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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fiftieth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017) and paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system¹ and from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for March 2018.

¹ Input provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Organization for Migration, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the United Nations Population Fund, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mine Action Service, the Department of Political Affairs and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.



II. Major developments

Box 1

Key points: March 2018

1. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#) on 24 February, in which the Council demanded a cessation of hostilities, military operations, in particular in eastern Ghutah, have reportedly claimed many hundreds of civilian lives. Thousands more civilians have reportedly been injured. There was only limited humanitarian access across conflict lines in March. Military developments in eastern Ghutah continued to result in civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure as government forces gradually advanced into the area, dividing the enclave into three separate areas. Non-State armed opposition groups continued artillery shelling of areas in Damascus city, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure. Some 133,000 people left the besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah, either through established corridors to sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq or through evacuation agreements to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates.

2. In north-western parts of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Turkish armed forces and non-State armed opposition groups entered the main city of Afrin and most other areas in the district. Since 20 January, military confrontations in the Afrin district of Aleppo Governorate have reportedly displaced over 137,000 people to the Tall Rif'at area, Nubl, Zahra', Fafin and surrounding villages. The lack of freedom of movement of internally displaced persons was a major concern, as they were prevented by local authorities from seeking safety and medical services in Aleppo city and from returning to Afrin district in some cases.

3. In Idlib Governorate, fighting between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, as well as among non-State armed opposition groups, continued to be reported. The humanitarian situation for those displaced in Idlib was extremely dire, as an additional 50,000 displaced persons recently arrived in the area from eastern Ghutah and Qadam, further stretching the capacity of host communities and humanitarian workers to respond. It is estimated that there are roughly 1.2 million internally displaced persons in Idlib Governorate, representing an increase of 25 per cent compared with figures from mid-2017.

4. An estimated 98,200 people had returned to Raqqah city as at 29 March. On 21 and 22 March, the United Nations conducted a security assessment of Raqqah city, noting the persistence of considerable risks despite relative calm and stability. The security assessment mission concluded that a humanitarian assessment mission could deploy (in early April), notwithstanding the widespread presence of explosive hazards, including unexploded ordnance, landmines and improvised explosive devices, throughout the city.

5. United Nations humanitarian assistance reached millions of people in need, including 2,159,965 people who received food assistance through regular deliveries. Access to hard-to-reach and besieged areas remained challenging, with only five inter-agency convoys reaching besieged and hard-to-reach locations during the month.

3. Since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#) on 24 February, in which the Council demanded a cessation of hostilities, military operations, in particular in eastern Ghutah, have reportedly claimed many hundreds

of civilian lives. Thousands more civilians have reportedly been injured. Attacks on critical civilian infrastructure continue to be reported; there were more than 70 verified incidents since the beginning of 2018, including 28 since mid-February. Attacks on areas of Damascus also continued from eastern Ghutah, resulting in deaths, injuries and damage to civilian infrastructure. There was only limited humanitarian access across conflict lines in March.

4. My Special Envoy for Syria was active throughout March to support the implementation of Security Council resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#).

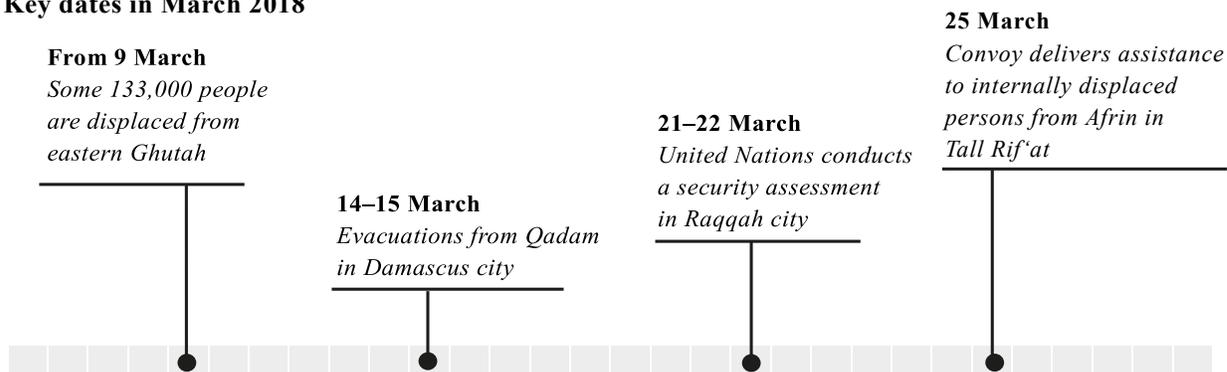
5. Negotiations between parties to the conflict in eastern Ghutah continued as the military operations escalated on the ground. Government and pro-government forces continued air and ground operations in the eastern Ghutah de-escalation area. An attack on 7 March on Hammurah and Saqba towns reportedly caused respiratory problems and suffocation among some 120 people, most of them women and children. Government forces gradually advanced into eastern Ghutah, cutting the area into three pockets.

6. Following agreements between parties to the conflict, some 130,000 internally displaced persons left the besieged enclave of eastern Ghutah in March, either through established corridors to sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq or through evacuation agreements to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates. This number includes a total of 83,288 people who left eastern Ghutah towards the sites in Rif Dimashq. While many people subsequently left those sites, 44,747 individuals remained, in facilities with the collective capacity to accommodate 25,855 people only. In addition, 48,216 individuals, mostly civilians and some fighters, left eastern Ghutah towards Idlib and Aleppo Governorates in negotiated evacuations. There were also exchanges of bodies and the release of Syrian prisoners held by armed groups. By the end of March, government forces and their allies were on the verge of gaining control over eastern Ghutah in its entirety, with negotiations in Duma ongoing.

7. The United Nations and its partners, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, provided food, water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, protection and health support to people remaining inside areas of eastern Ghutah that have recently come under government control, such as Kafr Batna, Saqba and Hamuriyah. An estimated 50,000 people are believed to remain in those areas and to be in need of basic assistance and services. Despite the scaling up of the humanitarian response, the situation in the eight sites hosting internally displaced persons remains difficult, as most sites are overcrowded, with nearly twice as many people in the facilities as their intended capacity permits. Protection risks stemming from overcrowding and a lack of privacy remain prevalent, and there is a need for additional sanitation and hygiene facilities. The most recent inter-agency convoy to a besieged area was completed on 15 March, providing food for 26,100 people in Duma in eastern Ghutah.

8. Following a local agreement in the neighbourhood of Qadam in Damascus city, 1,351 people were evacuated to Idlib Governorate on 14 and 15 March. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) moved into the district following the departure of non-State armed opposition groups, resulting in clashes with Syrian authorities and non-State armed opposition groups. The United Nations was not a party to the negotiations, nor was it involved in the organization of the evacuation.

Figure I
Key dates in March 2018



9. Turkish forces, along with Syrian non-State armed opposition groups affiliated with Operation Euphrates Shield, continued Operation Olive Branch in Afrin, in Aleppo Governorate. On 20 January, the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the United Nations in New York indicated that Turkey had “initiated a military operation on 20 January 2018 ... aimed at ensuring [the country’s] border security [and] neutralizing terrorists in Afrin” (see S/2018/53). On 18 March, Turkey reported that its forces had entered Afrin. There were also separate clashes between Turkish forces and allied non-State armed opposition groups with pro-Syrian government forces. There have been reports of civilian deaths, injuries and displacement. Military confrontations in Afrin district since 20 January have reportedly displaced over 137,000 people to the Tall Rif’at area, Nubl, Zahra’, Fafin and surrounding villages. The need for humanitarian assistance among the displaced population is high, with the majority relying on it to meet their basic needs. Since 29 January, reports have indicated that the Turkish Red Crescent and other Turkish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have provided humanitarian aid to 220,000 people in need in 133 different locations in Afrin district. The lack of freedom of movement for internally displaced persons is a major concern, as many are not permitted to proceed to Aleppo city, where there is greater capacity for the humanitarian community to provide assistance such as shelter. There are also reports of displaced persons being prevented from returning to Afrin, despite some of them expressing their willingness to go back if the conditions are conducive. There is particular concern for the sick and injured among the displaced population, as the only available hospital, in Zahra’, lacks the capacity to address all medical needs as it has only 12 beds. A mechanism has been put in place for the medical evacuation of emergency cases to Aleppo city; however, it can take up to 15 days to obtain the approval of the Syrian authorities for medical evacuations of critical patients. On 28 March, 60 medical cases were evacuated to Aleppo city following a prolonged waiting period. On 1 March, humanitarian partners delivered cross-line humanitarian assistance from Aleppo to Afrin. On 25 March, a United Nations/Syrian Arab Red Crescent inter-agency convoy delivered food, non-food items and nutrition, health and water, sanitation and hygiene items sufficient for 50,000 people in need in Tall Rif’at. A cross-border shipment to Afrin from Turkey planned for early April was also being prepared in cooperation with the Turkish authorities.

10. Fighting continued in Idlib Governorate between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups, including air strikes and artillery shelling. Shelling on the towns of Fu’ah and Kafraya, besieged by non-State armed opposition groups, was also reported. Clashes between non-State armed opposition groups were also reported. The Syrian Liberation Front, a group formed from the Ahrar al-Sham and Nour al-Din al-Zanki groups, launched an offensive on Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (the Levant Liberation Organization) across Idlib Governorate and the western part

of Aleppo Governorate, which responded through counter-attacks, both of which led to casualties.

11. The humanitarian situation for those displaced in Idlib is extremely dire, with almost 400,000 people displaced owing to fighting that has taken place since December 2017. Camps for internally displaced persons continue to operate at up to 400 per cent of capacity. While around 168,000 of those previously displaced have now returned to their original subdistricts, the capacity to respond remains severely overstretched, as an additional 50,000 displaced people have recently arrived in the area from eastern Ghutah and Qadam.

12. The south-western part of the country also saw renewed violence, including government air strikes and artillery shelling, as well as repeated clashes between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups in Dar'a Governorate. Reports that both government forces and non-State armed opposition groups had reinforced their positions with additional equipment and personnel were received by the United Nations. Meanwhile, government sources reported on local agreements being reached in multiple villages and towns in the area.

13. An estimated 98,200 people had returned to Raqqah city as at 29 March. While public services are slowly returning, with bakeries having reopened, the city lacks electricity and mobile communications; water is only pumped at a very limited capacity to the outskirts of the city. There are currently three functional health-care facilities inside Raqqah city. On 21 and 22 March, the United Nations conducted a security assessment of Raqqah city, noting the persistence of considerable risks despite relative calm and stability. The widespread presence of explosive hazards, including unexploded ordnance, landmines and improvised explosive devices, throughout the city has continued to pose a significant risk to civilians as well as to humanitarian workers. Health actors are continuing to see an average of more than 200 blast-related civilian injuries and deaths per month. The systematic survey, marking and subsequent removal of explosive hazards is a precondition for the safe return of civilians, as well as the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. The United Nations security assessment mission concluded that a humanitarian assessment mission could deploy (in early April).

14. Fighting against ISIL continued. ISIL continued to retain a presence east of Dayr al-Zawr city (around the towns of Albu Kamal and Mayadin), in Hasakah Governorate, and in the Damascus suburb of Yarmouk. ISIL also expanded its control over parts of the nearby Qadam neighbourhood of Damascus and negotiated an exchange of prisoners and deceased fighters with government forces.

15. The Department of Defense of the United States of America publicly reported that, in March, the coalition led by the United States had carried out at least 32 strikes against ISIL targets: 30 reported in the Governorate of Dayr al-Zawr and 2 reported in the Governorate of Hasakah.

16. On 4 March, the Ministry of Defence publicly reported that, in response to shelling with mortars on residential areas and military positions in Damascus and Rif Dimashq, the Syrian Arab Army had taken over several areas in the previous 48 hours, including Utaya, Hawsh al-Salihiyah, Hawsh Kharabu, Nashabiyah, Hazrama and Bayt Nayim farms. The Ministry then stated on 16 March that the Syrian Arab Army had taken over a large number of cities in eastern Ghutah, including Nashabiyah, Salihiyah, Bayt Nayim, Muhammadiyah, Hawsh al-Ash'ari, Shaffuniyah, Bayt Siwa, Hamuriyah, Mudayra and Misraba.

Protection

17. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and to damage and destroy civilian infrastructure. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians, destroying and damaging vital infrastructure and leaving communities littered with explosive hazards that killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat. The many civilian casualties and the scale of civilian destruction remain a strong indication that violations of the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution, and of the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks, are continuing. Children are particularly affected. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2017 was the deadliest year for children in the country since the beginning of the conflict.

18. Fighting continued to have an impact on civilian infrastructure, including medical facilities, schools, markets and places of worship. On the basis of information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), civilian casualties occurred in various governorates, in possible violation of international humanitarian law (see annex). OHCHR has documented alleged incidents perpetrated by parties to the conflict, including government forces and their allies, non-State armed opposition groups and their allies and Security Council-designated terrorist groups.

19. In addition to violations documented by OHCHR, the Government provided OHCHR with information on alleged violations. The United Nations cannot independently verify these allegations. In a note verbale received on 8 March, the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic in Geneva detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city in the Syrian Arab Republic, on 3rd, 4th and 5th of March 2018, which amounted to 99 mortars and their locations". It stated that "those terrorist attacks resulted in two civilian deaths and five injured civilians, most of them children and women, as well as in physical damages to private and public property and infrastructures". In addition, on 9 March, the Permanent Mission sent a note verbale to OHCHR in which it detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city ... on 6-7 March, which amounted to 61 mortars ... killing three civilians and injuring a further 28, most of them women and children, and damaging private and public property and infrastructure". In a subsequent note verbale dated 19 March, the Permanent Mission detailed "lists of shelling with mortars and missile attacks, perpetrated by terrorist armed groups, targeting residential areas in Damascus city ..., during the period from 13th to 17th of March 2018, which amounted to 86 mortars ... resulting in four civilian deaths and 89 injured civilians most of them children and women, as well as physical damages to private and public property and infrastructures".

20. Notwithstanding the call upon the Syrian authorities by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22 to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights, OHCHR reporting remains limited, given that the Government has not granted it access to the country.

21. The United Nations and its health partners verified eight attacks, including air strikes, that affected health-care facilities and personnel in March, some of which repeatedly targeted the same facilities. On 3 March, the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was hit by two mortars, causing material damage. On the same day, the Albairouni hospital, a public cancer-specialized hospital in Rif Dimashq (Harasta), was hit with a number of mortars, causing one injury and material damage.

On 5 March, Tishrin Military Hospital in Rif Dimashq was affected by indirect artillery fire, causing two injuries, and the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was hit again with a missile shell, causing injury to a hospital staff member and material damage. On 6 March, Tishrin Military Hospital in Rif Dimashq was again affected by indirect artillery fire, causing two injuries. On 8 March, the Albairouni hospital in Rif Dimashq (Harasta) was hit by three mortar shells, causing one injury. It was hit again on 9 March by indirect artillery fire, causing material damage. On 18 March, the Ibn Sina psychiatric hospital in Rif Dimashq (Duma) was once more hit by a mortar, causing one fatality (hospital staff) and material damage. On 20 March, the Irbin hospital in eastern Ghutah, which had previously been deconflicted by the Co-Chairs of the International Syria Support Group, suffered an attack that killed one patient and resulted in structural damage to the hospital.

22. Educational facilities also continued to suffer the impact of the fighting, with the United Nations verifying three attacks affecting schools and children. On 5 March, in Taftanaz, in Idlib Governorate, shelling occurred near the main gate of the Muhaudin school. The school had already sent the children home following earlier shelling on the main market that morning. While leaving the school, more than 20 people were injured, including more than 10 children and school staff. The school building suffered minor damage. On 11 March, in Idlib city, the Department of Examinations of the Education Directorate was hit by air strikes, resulting in severe damage to the building and equipment. On 21 March, in Kafr Battikh, in Idlib Governorate, a school was hit by air strikes, killing 13 schoolchildren aged between 7 and 11 years.

Humanitarian access

Box 2

Key points

1. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need, including from within the Syrian Arab Republic. Regular programming reached more than 2.1 million people with food assistance through 2,162 deliveries.
2. Five United Nations inter-agency convoys delivered multisectoral assistance to 162,100 people in one besieged location and three hard-to-reach locations.
3. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#) and [2393 \(2017\)](#), remains a vital part of the humanitarian response. In March, 466 trucks (27 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance to more than 1 million people through cross-border deliveries. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey and monitored the loading and passage of the first relief consignment through the Ya‘rubiyah crossing on the Iraqi-Syrian border.

23. Seven years into the Syrian crisis, the scale of humanitarian needs in the country remains staggering. In the 2018 humanitarian needs overview, 13.1 million people were identified as being in need of humanitarian assistance, including 5.6 million people in acute need. Some 6.1 million people were internally displaced as at the end of 2017, including 2.9 million displaced during the previous 12 months. Close to 5.5 million registered Syrian refugees remain displaced in a region facing deepening economic, social and development challenges. Less than half of the country’s health facilities are operational and more than a third of households rely on unsafe water sources. One in three schools have been damaged or destroyed. An estimated 6.5 million people are facing severe food insecurity. In addition, the delivery of humanitarian assistance to people in need remained extremely challenging in many

areas of the country as a result of active conflict, shifting conflict lines, administrative impediments and deliberate restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods by the parties to the conflict. In particular, access by the United Nations and its partners to people living in besieged and hard-to-reach locations remained a critical concern. Bureaucratic impediments, such as the non-issuance of facilitation letters by the Government, remained a significant factor in delays or non-deliveries, the creation of a tripartite coordination mechanism to tackle such problems notwithstanding. The most recent meeting of the mechanism was held on 12 December 2017, at which time there was no breakthrough on access-related issues.

24. Under the United Nations inter-agency convoy plan for March and April, access was requested to 27 locations in besieged and hard-to-reach areas, with the objective of reaching 1,027,220 people. Convoys are prepared for areas with multisectoral needs where access is limited, to ensure that United Nations support is based on needs. Five inter-agency convoys were able to deploy to hard-to-reach and besieged locations, namely, to besieged Duma in eastern Ghutah, Dar al-Kabirah in Homs Governorate and Tall Rif'at in Aleppo Governorate (see table 1). The second convoy to Duma, which was completed on 9 March, delivered the remaining food assistance, along with some health and nutrition items that could not be offloaded from the previous convoy on 5 March owing to insecurity. The total number of people reached in March was 162,100.

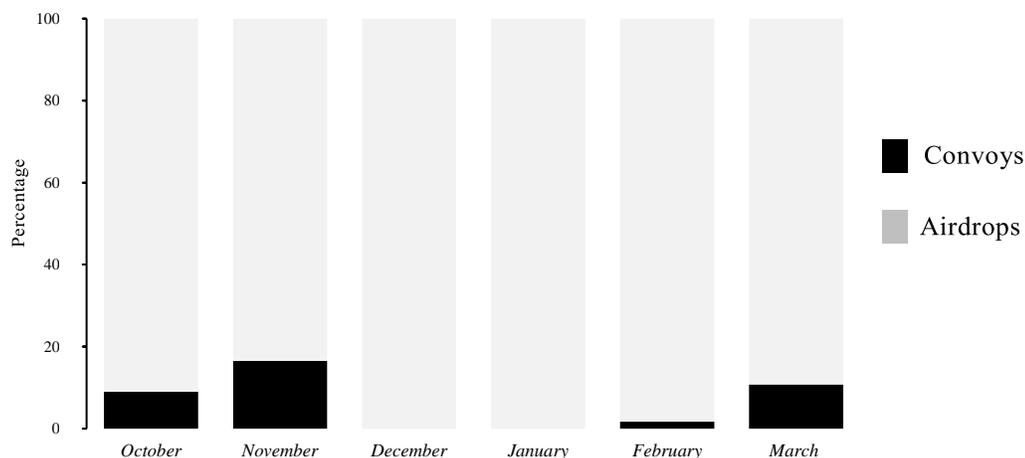
Table 1

Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian convoys, March 2018

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Requested target (number of beneficiaries)</i>	<i>Number of beneficiaries reached</i>	<i>Type of assistance</i>
4 March	Dar al-Kabirah, Ghantu, Tayr Ma'lah	40 250	33 500	Multisectoral
5 March	Duma	90 000	15 500	Multisectoral
9 March	Duma	90 000	12 000	Multisectoral
15 March	Duma	90 000	26 100	Food
25 March	Tall Rif'at	50 000	75 000	Multisectoral

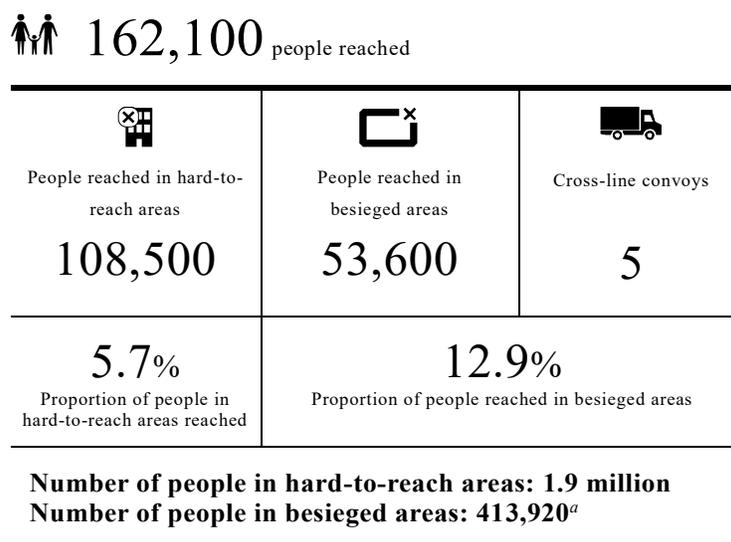
25. Individual agencies continued to submit requests for single-agency deliveries to locations across the country. Such deliveries are undertaken in areas in which access is less challenging through regular programming. In March, the World Food Programme (WFP) submitted 2,162 official requests to the Syrian authorities to obtain facilitation letters for the transport of food assistance to locations across the country, all of which were approved. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) submitted 57 requests for facilitation letters for the movement of core relief items and livelihood kits, all of which were approved.

Figure II
**Percentage of people reached each month in besieged areas through
 United Nations inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, October 2017–
 March 2018**



26. United Nations partners continued to face response challenges in north-eastern parts of the country, owing to, among other things, administrative restrictions, pending security approvals for access to restricted areas and high levels of explosive hazard contamination. Following the suspension of NGO activities in January 2018 owing to restrictions by national and local authorities, which affected 25 national NGOs, an agreement was reached on 31 January to allow for the resumption of United Nations regular programming in the north-east and for some humanitarian partners to resume their work. This agreement was valid only for two months, however (to 31 March), and covers a limited number of partners. It is critical that all humanitarian partners be permitted to continue to provide much-needed assistance to affected people in sites for internally displaced persons and host communities without restrictions, including to deter push factors compelling the displaced to return in the absence of safe and sustainable conditions. The United Nations continued to engage with the local administration and the Governor of Hasakah to identify a long-term solution to national NGO registration issues and enable the full, unhindered resumption of humanitarian activities in the north-east.

Figure III
Inter-agency cross-line humanitarian operations, March 2018



^a Figures are currently subject to review following recent developments in eastern Ghutah in Rif Dimashq Governorate.

27. Life-saving and life-sustaining medical items sufficient for 132,575 treatments were rejected or removed from inter-agency convoys by the Syrian authorities, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Details regarding the treatments and supplies removed are shown in table 2. Additional medical supplies were scheduled to be delivered as part of the inter-agency convoy plan; however, only five inter-agency convoys were able to proceed in March.

Table 2
Medical supplies removed from humanitarian convoys, March 2018

Location	Number of treatments	Types of supplies
Duma	124 010	Isosorbide dinitrate 20 mg tablet, ipratropium bromide inhalation aerosol 20 mcg/metered dose, beclomethasone dipropionate inhaler 50 mcg/puff, beclomethasone dipropionate nasal spray 50 mcg/puff, 200 doses, benzyll benzoate 25 g/100 ml bottle, cephalexin (monohydrate) USP 250 mg/5 ml suspension by Medico, paracetamol injection 10 mg/ml, 100 ml vial, insulin syringe U-100 luer with needle G29X 0.5", pneumonia type A kit (P97-023), pneumonia type B kit (P97-023), Italian emergency kits "Kit B" supply, inter-agency emergency health kit 2015 supplementary unit renewable supplies, digoxin 0.5 mg/2 ml ampoule, lidocaine hydrochloride 10 mg/ml in 5 ml ampoule, heparin sodium 5,000 IU/ml in 1 ml ampoule, diclofenac sodium 75 mg/3 ml ampoule, adrenaline (epinephrine) 1 mg in 1 ml ampoule, burn dressing kit without silver sulphadiazine cream, ceftriaxone sodium 500 mg vial, by Ibn Hayyan/Syria, ceftriaxone sodium 1,000 mg vial, by Ibn Hayyan/Syria, metronidazole 500 mg/100 ml vial, cefuroxime (as axetil) USP 500 mg tablet, mixed serum (dextrose 5% + sodium chloride 0.9%) 1,000 ml (equivalent to Na + 30 mmol/l, Cl - 30 mmol/l), IV administration set, sterile, disposable.
Dar al-Kabirah, Ghantu, Tayr Ma'lah	8 565	Carbamazepine BP 100 mg tablet, carbamazepine 100 mg tablets in blisters, pneumonia type B kit (P97-023), infusion giving set, sterile, with air inlet and needle.

Humanitarian response

28. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached millions of people in need through all available access modalities, including regular programming from within the Syrian Arab Republic, whereby humanitarian deliveries reach those in need without crossing conflict lines; cross-line convoys, whereby assistance from within the country is delivered across conflict lines; and cross-border deliveries, whereby assistance is provided to those in need from Jordan and Turkey (see table 3). In addition to the United Nations and its partners, non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to people in need. Local authorities in many areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups also continued to provide services where possible.

Table 3
People reached by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities, March 2018

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Number of people reached</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	–
International Organization for Migration	28 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 927 000
United Nations Children's Fund	>4 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	1 103 000
United Nations Population Fund	332 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	78 000
World Food Programme	3 028 100
World Health Organization	1 675 000

29. The conflict has dramatically deepened for hundreds of thousands of people in Rif Dimashq. The military offensive on eastern Ghutah has created extreme conditions in an enclave certain parts of which have been besieged since 2013. Some 133,000 people were displaced from eastern Ghutah in March, more than 44,000 of whom remain in severely overcrowded sites for internally displaced persons in Rif Dimashq. Close to 50,000 others — mostly civilians and some fighters — have been transported to Idlib and Aleppo, where the humanitarian response has already been stretched to breaking point. The remainder have left the sites for internally displaced persons under a sponsorship system, the details of which remain unclear to the United Nations. Very severe needs, including protection needs, persist within eastern Ghutah in view of the level of destruction and the lack of services. The United Nations and its partners are responding to the mounting humanitarian needs of those in sites for internally displaced persons with food, shelter, health and other assistance and protection services. Additionally, the United Nations has provided legal counselling to around 22,000 individuals and more than 225,000 core relief items, as well as shelter support, including the provision to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent of 2,200 shelter kits. Some assistance has also been provided in newly accessible areas in eastern Ghutah through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; Duma remained besieged and attacks continued.

30. Cross-border deliveries continued from Turkey and Jordan under the terms of resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#), [2332 \(2016\)](#) and [2393 \(2017\)](#) (see figure IV). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian

authorities in advance of each shipment, including of its content, destination and number of beneficiaries expected to be reached.

31. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations authorized under resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#) and [2393 \(2017\)](#) in Jordan and Turkey and monitored the loading and passage of the first relief consignment through the Ya‘rubiyah border crossing from Iraq. During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored seven United Nations agencies crossing 27 consignments consisting of 466 trucks from the four border crossings: 10 from Bab al-Hawa (256 trucks), 8 from Bab al-Salam (79 trucks), 8 from Ramtha (122 trucks) and 1 from Ya‘rubiyah (9 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments sent. The United Nations provides 48-hour notice to the Government for all shipments. Once in the country, United Nations partners ensure that shipments arrive at the designated warehouses. Independent third-party companies contracted by the United Nations ensure independent verification of the assistance arriving at the warehouses and monitor the distribution and/or service provision. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Jordan and Turkey.

32. Since cross-border operations began in July 2014, following the adoption of resolution [2165 \(2014\)](#), the United Nations has conducted more than 775 cross-border consignments, with more than 19,590 trucks (13,293 by way of Bab al-Hawa and 2,020 by way of Bab al-Salam from Turkey; 4,268 by way of Ramtha from Jordan; and 9 by way of Ya‘rubiyah from Iraq). These operations complement the aid provided by international and Syrian non-governmental organizations that provide services to millions more from neighbouring countries.

33. The United Nations and its implementing partners delivered humanitarian assistance from four cross-border entry points through Iraq, Turkey and Jordan (see table 4). This included food assistance to more than 706,000 people. Moreover, the United Nations conducted health and medical deliveries, providing more than 1.4 million treatments through the cross-border mechanism. In the northern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, UNICEF delivered winter kits, child protection assistance, nutrition, education, health and water, sanitation and hygiene supplies through a number of cross-border shipments. More than 163,000 people were reached with safe and adequate quantities of water through urgent repair/maintenance and operation of water systems in communities hosting internally displaced persons and returnees. Around 18 million litres of safe water were provided by truck to affected populations in Idlib and displaced populations from eastern Ghutah. Additionally, 38,000 people were provided with access to sanitation facilities through latrine construction. Moreover, some 140,000 primary health-care outpatient consultations were provided. UNICEF partners continued to provide life-saving nutrition services; 18,000 children and 19,000 women were screened for acute malnutrition using mid-upper arm circumference indicators. Furthermore, 9,400 caregivers, including pregnant and lactating women, were counselled on appropriate infant and young child feeding. In addition, through holistic support to schools and learning centres, UNICEF enabled 12,500 children to gain access to formal education and some 2,200 children to non-formal education. Support included stipends for teachers and education personnel, support for school running costs and the improvement or repair of education facilities, including gender/disability water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Around 445 teachers and education personnel benefited from professional capacity-building.

34. Moreover, a nationwide immunization round to administer bivalent oral polio vaccine was conducted in 13 governorates from 11 to 15 March. The final number of children vaccinated was 2,675,303 out of a target of 2.79 million children. A campaign for the use of oral polio vaccine was also conducted in Dara Governorate, with 162,053 children vaccinated against a target of 140,061 children. Those reported

successes notwithstanding, pockets of underimmunization persist. In the final week of March, nine new suspected measles cases were detected. Follow-up testing for laboratory confirmation and case investigation are ongoing.

35. UNHCR and its partners continued to enhance the response to the protection needs of internally displaced persons, returnees and other crisis-affected populations. In March, 8,089 protection interventions were conducted, reaching 135,831 beneficiaries, including 73,356 individuals through general protection activities, 2,673 through child protection activities and 22,226 through more than 1,000 awareness-raising campaigns on sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response activities across 12 governorates. As at the end of March, the total number of functioning UNHCR-funded community centres and mobile units stood at 93 community centres, 16 satellite centres and 74 mobile units; these were supported by 2,110 outreach volunteers, providing protection-related services, including community mobilization, child protection, legal aid, prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence and livelihoods services and services for persons with specific needs, to the benefit of some 2.6 million internally displaced persons, returnees, host communities and other crisis-affected people, in a vast catchment area encompassing 12 governorates. During the reporting period, 41,172 people in Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Suwayda', Dar'a, Qunaytirah, Tartus, Ladhīqiyah, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and Hasakah Governorates were direct beneficiaries of the United Nations legal assistance programme, including through counselling, sessions to raise awareness on various legal topics mainly relating to civil documentation and women's rights and the direct intervention of lawyers before courts and administrative bodies. Moreover, the United Nations Population Fund reached 332,259 people with activities on reproductive health and on sexual and gender-based violence.

Figure IV

Number of beneficiaries targeted by the United Nations and its partners by cluster through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, March 2018

(Thousands)

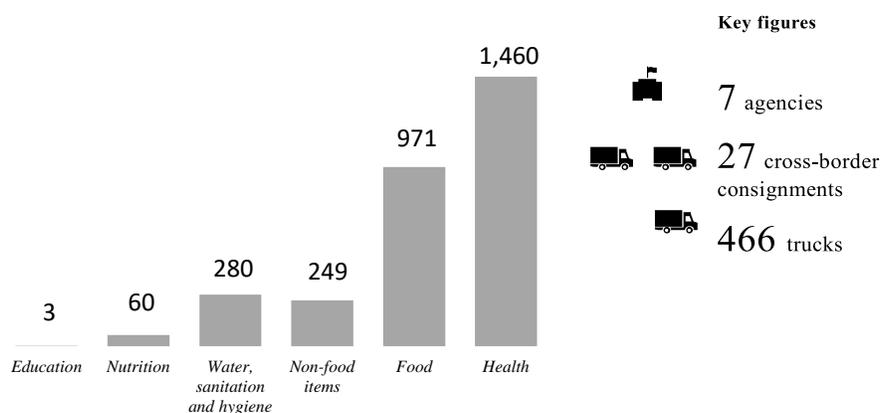


Table 4
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries by sector and by district, March 2018

<i>Governorate</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Non-food items</i>	<i>Nutrition</i>	<i>Water, sanitation and hygiene</i>
Aleppo	Bab	1 600	–	16 445	12 500	–	12 500
Aleppo	I‘zaz	1 600	130 710	267 198	25 500	–	32 598
Aleppo	Jarablus	–	–	3 750	–	–	–
Aleppo	Jabal Sim‘an	–	–	142 020	–	–	–
Hasakah	Hasakah	–	16 000	–	–	–	–
Hasakah	Malikiyah	–	–	22 860	12 000	–	–
Hasakah	Qamishli	–	–	40 600	–	–	–
Raqqah	Raqqah	–	–	600	–	–	–
Raqqah	Tall Abyad	–	–	–	2 400	–	30 000
Suwayda‘	Suwayda‘	–	1 455	–	–	–	–
Dar‘a	Sanamayn	–	17 555	–	–	–	–
Dar‘a	Dar‘a	–	128 848	15 000	–	–	–
Dar‘a	Izra‘	–	58 811	20 800	–	–	–
Dayr al–Zawr	Dayr al–Zawr	–	–	2 000	–	–	–
Hama	Muhradah	–	1 500	–	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma‘arras	–	97 750	120 220	7 098	–	2 500
Idlib	Ariha	–	103 650	38 890	59 272	–	–
Idlib	Harim	–	284 970	500 850	90 773	60 483	196 963
Idlib	Idlib	–	80 250	169 590	14 908	–	1 000
Idlib	Jisr al–Shughur	–	30 600	69 610	8 457	–	–
Qunaytirah	Fiq	–	100	–	–	–	–
Qunaytirah	Qunaytirah	–	26 900	30 000	–	–	–

36. The Russian Federation sent information bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Visas and registrations

37. A total of 64 new United Nations visa requests were submitted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in March. Of those, 15 were approved, 46 remain pending and 3 were rejected. Of the 29 new visa applications submitted in January and February 2018, 16 were approved in March, while 9 remain pending and 4 were rejected. A total of 87 United Nations visa renewal requests were submitted in March, of which 54 were approved and 33 remain pending. An additional 27 requests for visa renewals submitted in February were approved in March. For some United Nations entities in the Syrian Arab Republic, a significant number of staff are not in place or cannot be replaced owing to the non-issuance of visas for months, formal requests notwithstanding.

38. On 25 March, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for the Syrian Arab Republic submitted a request to the Syrian authorities for the approval of the deployment of an inter-agency surge team to scale up the operational capacity of the United Nations in the country. The request is for 17 additional United Nations staff

(from UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, WHO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) to be deployed for a four-week period. Visa requests were submitted on 27 and 28 March. Feedback from the Syrian authorities was pending as at the end of March.

39. A total of 23 international non-governmental organizations are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

40. Programmes of the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system are implemented in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, air strikes, regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and asymmetric attacks. In addition, and as a result of activities relating to the armed conflict, some areas of operation are highly contaminated with explosive hazards that pose an elevated risk to the implementation of United Nations activities in those areas.

41. Since the beginning of the conflict, dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations or agencies of the United Nations system, of whom 18 were staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. Many staff members of international and national non-governmental organizations are also reported to have been killed.

42. A total of 24 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme and 23 UNRWA staff members) are detained or missing.

III. Observations

43. In March, military escalation continued across the Syrian Arab Republic, in violation of existing ceasefire agreements, Security Council resolution [2401 \(2018\)](#) and previous Council resolutions. After 50 monthly reports and countless Security Council briefings, I continue to receive daily reports of attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure. De-escalation areas have become combat zones and theatres of the most perilous kind. The suffering of civilians continues. I am particularly disturbed by the disregard for civilian life and reports of repeated attacks on schools and health facilities, as well as reports of the use of chemical weapons. The fighting has also resulted in hundreds of thousands of Syrians being displaced, many multiple times, further stretching the ability of the United Nations and its partners to adequately respond with humanitarian assistance. In this regard, I urge the parties to refrain from any action that might force civilians to flee their habitual residence. In Idlib Governorate alone, it is estimated that there are approximately 1.2 million internally displaced persons, representing a 25 per cent increase from one year ago. In eastern Ghutah, in a matter of just three weeks, more than 130,000 people have had to abandon homes.

44. In the light of those developments on the ground, I must once again remind parties to the conflict of their obligations and responsibilities under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including when hostilities are aimed at Security Council-designated terrorist groups. Furthermore, I once again call upon all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligation to take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimize, the impact of hostilities on civilians and civilian objects and to allow and facilitate safe, rapid and unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance conducted without any adverse

distinction and in full adherence to humanitarian principles. I also remind all States with any influence over the parties that they have the obligation to ensure respect for international humanitarian law by the parties to the conflict. I will continue to offer the good offices of the United Nations, in the hope that warring parties choose peaceful means to resolve this conflict.

45. I reiterate that those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable. Such a step is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court. I also call upon all parties to the conflict, all States, civil society and the United Nations system as a whole to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011.

46. For eight years, the people of the Syrian Arab Republic have endured suffering upon suffering. The need that the civilian population consistently rank as the most critical is the need for protection: protection from the violence that has killed hundreds of thousands and has destroyed civilian infrastructure. No military efforts will provide the protection they are asking for. There is no military solution to the conflict. The solution must be political. We must find ways to make credible progress towards a genuine and credible political solution that meet the aspirations of the Syrian people to dignity and freedom in accordance with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the Geneva communiqué. My Special Envoy continues to work towards that end. With regard to the establishment of the constitutional committee, he relies on the commitment of the Astana guarantors, who invited participants to Sochi, Russian Federation, that the constitutional committee should be formed under United Nations auspices, in accordance with resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

Annex

Incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 2018*

Damascus and Rif Dimashq Governorates

- On 1 March, air strikes hit a residential building in opposition-controlled Kafr Batna, which partially collapsed, reportedly killing three civilians, including a girl, and injuring at least seven other civilians.
- On 1 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas in opposition-held Duma, allegedly killing five civilians, including a woman and a girl.
- On 4 March, several ground-based strikes hit a residential area in government-held Jaramana, reportedly injuring four civilians, including a woman and a child.
- On 6 March, several ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Jaramana, including Hay al-Ba‘th, Presidential Square and the Corniche, allegedly killing 3 civilians, including a woman and a girl, and injuring 12 other civilians, three of them women. One strike reportedly hit the vicinity of a school, killing a girl and injuring her mother.
- On 7 March, air strikes hit informal housing structures in Duma, reportedly killing nine civilians, including three women.
- On 7 March, two male civilians on a motorbike were allegedly hit by air strikes in opposition-controlled Hamuriyah, which killed the two men and burned their bodies and the vehicle.
- On 7 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas of opposition-held Saqba. An air strike caused the collapse of a building in the basement of which civilians were sheltered, reportedly killing 17 civilians, including five women and two boys.
- On 9 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Jaramana, allegedly killing a civilian woman and a child and injuring two other women and a child.
- On 10 March, air strikes hit residential areas of Duma, reportedly causing the collapse of two buildings and killing 17 civilians, including five women, three boys and three girls. Among those killed were eight civilians from a single family who were sheltered in one of the buildings.
- On 11 March, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-controlled Harasta, allegedly killing nine civilians, including two women, two boys and two girls.
- On 11 March, ground-based strikes reportedly hit a residential area in the Corniche area of Jaramana, reportedly killing 2 civilian women and injuring 10 other civilians, including two women.

* In line with Security Council resolution [2258 \(2015\)](#), the present description of developments on the ground and the incidents that occurred during the month that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has been able to corroborate relates to compliance with Council resolutions [2139 \(2014\)](#), [2165 \(2014\)](#) and [2191 \(2014\)](#) by all parties in the Syrian Arab Republic. The information is provided without prejudice to the work of the Task Force on the Ceasefire of the International Syria Support Group. The reporting is not a comprehensive listing of all violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law that took place in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period.

- On 11 March, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in Damascus, including Barzah, Shaghur, Bab Tuma and Maliki, allegedly killing three civilians, one of whom was a child, and injuring at least five other civilians, including two women.
- On 13 March, ground-based strikes hit residential areas in the Bab Sharqi and Zablatani neighbourhoods in the old town of Damascus, reportedly killing a civilian woman and injuring two other civilians.
- On 14 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Hamuriyah, allegedly killing 12 civilians, including five women, three boys and three girls. Among those killed were a family of five who had sheltered in one of the buildings that was struck and a civilian in the garden in front of his house. More than 20 civilians remained under the rubble as first responders were unable to operate owing to ongoing strikes in the area.
- On 15 March, a ground-based strike hit a residential area of Bab Tuma in Damascus, reportedly killing a civilian.
- On 16 March, air strikes hit the vicinity of a market square in which hundreds of civilians had gathered to move towards the Hamuriyah crossing point to be evacuated. At least 41 civilians, including women and children, were reportedly killed by the strikes, with dozens of other civilians injured. A number of internally displaced persons were among the victims and some bodies were burned and others scattered, rendering the identification of some victims difficult.
- On 17 March, air strikes hit a residential area in opposition-held Ayn Tarma, one of them hitting a building in the basement of which internally displaced persons were sheltered. The strikes caused the collapse of the building and allegedly killed 14 civilians, including seven boys, four girls and a woman.
- On 19 March, air strikes hit a residential area of Harasta. A strike damaged and triggered a fire in a residential building in the basement of which several civilians were sheltered. The strike reportedly killed two boys and two women and injured 15 other civilians. It also hit near a medical point but did not damage the facility.
- On 19 March, air strikes hit a school in opposition-controlled Irbin in which hundreds of civilians were reportedly sheltered, damaging the facility and triggering a fire. The strike allegedly killed 20 civilians, including 14 girls, two boys and four women, and injured at least 40 other civilians. Civilians remained in the shelter after the incident as they had nowhere else to go.
- On 20 March, a ground-based strike hit a shopping area in Kashkul, a residential neighbourhood in Jaramana, reportedly killing at least 21 civilians (including eight women, a boy and a girl) and injuring at least 8 other civilians (including four women and a boy). At the time of the incident, large numbers of people, including those displaced from Rif Dimashq and other governorates, were in the area ahead of the forthcoming Mother's Day holiday.
- On 22 March, an air strike hit a building in Irbin in which several dozen civilians (mainly families) were sheltered. The strike triggered a fire in the basement that reportedly killed 37 civilians and critically injured 9 others, who died the next day. In total, 46 civilians, including 15 women, eight boys and eight girls, were killed in the incident, including nine families.
- On 23 March, ground-based strikes hit a sporting facility in the Fayha' area of Damascus, allegedly killing a boy and injuring at least two other civilians.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 5 March, a ground-based strike hit a checkpoint reportedly manned by Asayish forces at the entrance to Barband village on the outskirts of Raju district in west Afrin. The strike hit in close proximity to a vehicle carrying civilians, allegedly killing an elderly woman and injuring 21 other civilians, including nine women and four children. The civilians were reportedly fleeing the fighting near their villages of Ashunah and Zarqah in Raju and were heading towards Afrin city.
- On 5 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit near a residential area of Qurayriyah village in Jindayris, south of Afrin, allegedly killing two civilians, including a three-month-old girl, and injuring eight others, including a woman and three children.
- On 7 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area of Maydanki village in Sharan district, reportedly injuring five civilians, including two women.
- On 8 March, ground-based strikes hit a residential area in Turandah village, allegedly killing three siblings: a girl and two boys.
- On 14 March, explosive hazards reportedly killed two male civilians and injured five others — three women and two children aged 12 and 13 — who were travelling by tractor from Afrin city to their home in Ma‘batli district in Afrin. The explosive hazard reportedly detonated while they were driving along the road.
- On 14 March, several ground-based strikes hit residential areas of Ashrafiyah and Fillat Street in Afrin city, allegedly killing 5 civilians, including a seven-year-old girl, and injuring 17 other civilians, including five women and seven children.
- On 16 March, air strikes and ground-based strikes hit a residential area of the Mahmudiyah neighbourhood in Afrin city, reportedly killing at least 6 civilians, including one woman, and injuring 27 other civilians, including eight women and six children.
- On 17 March, ground-based strikes hit the vicinity of Afrin hospital in Afrin city, causing damage to the paediatric ward. Patients had been evacuated at least two days before to government-controlled Nubl and Zahra’ villages.
- On 18 March, three civilians were reportedly killed and four others injured, all from one family, when an explosive hazard detonated as they tried to enter their home in Afrin city.
- On 19 March, an explosive hazard detonated in a commercial building in Afrin city, allegedly killing seven civilians and three opposition fighters in the vicinity.
- On 20 March, two male civilians were reportedly killed and seven others were injured, all from one family, when an explosive hazard detonated in their home in Barqum village in southern rural Aleppo.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 16 March, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) fighters reportedly captured 18 civilian men in Sha‘fah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate for unknown reasons. Their whereabouts remain unknown.
- On 21 March, a 13-year-old boy was allegedly killed by an explosive hazard that detonated near him in the street in ISIL-held Bahrah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

- On 22 March, a civilian woman was reportedly killed and a boy injured when an explosive hazard detonated in their home in government-held Quriyah town in eastern Dayr al-Zawr.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 14 March, a senior Kurdish official from the Raqqah Civil Council, who had been instrumental in its foundation in 2017, was allegedly shot dead in his home in Tall Abyad in northern Raqqah Governorate.
 - On 16 March, a male civilian was reportedly killed when explosive hazards detonated near him as he was checking his home in the Dariyah neighbourhood of Raqqah city.
 - On 22 March, the bodies of 22 civilians were retrieved from under the rubble of a destroyed building close to Al-Ma'arri School north of Raqqah city as a result of air strikes carried out on the area a few months previously.
-