

# Northeast Syria Humanitarian Situation

## October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019



*IDPs fleeing Serê Kaniyê/Ras Al Ain area heading towards Hassakeh city on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019 courtesy of Delil Souleiman /AFP*

The most challenging aspect of the current crisis in the Northeast of Syria is not knowing when, where, how, why, and by whom the community is going to be attacked, bombed or uprooted. With the lack of clarity over these critical questions, civilians there have regrouped from multiple waves of conflict-induced displacement, and despite limited resources, continue to strive towards a peaceful and diverse society while hosting IDPs from all over Syria.

According to international efforts to map the movement of internally displaced people (IDPs) across the region over the last week, it is estimated that approximately half of those displaced have taken refuge in Hassakeh, an urban centre some 70 km south of the Syrian-Turkish border. Nonetheless, the mobility dynamics are very fluid as the IDPs continue to change their locations.

“More than half of civilians in northeast Syria were in need of humanitarian assistance before the latest fighting began. We must ensure that all measures are taken to facilitate full, safe and unfettered access to men, women and children in need,” - Nirvana Shawky, CARE’s Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

The international community must act urgently to prevent the ongoing humanitarian crisis in northeast Syria.

### *Current situation Highlights*

Northeast Syria humanitarian needs continue to rise as the conflict deepens there. Civilians are fleeing hotspot areas and sites of bombardment. Civilians are seeking refuge at their relatives' homes and communal shelters and/or in overcrowded camps. So far, 37 communal shelters in Al-Hassakeh Governorate are reported to have been targeted by attacks, and the numbers appear likely to rise further.

Overall, 55 collective shelters in Al-Hasakeh Governorate are accommodating 10,768 people (2,224 families). Seven collective shelters (six in Tal Tamer and one in Ras Al-Ain) have now been vacated. Assessments and mapping of response activities in collective shelters are ongoing and further information will be available in the coming days.

Moreover, despite the announcement of an agreed 5-day ceasefire (120 hours), intense clashes took place in Ras al-Ayn/Serê Kaniyê and the city was besieged on that same day. An appeal by health actors in the city to evacuate civilians and those who had been injured was issued. Health service provision has been disrupted due to the targeting of the main hospitals in some areas, while other health facilities are overwhelmed with emergency cases, as some 145 civilian casualties and over 40 deaths are reported by the United Nations.

The escalation of fighting is disrupting life-saving humanitarian aid to vulnerable people, including more than 700,000 who were already internally displaced into this region prior to the outbreak of fighting on 9 October. The highly volatile security situation is hindering the delivery of vital humanitarian aid as supplies are cut off and aid workers are either evacuated or themselves displaced.

In just over a week, at least 165,000 people have been displaced, including an estimated 70,000 children. Of those most recently displaced, around 10,786 people are being hosted in 55 collective shelters across 8 sub-districts of Al-Hasakeh governorate. The rest are residing with host communities. On 17 October reports were also received that 3,250 families (around 16,250 people) had been displaced from communities in northern Aleppo towards Menbij. Displaced families are reportedly staying with relatives and in informal settlements. The next day alone, 16,250 people were reportedly displaced from communities in northern Aleppo towards Menbij. Displaced families are staying with relatives or in informal settlements.

Despite the announcement of a 5-day pause in fighting on the evening of 18 October, hostilities continued to be reported in Ras Al Ain, amidst accusations from both sides that the terms of the truce have yet to be delivered.

On 19 October, local responders evacuated 30 injured people and 4 bodies from Ras Al Ain to Roj Hospital in Tal Tamer and Farman Hospital in Qamishli city, Al-Hassakeh governorate; a further 15 wounded and 17 bodies were evacuated on 20 October in addition to five families, including women and children.



*IDP children taking shelter in one of the schools in Girkê Legê/Mabadah town on October 15<sup>th</sup> 2019, courtesy of Aso Network*

The Allouk water station, which serves over 400,000 people in Al-Hasakeh city, was damaged by the bombardment. Efforts to repair and bring it back into working service were successful, with water and electricity restored to the affected population on 19 October. The water station will continue to need to be refueled over the coming days and weeks. Water will take a few days to reach all neighborhoods.

- Efforts are ongoing to relocate the remaining 14 families (83 individuals) currently stranded in Mabruka camp, now under control of the Turkish affiliated forces; families have received food assistance and relocation to Areesheh camp is expected to take place in the coming days.
- According to UN OCHA More than 176,400 people, including around 74,000 children, have been displaced from Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Aleppo governorates; to date, 18,500 people have returned to their places of origin – 2,500 to Quamishli city in AlHasakeh and 16,000 to Tal Abiad in Ar-Raqqa governorate. Overall, 55 collective shelters in Al-Hasakeh Governorate are accommodating 10,768 people (2,224 families) – seven collective shelters, six in Tal Tamer and one in Ras Al-Ain, are now empty. Mapping of assessment and response activities in collective shelters is ongoing and further information will be available in the coming days.
- More than 176,4001 people have recently been displaced since the beginning of the crisis on 9 October, fleeing military advances and hostilities. Many have displaced multiple times from one area to another. This has exacerbated poor conditions for the pre-existing camp population of over 92,000 people with 18,000 secondarily displaced following the sudden closure of two camps; Ein Issa and Mabrouka camps.
- An estimated 2,500 individuals arrived to Tal Arfan town near Darbasiyah, the displaced are from Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad. They are being hosted by a religious leader.

**Protection concerns:**

- There are reports of people returning from Qamishli town to their villages in surrounding areas. Some families displaced from Darbasiyah are reported to have started returning to protect their property.
- IDPs in collective shelters have indicated that they have no plans to return until the situation is stable and hostilities have ceased. Hostilities are continuing and there are fears that they could escalate after the 120 hour agreement expires. There are also fears of revenge attacks.
- Lack of privacy issues and separate showers in collective shelters remain as main protection concerns. There is also a need for more child friendly spaces and increased water supply.
- In Raqqa, advocacy for unimpeded access and solutions is ongoing for the 27 unaccompanied children in an interim center managed by local authorities.

**Food Security Needs and Gaps:**

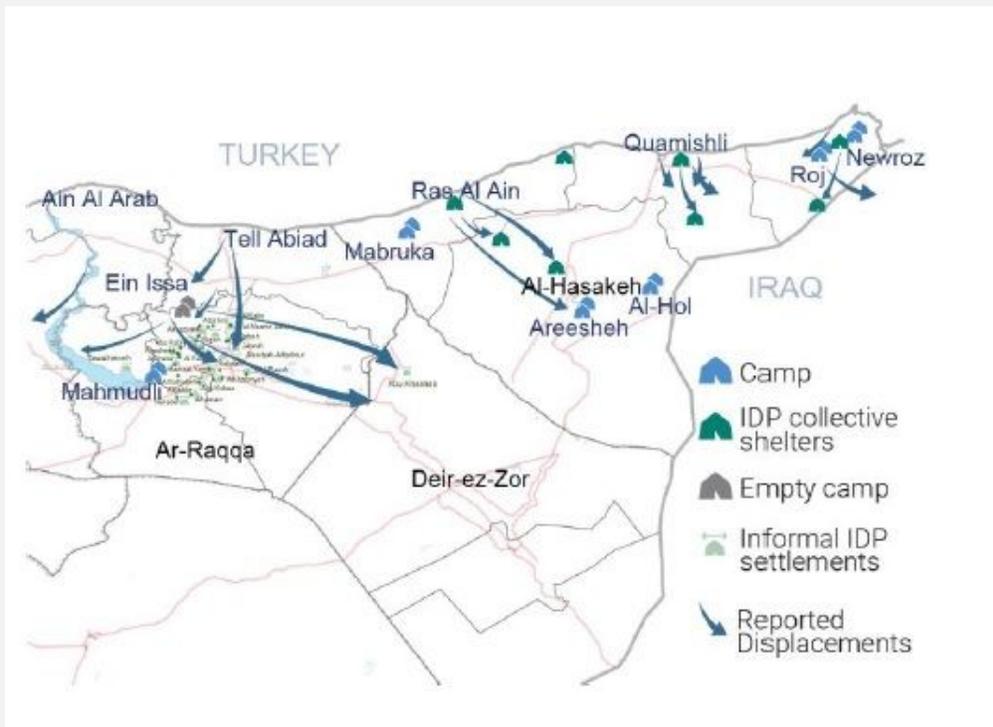
- Gaps identified thus far include households hosting displaced population in need of immediate response in Menbij, Ain al-Arab/Kobani; Al-Hasakeh in urban areas in Mabada, Tal Tamer, Al-Hasakeh and Jawadiyeh, and in Tall Abiad, Ras Al Ain and Ein Issa.
- Currently, access challenges persist in Menbij, Ain al-Arab/Kobani sub-districts and Ein Issa and Ar-Raqqa city.

**Health Needs and Gaps:**

- The health sector reports the need for rapid assessments of existing health facilities, active hospitals and new IDP relocation centers. Front line hospitals require more support to scale up operations and handle the influx of needs. Given the current circumstances, capacity building for national medical staff is essential for successful response modalities.
- Qamishli hub needs a full stock of life-sustaining medicines and medical supplies pre-positioned to support health partners in affected locations. Road access for supplies must be facilitated immediately to meet current needs, in addition to supplies being airlifted.
- First aid points, such as trauma stabilization centers, at the nearest safe locations must be ready to receive the injured and refer them to appropriate hospitals. Coordination between active partners for referral pathways of patients must be strengthened to cover existing gaps in available support.
- Early warning, alert and response systems at locations of newly arriving IDPs must be used efficiently and effectively. Water quality control systems must be established immediately in these locations as well. Alongside the systems, health education and awareness messages must be articulated through a clear system. In Ar-Raqqa city, gaps in vaccination coverage exist and require increased support as a limited number of qualified medical staff are available. Partners operating in several clinics reported that lack of drugs as one of the main problems experienced by team leads, along with overcrowding in the health facilities.

**Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs) Needs and Gaps:**

- As of 20 October, an estimated 176,419 people have been displaced or 35,284 families. It is estimated that 40% or 14,114 households are in need of NFIs including the populations living in camps and collective shelters.
- An estimated 20% of the displaced are in need of tents or emergency shelter kits including new arrivals to the camps.
- There are concerns regarding gaps and needs in heaters and heating fuel, particularly for the camps as some NGOs had confirmed distribution, but were unable to deliver. Many NGOs have had to reduce activities, or relocate staff. Historically, it has been difficult for Damascus-based agencies to receive approval for fuel distributions.
- While the camps and areas of Al-Hasakeh are expected to be covered with NFIs, there are concerns regarding gaps in other areas including Raqqa, Tal Tamer and areas that are harder to reach based on the security situation.
- Overcrowding remains a serious concern in Areesheh camp and continues to exacerbate protection, health and sanitation risks while posing challenges for all actors to implement activities and provide services. At the same time local authorities have indicated that they would not support possible expansion.



Map by UN OCHA showing displacement destinations of IDPs

*Even with the ongoing violence, SHAR and other local organisations are continuing to serve and support the local communities affected by displacement, and this is despite the risk of further escalation and lack of response to the ongoing crisis.*