



PRESS STATEMENT

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF ISLAMIC RELIEF MALAYSIA

23 FEBRUARY 2018

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**ISLAMIC RELIEF MALAYSIA CALLING FOR HELP**

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**Bandar Baru Bangi, 23 February 2018** – Malaysians from all walks of life and backgrounds are called upon to support the effort of Islamic Relief Malaysia (IRM) and contribute to “Save Syria Appeal”. The campaign is aimed to raise RM1 million for the beneficiaries in the affected areas in Syria, especially Eastern Ghouta.

Islamic Relief (IR) is currently working in Eastern Ghouta through local screened partners and have been supporting the blockaded communities with non-food items (NFI) such as blankets, sheets, buckets, containers for water, cooking items, and soap. IR has been actively providing fuel for heating to reduce the bitter cold winter for the affected people.

Food aid distributions are still on-going in Eastern Ghouta by IR and the team is currently supporting food parcels for 1,500 families as well as baked bread bags for 1,334 families respectively. Despite the upsurge of conflicts, IR continues to distribute essential food aids to those in need.

According to the United Nation (UN), 346 civilians have been reportedly killed and 878 people were injured. The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, has appealed for an immediate end to the conflicts and explained the condition in Eastern Ghouta as “hell on Earth”. Over the last few weeks, a number of military offensives have further aggravated the humanitarian situation across Syria.

Heavy bombardment in southern and south-eastern in rural Idleb has led to fatalities and displacements amongst civilians, including major infrastructural damage. Between 15 December 2017 and 3 February 2018, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) recorded a total number of 325,443 displacements in north-western Syria, mainly towards Dana, Salqin, Kafr Nobol, Ariha and Atareb sub-districts.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> January, a military offensive was launched in the Afrin district of Aleppo which caused up to 30,000 people to be displaced within Afrin. As a record, about 400,000 people have been living under a government-imposed siege in Eastern Ghouta since 2013.

Major roads have been reportedly destroyed and this has impeded aid delivery, rescue operations, and stunted the movement of ambulances. The available stocks of vital medicines

and disposables are rapidly dwindling. Access has become more limited but IR is still dedicated to help as much as possible.

Islamic Relief has been responding to the crisis inside Syria since 2011, working on the borders to provide people caught up in the violence with essential humanitarian aid. Among the aids include medical assistance, food pack, World Food Programme voucher, shelters and rental payment, water and sanitation, NFI such as clothes, blankets, and heaters, and psychosocial assistance.

### **Eastern Ghouta Overview**

Eastern Ghouta is an agricultural region east of Damascus that is home to nearly 400,000 people. The area has faced access restrictions since the beginning of the Syrian conflict and was classified by the United Nations (UN) as besieged in 2013.

The population is affected by protracted conflict and recent deterioration of access restraints. The continuous besiegement resulted in severe food shortages and sharp increase of prices across Eastern Ghouta. The situation has aggravated due to tax increase imposed on traders by Government of Syria (GoS) that led to an increase of prices up to 50% for basic food items. Further, the high price of fuel significantly constrains household food utilization; melted plastic is the only available cooking fuel, which costs 11.7 GBP/L (ten-time increase compared to the national average price of diesel). Last week Eastern Ghouta received its first aid delivery in almost three months. There are severe shortages of food. A bundle of bread now costs close to 22 times the national average and 12% of children under five years old are said to be acutely malnourished.

More recently, there has been a surge in airstrikes as the GoS try to gain control of the last rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta. Children make up half of population and they are bearing the brunt of these attacks. The death toll continues to rise as the airstrikes intensified and because medical facilities were also hit. These attacks have hit not only civilians but also their means of survival, targeting bakeries, warehouses and anything else that may hold food supplies. The attacks targeted major roads in the area, which will block any aid or rescue operation and hinder the movement of ambulances. In the last 4 days in besieged rural Damascus, there have been 3,000 strikes (air and land) including 420 airstrikes, 140 barrels bombs, 1,523 rockets, and 882 artillery attacks. Around 310 people have died and 1,550 injured, among dead 72 were children and 45 were women. 6 hospitals and health facilities were destroyed by airstrikes. The available stocks of essentials medicines and disposables are depleting rapidly. Currently there is only one vascular surgeon, one neurosurgeon and one gynaecologist in all of Ghouta. There is no medical specialist and cardiologist available in Ghouta.

### **About Islamic Relief**

IR now operates in more than 30 countries around the world providing a long-term focus and development to eradicate poverty and save lives during the humanitarian crisis.

Islamic Relief has been responding to the crisis inside Syria since 2011, working on the borders to provide people caught up in the violence with essential humanitarian aid. Since 2012, we have been working deep inside the country to reach vulnerable families. Since the conflict began Islamic Relief has delivered more than **RM760 million** worth of aid inside Syria and in neighbouring countries, assisting **millions of Syrians**. We are distributing food packs, clothes and medical supplies to communities under siege within Syria and displaced people along the Turkish border. We are also running or supporting camps and providing livelihood programmes, education and psychosocial support for refugees

in **Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq**. In Europe our teams are assisting Syrian refugees in Greece, Italy, Macedonia and Germany.

For more information about IRM humanity, please visit the official IRM website [www.islamic-relief.org.my](http://www.islamic-relief.org.my) or contact IRM on fixed line 03-8926 3434.

For those who wish to contribute, donation can be made through the following account numbers under the name of Islamic Relief Malaysia:

**MAYBANK ISLAMIC | 5621 4270 8704**

**CIMB ISLAMIC | 860 2073818**

**BANK ISLAM | 12 029 01 006564 3**

**AFFIN ISLAMIC | 10 671 000278 4**

**BANK RAKYAT | 11080 10000 35**

or :

**CHARITY SHOPPE | CASH / CREDIT CARD**

**MOBILE APPS | IR Malaysia**

Zairulshahfuddin Zainal Abidin

Chief Executive Officer, Islamic Relief Malaysia

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