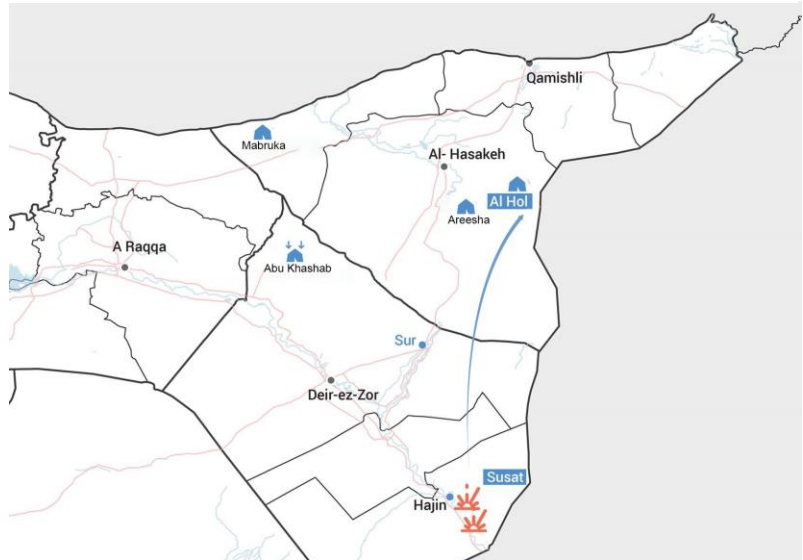


## Highlights

- *Since the beginning of December, more than 25,000 people have arrived from Hajin and surrounding areas in south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor to Al Hole camp, some 300 km to the north. The camp currently hosts more than 35,000 people and has largely surpassed its maximum capacity. Since 22 January 2019, some 10,000 people have arrived at the camp, straining response capacities.*
- *The majority of people fleeing Hajin are women, children and elderly people. Conditions along the road, including in screening centers, are extremely harsh with limited food, water, shelter, no health services. As of 4 February, at least 35 children and newborns had reportedly died either en route or shortly after arriving in the camp, mostly due to hypothermia.*
- *Humanitarian actors in the northeast are scaling up response efforts to provide life-saving assistance and improve reception conditions in the camp. The provision of assistance along the way to Al Hole and closer to the Hajin area is a key priority but remains limited due to access limitations and insecurity.*
- *The United Nations remains gravely concerned for the situation of civilians remaining in the area of Hajin, who continue to be exposed to ongoing hostilities. The United Nations also calls for all movements to be voluntary and for the displaced to be able to return to the areas of their choosing once hostilities subside.*

### Displacement from Hajin, Deir-ez-Zor, to Al Hole camp



## Situation Overview

Since November 2018, hostilities in the ISIL-held areas of Hajin in south-eastern Deir-ez-Zor have further intensified, with widespread reports of many civilian casualties. People fleeing hostilities reported critical shortages of food and medical supplies, and large-scale destruction of civilian infrastructure. There continues to be serious protection concerns for civilians who remain trapped in the last ISIL-held areas of southeastern Deir-ez-Zor.

Since 4 December 2018, over 25,500 people have fled the Hajin area and arrived at Al Hole camp in Al Hasakeh Governorate, with approximately 10,000 people arriving at the camp since 22 January. Many of those leaving the Hajin area are women, children and elderly people, both Syrian and foreign nationals, who have to undertake an arduous journey to escape the violence. After escaping the areas of active fighting - often at night and with risk of exposure to active hostilities and explosive hazards-, displaced people describe undergoing security screening in some locations along the way, being placed onto open trucks and having to endure a difficult journey 300kms

northwards to Al Hole camp, with limited food, water and protection from the elements. Following advocacy with parties in control, the transit time has decreased in the past week. However, the journey is still long and in harsh winter conditions, impacting the most vulnerable, especially young children. Most of the displaced arrive in Al-Hole already in critical condition. As of 4 February, at least 35 children and newborns had died either *en route* or shortly after arriving in the camp since the beginning of December, mostly because of hypothermia.

Due to ongoing insecurity and proximity to areas of active conflict, humanitarian access to civilians in the Hajin area and to people on the move remains severely challenged. The UN and partners have not yet been able to provide assistance, including life-saving medical assistance to people who are sick or injured during their transit from Hajin areas to Al Hole camp. Humanitarian organizations are strongly advocating that people who are on the move are provided with the necessary assistance, in particular the



Al Hole IDP camp in Al Hasakeh Governorate, Feb. 2019. Credit: OCHA

most vulnerable people. Discussions are on ongoing with the parties in this regard, with the aim of ensuring that ambulances and medical personnel are deployed along the transit route to attend to critical medical cases, that people receive food, water, clothing and basic items during the journey, and that if families are to be transported to the site, transport conditions be suitable (e.g. buses) to protect the already vulnerable population from the elements. A possible transit site close to the town of Sur, along the route towards Al Hol, may be established in the coming days.

There are further concerns that whilst the movement of displaced people to Al Hole camp is largely determined by military necessity, it remains largely involuntary as displaced people often express a desire to move to other areas of Deir-ez-Zor where they can stay with family and acquaintances. Discussions are ongoing to ensure better management of personal documents upon people's arrival at the camp so as to facilitate their freedom of movement and ability to leave the camp in the short-term. Parties in control have indicated that IDPs will be allowed to return to their areas of origin once military operations cease and the area becomes safe, although this may take several months.

### Humanitarian Response

The rapid and large-scale influx of new arrivals in Al Hole has tripled the camp's population in the last two months to some 35,552 people and stretched camp capacities. The initial influx of people led to overcrowding in the

camp's reception and communal areas. The situation has now improved as screening and registration processes have been accelerated in recent days. Currently, around 3,000 individuals are living in the camp's reception area and in communal spaces such as schools and communal kitchens, while large-size tents are being set up by the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations to host the new arrivals until they receive family tents. The United Nations and other humanitarian organizations



Shelters for newly arrived IDPs at Al Hole camp, Al Hasakeh, Feb. 2019. Credit: OCHA

continue to scale up the response to the influx of new arrivals, who are provided with food, shelter, winterization and hygiene kits, medical and protection services, and other support upon their arrival. 24-hour response teams, including protection staff from various humanitarian partners, have been set up to receive the newly displaced, quickly identify the most vulnerable cases, organize triage and referrals, and provide urgent assistance, especially to unaccompanied or separated children, persons in urgent need of psychological support and those who are in need of immediate medical assistance. When required, the sick and injured are referred to hospitals in nearby sub-districts, while severely malnourished children are being referred to Al-Hikma hospital in Al-Hasakeh. Follow-up care is also being arranged for all infants and healthcare workers are being trained on neonatal resuscitation and newborn care at home, while additional medical personnel and ambulances have been mobilized. To address urgent needs, WHO has also delivered over 35,000 treatment courses to support the work of mobile health clinics and health teams, which are operating in the camp, since the beginning of December. Additional vaccination teams are also being deployed and training camp volunteers on psychological first aid and basic counselling is underway. A static clinic; two mobile reproductive health teams and two gender-based violence mobile teams, have been deployed. Health kits to support women and adolescents have also been distributed.

Shelter partners are currently distributing family tents for 1,500 families at the camp. UNHCR has also provided to more than 23,000 new arrivals core relief items and winter assistance, including high thermal blankets, sleeping bags, additional plastic sheets, family winter clothing kit and winter jackets. Additional children's winter clothes are being distributed by UNICEF, and other humanitarian organizations are providing hygiene kits. 2,496 ready-to-eat kits have also been distributed to all new arrivals by humanitarian partners. Given the cold winter weather, heaters are also being urgently mobilized and are expected to reach the camp within the coming days; distribution of fuel is also planned.

To accommodate the influx of new arrivals the camp is being extended in the so-called "Phase 5" section, which will be able to accommodate 12,840 people. Construction of roads, lighting infrastructure, communal kitchens and rain drainage channels is ongoing and it is expected to be finished by the end of February 2019.

### Additional resources needed to continue scaling up the response

Humanitarian actors are concerned for the most basic human condition and wellbeing of people fleeing the Hajin area and their situation en route and calls for parties on the ground to increase assistance to IDPs when gathered at screening points, as well as to dispatch ambulances along the road to tend to the sick and injured. The rapid evacuation of urgent medical cases from screening points on the transit route is also a priority, respecting the principle of humanity and with no adverse distinction along the profile of the individuals (Syrian or Foreigners)

With the rapid expansion of the IDP camp population in Al Hole, further support is needed to scale-up assistance at the site. This includes additional family tents to guarantee dignified conditions and privacy, non-food items, heaters, dignity kits, food and nutritional supplies. In addition, it is also essential to continue to strengthen the provision of critical health care services in the camp, to expand water and sanitation facilities with gender sensitive measures in place (e.g. adequate lightning, lockable doors), and to increase the provision of protection services, including child friendly and other spaces for children and adolescents in the camp, women and girls' safe spaces, as well as integrated reproductive health and GBV services. Pending the launch of the 2019 HRP, additional financial resources are urgently needed to meet these needs.

Humanitarian partners continue to strongly advocate with all parties, and those with influence over them, to ensure the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure and to facilitate safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to people in need, and for IDPs swiftly be allowed to leave Al-Hole, to move to a place of their choosing.

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