

Kate Seelye: Thank you, Wendy, and thank you all so much for joining us for today's conference. We're going to have a very interesting couple of hours. Today's panel is going to be looking beyond the statistics and the numbers behind the humanitarian crisis in Syria to examine what this struggle means for the average Syrian and for the future of the development of Syria, a country that for those of you who had the good fortune to know it before the war, was truly unforgettable due to its incredible beauty, culture and long history. Most of us in this room today are aware of the fact that this is the worst humanitarian crisis of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, comparable in scale to Rwanda and the Balkan Wars of the nineties and yet, that fact has not seemed to have translated into widespread international compassion for the plight of the average Syrian. There are many complex reasons for this, which I won't go into, but among them, I believe, is the fact that we, those of us who care deeply about Syria, have not done a better job humanizing this crisis. We haven't told the story of ordinary Syrians in a way that can resonate with Americans who are so overwhelmed by what seems to be such an incomprehensible conflict and today here we want to redress that imbalance by talking about the human scale of this conflict, by talking about how civilians and the rebel-held north are coping about how this crisis is impacting refugee families living in Jordan, in camps and in villages in Lebanon and also about what this war means about the future of Syria's human development and we want to do so to set the stage for a broader policy discussion about what more the international community can do to better address the plight of Syria's civilians. Gathered on this panel today are four individuals who've closely followed the situation on the ground and are working very closely to help Syrians in need and to think about Syria, what Syria will need to get back on its feet. I will introduce them briefly. Longer bios are in your program books in the order of who will be speaking. To my right, Mr. Abdallah al-Dardari is the Chief Economist at UN-ESCWA in Beirut, where among other things, he's been leading a team of economists and experts working inside and outside of Syria to draw up a post-war reconstruction plan for Syria and I hope we'll be implementing that sooner rather than later. Mr. Dardari also served as the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs in Syria from 2005 to 2011, when he left at the start of the war. Amin Awad serves as the Director of the Middle East and North Africa Bureau at UNHCR Headquarters, where he oversees the Syria conflict, along with many others. He's a very busy man. His distinguished service for the UNHCR has spanned more than 25 years and has included posts as Humanitarian Coordinator during the Macedonian Crisis and as a Coordinator of Iraq Operations. Dr. Uma Kandalayeva is a veteran International Relief and Development Program Manager and Chief of Party and Country Director with over 15 years of experience. She currently leads the IRD, Jordan and Lebanon Country Offices where she designed their programs in support of Syrian refugees. And finally, Jomana Qaddour is the cofounder and legal counsel for Syria Relief and Development, Inc., an organization that provides direct emergency aid and humanitarian relief for Syrians, mainly in the north, who've been affected by this war

and she's been speaking extensively on Syria's humanitarian and political situation. So I want to thank all of our panelists very much for joining us. It's an enormous honor and I'd like to invite Mr. Dardari to take the podium.

[applause]

Abdallah Al-Dardari: Thank you very much. Good morning. It's a great honor and pleasure to be here today. What I'm going to be talking about is the fruit of the work of almost 300 Syrian experts working with UN-ESCWA in Beirut to chart a vision and a way forward for Syria post conflict. Today the situation is so dire that sometimes we believe we are running out of statistics to describe what's happening in Syria. Let me just give you the latest figures that we have. Every week, 10,000 Syrians lose their jobs. Every day the Syrian economy loses \$109 million. Every month 6,000 people die. Every day 300 people lose their homes and become displaced. Every day 2,005 Syrians cannot, uh, lose the ability to provide for their food necessities and every day 9,000 Syrians fall below the absolute poverty line. The situation, this is a country where almost 40% of its populations cannot find their daily bread, while 12,000 years ago, it started the agriculture and farming of wheat. The situation, therefore, even with these numbers that I just told you, things are worse than the numbers can speak and they are worse for a number of reasons. First, because before this conflict, the country had achieved and it was the only Arab country that achieved beyond the expectations in the millennium development goals. By 2010, Syria was set on the road to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals and overcome these goals by 2015. Today, Syria is 34 years behind in the human development index. So 34 years of human development of the country is lost. The current economic and social situation in Syria is so threatening that we believe that the continuation of this conflict for two more years mean economic, that economics alone can break up Syria. The fact that Syrians across the country are living in a war economy, a war economy that is so decentralized, the idea of a single state is being destroyed every day and, therefore, something rapid has to be done to keep Syria from breaking apart and I am not even here talking about the military or the political aspects and the social fabric disintegrating, as we speak in Syria. I'm just talking economics alone can break up this country in two years' time, if the conflict continues. Already the country has lost 45% of its GDP. That's almost equivalent to Germany's loss at the end of Second World War. These are numbers that we have not seen in any conflict before and 40% of Syria's productive assets have also been destroyed. More dangerously as you may know, a generation of almost four million students has not received any type of education for the past three years, in a country that was considered a success story in education, especially for girls, in the Arab region. Now this grim picture also comes with a glimpse of hope. A glimpse of hope that Syrians so far still insist that they belong to one country. That the Syrian economy is still running. It was... It did not shut down completely. It's still... there's

still a glimpse of hope that some state institutions are still functioning. There is a glimpse of hope that areas outside the regime control are trying to patch up some sort of local administration, development activities and so on. There is still a glimpse of hope that I can tell you today, uh, if the conflict stops now, despite all the destruction, the country has the ability to recapture its previous growth trajectory in a relatively short period of time. But to do so, the country needs from what we concluded and what we can assume, the country needs a level of confidence between its population, a level of security and safety and a level of governance that is necessary to start a new rebuilding exercise. Our estimates that Syria needs two hundred billion dollars to achieve by 2025 what was supposed to be achieved by 2015. So that is the best case scenario. If the country can mobilize two hundred billion dollars and can spend these two hundred billion dollars in an efficient and effective and transparent manner, and can create the institutions that can manage these funds equally, inclusively and transparently, and if the regional and international powers concerned with the situation in Syria provide support to this plan, the country will be able by 2025 to achieve the Millennium Development Goals it was supposed to achieve in 2015. So in best case scenario, the country has lost 10 years of human development. That's the best case scenario. What are the challenges are very clear. What is the government's framework necessary for the government, whatever government of that day, to be able to mobilize, attract \$100 billion of public investments? Could that government establish a taxing system, a taxation system, to mobilize resources? Could it have enough confidence with the international community to attract official development assistance? Could it have transparent public procurement laws to ensure competitiveness and competition in all these projects? The country also needs \$100 billion dollars of private investments. Is the business environment in Syria going to be able to attract \$100 billion dollars of private investments? Is there enough separation of powers? Is there an independent judiciary? Is there a, a, an accountable government institutions and civil service? Could investors stand equal in the eyes of the law, just as citizens should stand equal in the eyes of the law? These are, they may sound as, uh, taken for granted by probably most of you, but you and I know that these are almost impossible to achieve in a very short period ahead of us. However, we also realize that without this governance framework - and that's what the work of the 300 people concludes. Without the right governance framework, at the local level and at the central level, there cannot be a reconstruction program for Syria and the reconstruction program for Syria is not a question, is not a physical question. It's not how many homes you can build or how many streets you can repair. It is a question of a vision; a question of a new social contract between all Syrians to agree on what type of government and government's governance relationships they want to have. That social contract is the biggest obstacle, the biggest challenge, but also the biggest hope Syrians have. To achieve that, the country today needs to have a common agenda and a common middle ground. What I just presented to you in numbers and the level of

destruction and the hope for reconstruction is, should be a motivation enough for Syrians and for the parties engaged in Syria, positively or negatively depending where you stand in the Syrian conflict, should be enough incentive to start thinking in a realistic way, in a pragmatic way, in a way that can ensure the end of hostilities and the immediate and rapid move towards peace-building and reconstruction. And this, in the opinion of the people who've been working on this project, should start now and should not wait until there is a day after. There is not going to be a clear day after in Syria, where you have a clean cut situation and you start building a new society. We will be muddling through. There... the type of transition that Syria will see will not be so decisive for one side in this conflict and we can see that in the Geneva talks. So it is our responsibility and I mean by ours, is the United Nations and the nations of the United Nations, to start thinking now about what we can do for Syrians, not wait until there is a peace agreement. You may realize, and my colleagues from the UNHCR have much better data than I do on this, that the pull factor in the Syria refugee crisis was very important. What do I mean by that? We have a flood of Syrians into Lebanon and Jordan and which is affecting the social fabric and the economic structures of those two countries. However, had we practiced some developmental activities inside Syria, even during the conflict, many of the refugees wouldn't have moved to different, to neighboring countries and even today, there are many things that we can do to improve livelihoods inside Syria that will reduce the flow of refugees and most importantly, prepare the ground for their safe and dignified return. And I can assure you that Syrian refugees and internally displaced will actually vote with their movement, whether the peace agreement that could be reached later is viable or not. The return of the refugees and the IDPs to their homes and I insist their return to their original homes, not to somewhere else, they will then have the choice to somewhere else, but they will have to have the right to go back to where they left. That voting will be crucial to determine whether a peaceful process is successful or not and, therefore, we need to think about from now what could be done to ensure the safe and dignified return of Syrian refugees? Do we have basic things like across border, uh, uh, uh, facilities? Do we have assurances about the safety of the roads going back? Are there health services on these roads for these people returning home? You are talking about millions of people. Do we have the infrastructure, even if refugees and IDPs want to go back home and erect a tent next to their destroyed homes? Do we have clean water and sanitation and education and health services in these destroyed towns and villages? We need to think about these issues now. It is not too early. It is already too late. People are already meeting in Geneva now. Regardless of what individually we may think about the Geneva process, but we do have a process and that process is already demanding from us to provide visions and solutions for the future. My team and myself in the UN-ESCWA are working on a 10-year vision for Syria. A 10-year vision that is based on a good governance and democratic transition. A 10-year vision that not only helps to invest \$200 billion, but most importantly, a 10-year vision

that is based on the empowered capacities of Syrians, the brilliant people of Syria and their entrepreneurial spirit and their ability to produce something out of nothing and to testify to that, go to north Jordan, go to Lebanon and see that the first thing a Syrian refugee does is not ask for food aid; it's to ask where can I find a job? How can I set up an enterprise? How can I create a new business? This is what we are counting on for Syria in the future. I think what we have developed so far as a group to anchor Syrian future development in a program that would, as I said, achieve the Syrian Development Goals, the MDGs by 2025, with the hope that this conflict, at least the violent phase of the conflict, would end in the next few months, maximum by 2015. That may be at the moment an imaginary goal. Some of you would say, "We don't see it ending soon." A proposal like this, a clear vision that is supported by the international community, a clear program that starts today for to help Syrians coping with their situation, to help them prepare for earlier recovery is, by the way, a very important tool to encourage all parties to talk about peace more seriously. When they see there is hope, there's an alternative. There is a way forward that Syrians can agree on. They will start thinking about, "Should we continue this futile fight?" And from what I see on the ground and call me, call me a hopeless optimist, there are beginning of signs that people are looking into that alternative already, because the fighting will not produce and fail to produce the outcome that either side thought it could produce. It's time to look at the alternative. The opportunity cost here is very high. The numbers I just presented to you at the beginning is only part of the opportunity cost. The opportunity cost here that Syria can find a future and we all should invest in that future and support it in peace talks; support it in development and support it in investing in Syria later. The UN system has started to move away from a complete focus on the humanitarian issues towards some development and aspects. This is a very positive move. It needs to be strengthened. It needs to be deepened and it needs to be programmed within a vision that the UN and the people of Syria can believe in. I don't want to take much more time than what I did. I hope I'll be able to answer some of your questions. Thank you very much for this honor for being here with you today and good day.

[applause]

Kate Seelye: Thank you very much. I'd like to invite Mr. Awad to the podium.

Amin Awad: Good morning colleagues and friends and thanks to the Institute and Ambassador Wendy Chamberlin for the invitation. I'm very happy to be here. From the outset, I will just say that I will be speaking about the... As far as mapping out the humanitarian crisis as for the serious situation I'll be speaking about, the magnitude of the flight of the refugees, uh, the surrounding countries but also the displacement that takes place as we speak within Syria, the challenges that we face as we try to access this population inside Syria or even its surrounding countries, be it within

camps or in host communities, but also would like to look at the, the profile of this population, the challenges that we face and also the impact on the host communities and surrounding countries and the development aspect—security and economic opportunities—that refugees may or may not find in these areas of refuge, the nexus of humanitarian and development and the challenges that we are facing given the numbers of refugees, among them women and children and the major challenges that we are facing collectively. We have about 2.4 million people now in the, in the surrounding countries that fled during the last two years plus or three years. We're entering the fourth year of the conflict now. Inside Syria we have about six million people that already left their home in addition to three million that are impacted directly or indirectly by the conflict. Either they lost their jobs or separated from families that are in besieged areas or hard really to reach area, areas or they lost some kind of support directly or indirectly. That brings the total to about almost 13 million people that in need. The appeal that was put out by the UN and another 155 partners, it stands at about 4.1 billion. Sorry, \$4.3 billion dollars. That is the highest a bill ever in the history of humanity, the history of the UN and, of course, begs the question until when this, this will grow and how far can the international community afford this. War affordability is becoming a big issue. And to what extent the surrounding countries that kept their borders open will continue to receive refugees and at what cost. Are their instability, their economic development, the tension between the local communities and refugees and so on and so forth. Say if we were, we meeting each other there, the, um, routes of flights acts as a territory, of surrounding countries from a protection point of view. Some of the border area remain in control. Some of the countries, like Lebanon, for example, they kept their borders open. They were the solidarity between northern Iraq and the Syrian communities and the Kurdish communities in Syria and in the northeastern Syria and in some instances, some of these borders are controlled and we continue to [inaudible] the government of the surrounding countries, namely, namely Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt to continue to keep, uh, their borders open and receive refugees and live up to their international obligations and by and large, they have been doing that, which prompted us to also embark on uh, uh, uh, the marches and lobbying with international community to make sure that there is border sharing and support and a commission for the role the surrounding countries have played in receiving hundreds of thousands of refugees at this expense, of their own security and economic development. The number of refugees that I have just mentioned, the 2.4 million, these are the recent refugees. Another 600,000, bringing the number to 3 million, those are recent and these are government estimates. These 3.0 million people, only 15% live in camps; 85% live in host communities and, of course, this brought an enormous impact and it constrained the host community. In villages, uh, if I take one example, in Lebanon, a village that has an original population of 5,000 Lebanese, some of them grow up to be 15, 20, 30,000. Of course, you can imagine the magnitude of problems - education, employment, water, sanitation, electricity,

other type of energy, waste management and crimes and so on and so forth. The impact is tremendous. The impact also is tremendous in many of the other services that we cannot think of, but also the cost as far as development, pushing some of the Lebanese population into poverty and displacing others that will held jobs because of the competitions of the new incoming population and the crisis, the cost of the crisis in Lebanon, for example, was put at \$7.5 billion, just one example of many. Turkey, for example, estimated that it's not receiving aid from the international community, but it has put about \$2.5 billion at the disposal of the refugees as far as the 22 refugee camps that they have created, the services that they have provided to the refugees. Jordan, for example, estimated the cost of hosting Syrian refugees at about 1.7 billion and the number continue to grow. What are we doing in the international humanitarian community in these surrounding countries? As I said, there are 155 now entities that appeal for fund and, uh, [inaudible] about 2.5 billion that were pledged and we'll see what the rest of the year brings. I think one of the challenges is, as I said earlier, how far we're going to continue to increasing the support and ever increasing outflow of refugees and how long the international community will be able to foot such big bills and to what extent surrounding countries will continue and far abroad keep their borders open to receive millions of people. Of course, the only solution is and the practical solution to this is a political solution to stop the fighting and the outflow. In 2012, 2013, we have assisted hundreds of thousands of people. We have also contributed to the other, I said, the registration of 2.4 million people with the profiling of these families, their vulnerabilities. There's a big push on the education side of things, but it still remains very limited. Among the populations that we have, about one million refugees, refugee children, 90% of them are not having formal education. They are traumatized. They need social psycho support. They need clothing. They need special attention, attention. There are a number of these children who have been separated from their family during the fight, during the fighting and during the flight outside Syria. There's also other challenges that the population is facing as far as the vulnerability of women and girls in the camps and in flight, in, in, in refuge as far as employment, education, literacy, support, gender based, violence, trauma in the homes where they live, domestic violence and so on and so forth, and this, of course, needs a huge, push by the international community, by the local government and by us, the humanitarian, to make sure that children and women programs are robust and big in number with adequate coverage to be able to respond to the need of this vulnerable sector of the population. Now I have talked earlier about the impact of this population on the surrounding countries and we will see in 2014 a shift in the way we develop, we, we, we, uh, we deliver assistance. It's not going to be a few humanitarian assistance. It's going to be a mixture of development assistance and a cash-based kind of support and that is for two reasons. One, I think a lot of these population now that are in exile, they need more than the in kind support that we give them, be it shelter, be it blankets, be it heating or a stove, or kerosene. They need also cash to make their

own priorities and buy and be able to access services and purchase what they need. But also by shifting to cash-based assistance, we are injecting hundreds of millions of dollars in 2014 into all small communities and that will also have a spinoff of creating employment and stimulating these communities that were depressed or restrained by the presence of the refugees and the humanitarian development nexus will also help the government as far as burden sharing and support from the development institution, the financial institution, bilateral all developmental, all humanitarian agencies to be able to offset the pressure and the burden that they face by hosting these refugees and by doing that, also knowing that this crisis will continue and we have to remain local to stay the course and move beyond the humanitarian, new humanitarian, emergency humanitarian assistance to other areas that could really help us sustain these communities and keep the governments maintaining an open border policies when it comes to refugees. In 2013, we faced one of the toughest winters. You will recall, Storm Alexa in places like Lebanon and in Jordan and northern Iraq and Turkey and Egypt. I never thought that Middle East would be subjected to such harsh weather conditions that are comparable to northern Europe or Scandinavia where the temperature dropped below -20 degrees and about one meter of snow in places that never seen snow before. So we have had since the beginning, since the beginning of the summer actually in 2013, a very comprehensive regional winterization plan, where we put about \$216 million in that to basically uh, uh, uh, distribute, uh, winter, uh, related, uh, relief items from blankets to plastic sheeting to stove, to kerosene for heating, wood for heating, but also for the majority who live in collective centers and homes and apartments with heat, a lot of construction, rehabilitation, uh, waterproofing and so on and so forth. That did pay off given the winter that the region hasn't seen for 100 years. The winter is not over yet and we continue to stay the course and make sure that winterization is progressing throughout the first quarter and beginning of second quarter of 2014. Some challenges that we still continue to face inside Syria: security, access to population that in hard-to-reach area and populations that are besieged. We estimate about two million people of the six million displaced in Syria are in areas that either besieged by one side or another, or what we call hard-to-reach areas. Some of these populations are malnourished. They don't have access to services. Some of them have pending operations or health needs that they need to get out of these besieged area to really seek support. Some of the other challenges in surrounding countries is access to territories, uh, we... Borders in comes countries are open and others are, are managed. Managed in the sense that either they're asking for documentation; will not accept expired documents. They want to make sure they are not young men alone, if they're coming in families. So it's managed in that sense and, of course, security is an overriding issue for some of these countries. Protection of space is still important, to preserve the protection of space that been created, created in the region. Global solution as Dr. Variosa said, has to be something that should not be kept until the end. We should bring the last



first and try to talk about global solution even in a small scale. We know that some Syrians are retaining and returning to areas where there is nothing. Either are they in rehabilitation or reconstruction, even emergency basic relief and, and, and rehabilitation programs for areas of retain so that people can sustain themselves in these areas and create a livelihood and do not move further and then services would start to spring around them. I'll stop here and probably take more of the questions later on. Thank you very much.

Kate Seelye: Ms. Kandalayeva, please.

Dr. Uma Kandalayeva: Ladies and gentleman, I would like to thank you for coming today. Would like to thank you, organizer of this event, because each of you are basically helping to keep light on a very, very serious crisis which we are facing today in Middle East region. We're appreciated of all international assistant which we are getting from the American people, from the American government, from fees-based organization, from UN-based organization, because these agencies and people, simple people who are contributing for this uh, um, to, to this crisis, helping agencies as IRD being a humanitarian agency, with a major goal of providing care to most vulnerable people in the region to do our daily job. And our daily job is facing crisis and erasing this crisis at every household level. My colleagues from UNHCR and policymakers are looking into bigger picture trying to address the global, global crisis from the, um, um, mature more policy, prospective policy, um, view. But agencies as IRD, we are trying to address this crisis at every household level. We have... We are facing, um, challenges every day to address problem of every single Syrian family who cross the border. We have every 24 hours hundreds of Syrians crossing borders with Jordan and Lebanon. People are coming in the snow, in the winter without any spare jacket, any spare food. They don't have suitcases with them. They just holding their children on their hands and crossing border in order to, to survive, in order to give them protection. When they cross the border, they don't have anything. They don't have... they don't have, uh, pot to prepare next meal to, to their family. They are...they are in need of everything. That's why international attention, attention of international donors is extremely important to be able to, for us to provide assistant to these families on very basic needs. When people are crossing the border when they are residing either in the camps or outside in the local communities, it is really, really important to understand then majority of this children, uh, majority of this population are children and woman who really need, who are they're, they're... they are faces of this crisis. They really require multi-level assistant, not only addressing their basic need as the most important need, basic food, clothing, water, shelter, but they need very, very serious psychosocial support. Their psychosocial and mental conditions as victims of war, as people who just yesterday saw their house blown up or their family member was killed in front of them, they are really under very serious psychosocial stress, emotional stress and

they crossing border of neighboring country being to Jordan, Lebanon or Iraq, they simply don't know when they will be able to come back to their homes, if they will be able to come back at any point of time and how they will find their home, if any home left over. And that's really putting such a serious pressure on their everyday survival. Agencies like IRD with the primary goal on humanitarian aid, providing humanitarian aid with, um, to this population, with the help of UN agencies, we are trying to make this period of time like to, little bit easier for them to cope with the crisis which they face. Definitely it's a lot of attention, uh, a lot of assistance was provided as of today, but whatever assistance provided, it is not enough. The complexity of crisis is so huge. The, um, complexity of the issues these people are facing on a daily basis is so comprehensive, then more and more attention need to be given to every single Syrian family. Every single Syrian family who are host, hosted by, by local communities, a lot of, a lot of, um, country, um, appreciation should be given to Jordanian and Lebanese societies. Jordanian and Lebanese families who open their houses and, uh, allow Syrian, Syrian families living with them under same the same roof. They're sharing very, very limited resources they have with the Syrian families on a daily basis, but resources are really limited for Jordanians and Lebanese them self and now having burden of so many hundreds and thousands of very, very vulnerable Syrians who are utilizing same limited resources in both of these countries. This making crisis is really, really deep and we need to make sure then attention is given to Jordanian society, to Lebanese families, who are really on the edge of their coping mechanism with this crisis as well. The, um, main support need to be given to these communities. The healthcare system of Jordan and Lebanon is really on its edge, because of for the last two years, patient load, for example, patient load at every public health clinic, uh, in Jordan is increased, is tripled. Tripled during last two years, because Syrians, um, are legible for free healthcare in Jordan and Jordanian government has graciously granted this, um, this type of assistance to, to Syrians. But healthcare system is suffering. Ordinary healthcare providers now is seeing three times more patients per day versus they were seeing two years ago with the same, same resources. The schools, there is no, no space for children in public schools. Most of the public schools are working in two shifts. There is no playground left at public schools, because we are building extra classrooms. We are putting containers at, at the playground in order to accommodate these Syrian children to be able to access basic education. The situation in the camp is, uh, very, very difficult with, um, from an etymological to control all this emerging infections, which Jordan and Lebanon never had for years. Now, all of a sudden, we have, uh, very serious issue of controlling infection diseases in the areas where refugees are flow due to the conditions, living conditions they have and with the help of, uh, World Health Organization, UNICEF and other ministries of health, this is what is addressed, need to be addressed and we are addressing on a daily basis, but this is ongoing crisis, ongoing crisis which should not be forgotten. Agencies as IRD, we are trying to, to provide support on a daily basis, but we rely very much on

assistance and trust we are getting from our donors, from our contributors until a longer term solution may be found for this crisis and people will have a little bit of release. Thank you very much.

[applause]

Jomana Qaddour: Hello. Thank you for having me. It's kind of intimidating to follow such a prestigious panel. So my name is Jomana and I am the co-founder and legal counsel of Syria Relief and Development, one of many Syrian American organizations who are trying to address this crisis. Because we do not work under the UN or the ICRC, we have a unique ability to be able to reach a lot of Syrians that are in the rebel-held territories. We do not need Syrian government permission to access the patients and those in need and a lot of what I'll be telling you today is actually a summary and a synthesis of a lot of information that I received from the Syrian American Relief Coalition. So just to begin with, I wanted to pull up this map so that I can sort of map out to you where the rebel-held areas are located and, and, um, an organization called People Demand Change actually provided this for us. So in the very, uh, the northeast corner, the blue corner, that's mostly controlled by the PYD, the Kurdish groups. That area, I won't go into detail. It's not really my area of expertise, but I do know that it is under less bombardment by the government currently, but there are a lot of inter-Kurdish strife in that region and so I think we might see things unfold in that area later. Moving south, the Deir ez-Zor region, is heavily... It's actually dominated by a lot of different forces, including Jabhat al-Nusra, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and the Islamic Front. Moving by the, um, the, by Al-Hasakah province, up north you have outlined in black is mostly controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and although I'm a humanitarian, I have to know where ISIS is located, because it is really hindering a lot of the humanitarian aid and has disabled us basically from being able to reach a lot of the people that we serve. Moving west, we have Aleppo and that is, uh, that's unfortunately been an area where both, excuse me, ISIS, the Islamic Front and the FSA battle over control and there is so much fighting that I have heard from our people on the ground that it will take hundreds if not thousands of people just to remove the rubble, the debris and the garbage before rebuilding can even begin. Moving onto the Idlib province, so the green area. That area tends to be the, um, I'd say the most stable area of the rebel-held territories. The FSA and the Islamic Fronts control that area and that is one of the only checkpoints that we're able to depend on in order to allow cross border aid to enter. And then, of course, you have the largest area in red, Damascus, Homs, Hama, Tartus, Latakia, all of the cities on the coast. There are parts of that where you see the orange that are sort of cut out, suburbs of Damascus that are under rebel-held territories. So these are always disputed. They go between government and rebel-held and then finally in the south, we have Daraa, which is also a disputed territory. And so when I talk about these, I'll focus a lot of what I'm

saying just briefly on Aleppo, Homs and Damascus, um, because that's where most of our work is based. We do have a hospital in Aleppo and we've seen a very huge spike in number of the patients that we're receiving due to the barrel bombings that have been falling on the people of Aleppo. These barrel bombings contain shrapnel, bullets, glass, what-have-you, and they're dropped on civilians. Um, [clears throat], the... I... and recently, actually one of our coalition partners, their hospital was, uh, was attacked by unarmed...excuse me, masked, um, unarmed gunman who followed an ambulance into a hospital, then threatened the staff and killed an ICU patient, um, and so what the hospital had to do, is it's been forced to close its doors and is unable to accept, for that time, I know it was unable to accept, for that time I know it was unable to accept patients because of the safety of both the patients and the doctors. But slowly, you know, these doctors are coming back to work. They're picking up and trying to go back to serving the needs of the people of Aleppo. We... I know that on other, the same coalition partners, also part of the Polio Task Force, and we commend them on this great effort, because unfortunately, with the spread of polio all over Syria, it's created a very unique, um, excuse me, complications. One is that the Syrian government claims to be vaccinating these children. Well, doctors have confirmed that sometimes just regular serum has been injected in these children and not the vaccines that they need. Other times, they're sending home the needles with the families and saying, "Inject them yourself." I mean, it's, it's, it's, it has, it has really baffled the medical professionals to see that this is happening. So what this coalition is doing, uh, the polio partners in the north, they're just vaccinating any children they can find, to make sure that these children are actually indeed vaccinated and unfortunately, only 5% of polio patients ever show actual symptoms of polio. So a lot of times they're un... you know, just to make sure, that's why they're, uh, you know, um, vaccinating any children that they see. Moving onto just a bit about the food and fuel. On the medical note, um, eh, excuse me. Um, vaccinations and anything and needles and even certain medicines, they have to be kept at certain temperatures. Some of our partners have told us that patients have gone into shock because they've been injected with medicine that was simply too cold and so it's, it's, it's really caused complications on that front. The ISIS checkpoints that are placed all over Aleppo have really threatened the population. Many times our doctors and our physicians and our nurses have been unable to go to work, because there are checkpoints in their neighborhoods and because ISIS has been executing people in a very *ad hoc* fashion, there's just no telling what kind of threat they may actually pose to our staff and, and it has been confirmed that they do have access to a lot of journalists. They have been holding them captive and they have actually killed many activists, journalists and actors in the Aleppo area. Damascus is also very difficult, because parts of Damascus are relatively normal and other parts are in, in dire need of support. Hepatitis B has been a problem in Damascus, but unfortunately, there are no labs that can verify this for some patients and because Damascus is not right next to a border, it is also very difficult to get

these patients to where they can be seen and be treated. Scabies and lice have been a very large problem, because a lot of these families are staying in basements. They're huddled together in very damp and unsanitary conditions. A lot times, schools, which I'll go into later, are set up in these basements, um, and so the chances of these diseases spreading is very high. Those who are detained are also coming back with these similar kinds of symptoms. Transplants has also posed a very unique situation. I mean, it's hard enough, I know, for people, uh, some of my friends who've had to undergo transplants in the United States to find the appropriate donors, but it's very, very difficult for Syrians, because this is not even being offered in neighboring countries at this point to on a very large scale it might be here and there, but definitely not on a very large scale. So these people are trying to petition to the United States and Europe to allow them to enter and, of course, that's a lengthy process, during which a patient can easily die. The lack of CT scanners has caused a lot of difficulty, because doctors have had to operate on, you know, brain surgeries, open up brains without the schools, excuse me, without verification of exactly what's going on, but it's too difficult to get these patients safely to Turkey and return them back in time. Now education. There's a... We have another coalition partner who is doing very good work on the education front, especially in Damascus. Two years ago when the revolution, uh, the crisis started happening, um, we had many private Gulf donors who were coming to Syria giving their money and supporting what many Syrians considered very sectarian-in-nature schools, but unfortunately, because these students had nowhere else to go, they were attending these schools and that, um, were teaching I think kids, uh, you know, ideas that an average Syrian family would not promote. So this organization has been trying to reach out and has reached out to 15,000 students in Damascus, to try to buy out these schools and to provide a more peaceful, inclusive type of education for these children, um, and it's, this is and I think investing in children as my, as my co-panelists here have said, investing in children is very, very important at this stage, because these kids are traumatized. They're psychologically traumatized. They feel hopeless. A lot of them are telling us, "We wish we were never born," um, and providing education. Providing a temporary haven for them to leave, instead of forcing them, you know, to go out and make money on behalf of their families is really crucial at this point. Damascus, also there's, there's specific complications with Damascus, food in Damascus because the checkpoints, the government-held checkpoints in and out of these rebel-held areas, are very restrictive in nature. They don't, they don't allow, even if they open up for a short period of time, they don't allow food, much food to enter, so that, so that they always have leverage over the people in that specific area. They want to make sure that there aren't stockpiles of food. Also, our, our people on the ground have told us that that non-Muslim towns are being given some privileges and are allowed to have food, so as to increase sectarian tensions and this has also been very difficult to deal with. Seventy-five percent of, excuse me. Seventy-five percent of people in Syria are out of savings

and they can't afford to buy the inflated groceries and items that they need, um, and agriculture. My, my grandmother is actually, my mother's family is all still living in a suburb of Damascus and during the summer this year, they finally decided to start growing their food, because you know, Syrians, like Dr. Dardari said, are very, they try to be very independent. They don't want to ask for aid and so a lot, a lot of them have been growing their own food and vegetables, but of course, in the winter, that's not an option and so as much as they try to can, as much as they try to plan, there's only so much you can do in a country like Syria, where agriculture is a, is a major way of providing food. And then I'll end with, briefly, with Homs. Homs is the city I was born in actually. I was born in Ariha province, one of the besieged areas of Syria. My aunt still lives in this area, um, and we have spotty connection, communication with her, but we try to talk to her and our staff obviously on the ground, to understand what's happening there. The Old City of Homs has been under siege for the past two years and specifically in the Al Waar province that has been under siege for nine months, there are over 600,000 residents. This year, we were told by our staff that there were 2,000 amputations that had to be performed without anesthesia. Um, I, I... I forgot to mention there was, there was a very, very touching case in Aleppo where there was a woman who needed a Caesarean operation. There was no electricity. There was no anesthesia and what the doctors had to do was, was have two nurses hold each one of her hands down, so as to be able to perform the Caesarean. The baby ultimately died, but she survived, but without light, without the appropriate medical equipment, it was very difficult and anesthesia has, the lack of anesthesia, excuse me, has been a, has crippled the treatment of operating, uh, of medical operations in Syria. There was another situation which a military operation, you know, a combination of doctors and FSA, helped evacuate 600 patients that were in need of operations outside of this besieged area. Thirty doctors and uh, and uh, 30 doctors and staff actually died during this operation to save these people. Many people in Homs, as well as other places in Damascus, have been eating grass, shrubs, roots, dogs, cats and otherwise. A lot of them are uprooting trees completely just to be able to access the roots, so that they could either burn them or also cook them, um, and um, I mentioned tuberculosis. Over half of Syria's 30,000 doctors have fled, two of which have been my own relatives, because they have been, were targeted for treating Syrian patients. And petrol and diesel is obviously in very short supply and buying humanitarian supplies has become very difficult, because prices are almost three times of what they are in government-held territories. I'll end by just two, two um, two points that as a Syrian American NGO, I would like to say that, you know, as we can throw bil... and we have and I've, we've seen the United States government, along with other governments, throw billions of dollars at this, at this conflict and we greatly appreciate it and it has really helped to save a lot of lives. But unfortunately, until there's a political solution, our hands are tied. Very recently, we, we distributed aid to a part of a, a suburb of Idlib, and two days later, the, the village was bombed and all

of our work was gone and, and these people were, were, were killed. It only took one strike to undo all the aid that was delivered. We also ask that, uh, we please ask the international community to pay attention to the children of Syria, to make sure that they have education and something other than, um, than this war to worry about. Thank you very much.

[applause]

Kate Seelye: I want to thank our panels for their very insightful presentations. They've just put some flesh on a very abstract crisis and have spoken to the incredible courage and endurance of the Syrian people. A certain theme came out here early on in this panel and that is three years into this crisis, the international community is starting to think very differently about humanitarian assistance. There's a shift in thinking away from traditional giving towards, as Mr. Dardari put it, more developmental activities. You touched upon it. Mr. Awad talked about a shift toward cash assistance and I'd like Mr. Dardari and Mr. Awad and Ms. Kandalayeva to flesh out what this really means as we look forward at a prolonged crisis. How should the international community and NGOs be thinking differently about helping Syrians sustain themselves inside Syria and outside and, and for Jomana, you're doing such incredible selfless work. What would you like to see the international community doing more of to make the provision of aid and food perhaps just a little bit easier? And we'll begin with Mr. Dardari.

Abdallah al-Dardari: Yes. Well, I think today there are opportunities here and there across the country that we should exploit, even though they are very limited and the picture that Jomana just presented to us is a very realistic one. It is not, she has not exaggerated. She has not uh, uh... She did not try to paint an unrealistic picture of Syria. This is what's happening in the country as we speak. But actually, because of this disastrous situation, we need to grasp any opportunity. First to look at the possibilities of local cease fires; secondly to utilize this as an entry point for humanitarian access, improving access, but also immediately to start working development and developmental activities such as farming. I'll give you an example. The War Food Program spends \$42 million a week on food aid to Syria now. With \$50 million a year, you can revamp agriculture in vast parts of Syria as today, before the conflict is over. So, activities of that kind. Livelihood, micro-finance schemes, some public works programs in areas where there is some relative safety and comfort and these are, unfortunately, not big parts of Syria, but still we need to invest in those. The UN system is considering and should be considering more, a more integrated approach to entering any area where medical services, education, health and livelihoods could all be put under one package and presented as one package rather than different agencies doing different things, which is extremely important to optimize resources and to have maximum impact. Most importantly,

developmental activity can be a very important element in social reconciliation at local level. It's extremely important to make sure, to test at least could different and conflicting communities work together again on the ground in farming? Could they work together again in protecting archeological sites that have been destroyed or pillaged? Could they work again in providing social services to their communities? It's from my personal point of view and the group I am working with, the most important element of these interventions should be the social reconciliation aspect. We need to prepare the ground sooner or later. Syrians will have to live together regardless of their religious or ethnic background. We have no choice but living together. So this is the idea we are proposing now, knowing the difficulties and appreciating that it is a very difficult situation, as what Jomana just mentioned.

Kate Seelye: Thank you. Mr. Awad?

Amin Awad: Thank you. I saw the shift in the way...

Kate Seelye: Could you pull up your microphone, please? Thank you. Just bring it a little closer.

Amin Awad: Thank you. So the new shift that we are seeking as the situation become protracted and as refugees outflows increase, is to really work with the host communities and the government to devise some program that would ensure a balance in the distribution of aid that's coming in between the host communities and the refugees themselves, given the fact that the majority of the refugees do live now in host communities and that is basically working now with some of the development agencies, like UNDP. We're working in a big way with the World Bank, which is a new development that we have now in the Syria region. We are also involved with many of the development actors and the, some of the think tanks and some of the grassroots organizations to help us out in mapping out the households, profiling those households. For example, in Jordan, we just completed 100,000 visits plus to host communities that are, that are, uh, where host communities and refugees them self, to profile the families as far as income, employment, savings, remittance, disabilities, human capitals, skills, size of families, gender and so on and so forth, to be able to design those programs. We're trying to be very prudent. We started in 2012 and 2013 with a small amount of cash-based programs. Now in 2014, we're going to see a big shift from an assistance-based, material assistant to cash-based and we're looking for cash for rent, cash for vulnerabilities, cash for winter, monetization, cash for other items and that's basically will, we try to also capture the byproduct of this. Employment in the communities, how the cash infusion, the hundreds of millions that will be infused into the small communities will have an impact. Also, one of the most important elements is to give the refugees a choice to do what they need to do. And lack of cash, also and dependence on only material



assistance on the short term or the long term, is not effective. There is a phenomena that we're trying to really stem and control; that is a phenomena of begging that we've never seen in this part of the world. Is a middle to high middle income kind of countries, the kind of dignified communities that depend on their wider family structure before they really go out begging. Today if you are in the streets of Bekaa Valley, the towns or villages in the south, even in Istanbul, if you are entering Istanbul Airport, you see a number of Syrian refugees, mainly women and children, begging. You find this throughout the south of Turkey; you find it Lebanon, in Beirut and basically because they don't have cash to... If you interview any of them, they will tell you that two dinars, to in Amaan, to really go to the pharmacy and buy medicine over the counter for a four-months-old or a six-months-old baby. We don't have it. So what would they do? They get of wherever they are, stand in the street to beg to be able to pay that. So, we are trying to really also contain some of these social phenomena and address issues that the refugees do face together with the host communities. So there is a big push and we try to also educate the international community with the humanitarian and the development to reorient their program and work it so that it can make sure there is an impact and there is a quick impact, an efficient and in a, in a very work-ordinated manner to bring sustainability to this issue. Thank you.

Kate Seelye: Dr. Kandalayeva.

Dr. Uma Kandalayeva: I'm very much agree with my UNHCR colleagues because we are working exactly on this direction together, being IRD, being a UNHCR partner in both Jordan and Lebanon. This is what we together are doing and is IRD-trained community outreach walkers, knocking on the door of hundred thousand of households of Syrian refugees and collecting firsthand information on the gender, needs, what the family size. You know, trying to find out as much information as possible about the needs from every single household. We have a very serious focus on community mobilization actions, which we believe is longer term developmental approach to solve some of the problems what Jordanian and Lebanese community have hosting Syrian refugees. We're able to put together at every single community. This is very unique approach, which IRD is having in both of these countries. We are able to put together around the table Syrian refugee, Jordanian or Lebanese representative from the community, local municipality person, local government person to sit together and decide what actually my neighborhood and my community need as a first intervention today. What we would need as of tomorrow and day after tomorrow? They preparing this basic analysis and giving it to us and to UNHCR, how we can, how we should address not only relief emergency needs of today, but how it's better to address it a little bit down the road. For example, when we in the northern communities, when we faced serious, serious problem during last summer, particularly during the holy months of Ramadan

time in the summer with lots of gar... communal garbage was flying around with lots of fleas and, you know, cockroaches. In every single little, little town of this, of this area and people were coming and saying, "This is holy months of Ramadan. We cannot allow our children to see us living in these conditions, but we don't have enough garbage bins to put this garbage." When the municipality came and said, "We don't have enough money to rent the garbage truck to remove this garbage out of our community," and that's where we came, as IRD, with UNHCR and because it was raised from the bottom up to us as their emergency need today, but it has developmental approach. We said, "Okay. We're going to help you to rent private trucks to remove this garbage, but you mobilize community," where they are coming in the streets, children and teenagers, woman and man. They're coming with equipped and they basically cleaning their neighborhood all together. That has a developmental approach as well as community building trust together, where they enlarge the protection space of refugees where refugees are not fighting with hosting community members among, for their, for their, you know, vocational space or for next job. But they're coming together to clean up their neighborhood. They get to know each other. They contribute to the peaceful coexistence of refugee and the hosting community. That type of project was a very quick impact and immediate impact on their psychosocial wellbeing and protection at community level is very, very important.

Kate Seelye: Jomana, what would make your aid assistance easier?

Jomana Qaddour: Well I think one thing that they, United States government, has been doing over the past year, but to definitely increase and I speak only on, you know, about the U.S. government, because I live here. So I'm not going to speak about European countries. But, um, but specifically to assist the NGOs that are operating in the rebel-held territories, because I think that they, they're in a very unique position to reach a lot of people that the ICRC and the United Nations sometimes are simply unable to, to reach. The second thing I would say is very much targeting the issue of food, diesel and baby formula, because I think these are the things that are most hard...the hardest to find and also the most expensive. Specifically on baby formula, I remember when we were talking to members of the administration about this and they said, "Well, to give you baby formula, you have to launch a campaign that will, that assures us that you're encouraging Syrian women to breastfeed." Well this to me was puzzling, because Syrian, I mean Syrians as part of their culture, do not look at baby formula favorably, for example, and the reason these women are looking to baby formula is because they're malnourished and their bodies simply won't produce milk and so we told them how... We... I mean, there are only so many people we have to do this work and you're asking us to expense staff to talk about something that is just not urgent and, and these women are asking for these types of aid because they're in absolute dire need. And I

would just say the last thing is that helping Syrians who are inside that absolutely need transplants, absolutely need access to CTs, to facilitate access to those things. Thank you.

Kate Seelye: Thank you. Well, we have a large audience here, which speaks to the fact that there is growing interest in the Syrian humanitarian crisis and I'd like to open up the floor to questions. I'm going to stand here. I'll take a couple at a time. If you'll please raise your hand and we'll begin. Somebody right here had their hand raised? Oh, somebody over here? I'll begin with this gentleman. Is there anybody on this side and then somebody on this side? Next question. We'll take three and then, uh, at a time. And if you could please introduce yourself.

Bassem Barabandi: Good morning. My name is Bassem Barabandi and I'm from Syria. My question is, um, events of the crisis of refugee is hard to break in for everyone. Don't think the international community should think to build capacity for the Syrian refugees, for whenever we have a peace in Syria, we have the guys who are willing and ready to reconstruct Syria and the refugees, we have a doctors; we have teachers; we have economics. It's not only the poor people. Many people left according to many statistics because they lost a job, and so on and so forth. So I think even so, we have very major problem with dealing with babies' issues and shelters at Lebanon, which is very important, but at the same time, I think international community should put certain budget to building capacity for these people at refugee camp and inside Syria. Thank you.

Kate Seelye: So is the question is how to better use Syrian capacity for local development?

Bassem Barabandi: I think there should be more programs, more... this is the question for the UNHCR, for Mr. Dardari, as international community, do you think that you can put some more budget for building capacity for the Syrian and refugee camps? We cannot only talk about tragedies. We have to look about some, to get some hope for future.

Kate Seelye: Okay. Thank you. We'll get... over here?

Blake Selzer: My name is Blake Selzer. I work for CARE. We're the humanitarian advocacy policy, but thank you for this important panel. The panelists this morning I think painted a powerful picture of the crisis and the importance of humanizing the crisis to get public awareness, in this case the American public awareness, and global public awareness. But we're here in Washington, DC, so my question for any of the panelists is, what would be your top messages to policy makers up on Capitol Hill? Thank you.

Kate Seelye: Okay. And do we have a third question? Right here in the front.

Bill Corcoran: Bill Corcoran from the organization, ANERA, to Dr. Al-Dardari. Curious about the 10-year vision for the rebuilding of Syria, if that also envisions the Palestinians who have left Syria and whether or not that is a viable option in the future. Thank you.

Kate Seelye: Thank you. Let's begin with the budget for building capacity with Mr. Dardari and Mr. Awad. Whoever would like to respond to that.

Abdallah Al-Dardari: Well let me say that it is a worthy investment to find ways and means to invest in the capacity building and the skills and competency developments of tens of thousands of Syrians at different levels of education and skills, to prepare them for the next phase of the country. First of all, there are many Syrians who have not been trained, have been out of touch with what's been happening. They have not been doing their job anyway, so there's no more training for them and the needs of the reconstruction will be very different from their previous needs in the country. The skills, the required competencies are going to be very difficult and challenging. So investment in that area will be extremely important. There's a lot of money going to humanitarian issues, as we mentioned. The appeals are the largest since probably World War II, but now only recently UNDP, for example, put an appeal of \$166 million for some developmental activities, including training. We need to increase that and make sure it happens.

Kate Seelye: Does anybody want to add to that?

Dr. Uma Kandalayeva: That's very, very good question you asked and I want to make a note then we at IRD very strongly believe in the capacity development of refugees and this is what we are doing. For the last six years basically we were heavily involved in the capacity building of Iraqi refugees who are living in Jordan and Lebanon and now we are replicating lessons learned and we are heavily involving Syrian refugees in a training programs to build their capacity and they are providing many of the assistant today, Syrian part, um, Syrian refugee peers. That's one of the ways when we believe then all the skills they will learn during this crisis being outside of their country, they can take with them back, once they're back to Syria. For example, one of the largest health, community health outreach work force in Jordan is all Syrian woman. They are trained by us and they know basics on community health outreach. We hope this is one of the capacity building investments from our side to them.

Jomana Qaddour: I'd just like to add that I think SRD, among many other organizations, are utilizing Syrians themselves to complete the work. We're not sending anybody from the outside. We've actually begged some of these doctors in

Halab, excuse me, Aleppo, to stay in Aleppo and so, so, receiving these grants from the United States government and other entities has enabled us to keep the physicians, the nurses and the people inside of Syria there and to be able to pay them, even if it's a nominal fee, to continue working.

Kate Seelye: And, Jomana, do you want to address the question of the top message for policymakers herein Washington?

Jomana Qaddour: Stop the crisis. Flex your political muscles, please. We need, we need you to bring, you know, use diplomacy to end this. We can't do our job unless the crisis ends.

Kate Seelye: Would anyone else like to address that question?

Abdallah Al-Dardari: What Jomana is saying, yes, definitely. Let's stop the crisis. That's the every effort, every humanitarian. Any humanitarian effort or even development or what we call coping strategies, resilience support strategies for Syria today or Syrian refugees, will only achieve very limited objectives, if there isn't at least accompanied and paralleled with it a serious political process. Now that's why Geneva is important, but that's on the side. Jeffrey Feldman will speak about that. Stop the crisis and as it's becoming clear it's futile. It's... there is... There is nothing, uh... Every day that this crisis continues, the damage as you can see, is incredible and so that's the message. Let's have a clear policy. We don't see yet a clear policy. So let's have a clear policy with incentives package put on the table to induce parties to come to the talking and to produce something out of the discussions.

Kate Seelye: What might be an incentive package?

Abdallah Al-Dardari: [laughs] Well, an incentive package which makes it very difficult for the parties to refuse a peaceful proposal. That has not been yet put on the table. We don't see it yet. We see the principles in the letter of invitation to Geneva in Geneva I announcement. Those principles are there. Now, in practice, how do you incite, entice the parties to accept or find it difficult to refuse what's on the table?

Kate Seelye: Amin, you wanted to comment?

Amin Awad: Yea. I think the magnitude of the crisis and the rapid increase of the number of people affected and the impact of the surrounding countries, two or three years ago, it was a jargon that this conflict would get out of control and impact surrounding countries and not only see the [inaudible] security over, but the international security and now it is happening. And I don't think really a lot of efforts

have been put into exploring and exploiting to the fullest opportunities that may be available to bring a solution. I think both side of the conflicts are reaching a conclusion that there is no victory through violent or military means and they ought to be a political solution, given the high cost of the crisis, financial, human and so on and so forth. So I think really there's only one way to go forward, otherwise, this is not going to be affordable, not sustainable and it will indeed destabilize the region and beyond.

Kate Seelye: Mr. Dardari, did you want to address the question on [inaudible], please.

Abdallah Al-Dardari: First, the Palestinians in Syria ultimately need to go home. They need to go back to Palestine. But until this happens, any vision for Syria should include the Palestinians in Syria definitely and they are a progressive, they have been a progressive force in the Syrian society. Maybe people don't know, but in 1948, when Palestinian refugees came to Syria, they were an enlightening force in culture and education and in openness and in liberal thinking for Syria. So they have contributed dramatically to the welfare of the Syrian society, but at the end... and they are treated as citizens. They are... Syria is the only Arab country that treats Palestinians as equal to citizens, but at the end of the day, the best vision for the Palestinians is for them to go back home.

Kate Seelye: Let's get another round of questions. We have a woman here. Could you wait for the mike? And then the gentlemen behind her and then we'll come back to you. So there are two people in this.

Miriam: Hi. This is a question for the whole panel. My name is Miriam and I'm with the Syrian American Medical Society and as Jomana mentioned, one of their coalition partner's facility was actually attacked by an armed gunman and they followed the ambulance through. What can we do to protect physicians in Syria and to ensure that these hospitals that a lot of donor money is being used to support, can actually operate safely and that they don't have to shut down their doors, because doctors are worried for their safety?

Kate Seelye: Okay. Thank you. If you could just pass the microphone to the fellow behind you.

Man: Thank you. I know Israel has spent millions of dollars in transferring Syrian civilians to hospitals they have made on the borders. I was wondering if the panelists thought if there was any way we could utilize Israel as a border nation?

Kate Seelye: Say that... Utilize Israel as a border nation?

Man: Yea.

Kate Seelye: And there's a question from a gentleman over here, if we could just run the mike over.

Phillip: Hi. Philip [inaudible], UN-Habitat. When we talk about the wellbeing of Syrian families, we very easily zoom in on health and education. But if we look at the appeals, it's obvious, of course, that the children housing solutions is one of their top priorities. Unfortunately, it's one of the most underfunded sectors. It's of course, not in the public realm. It's very much in the private realm. If you look at the numbers, one of the basic problems, of course, is lack of housing stock that is still standing or appropriate in Syria, but also in Lebanon and Jordan, where the housing stock is just not available. So I wanted to hear maybe also from, uh, maybe Mr. Awad and Mr. Dardari on construction measures that could be taken to take it next step and taking into account that the crisis is protracted.

Kate Seelye: Thank you. All right. Who'd like to talk about doing more to protect physicians in Syria? Amin?

Amin Awad: Yea. Unfortunately, targeting civilians, targeting a specific people who is, with specific profiles, uh, uh, sites of prayer, schools, is becoming a way of punishing the population, punishing, collective punishment of some sector of the population and also some areas, but also use as a deterrence to deter people from physician, from also of nurses from treating one side or another. And in many of the even the PRSD to present such a statement that was very clear, the call for both, the government and the opposition or the rebels, or whoever they may call, be called to really stop targeting these facilities and these [inaudible]. I personally think that there ought to be [clears throat] an accountability used as a deterrence to deter whatever side from targeting so important sector of the population and the workforce that is helping the population in crisis.

Kate Seelye: Thank you. Would anybody else like to... Jomana, do you want to talk about that?

Jomana Qaddour: I think as Mr. Amin said, it's, it's a very difficult thing. I... I don't have a solution off the top of my head. It's very hard, because a lot of these rebel-held areas go between government control, ISIS control, FSA control, um, it's, uh... I... I wish I had an answer. You know.

Kate Seelye: What about the question of how Israel can be better sort of utilized in addressing the humanitarian crisis? [laughs]

[laughter]

Kate Seelye: Clearly, uh... [laughs] Clearly, a sensitive subject. I had somebody from the Israeli Embassy... were you about to say something? No? Definitely not. [laughs]

[laughter]

Kate Seelye: ... Came to say that they felt that the less Israel engaged itself in this issue, the better for all the parties. Um...

Jomana Qaddour: That being said, they... that being said, I mean, there, there is evidence that Israel has provided humanitarian assistance and otherwise and you know, we appreciate wherever humanitarian assistance comes from. I mean, I don't think Syrians are turning away any good work that's coming, but it is a sensitive political situation.

Kate Seelye: Indeed. What about the housing question? Construction and addressing this sector? Mr. Dardari, would you like to touch on that?

Abdallah Al-Dardari: I have to say that UN-Habitat has been doing an excellent job in mapping the housing situation in Syria. They, they have a very reliable assessment of the situation in the UNS Corps Project for International Agenda of Syria, we are working closely with UN-Habitat and that... Our colleague from UN-Habitat is right to say there needs to be something to be discussed about housing of Syrians today and I referred to that when I said suppose we need a coping strategy now and we also need a preparations for possible return of IDPs and refugees. Can you imagine what does it mean to go back to one point something million homes destroyed in Syria? What, what... the enormous, the tremendous task ahead of us in providing homes and shelters for these people when they go back. The numbers to put, to be put in perspective, 1.5 million homes partially or fully destroyed in Syria is more than the total homes, houses in Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. Imagine that you want to build those five countries from scratch today. That's the proportion we need to keep in mind. So, I fully agree and we are working together to find things that what could be done now regarding housing, what could be done in the medium turn. Just to give you, if I may?

Kate Seelye: Yes, please.

Abdallah Al-Dardari: To give you an example of the challenge of housing, Syria usually used to build around 78,000 homes every year. The need now to rebuild what was destroyed, plus the natural growth rate, is around 350,000 homes a year.



So, uh, uh... Syria needs, used to... uh, uh, consume eight million tons of cement. It will need 30 million tons of cement every year for the next ten years. There are not enough roads nor ports that can carry 30 million tons imported to the country. There is... the 30 million tons need 1.4 billion cubic meters of water to turn into mix for reconstruction. Syria does not have 1.4 billion cubic meters. We are already a water-poor country. These are practical things we are studying together with UN-Habitat and other agencies in trying to see how to prioritize where do you start and how to start. What type of building materials may be required. Do you bring people... Most of the areas destroyed are in informal housing areas where deeds and entitlements are not clear. What do you do? Do you bring people to those same areas that were informally or illegally built before the war? Do you bring them back to those places? Where else would you build for them? How about the social fabric that existed in those areas before the war? Do you rebuild the same social fabric or not? If you take an example of Nahr al-Bared refugee camp in north Lebanon, when it was destroyed, there was a very nice architectural plan, a master plan, to rebuild it. But in fact, the families from the Palestinian town of Safad insisted on staying in the same street as they used to before that camp was destroyed. Now and Ali wanted to live with Mohammed, because she was her neighbor before the camp was destroyed. Now, these are realities and the company, the architectural company that did the master plan, is reconsidering all of that. So... and this is just a small Palestinian camp in the north of Tripoli. Imagine 1.5 million homes, what type of socioeconomic analysis that needs to take place. So the enormity of the conflict requires very out-of-the-box thinking, requires a lot of cooperation, but again, and again and again, it requires stopping this conflict as soon as possible.

Kate Seelye: Well it's very heartening to know that there is a lot of creative thinking on this subject here assembled before us today. It's been a great honor and a privilege to hear from our fine panelists. I want to thank you all and I thank you all for joining us. And um, our next panel will begin in 15 minutes. Thank you.

[applause]

**End of file**