



6th July 2022

**The Syria Public Health Network urges member states of the UNSC to renew Resolution 2585: a statement on the UNSC's vote on cross-border aid to northwest Syria**

This week, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will vote to renew Resolution 2585. This resolution was originally adopted in July 2021 with a unanimous vote and keeps Bab al-Hawa border crossing open for the delivery of essential humanitarian aid. Bab al-Hawa is the last open border crossing into northwest Syria on which more than 4 million people (more than half of whom are internally displaced) rely, for essential health and humanitarian aid. Through this border, essential supplies, food assistance, COVID-19 and polio vaccinations and other essentials are delivered to an increasingly vulnerable population.

SPHN recognizes the harrowing public health catastrophe that would result should cross-border aid via Bab al-Hawa be discontinued and thereby urges the UNSC to renew Resolution 2585. It is imperative that the vote on the border crossing not be used as a bargaining tool. The issue should instead be approached solely as the humanitarian matter that it is. Failure to renew the resolution will exacerbate food insecurity and block the delivery of essential medical aid and equipment to the individuals living in northwest Syria, over half of whom are children. It may also reverse the effects of past cross-border operations, such that previously eliminated epidemics like polio may reemerge.

The closure of Yaroubieh border crossing in January 2020, through which aid had been provided to northeast Syria has shown how such border closures jeopardize humanitarian aid. There have been numerous examples of impeded flow of aid to areas in the northeast which are no longer covered by cross-border resolutions<sup>1</sup>. This has been particularly stark during the COVID-19 pandemic. Should Bab al-Hawa border crossing be closed, the same could happen in northwest Syria with even more devastating consequences.

We therefore reiterate that if Bab al-Hawa is closed, there are no alternative UN cross-border aid mechanisms available. This will lead to a humanitarian disaster even worse than has already been seen in Syria's violent and protracted conflict. Humanitarian organizations will not be able to deliver life-saving aid without the renewal of this border crossing. SPHN implores the member states of the UNSC to renew Resolution 2585 to keep Bab al-Hawa open and to push for the reopening of Bab Al Salam (to the northwest) and Yaroubieh border crossings (to the northeast.) Without this, millions of civilians will suffer from such interruptions to humanitarian aid.

For further information, please visit:

Physicians for Human Rights. Time is Running Out: Secure Humanitarian Access for Million in Northern Syria (<https://phr.org/renew-syria-border-crossings/>)

United Nations News. UN Syria Commission: 'unconscionable to consider closing last border crossing' (<https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/05/1119082>)

Mark Cutts at the New Humanitarian. Why the UNSC must vote for Syria aid. (<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/07/05/Why-the-UN-Security-Council-must-vote-for-Syria-aid>)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/28/syria-aid-restrictions-hinder-covid-19-response>