

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **For immediate release**

### **Astana Peace talks – is this the final breaking point in restoring hope for the Syrian People?**

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London, United Kingdom – The Humanitarian Forum (THF) welcomes all peace processes that endeavour to bring an end to, arguably, the most devastating crisis since the Second World War. We hope that these talks develop further previous peace talks initiated by the United Nations.

THF, along with its partners, organised one of the first humanitarian conferences for Syria on 17 December 2011 in Cairo, with cooperation from UNOCHA Middle East and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Humanitarian Affairs Department and, a follow up conference on 4 March 2012 at the League of Arab States in cooperation with OIC and League of Arab States' Health and Emergency Department. Here the partners called for a coordinated humanitarian response from all stakeholders and emphasised the importance of involving the Syrian community at all levels.

We expect efforts to fully implement a ceasefire across Syria and appeal for an immediate, unconditional and safe access for humanitarian agencies to reach the children and families who are still cut off from humanitarian aid across the country.

According to the UNHCR, there are 15 besieged areas in Syria where up to 700,000 people, including an estimated 300,000 children, still remain trapped. Nearly 5 million people, including more than 2 million children, live in areas that are extremely difficult to reach with humanitarian assistance due to fighting, insecurity and restricted access.

President of the Humanitarian Forum, Dr Hany El-Banna OBE stressed,

“All means should be exhorted to bring an end to this devastating conflict. The peace talks in Astana need to be constructive and restore hope for the Syrian people along with a strategic plan for the future of their country.

The Syrian people need to be involved in re-shaping their future and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes is paramount to a meaningful peace process. The last few years have been very saddening and I hope, starting with the Astana Talks, 2017 will become the year of peace”.

**ENDS**

#### **Note to editors**

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**The Humanitarian Forum (THF)** is a UK based network of global partners from the Middle East to Europe and North America. It aims to put beneficiaries first by building trust between communities, organisations and individuals to maximise the effectiveness of humanitarian action. Through training, good governance, cooperation and maintaining humanitarian standards, THF hopes to create stronger, more efficient networks that can make the most of resources and foster learning and innovation within the humanitarian sector.