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No. EN 325/20

August 21, 2020

**His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres  
United Nations Secretary-General  
UN Headquarters  
First Avenue at 46th Street  
New York, NY 10017 - USA**

Your Excellency, dear Secretary-General,

We write to you with deep concern about the current humanitarian catastrophe that is taking place in Hassakeh – northeast Syria. Over one million Syrians are denied their basic human rights, namely their right to live.

For more than 10 days, armed factions supported by the Turkish occupation have deliberately cut off water from the population thus subjecting them, especially children, elderly and vulnerable people, to thirst and critical health conditions. This comes at a time when the spread of COVID19 virus is taking its toll on the entire country. Moreover, this humanitarian situation is further aggravated by the high summer temperatures in that region.

Using water as a weapon – which is not the first time – is a barbaric act and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights. Yet, there has been no response from the international community to this atrocity despite the constant appeal of the people of the region. If water blockade continues, it would only be appropriate to characterize this inhumane act as a crime against humanity.

While we hold the international community responsible for the consequences of this unethical act, we urge the United Nations, through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Union, to address immediately this calamity and to provide water and help for the suffering people of Hassakeh and northeast Syria.

Yours sincerely,



**Ignatius Aphrem II**  
Patriarch of Antioch and All the East  
Supreme Head of the Universal Syrian Orthodox Church