



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

STATEMENT

Brussels, 19 August 2014

Statement by EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva on World Humanitarian Day 2014

World Humanitarian Day is observed in memory of the victims of the attack on the United Nations' headquarters in Baghdad in 2003 which caused the deaths of 22 people, including the UN Special Representative in Iraq Sergio Vieira de Mello.

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, is in Iraq, where the European Commission is providing vital assistance to hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped by the fighting. She has made the following statement:

"World Humanitarian Day is an occasion to pay tribute to the people who risk their lives every day to help the victims of war and disasters around the world and an opportunity to highlight the humanitarian challenges we are facing.

These challenges are all too evident here in Iraq. Hundreds of thousands of people are in desperate need of help. But reaching them is being made all the more difficult by an escalating conflict. It's no longer business as usual for humanitarian workers – not here nor anywhere else.

The rising number and the evolving nature of conflicts is making our world ever more fragile. In the Middle East we are witnessing horrific levels of violence in which there is no end in sight for the suffering of innocent civilians. Across Africa, from Mali in the West to Somalia in the East, stretching across Northern Nigeria, the Central African Republic and South Sudan, there are millions of civilians squeezed inside a belt of conflict fuelled in part by ethnic and religious hatred. Bringing relief and assistance to vulnerable children, women and the elderly is becoming more and more difficult.

And these challenges are making it more dangerous for humanitarian workers to do their jobs. The number of attacks against them has quadrupled since 2003. Last year an average of twelve humanitarian workers were killed and more than ten were kidnapped every month. Every week three humanitarians were attacked and wounded.

With the combined impact of climate change, rapid population growth in places like the Sahel and a rising tide of extremism we will inevitably see more conflict, more hunger and more people forced to abandon their homes and livelihoods.

We live in a world of enormous fragility and because of this we need to focus more on the challenges we face: for the sake of the victims of war and disasters and also for the sake of the brave men and women who put their lives on the line to help them."

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For further information

[MEMO/14/500](#): World Humanitarian Day 2014: More and more violence towards humanitarians

Website of the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO):

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/index_en.htm

Website of the European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/georgieva/index_en.htm