year, the UN General Assembly decided that World Humanitarian Day should be marked on 19 August every year to increase public awareness about humanitarian assistance activities worldwide and to honour all humanitarian personnel, in particular those who have lost their lives in the cause of duty. The choice of 19 August is because on that day in 2003 the Canal Hotel bombing in Baghdad (Iraq) that led to the death of 22 people, mainly UN staff.

*For more information contact: Muna Mohamed, Reports Officer, +254-733-64 37 37 or mohamed26@un.org.*

*For more documents and maps on the Somalia situation see: [www.ochaonline.un.org/somalia](http://www.ochaonline.un.org/somalia)*