



**Hala Kamil remarks at World Humanitarian Day event
UN Headquarters, New York, New York, 19 August 2016**

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General,

Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I stand here before you today, my beloved Aleppo is burning. 275,000 men women and children are under siege and two million are living in fear of besiegement. They cry out but they are met with silence, the world does not hear them.

Instead, the world hears the echoes of gun shots and explosions, tormented by images of knife-wielding terrorists killing in the name of Islam.

Well not in our name, not in my name.

Aleppo used to be a bustling mecca. Now it is a vision of hell, a vibrant city bombed into the stone ages. Families who remain live in apartment buildings without walls, their bakeries, schools and health clinics blasted into dust.

I ask the world to hold on to that which unites us now more than ever: love, respect, freedom. My homeland is bleeding profusely and the world is yet to tend to its wounds. The scars of war threaten to leave generations without hope. Please do not continue to let that be the case.

While walking up the stairs to address this solemn assembly I tried to imagine for a moment all these most powerful people in the history of mankind who have stood here before.

Can these most powerful heads of State be bothered with the fate of individuals? With stories of families fleeing from places like Aleppo?

After all, this city that my family and I escaped from to seek shelter in Germany, stands just as a symbol for the misery that countless families around the world bear.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have no access to the daily challenges of global politics and diplomacy, but Aleppo has become a symbol of our collective failure to deliver to live up to our humanity and deliver a solution.

In a world of conflicting views and interests, the adverse fate of ordinary people gets buried. I imagine that the quarrelling world powers throw tons of opposing images and stories of suffering people at one other - suffering that they claim to defend.

The story of my ordinary family is just a small glimpse into what this suffering feels like. Thank you for watching it.

I do not agree with those out there who say that there are two worlds: One for the political decision-makers and one for those who bear the consequences of their decisions. We who suffer those consequences must have some bearing on the actions – or lack of action - of the powerful.

Tonight I want to reach out to all of you: to the most powerful and also to my fellow Syrians, to grieving mothers, fathers, children, husbands, wives, and lovers. Make your voices heard!

I call upon you not to give up and not to regard us as helpless victims being ushered by the powers of destiny alone, forever deprived of self-determination.

We may have lost our homes, but we have not lost our ability to change this world, for it is the only world we have!

Thank you for your attention.