



## [The Humanitarian Border Crossing on Turkey's Border into Northwest Syria Must Remain Open](#)

As the six-month extension approved by the UN Security Council to maintain the Bab al-Hawa border crossing between Syria and Turkey for aid deliveries is set to expire this upcoming Monday, both the UN and Syrian communities have publicly urged to keep the crossing open. With the Bab al-Hawa border being the sole locality of aid from the UN for Syria since 2014, it has allowed resources to reach opposition-controlled areas in Northern Syria without approval from the Syrian government. A UN delegation led by David Carden recently visited Idlib, a city in Northwest Syria that receives almost 80% of aid, to highlight the region's dependency on the little assistance provided by the United Nations and urge action on behalf of the Security Council. Idlib hosts a population of approximately 4 million people, many of those being displaced refugees throughout the 12-year conflict within Syria. The goal of extending the border operations for upwards of a year is to help facilitate more aid sent and begin long-term infrastructure and housing projects to benefit those living in the region directly, in addition to helping to remedy the effects of an earthquake this past February to both the Bab al-Hawa border and Northwest Syrian Region. The quake left 4,500 dead in northwestern Syria and around 855,000 people displaced due to the destruction, with assistance being more necessary than ever. Two alternative borders were opened for aid transfer to help immediately after the disaster and later extended for a further three months, with these borders also hanging in the balance of the UN Security Council decision. The transmission of aid through the Bab al-Hawa border crossing did not resume until mid-June of this year due to the extent of earthquake damage.

Significant opposition to the border extension comes from the Syrian government and Russia. Russia is the primary financial backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Russia remains a permanent member of the UN Security Council and directly impacts the decision made regarding the border. With previous threats to veto or abstain from border renewals, Russia and the Syrian government want all aid to be imported through Damascus, the state's capital. Russian entities claim that the Bab al-Hawa border impedes state sovereignty as it allows for trade and transfer to occur outside the scope of government power and with accessibility to the international community. Russia has been a long ally of Assad. Seeing him take full control of Syria would be of great strategic importance to Russia. With Idlib remaining as one of the last stronghold opposition forces against Assad, groups such as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham hold extreme power within the region, with the repercussions of this conflict directly felt by the citizens residing there. Multiple access points for aid delivery to Syria were initially dispersed across various opposition-controlled areas. Yet, efforts from both Russia and China have reduced these points to one sole remainder, Bab al-Hawa.

With the effects of the earthquake compounding the pre-existing conditions in Northwest Syria leaving the region extremely vulnerable, UN aid is considered necessary for sustenance despite the limited initial resources. Additionally, many Syrian NGOs rely on funding from the UN for groundwork efforts

within cities such as Idlib, with the future of this also remaining uncertain as the renewal vote approaches. Yet, what remains consistent is the need for assistance on behalf of Syrians living in the region, who fear what a future without aid would look like amidst continued conflict. With the \$5.4 billion UN aid appeal for Syria remaining less than 12% funded, the potential closure of the Bab al-Hawa border could mean devastating effects for the region. As the UN Security Council is set to vote within the upcoming week, keeping the crossing open to preserve the human rights of citizens of Syria.