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## UN READIES EMERGENCY SITES AS IRAQ HITS MOSUL

20.02.2017

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AFP, 19 Feb 2017

THE United Nations said yesterday as Iraqi forces launched their offensive to retake west Mosul that it was rushing to build more shelters ahead of an expected wave of displacement.

We are racing against the clock to prepare emergency sites south of Mosul to receive displaced families, the UNs humanitarian coordinator in Iraq, Lise Grande, said in a statement.

The humanitarian operation is already stretched. We are trying to reach more than 6 million people across Iraq who need help. We dont have all of the funding we need and many partners are facing major capacity constraints, she said.

Around 350,000 children are trapped in western Mosul, Save the Children warned.

Iraqi forces and their allies, including the US and UK, must do everything in their power to protect children and their families from harm, and avoid civilian buildings like schools and hospitals as they push deeper into the city, said the London-based charitys Iraq country director, Maurizio Crivallero.

He warned that escape is not an option for most families, who risk summary execution by fighters from the Islamic State group, sniper fire and landmines □ but they are also running out of food, water and medicine.

This is the grim choice for children in western Mosul right now: bombs, crossfire and hunger if they stay — or execution and snipers if they try to run, Crivallero said in a statement.

Safe escape routes for civilians must also be established as soon as possible, he added.

The offensive to retake Mosuls west bank that began yesterday could be the most brutal fighting yet in a four-month-old operation on Iraqs second city, where the leader of the Islamic State group declared a caliphate in 2014.

Isis business model failing as group haemorrhages millions while losing territory across Syria and Iraq