



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 16, 2013

UN Seeks \$6.5 Billion in Aid for Syria War Refugees

The United Nations announced on December 16 that it is asking for a total of \$12.9 billion in aid, with \$6.5 billion of that amount to go to refugees impacted by the ongoing civil war in Syria.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos announced the launch of the appeals in Geneva, saying, "As we look towards the fourth year of this appalling crisis, its brutal impact on millions of Syrians is testing the capacity of the international community to respond."



"This [\$12.9 billion] is the largest amount we have ever had to request at the start of the year," said Amos, noting that half of the funds being requested will be used in Syria and surrounding countries. "\$6.5 billion of this will support our efforts in Syria and neighboring countries," continued Amos. "This is the largest-ever appeal for a single crisis."

News of the campaign was released by the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA).

The UN's high Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, noted in a statement:

We're facing a terrifying situation here where, by the end of 2014, substantially more of the population of Syria could be displaced or in need of humanitarian help than not. For now it remains of life-saving importance that the international humanitarian response is supported. Massive international solidarity is crucial.

The remainder of the \$12.9 billion requested will be earmarked for relief efforts in the Philippines, the Central African Republic, Yemen, and elsewhere. While the crisis in the Philippines resulted from the massive devastation wrought by Typhoon Haiyan, the Central African Republic has suffered from ongoing conflict between the ruling military regime and various rebel groups. Yemen is a chaotic state where al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is based, and the United States has launched a series of drone attacks there to target al-Qaeda members.

More than 800,000 Syrian refugees have fled the embattled nation, with many living in tents in camps in Bekaa, eastern Lebanon. The area was recently buffeted by cold temperatures and snow brought by a massive winter storm named "Alexa."

"For the hundreds of thousands of refugees in Lebanon, as well as those in neighboring countries and the displaced in Syria, a storm like this creates immense additional hardship and suffering," said Amin Awad, Director of UNHCR's (the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) Middle East and North Africa Bureau.

"With Lebanon's help, we're doing everything we can to get rapid additional help to people who most need it. This is on top of the winter preparations already done over the past months."



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The conflict that has caused such large numbers of refugees to flee Syria began with protests in January 2011 and is considered to be part of the Arab spring uprisings that began the prior year. The revolutionary activities have driven rulers from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

As protests in Syria increased in early 2011, the government of President Bashar al-Assad cracked down. President Obama responded in May by signing an executive order, the stated purpose of which was to pressure the Assad government “to end its use of violence against its people and begin transitioning to a democratic system that protects the rights of the Syrian people.”

Conflict between government troops and anti-government rebels escalated throughout 2011 and by January 2012 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stated that fighting in Syria had become so widespread that [the conflict was now, in effect, a civil war.](#)

Among the opposition forces opposing the government are the Free Syrian Army, composed mostly of defectors from the Syrian army; the Islamic Front, whose charter rejects representative democracy and secularism and seeks to establish an Islamic state in which Sharia law would be imposed; the Ahfad al-Rasul Brigade, which is funded by the state of Qatar; the Al-Nusra Front, a branch of al-Qaeda operating in Syria; and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which is also closely connected to al-Qaeda.

A number of reports have indicated that the rebel opposition to Assad is not strictly a home-grown movement, but has received extensive support from outside Syria. As [The New American](#) reported on March 12,

American personnel and allied European governments are secretly training Syrian “rebel” forces at bases in Jordan to wage war against the Bashar al-Assad regime, according to a leading German newspaper and other media reports, which quoted participants and organizers involved in the controversial and almost certainly unlawful operation. The so-called “revolutionaries” — a brutal coalition composed largely of foreign jihadists, self-styled al-Qaeda terrorists, and anti-Assad forces heavily backed by the Obama administration, Western powers, and assorted Sunni Arab dictators — are also known to be receiving vast supplies of weapons, financing, and political support from abroad.

A report in Britain’s [Telegraph](#) on March 8 cited an expose in a Croatian newspaper that 3,000 tons of weapons dating back to the former Yugoslavia had been sent aboard 75 planeloads from Zagreb airport to the Syrian rebels, mostly through Jordan. The report noted that the weapons shipments were allegedly paid for by Saudi Arabia at the request of the United States, with assistance on supplying the weapons organized through Turkey and Jordan.

The report continued:

British military advisers however are known to be operating in countries bordering Syria alongside French and Americans, offering training to rebel leaders and former Syrian army officers. The Americans are also believed to be providing training on securing chemical weapons sites inside Syria.

As noted earlier, the rebel forces engaged in fighting the Assad regime included elements of al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization that our government holds responsible for the 9-11 attacks (among other attacks) and which provided the rationale for our invasion of, and continued warfare in, Afghanistan.

U.S. support for the opposition in Syria continued a pattern that has had disastrous effects in the



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Middle East. In several cases, moderate or secular Muslim strongmen — including Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, and Bashar Assad in Syria — were opposed in varying degrees by the U.S. government, which either invaded their country outright (Iraq), withdrew support for the leader (Egypt), or supported opposition groups (Syria). In all of these countries, significant Christian minorities had enjoyed freedom of religion and often lived peacefully among moderate Muslim neighbors. In each case, the change of government (or attempted change) had a devastating impact on Christians. In the case of Iraq, a rise of anti-Christian violence caused massive emigration of Christians, with a favorite destination for Iraqi Christians being Syria. Since the civil war, however, as militant Islamists occupy more and more of Syria, large number of Christians have fled Syria for Lebanon.

A report from the [Religion News Service](#) on September 4 quoted from a letter that Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general/CEO of World Evangelical Alliance, sent to the State Department, stating that Christians in the Middle East oppose military intervention in Syria.

“There is major consensus amongst the Christian leaders in this region that any military intervention would have a detrimental effect ... on Christians in Syria,” wrote Tunnicliffe.

Tunnicliffe was attending a meeting of Christian leaders in Jordan convened by Jordan’s King Abdullah II, who met with about 70 Middle Eastern Christians to discuss the challenges facing Arab Christians.

“I couldn’t find a Christian leader at the conference who supported military intervention,” Tunnicliffe said in an interview. “The question is, how do you protect Christians if there’s a regime change?”

If Iraq serves as an example, you cannot protect Christians when a Christian-friendly Muslim leader is replaced by radical elements with an animosity to Christianity. The result is violence, deaths, and mass emigration, leading to the humanitarian crisis that now exists in the refugee camps in Lebanon.

Photo of Syrian refugees in a camp in Lebanon: AP Images



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