



OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR FOR THE SYRIA CRISIS

## **Statement by Mark Cutts, Deputy Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syria Crisis, on Violence Against Aid Workers**

**Gaziantep, 7 January 2019**

I am appalled and outraged by the news of the abduction and killing of an aid worker representing a non-governmental organisation last week in Idleb, in the northwest part of Syria. Aid workers in Syria risk their lives daily to assist millions of people made vulnerable by the conflict. Parties to the conflict have an obligation not only to protect their lives, but also to ensure that they can work unhindered. Such acts of violence put into jeopardy the continuation of a humanitarian operation that is providing a vital lifeline for millions of people in Syria.

Aid workers who provide humanitarian assistance and professionals who provide basic life-saving services have been subjected to violence throughout the close to eight years of the Syrian conflict. Hundreds of aid workers have been killed or injured during the conflict. Last year alone, dozens of aid workers were reportedly killed in Syria. Countless others have been subjected to violence, threats and intimidation. Aid workers are, moreover, experiencing numerous abductions, killings, and other acts of violence targeting them. In the northwest, there has been a disturbing trend in recent months of increased kidnappings, extortion and attacks affecting health workers and humanitarian staff. These acts of violence affect the individuals, their families, colleagues, and the communities that these humanitarian workers serve and may deprive these vulnerable people of services they rely on to survive.

Acts of violence against civilians are deplorable and I condemn in the strongest terms this latest kidnapping and killing of a humanitarian worker. Humanitarian operations are protected under international humanitarian law and I call on all parties to the conflict to take the necessary measures to prevent any further attacks on humanitarian workers and to ensure their protection at all times.