Chairman Royce, members of the committee,

thank you very much for having us here today.

We are 2 years into this conflict, and we are in the midst of a

grim and escalating humanitarian crisis. We’ve heard the grim statistics;

behind each of these statistics are profound stories of loss

and particular impact on the women and children who are always

the most affected by conflict.

We heard these stories in January when the three of us traveled

to the region, and it really hits home how profoundly brutal this

war is when you stand at the border of Syria and Jordan at night

and literally watch thousands of families walk across that border,

mainly women and children.

I want to just cover a few key points today. First, our humanitarian

mandate is one of the most important expressions of who we

are as Americans, and the U.S. Government is helping those in

need throughout Syria. Since the conflict began 2 years ago, our

aid has been a lifeline to more than 2.4 million people, including

those in areas affected by the worst violence, in Idlib, in Aleppo,

in Daraa.

We are working through all channels, through the United States,

international organizations, NGOs, local Syrian groups and networks

to reach all who are in need throughout Syria. We are working

closely with the Syrian Opposition Coalition’s Assistance Coordination

Unit or ACU, which is now playing a vital role in coordinating

international aid going into Syria. USAID has a full-time liaison

working with the ACU to build that relationship, to share information,

coordinate the assistance, and help the ACU have greater

capacity to do more.

Our assistance is reaching all 14 Governorates and approximately

60 percent of our aid is reaching those in contested and Opposition-

held areas. We’ve prioritized food, basic medical, and trauma

care relief supplies. In Aleppo Governorate 50 bakeries were reopened

with enough flour from USAID to bake daily bread for

210,000, and working with a cadre of very brave doctors, mainly

Syrians, we’re supporting 144 hospitals, health clinics, and mobile

units who are providing essential care, and especially looking at

the needs of women and children who are affected by this conflict.

My second point is that all of this is not enough. The growing

crisis is outpacing the international response capacity. We have a

problem of access. The single greatest factor limiting humanitarian

aid is that we need more access across battle lines; we need crossborder

access. We are simply not able to reach everyone in need.

There are not enough resources. Simply put, there is not enough

money to reach the scale of this need. We continue to urge all countries

to follow through on the generous commitments they made at

the Pledging Conference in Kuwait in late January. It is imperative

for all countries to step forward to share the burden. We invite you

to add your voices to that call.

Security is a constant concern. Every day I get reports of humanitarian

aid workers who have been kidnapped, targeted, and clinics

and bakeries bombed. Just last month, three USAID-funded medical

clinics were bombarded, one was destroyed by a mortar shell,

10 people were killed. So, to protect our humanitarian partners, to

insure the aid can continue and reach those in need, we are not

branding much of our assistance, which goes to my third point.

We are working hard to insure that the Syrian people know the

United States is the largest donor, and that the American people

are standing by them in this hour of need. We’re working with our

partners to find ways to safely and selectively brand, when they

can, in one of the most dangerous and complex humanitarian environments

on earth right now. They are engaging intensively with

local leaders at every level to make sure they understand where

the aid is coming from. We’re amplifying our support through official

visits to the region, intensive regional media engagement, and

making a full government-wide push to communicate directly to

the Syrians. This hearing today is a wonderful opportunity to further

that message. So, again, our thanks.

My fourth and final point is that in addition to humanitarian assistance,

as Ambassador Ford has detailed, the U.S. is investing in

Syria’s transition to help the Syrian Opposition deliver. We recognize

they need to deliver on meeting Syrian needs now, so we are

working with them through offices like the Office of Transition Initiatives

to identify priority projects both immediate and longer

term that can help the Syrians.

Our continued assistance and support for the Syrian people is a

vital investment in the stability of a region that’s at the heart of

our U.S. national security interests, and our humanitarian help is

a crucial expression of our American values and our solidarity with

the Syrians at this tragic time.

We know our humanitarian assistance will not end the bloodshed

but it is saving millions of lives, and preventing a tragic situation

from becoming worse. Thank you.

Congressman, thank you very much for your

question. I will start by just saying when I was there in January,

I met with a group of young activists, including young women who

have now had to give up their dreams of being lawyers and finishing

their college education.

On International Women’s Day, I got a series of text messages

from them to promote a campaign they had organized called ‘‘I am

SHE,’’ that we had supported, very much focused on bringing to attention

the special needs of women in conflict. This is an issue we

take seriously globally.

In Syria, through the hospitals that we’re supporting, we’ve also

brought in rape kits, and counselors. It is in the immediate aftermath

of a sexual assault that it’s so important to get treatment.

We are also working with partners to provide special counseling for

the many, many children who are affected by this, who are traumatized

now.

This has impact for the rest of your life—to go through this.

Many children are being caught in the crossfire, as are the women,

and it is brutal.

And my colleague, Anne, might want to say something about the

particular plight of women in refugee camps.

Yes. Thank you for your question. I think this underscores

the fragmentation that’s happening in Syria, and the

ways in which so many particular groups are being targeted and

threatened.

We provide humanitarian assistance on the basis of need regardless

of who you are. We are seeking to get into all the 14

Governorates. Many of the Christian communities are concentrated

in what’s called the Christian Valley between Homs and Tartus,

and Aleppo, and we are definitely insuring that assistance is getting

there through our partners, as well as in a few pockets in the

suburbs of Damascus.

This is something that we’re definitely watching along with all

the groups that are particularly vulnerable.

Yes, I would just simply add that we evaluate

this every day and look at every opportunity to see where we can

brand safely. Ultimately, we need to provide assistance in a way

that insures that it gets to the people, and that we are able to save

lives in this really, really difficult crisis.

If we do so in a way that further endangers the aid workers, it

threatens not only our very brave colleagues, but it also will shut

down the overall enterprise. So, it’s a delicate balance, and as a result,

we’re also looking at all the other ways to get the word out,

all the other ways to communicate directly to the Syrian people

that the American people are standing with them.

Well, I will just add that I detail out in my testimony

some of the ways in which we’re working to help the communities

who are stretched and strained by the influx of refugees, and

working directly with the governments of these countries to provide

additional support. So, it’s an important question, and one that

we’re deeply focused on.

It’s limited, but it’s important that through the

training, through the provision of those supplies and also, by the

way, just a lot of regular supplies that women need.

For those who have been forced from their home,

and then those who experience the violence. It’s limited, but it is

definitely a part of how we train those who are participating in the

clinics and hospitals that we support.

And you are such a wonderful champion of women, I want to

make another comment.

And that is, part of supporting this tolerant secular

vision is also supporting the many strong, powerful Syrian

women to have a voice, and to be a part of that future.

Suheir al-Atassi is a very strong, wonderful woman who’s heading

the Assistance Coordination Unit. We’ve worked closely with

her, and along with our State colleagues we are providing support

and training for a group of women who have put together a charter

for Syrian women. This is part of a long-term commitment that we

have to support women’s voices to be at the table during negotiations,

and to be part of the future.

As I said, we’re examining on a case-by-case basis

when and where we might be able to safely brand, but we’re also

looking at what are the other ways in which people get their information.

So, we recently, the three of us took a trip to the region,

did intensive regional media, Arabic language thanks to Ambassador

Ford’s Arabic.

First of all, thank you for taking the trip. It’s an

important symbol to have you visit. And you are absolutely right,

this is—this goes far beyond one side. And I think it more than

anything else is really emblematic of a global epidemic of violence

against women. We see this—this goes far beyond the borders of

Syria.

And if you noted on Valentine’s Day, there was a wonderful

event called, ‘‘A Billion Rising,’’ which is women around the globe

taking to the streets with music and poetry, but making the strong

assertion that there’s no longer a place on this planet for violence

against women.

We are working in all the ways that we can to address the symptoms,

to provide treatment, counseling, medical care, but at the end

of the day, there are deep norms that need to be changed around

the world.