Good morning, Chairman Royce, Ranking Members,

and Mr. Deutch, and members of this committee. Thank you

for hosting this hearing today on the humanitarian crisis inside

Syria.

I am pleased to be able to appear before the committee with my

colleague, Ambassador Robert Ford, and USAID Assistant Administrator,

Nancy Lindborg. Our offices work closely together to provide

humanitarian aid to those affected by the violence in Syria.

The 2-year anniversary of the Syria uprising coincides with another

dark milestone. Over 1 million refugees have fled Syria. More

troubling, half of that number arrived in the last 2 months.

I would like to share with you the approach the Bureau for Population,

Refugees, and Migration is taking to address the crisis, and

how that complements and reinforces what USAID does. In my

written testimony, I describe how the refugee crisis is affecting the

neighboring countries, and I won’t go into those details here, but

invite questions from you on the very different situations we have

seen in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq.

Let me just say that we recognize the huge strain that the influx

of refugees is currently placing on host countries. It is essential

that neighboring countries continue to keep their borders open for

those refugees fleeing violence in Syria.

In every meeting with officials from these countries we thank

them for allowing refugees to cross and discuss ways to help them

uphold humanitarian principles while protecting their own security,

and preventing a spillover of violence.

The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration works closely

with our colleagues at USAID, and together we lead the U.S. Government’s

humanitarian response. Nancy Lindborg and I have

traveled often to the region, traveled together twice, and on our

most recent trip were also joined by Ambassador Ford in Turkey

prior to our participation at the January Kuwait Donors Conference.

The State Department is helping to get as much humanitarian

aid as possible to Syria’s conflict victims. We are providing funding

to the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red

Cross, and non-governmental organizations. These aid agencies

bring technical expertise and operational capacity to respond to a

crisis as large-scale as this. Of the nearly $385 million provided

thus far, the State Department’s contribution total nearly $185 million

and meet basic humanitarian needs such as shelter, water,

and health both inside Syria, and in host countries.

The delivery of assistance is often undertaken at great personal

risk. In recent months, U.N. convoys have delivered aid to Opposition-

held areas in Syria where thousands are in acute need of humanitarian

help. Such movements are highly dangerous.

Of course, people in need are not concentrated in one area and

can be found all around the shifting battle lines. Humanitarian organizations

provide aid in a neutral and impartial manner. The

United Nations is seeking to get access to all communities in need

on a regular basis. It is unacceptable and a violation of humanitarian

principles for the Syrian regime to deny this access.

I should mention that the fighting has also endangered the lives

of Palestinians and Iraqi refugees who lived in Syria. They, too, are

caught up in this crisis and have been displaced, or have fled the

country.

I regret to tell you that even as the crisis explodes, the international

community is facing a resource problem. The U.N.’s Regional

Response Plan has thus far received only 21 percent of the

funds it needs to operate for the first half of 2013. Other donors

must quickly provide the funds that agencies need to keep lifesaving

operations going.

And even if the Assad regime falls soon, humanitarian aid will

likely continue. This is because of the widespread destruction of

Syria’s infrastructure and predicted flows of refugees that would

continue to cross borders—likely in both directions. Needs could extend

into the long term.

I’ve got my work cut out for me in terms of convincing other

countries to give more, in setting the record straight about the heroic

efforts of aid workers inside Syria, in pressing international

aid agencies to do as much as they can, wherever they can.

I am encouraging U.N. leaders to take on more risks and push

the envelope to get aid into those hard to access parts of Syria

where the needs are great. And we are formally requesting that

they plan for every conceivable contingency since this crisis has already

defied predictions about its likely scale and scope.

We are asking neighboring countries to keep their borders open

despite political tensions and economic burdens within their own

countries, to work with us to insure international aid reaches the

Syrians, and to help us uphold international standards in order to

protect and aid refugees.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, my Bureau’s primary concerns are

providing protection and assistance to those who have fled the violence.

The State Department’s overall goal, of course, is a return

of peace and stability to Syria, and to one day see the refugees return

home. And I’ll be happy to answer your questions at the appropriate

time.

We are working with UNHCR in Jordan, and

UNFPA in Turkey to insure that aid is provided to women and

girls who have suffered as they fled from Syria. We’ve heard very

credible reports that one of the things they’re fleeing from is the

threat or actual rape.

In the Zaatari refugee camp, we are giving funding to NGOs so

that they can meet the needs of Syrian women and children. So,

we take the issue very, very seriously, and thank you for raising

it.

Thank you for asking, Congressman. In our conversations

with these neighboring countries, they have explained to

us the strains and the burdens that this is putting on their societies.

There are economic strains, and they are also sometimes tensions

between the groups in those countries, like in Lebanon, for

example. We were talking before about Christians, I was thinking

about how Christians and Muslims live together in Lebanon, but

when you have these extra burdens put on a country, it can really

provoke tensions among different communities.

So, what Congress can do is continue to provide assistance so

that we can support these countries. In some cases, such as Jordan,

we have a bilateral assistance relationship. In the case of Lebanon,

we really prefer to work through international organizations. And

even in Turkey can do discreet things by providing assistance

through non-governmental organizations, or have technical experts

from the international organizations provide assistance, even

though the Turks are very much in the lead of their own camps.

I realize that asking for more money at this current time and

this environment on Capitol Hill, I don’t have to tell you that that

sort of goes against the grain, but that is the key way that we can

convert our good intentions to real live aid, and make a difference

in people’s lives on the ground.

The difference between Syria and Rwanda is that

Rwanda was carried out by large numbers of people using very

simple implements, machetes, and they set upon their neighbors

and they slaughtered them over a very quick period of time.

In Syria, we see months and months going on that people are

being killed by their own government, and that they are being

killed from the sky. Some of the refugees we spoke to in Jordan

were talking about barrel bombs that would be dropped, so they

weren’t killing face-to-face. The barrel bombs would come down, explode,

and take out large groups of people. The shrapnel would go

sideways, they would maim and injure children, the elderly, ill people.

And then, also, as Robert has discussed with me, Scuds are

now being used to just destroy whole city blocks.

So, it’s probably more efficient to use that kind of awful weaponry

from the sky. And the results then are the same: Lots, and

lots, and lots of innocent lives lost, and a very completely senseless

waste of life.

The High Commissioner for Refugees is in town for

a few days, so he and I went to the studio part of the State Department

yesterday and spoke to the lead correspondent from Syria

Deeply, which is a group of journalists in New York who are trying

to get information into Syria. And we do that sort of thing all the

time. The day before I’d been on CBS News. We’re trying to get our

messages out however we can, so we really appreciate your putting

a spotlight on the humanitarian pieces of this crisis.

Congressman, I’ve written in the past about countering

financial flows to terrorists, so I’m not qualified to answer

your question.

What I’d like to do is defend the U.N. presence in

Damascus, because they’re not there to prop up the Assad regime.

They’re there to make sure that the aid gets in. Now, to get visas,

they have to get them from the Ministries that he controls. But

once they’re there, their intention, which they are, in my judgment,

fulfilling, is to get aid out to innocent people wherever they can

throughout the country.

Now, in Syria there is no only Opposition on one side, and only

regime control on the other side. It’s more like a checkerboard, and

they are trying to get it to all these hard to reach areas, and

they’re trying to get to people everywhere.

Let me give you an example. I was talking to the World Health

Organization about vaccinations. For 21⁄2 years, there have hardly

been vaccination campaigns going on in Syria. Disease won’t respect

where the battle lines are, so we want to get the aid in wherever

we can using every possible legitimate method we can. And

the U.N. is playing a very important part of that, think.