



News note

UNICEF calls for an immediate end to the siege of Misrata

AMMAN, 11 April 2011 – UNICEF called today for an immediate end to the siege of Misrata, warning that tens of thousands of children were at risk in the conflict-ridden city.

UNICEF said that intensified fighting and indiscriminate shelling has led to an increased number of children being killed in Misrata, with many others lacking food and safe water, and traumatised from the atrocities they have witnessed.

The UN Children’s Fund said it had verified that children as young as 9 months have been killed in Misrata, with at least 20 child deaths and many more injuries, due to shrapnel from mortars and tanks, and bullet wounds. Almost all child deaths have occurred in the past 20 days, with a majority of child victims below 10 years of age.

“More and more children in this city are being killed, injured and denied their essential needs due to the fighting,” said Shahida Azfar, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Extraordinary efforts must be taken to protect them. The siege must stop.”

As fighting in and around Misrata goes into its seventh week, tens of thousands of children remain caught amid hostilities. UNICEF reiterated calls made by the UN Secretary General to all parties for the immediate establishment of a cease-fire. “Until the fighting stops we face the intolerable inevitability of children continuing to die and suffer in this warzone,” said Azfar.

Late last week, UNICEF and other UN agencies delivered critical relief supplies to the hospital in Misrata. These included emergency health kits and surgical material that will cover the urgent needs of 30,000 people for a month, obstetric surgical kits, midwifery kits and hygiene kits. In addition UNICEF provided play kits for children, so as to enable them to stay in the relative safety of indoors. There have been consistent reports of sniper fire hitting children in Misrata. This means children are confined indoors. The kits therefore aim to provide some respite from the conflict.

UNICEF is also responding to needs in Eastern Libya through the delivery of health kits and hygiene kits for the benefit of tens of thousands of affected and displaced people, through partnerships with NGOs present in Benghazi. “The supplies are a temporary lifeline to those trapped in the fighting,” said UNICEF’s Azfar, “however if children are to be protected, then regular, safe access for humanitarian agencies – borne through a ceasefire – is urgently required.”

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world’s largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded

entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: www.unicef.org

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