



[The U.N. Security Council Agrees to Extend Syrian Cross-Border Humanitarian Aid Deliveries for Another Six Months as Agencies Warn of the Detrimental Impact that a Failure to do so Would Have on Millions of Vulnerable Civilians](#)

The United Nations Security Council has adopted a last-minute deal to extend the authorization of cross-border aid deliveries into northwest Syria for six months. The Bab Al-Hawa Border Crossing, a road reaching the region from Turkey, is an integral humanitarian aid corridor that allows food and other supplies to reach vulnerable civilians. The mandate had expired this past weekend after Russia used its veto power to block efforts to extend the authorization by a full year. In order to break the deadlock, a compromise was reached granting the mandate another six months, with the future option of lengthening it by the same amount of time. Turkey and others helped to push Russia to agree to the resolution, which is critical in providing food and medical supplies to the area. Aid agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and rights activists have stressed the importance of the extension, citing that the humanitarian situation in Syria would get considerably worse if this road was blocked. While the 6-month extension was ultimately just half of the desired 12-month renewal wanted by most parties involved, it is nevertheless a needed step to ensure that aid can still continue to flow into northwest Syria.

Observers and political officials have championed the midnight deal as a positive instance of multiple actors engaging in productive and persistent talks, the result of which averted exacerbating humanitarian suffering in a devastated region. Some optimistic analysts have even cited that this may be a sign of growing communication and collaboration to try and bring an end to the longstanding and brutal Syrian conflict. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, stated that “The humanitarian agreement we’ve reached here will literally save lives, but while the deal is undoubtedly critically important to ease Syrian suffering as a result of the war, it is by no means a long-term solution.”

The Syrian conflict has been one which, due to the array of rights abuses and a dire humanitarian crisis, has gained the attention of the international community, and particularly NGOs. These NGOs and human rights activists were quick to strongly condemn the initial refusal to extend the protected border crossing. Total refusal to extend it would have resulted in a serious deterioration of an already sensitive humanitarian situation in northwest Syria, where an estimated 4.4 million civilians are reliant upon the aid delivery services due to a lack of food and basic supplies. Apart from it being a moral consideration, if Russia was to block the crossing even at the modified resolution parameters, it would have been a grave violation of international law. Additionally, with that potential road corridor closure, all U.N. aid would have needed to go through the Assad regime which for understood reasons, lacks international trust to not interfere or mismanage it.

The midnight deal at the United Nations, with pressure from Turkey and diplomatic maneuvering from the United States, has positive implications with millions of Syrians getting much-needed humanitarian aid. Even as some have praised the diplomatic efforts though, there is still far more to be done in order to ensure that the road’s authorization is extended beyond the short-term 6-month deal recently approved by the U.N. Security Council. It is still deeply troubling that Russia wields a significant amount of control over the status of the humanitarian corridor. For long-lasting diplomatic triumphs regarding Syria, further attention and pressure on Russia and other Syrian-regime supporting entities is imperative to protect civilians who have been cruelly affected by the longstanding conflict.