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## G8 demands 'greater humanitarian assistance' for Syrians



G8 foreign ministers meeting in London Thursday called for “greater humanitarian assistance” for war-affected Syrians, and said they were “appalled” by the rising death toll of more than 70,000 people.

Leaders of the Syrian National Coalition were present on the sidelines. During a lunch meeting on Wednesday, they asked global powers for more humanitarian aid, according to a U.S. official.

The United States, which on Feb. 28 said it would for the first time give non-lethal aid to Syrian rebel fighters and more than double its aid to civilian opposition, has so far chosen not to provide arms to the rebels.

In the final statement, the ministers themselves “called for greater humanitarian assistance and for improved and safe access to the Syrian people by humanitarian agencies in co-ordination with all parties to the conflict.

“They were appalled that more than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict and that there are now more than a million Syrian refugees registered by the UNHCR in neighboring countries, and more than two million internally displaced persons in Syria,” the statement added.

But they made no mention of supplying arms to the rebels as the opposition demanded.

The ministers reaffirmed their support for U.N.-Arab League envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and for finding a political transition in Syria, they said.

The statement also urged all sides in the conflict, which has now entered its third year, to respect human rights.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met Syrian opposition leaders but U.S. officials said Kerry made "no promises," with Western nations concerned that any weapons supplied to rebels could fall into the hands of al-Qaeda-linked fighters.