

**Over 30 Celebrities ask the UN “What are you doing about Syria?”
Third Anniversary Ceasefire Appeal by Leading Arts and Entertainment Figures**

**Joint Press Release for Immediate Release
The Hoping Foundation and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA
(for publication in Sunday editions)**

London, Jerusalem, 15 March 2014: Over 30 leading film makers, writers, artists, musicians and public figures have come together in a joint public appeal to the United Nations, asking the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council to make clear what they are doing to create “local ceasefires” and “safe spaces” for all civilians in Syria. The call comes two weeks after the UN was last able to deliver food parcels to the besieged Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk in Damascus and amid mounting concern for some 20,000 people trapped there.

The joint statement, endorsed by the Hoping Foundation and the UN’s Palestinian Refugee Agency, UNRWA, draws particular attention to the plight of some half million Palestinians living in Syria who have now been made refugees “two or even three times” because of the conflict. Those calling for an immediate ceasefire and lifting of the sieges of civilian areas include film directors, actors, and producers such as Alfonso Cuarón (Best Director Oscar for Gravity), Stephen Frears, Ken Loach, Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant and Eric Fellner; musicians Sting, Annie Lennox, Roger Waters, Peter Gabriel, Bryan Adams amongst others; artists such as Tracey Emin and Marcel Odenbach; writers such as Hanif Kureishi, Will Self, and Esther Freud, along with other prominent public figures such as Laura Bailey, Bella Freud, Jemima Khan and Trudie Styler.

Bella Freud, co-founder of HOPING said “with this statement we aim to raise immediate attention to the shocking situation of Palestinians and other civilians besieged and being starved to death in Syria. Palestinians have been made refugees so many times, and their plight matters deeply to all of us”. The statement demands that “people and relief must be let through” to besieged areas. “We want our voices to carry, on behalf of those now suffering in Syria, in order to prevent any more tragedy, and we urge everyone to contact them”.

UNRWA Spokesman, Chris Gunness, said “it is now exactly two weeks since our last delivery of humanitarian aid to Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus. The situation there is desperate, so this appeal is timely and urgent. The people of Yarmouk and civilians across Syria urgently need these UN bodies to heed the call of these celebrities. We are getting continued reports of widespread malnutrition, particularly among children, of women dying in childbirth for lack of medical care and people reduced to eating animal feed”.

The HOPING-UNRWA initiative is also in support of the #LetUsThrough Thunderclap campaign which aims to generate 23 million socialmedia impressions of the campaign hashtag, which will see the now iconic image of refugees in Yarmouk lining up for food projected on the world famous electronic billboard in New York’s Times

Square on Thursday evening.

For interview requests and media inquiries, please contact Lizzie Leigh of HOPING at hoping@hopingfoundation.org or on +447737553981

See below the full statement and list of signatories.

#UNRWAHoping4Syria

"Over 500,000 Palestinian refugees are residing in Syria, refugees since 1948, and in the last years of the conflict in Syria they have been made refugees two, or even three times again.

Because both UNRWA and HOPING's purpose is to assist Palestinian refugees, we have been working to lift the siege of the refugee camps in Syria, to get emergency supplies into those camps where the population is starving, and to seek ways to make their voices heard.

All refugees have a right in international law to return to their homes. Until such a time, Palestinian refugees have a right to be protected as civilians in times of war, as do all the people of Syria.

We ask the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations, bodies that represent the peoples of the world, to tell us how they will create safe spaces and local ceasefires with immediate effect. People and relief must be let through. We want our voices to carry, on behalf of those now suffering in Syria, in order to prevent any more tragedy, and we urge everyone to contact them."

Signatories:

Alfonso Cuarón; Andrew Innes; Annie Lennox; Bella Freud; Bobby Gillespie; Bryan Adams; Carsten Höller; Daisy Lowe; David Morrissey; Douglas Hart; Emma Thompson; Eric Fellner; Esther Freud; Hanif Kureishi; Hugh Grant; James Fox; Jemima Khan; Jeremy Deller; Juergen Teller; Karma Nabulsi; Ken Loach; Laura Bailey; Liam Gillick; Marcel Odenbach; Mary McCartney; Nicholas Wright; Peter Gabriel; Robert Del Naja and Grant Marshall of Massive Attack; Roger Waters; Sheherazade Goldsmith; Stephen Frears; Sting; Tobias Rehberger; Tracey Emin; Trudie Styler; Will Self.

ends