



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

by

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Permanent Representative

The Situation in the Middle East (Syria – Humanitarian)

United Nations Security Council

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I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Lowcock for his very comprehensive briefing.

For almost a decade the people of Syria have had to endure the perils of war and the resulting effect of living through one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has seen. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines remains deeply concerned about the severity of the humanitarian situation.

Syria remains the largest refugee crisis in the world. Millions of Syrians have been forced to flee their homes and have become internally displaced, while millions more have left their homeland entirely. They are forced to reside in extremely difficult conditions where access to basic needs such as clean running water is a daily struggle. For this reason, we cannot stress enough the need for safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access through the most optimal channels. We echo our support for Resolution 2504 (2020), authorizing cross-border operations, having embraced the mechanism for the sake of human dignity. Further, we look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on the feasibility of alternative modalities to Al Yarubiyah crossing by the end of February.

On the point of refugees and internally displaced persons, we must underscore that conditions should be cultivated within Syria to facilitate the safe, voluntary, well-informed and dignified return of nationals. Without stability, security and reconstruction, refugees and internally displaced persons are barred from embarking on the difficult journey of rebuilding their lives.

Mr. President,

Hostilities continue to intensify even in areas where ceasefire arrangements have been established. We call on parties to exercise maximum restraint to de-escalate and we strongly condemn attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, especially those attacks which have caused disruptions in medical and education services. We also remind parties that operations aimed at eradicating the scourge of terrorism do not absolve them of their obligations under international law and that the fundamental principles of armed conflict must continue to be observed and respected.

Accountability for acts committed in violation of international law is inextricably linked to lasting peace. It is therefore important that perpetrators be held responsible to prevent impunity and bolster confidence in justice. As such, we welcome the Board of Inquiry, established by the Secretary-General, to investigate a series of incidents that have occurred in northwest Syria.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines appreciates that the humanitarian situation cannot be discussed independent of the political process. This conflict does not have a military solution and can only be resolved through a credible, balanced and inclusive political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We emphasize the need for an inclusive and consultative process. We must make every effort to further dialogue with the Syrian government on **all** decisions which concern their country in respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such decisions should not be subject to machinations of geopolitical interest and great power intrigue.

Despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, the Syrian people continue to display an extraordinary resilience. It is our genuine hope that this Council's commitment to supporting the Syrian people will manifest itself in ending the conflict and ensuring a sustaining peace for Syria. Indeed, Mr. President, we do have a burning responsibility to the Syrian people. We must help them and we must make it stop.

Thank you.