



Highlights



137,070

people have been displaced from Afrin district



50,000

beneficiaries to be reached with supplies from the UN/ SARC inter-agency convoy to Tall Refaat



60,000

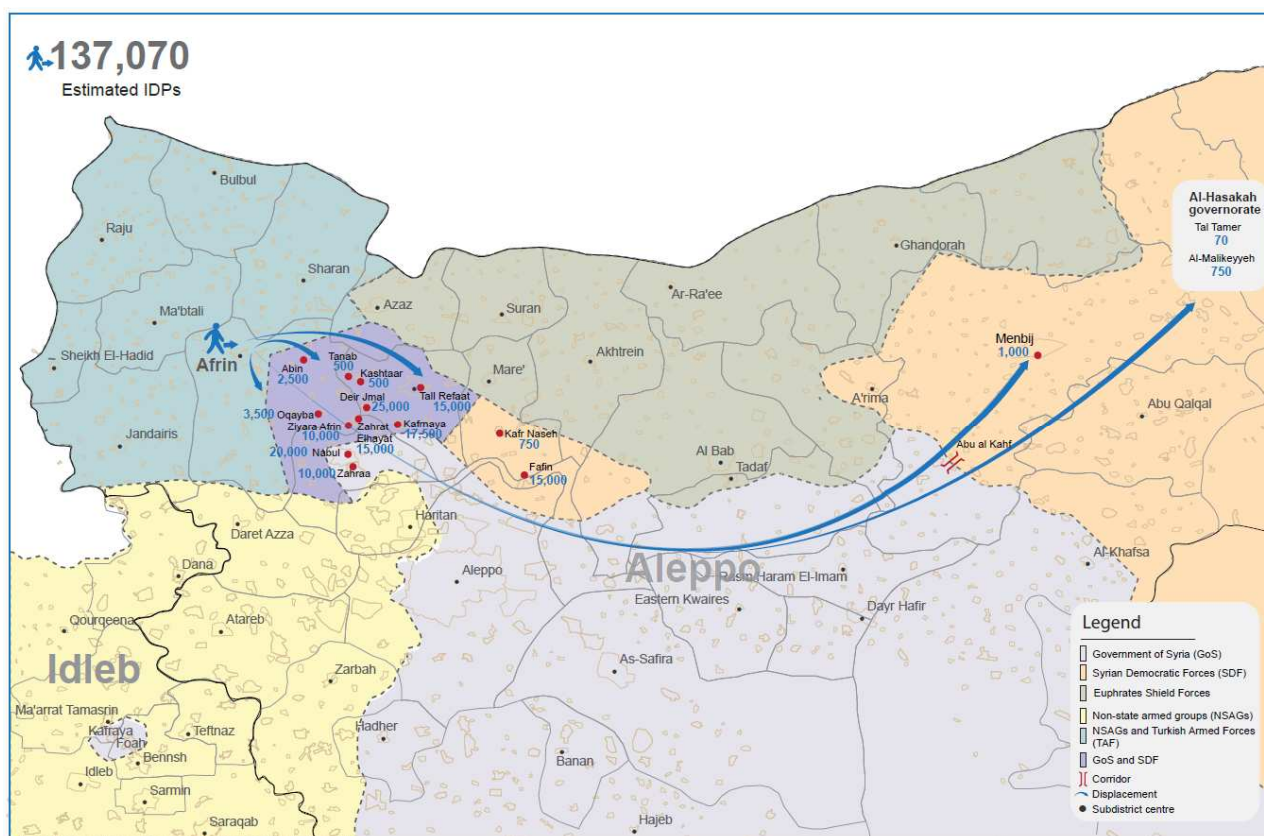
individuals benefitted from water trucking services and hygiene kits



\$73m

in additional funding required by the UN and partners in Syria to assist those affected

- Military confrontations in the Afrin district of Aleppo governorate since 20 January have displaced an estimated 137,070 people (new and revised number) to the Tall Refaat area, Nabul and Zahraa, Fafin, and surrounding villages. The needs for humanitarian assistance amidst the displaced population are staggering, with the majority relying on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic survival needs.
- Movement restrictions for IDPs to Aleppo city prevent many from seeking alternative housing arrangements and for the sick and injured from rapidly accessing specialized medical care.
- On 25 March 2018, a UN/SARC inter-agency convoy delivered food, nutrition, NFIs, health and WASH assistance sufficient for 50,000 people in need in Tall Refaat. A UN cross-border shipment is being prepared to cross from Turkey to Afrin between 02 and 06 April. The convoy will contain NFIs, clothing kits, reproductive and dignity kits and food for the affected population in Afrin district.
- The UN and partners in Damascus are facing a \$73m funding gap to respond with life-saving assistance and protection services to all those displaced from Afrin district and are urgently appealing for additional funding.



Situation Overview

Following a prolonged period of military operations in the Afrin district of Aleppo governorate since 20 January 2018, some 137,070 individuals from Afrin district are estimated to have been displaced to Tall Refaat, Nabul, Zahraa and surrounding villages, and to Kafr Naseh and Fafin, east of the Tall Refaat area. Some 50,000 – 70,000 individuals are believed to remain inside Afrin city. Previous displacement estimates have recently been revised downwards following assessments carried out in the area by the UN and partner organizations. The majority of IDPs (90,250 individuals) are currently located in Tall Refaat and ten other villages, while 20,000 individuals are in Nabul, 10,000 in Zahraa and 15,000 in Kafr Naseh and Fafin. However, with registration efforts progressing slowly, these new numbers remain estimates and are subject to change. According to partners on the ground, the number of displaced individuals appears to be stabilizing, however, any further hostilities in Tall Refaat could trigger a possible secondary displacement towards Menbij and Al Hassekeh. Small scale onward movement from Tall Refaat area to Menbij (1,000 individuals) and Al-Hassakeh governorate (820 individuals) has already been noted.

Most of the displaced individuals in Tall Refaat are staying in abandoned houses, often with several families to a room. Some families stay in mosques and schools, while other IDPs are sheltering in the open. IDPs in Nabul and Zahraa are either staying in collective shelters, such as mosques and private halls or are renting houses. Given the strain on services in these two locations, the authorities are closing the collective shelters and plan to move the IDPs to Tall Refaat, a decision which will eventually impact some 4,000 IDPs. To date, three out of 19 collective shelters have been closed and some 500 IDPs were moved to the Tall Refaat area.

The lack of freedom of movement for IDPs is a major concern, as many are not permitted to proceed to Aleppo city, where many have relatives or houses, and where there is greater capacity for the humanitarian community to assist them with shelter. There is a particular concern for the sick and injured amidst the displaced population as the only available hospital, in Zahraa, lacks the capacity to address all medical needs as it has only twelve beds. A mechanism has been put in place for the medical evacuation of emergency cases to Aleppo city; however, it can take up to 20 days to obtain approval for the medical evacuation of critical patients. On 28 March, 60 medical cases were evacuated to Aleppo city following a prolonged waiting period.

There are also reports of IDPs being prevented from returning to Afrin, despite some IDPs expressing willingness to go back if the conditions are conducive. The United Nations appeals to the concerned authorities to ensure all IDPs enjoy the right to freedom of movement, whether to seek safety, shelter, medical treatment or to return to their homes.

The majority of IDPs in the Tall Refaat area rely on humanitarian assistance to meet their basic survival needs. Local markets are starting to function, with commodities available; however, prices are approximately 20 per cent higher than in Aleppo city. Many IDPs are unable to afford such prices due to a lack of gainful employment opportunities and depleted savings. Regular humanitarian access and deliveries to the IDPs are therefore urgently required to assist the displaced population.

Information on the humanitarian situation in Afrin city is scarce as access is currently limited. However, information has been received that water shortages in the city continue to be a concern following the destruction of a water pumping station in Jandairis sub-district, and the change in control of the Midanki Dam, north-east of Afrin city. A humanitarian organization indicated that three out of the four water pumping stations in the district have been repaired, while the fourth one (located around the Midanki Dam) is in the process of being repaired. The restoration of potable water through the network remains a major priority to ensure civilians residing in the city have sufficient access to safe water and are not at the risk of contracting waterborne diseases. Out of the district's 17 bakeries, only two located in Afrin city are currently functioning. Some of these bakeries have been unaffected by the fighting but are closed as their owners and workers displaced to other locations. Three health facilities (two hospitals and one primary health clinic) are operational in Afrin city. Medical facilities in the rural areas of Afrin remain closed, and reports indicate that the majority of the city's medical staff were amongst the displaced. Referral of medical cases to medical facilities in Jarablus, A'zaz and Turkey is taking place depending on the severity of each case. All education services are currently on hold. Damage to shelter is reportedly low, however, reports indicate the presence of explosive remnants of war and improvised explosive devices, which have so far caused a number of casualties among civilians.

From a protection standpoint, the situation in Afrin district remains worrying. Anecdotal information indicates that incidents of looting, confiscation of property and threats of violence against civilians are happening but on a smaller scale than what was initially reported on 18 March.

On 28 March, Turkish and Syrian media reported that Turkey decided to open a new crossing to Afrin district in the village of Hamam village in the western part of the district. The village is located on the main road, which reaches major towns such as Jandairis and Afrin city. It is expected that this border crossing will be used by Turkish organizations, although the capacity of the crossing is believed to be low.

Humanitarian Response

On 25 March 2018, a UN/SARC inter-agency convoy delivered food, nutrition, NFIs, health and WASH supplies sufficient for 50,000 people in need in Tall Refaat. Inter-agency teams accompanied the convoy to conduct a rapid needs assessment, which will inform the UN response going forward.

In addition, regular assistance is being provided by the UN and humanitarian partners. This includes the provision of 24,700 ready-to-eat food rations and 31,200 liters of milk to Tall Refaat, Nabul and Zahraa, in addition to 7,000 bread bundles, which are being distributed on a daily basis. With UN support, nutrition supplies sufficient for 46,800 beneficiaries have also been delivered to the IDP locations.

Three health facilities are being supported in Nabul, in addition to a SARC first aid point, two facilities in Zahraa and one health facility in Tall Refaat. Twelve mobile clinics and one ambulance are also serving the area. Water trucking services and hygiene kits have been provided sufficient for more than 60,000 people, and 40 water tanks have been installed. In addition to the inter-agency convoy, over 123,000 NFIs have been delivered to Tall Refaat, Nabul and Zahraa. These NFIs include plastic sheets, blankets, mattresses, sleeping bags and mats, kitchen sets and solar lamps among other items, and to date some 6,000 people have been assisted with shelter kits.

UN-supported protection teams are on the ground for the identification of protection needs, referrals and to inform evidence-based advocacy. General protection services, child protection services and gender-based violence protection services are being set up, largely with mobile teams. These mobile teams are providing psycho-social support, mine risk education, GBV-related services and case management, child protection services and general awareness raising activities.

Some 15,750 individuals in Kafr Naseh and Fafin have reportedly not been provided with humanitarian assistance with the exception of bread. However, the Kurdish authorities have reportedly dispatched 3,000 tents to the area for the establishment of a camp.

Despite these deliveries, more regular access is needed, to ensure humanitarian teams can reach people in need, monitor assistance and support the capacity of the four national NGOs working with SARC to provide assistance in the affected areas. The NNGOs are reportedly facing financial difficulties in deploying volunteers and transporting goods to the affected population, which is hampering the delivery and distribution of aid.

Funding for the response is urgently needed, with the UN and partners in Damascus currently facing a \$73 million funding gap to provide assistance to as many as a final displacement total of 200,000 IDPs.

With regards to the delivery of humanitarian assistance through the cross-border modality, an interagency shipment is planned to cross from Turkey to Afrin through Bab Al-Salam border crossing between 02 and 06 April. A number of Turkish organizations and NGOs are providing emergency assistance in the district through their teams. One organization provided 85,000 food meals and is currently supporting a mobile kitchen, which has provided 25,000 hot meals so far. Some Syrian NGOs have already carried out in-kind distributions in Afrin district and might be able to increase their presence to include other areas in the coming days. Given that agricultural fields are reportedly mostly intact, the implementation of livelihoods support programmes in the future is possible.

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