

## **At start of Islamic fasting month, Ban appeals to all parties in Syria to stop violence**

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appealed to all parties in Syria to put down their weapons during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, adding that this gesture could help build momentum towards peace.

In a statement issued last night, Mr. Ban noted that Ramadan is one of four months in the Islamic calendar during which fighting is supposed to stop.

“For the sake of the Syrian people, therefore, I would like to call on all parties in Syria to respect this religious obligation for at least, at a minimum, one month,” Mr. Ban said. (...)

This will be the third Ramadan that Syrian people mark since fighting began in March 2011 between the Syrian Government and opposition groups seeking to oust President Bashar Al-Assad. Since then, as many as 100,000 people have been killed, almost 2 million have fled to neighbouring countries and a further 4 million have been internally displaced. (...)

Mr. Ban also called for the release of detainees by Government forces and opposition groups, saying there are reliable reports of hundreds of women and children who are detained in various official and non-official centres across the country. (...)

Mr. Ban acknowledged that lasting peace will only come through negotiation, and reiterated the UN would continue to work with Russia and the United States to build on their agreement to achieve a political solution to the crisis and organize a conference in Geneva that would bring Syrian parties to the negotiating table. (...)

UN agencies will also continue their humanitarian support to those affected by the conflict, he added.

Speaking to reporters in New York, the World Food Programme (WFP) Emergency Coordinator for Syria, Muhannad Hadi, stressed that it is extremely important that aid continues to flow into Syria until the crisis is over, as there are many families inside the country that now depend entirely on UN assistance for food. (...)

At the same time, Mr. Hadi drew attention to the increasingly difficult conditions that his agency is facing, including multiple checkpoints and getting caught in crossfire. (...)

Mr. Hadi also urged continued support, noting that WFP needs \$27 million every week to assist 4 million people inside Syria and approximately 3 million in neighbouring countries.

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