



In this Issue

[Key Developments in northwestern Syria](#) P.1

[Protection Concerns for Haijn displaced](#) P.2

[Aid Convoy reaches 41,000 people in Rukban](#) P.3

FIGURES

People in need of humanitarian assistance	13M
People in acute need of humanitarian assistance	5.2M
Internally displaced people (as of August)	6.2M
Returnees (January – December 2018)	1.4 M
People in need in UN-declared hard-to-reach areas	1.1M

Source 2018 PMR & IDPs Taskforce

HRP 2018 FUNDING

3.36 billion
requested (US\$)

64.9% funded

Source: FTS/19 February 2019

Key Developments in northwestern Syria

A recent expansion of areas under the influence of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in northwest Syria has resulted in a potentially more challenging working environment for humanitarian agencies on the ground. Humanitarian agencies continue to closely monitor the situation and humanitarian deliveries are not reported to have been impacted.

The latest development follows temporary suspension of funding by some key donors for stabilisation activities benefitting more than 400,000 people at the end of 2018. The activities in question included support for key health services such as ambulances and referrals.



water.

An estimated 2.7 million men, women and children are currently in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in northwestern Syria. This includes 1.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), many of whom have been displaced multiple times and have been living in camps for years; resulting in increased levels of vulnerability. Some 40 per cent of children are out of school, while 2 million residents rely on water trucking for most if not all their clean

While a September agreement announced by Turkey and Russia to establish a demilitarised zone in the area, including around Idleb, resulted in a significant decrease in fighting and airstrikes, January witnessed an increase in clashes between non-state armed groups, placing civilians at further risk and resulting in injury and death. There has also been a significant increase in levels of shelling along front lines, with civilian casualties regularly being reported.

Despite a difficult operating environment, both the United Nations and non-governmental organizations continue to deliver life-saving or sustaining assistance in the area. Each month, 2.24 million Syrians are reached with critical assistance through cross-border operations out of Turkey; providing food, medicine, tents, critical winter supplies, and other forms of life-saving assistance to those who would otherwise not be accessible.

Humanitarian organizations continue to engage with all actors on the protection of civilians, including aid workers, humanitarian access, and respect for principled humanitarian action, to ensure that assistance reaches those who need it. The UN and humanitarian partners continue to implement a number of measures to strengthen risk mitigation and enhance due diligence and accountability systems, including screening and vetting of implementing partners, monitoring of distributions, commodity tracking systems, facilitating regular feedback from affected

communities and engagement with all parties to the conflict, to address operational challenges as they arise.

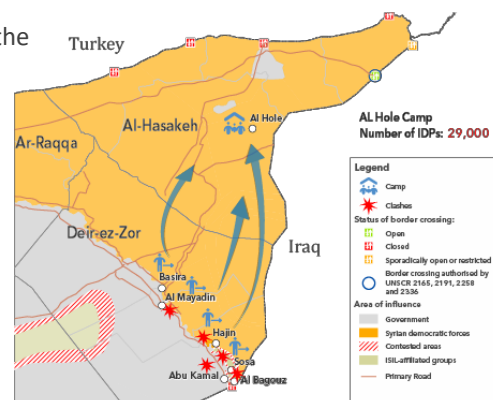
Protection Concerns for Hajin Displaced

Since late last year, large numbers of civilians were reportedly killed and injured in Hajin and surrounding areas in south-eastern Deir ez-Zor Governorate due to air strikes and intense fighting between the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Over this period, some 29,000 people were relocated from Hajin to the Al Hole camp in Hassakeh governorate, some 300 kilometres north of Hajin. Women, children and the elderly made up the majority of the people fleeing Hajin.

The rapid rate of new arrivals tripled the population of the Al Hole camp, which is now at full capacity. Humanitarian assistance has been scaled up in the camp, with 24-hour response teams are working to receive the newly displaced, quickly identify the most vulnerable cases and provide urgent assistance, including medical and protection support, with critical medical cases referred to nearby hospitals for treatment.

Extremely harsh conditions are reported along the route north, including cold temperatures and a lack of food, water, shelter and health services. By mid-February, at least 50 children were reported to have died either while in transit or shortly after arriving in the Al Hole camp, mostly due to hypothermia caused by exposure and a lack of access to healthcare, while making the arduous journey northwards.

The UN has established a transit centre in Suar town, midway between Hajin and Al Hole to receive people during the transit journey. However, humanitarian access to the initial screening site where the displaced are initially brought before their journey north remains inaccessible. Protection concerns for the displaced include constraints on freedom of movement, with many of those arriving at Al Hole expressing a preference to move to other locations, in most cases to connect with family members or friends in Deir ez-Zor Governorate.



Largest Aid Convoy from throughout the Syria Crisis reaches 41,000 People in Rukban



On February 14, The United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) finalised their largest ever humanitarian convoy to over 41,000 displaced Syrians at the remote makeshift settlement of Rukban in southeastern Syria, along the border with Jordan.

The joint UN and SARC inter-agency operation took nine days, required more than 300 staff and volunteers and consisted of 118 trucks with essential humanitarian assistance, including food, health and nutritional supplies,

core relief items, WASH materials, education items and children’s recreational kits. An additional 15 trucks contained logistical items to support the convoy.

Vaccines for some 10,000 children under five-years-of-age were part of the convoy, while a needs assessment was also carried out. The humanitarian supplies were provided based on findings of a

needs assessment undertaken during the first convoy to Rukban from within Syria in November 2018.

While the primary objective of this latest convoy was to provide critical humanitarian assistance to displaced persons, the UN recognises that a durable solution enabling people at the site to decide voluntarily and safely how to return to a normal life in a place of their choosing is required.

In line with that, the UN and SARC carried out an intention survey with nearly 3,000 households to consult with residents on their wishes and priorities. The findings are to inform discussion on facilitating durable solutions. During the convoy, most people indicated to the UN and SARC teams that they have a desire to leave Rukban; however, they have concerns over their safety and security.

The last time the United Nations had access to Rukban from within Syria was on 3-8 November, when an inter-agency convoy, jointly with SARC, delivered much needed humanitarian assistance. More regular access is needed to meet the needs of the displaced population.

They have limited access to food, medical care and other essential support. Food is primarily available through smuggling routes; however, prices remain high and the quality and variety is limited. Many people report being unable to afford basic food items and resort to negative coping mechanisms, such as skipping meals. Harsh winter temperatures, lack of sanitation systems and almost non-existent health services have greatly increased the risk of health concerns. "The conditions are harsh. There are so many people and there is lots of disease," Noor, 15, said, one out of dozens of thousands of inhabitants of the remote settlement.

There are no professional doctors in the makeshift settlement, with only some certified nurses providing extremely limited health services. This is leading to a major health crisis, with many of the displaced unable to treat injuries and chronic diseases and get support for disabilities. "I literally have nothing. My son has a medical condition and needs surgery. We've run out of everything. We don't have firewood so my daughters suffer from the cold. It's below zero here so we hope to go back home soon," Housain said, a 45-year old widow who left her home in Palmyra three years ago, along with her children – and is now trapped in Rukban.

Additional primary healthcare and basic pre-natal and post-natal care is provided at a UN clinic across the border in Jordan; however, most people in Rukban report challenges in accessing the UN clinic and getting referrals for more sophisticated care. An adequate water supply is pumped from Jordan to water points in Rukban.

For further information, please contact:

Paul Handley, Head of OCHA Regional Office for the Syria Crisis, handleyp@un.org

Heli Uusikyla, Head of OCHA Syria, uusikyla@un.org

Trond Jensen, Head of OCHA Turkey, jensen8@un.org

Mathew Ryder, Head of Office Jordan a.i, ryderm@un.org

David Swanson, Public Information Officer, swanson@un.org

OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at www.humanitarianresponse.info | www.unocha.org/syria | www.reliefweb.int