



Security Council

Distr.: General
21 February 2020

Original: English

Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018) and 2504 (2020)

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the sixty-fifth 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), paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018), paragraph 6 of resolution 2449 (2018), and paragraph 8 of resolution 2504 (2020), in the last of which the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a report at least every 60 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 system and obtained from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system regarding their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for December 2019 and January 2020.

II. Major developments

Key points: December 2019 and January 2020

1. Hostilities in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic increased significantly during the reporting period, causing civilian casualties and displacement, despite the 12 January ceasefire announced by the Russian Federation and Turkey. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recorded 344 civilian deaths in the north-west of the country as a result of reported airstrikes and ground-based strikes. At least 108 children, including 55 boys and 53 girls, were among those killed. Some 520,000 people, 80 per cent of whom were women and children, were displaced in the north-west during the reporting period. Almost all of those displaced moved further north and west, away from the intensifying aerial and ground bombardment and into ever-shrinking and overcrowded areas where civilians hope to find relative safety. This is the highest level of displacement in north-west Syrian Arab Republic in recent years.



2. Health-care and education services continued to be affected by hostilities, with four incidents affecting health-care facilities and assets confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and 14 incidents affecting education facilities verified by the United Nations. The incidents, many in the north-west of the country, resulted in the killing and injuring of civilians, including women, children, people in need of medical care and humanitarian workers.

3. In the north-east of the country, the Hawl camp in Hasakah Governorate continues to host more than 66,000 people, of whom 66 per cent are under the age of 18 years – almost 44,000 children. After a temporary reduction in the presence of humanitarian partners and the suspension of several activities owing to military operations, most humanitarian activities have resumed and health teams are working across the camp, although challenges remain with regard to providing assistance in the annex where third-country nationals are hosted.

4. Humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food deliveries for 4.5 million people in December and for 4.3 million people in January. More than 1.7 million health and medical treatments were provided to people throughout the country. Cross-border assistance, authorized under Security Council resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#), [2393 \(2017\)](#), [2449 \(2018\)](#) and [2504 \(2020\)](#), remained a vital part of the humanitarian response and included dispatched food assistance for over 1 million people in December and 1.2 million people in January, as well as the third polio immunization campaign of 2019 in December, reaching more than 830,000 children under the age of 5.

5. With the adoption of Security Council resolution [2504 \(2020\)](#) and the removal of Ramtha and Ya'rubiya as authorized crossing points, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it by the end of February 2020 on the feasibility of using alternative modalities for the border crossing of Ya'rubiya in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reached people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic through the most direct routes, and in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Consultations were undertaken in January on that basis.

6. Response efforts from within the Syrian Arab Republic continued at scale in response to assessed needs throughout much of the country, even as access for some humanitarian actors, including the United Nations, remained limited in some areas. During the reporting period, the United Nations and its partners received approval from the Syrian authorities to conduct 1,193 missions, 1,152 of which were approved at the local level and 41 at the national level.

Humanitarian update

3. December 2019 saw renewed and sustained intensification of aerial bombardments by government and pro-government forces inside the de-escalation area in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. The United Nations Children's Fund reported the deaths of at least 65 children in December alone in the north-west, including 8 children under the age of 15, killed in attacks on the town of Tall Rif'at, northern Aleppo, on 2 December. Fighting and violence continued to escalate in January in parts of Idlib, northern Hama and western Aleppo. Following extended

negotiations, the Russian Federation and Turkey announced that a ceasefire would commence in the de-escalation area on 12 January. However, ground forces continued hostilities on both sides of the frontline, and air strikes by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and pro-government forces resumed two days later. In the week of 15 to 23 January, OHCHR documented incidents in which at least 81 civilians were killed as a result of airstrikes and ground-based strikes.

4. Government and pro-government forces proceeded to consolidate positions and establish new frontlines, pushing civilians to flee northwards, away from the intensifying aerial and ground bombardment and into ever-shrinking and overcrowded areas where civilians hope to find relative safety. In southern Idlib, ground operations resumed on 24 January, with government and pro-government forces taking control of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man and several surrounding localities on 29 January. In western Aleppo, ground operations commenced on 26 January, preceded by airstrikes and intense bombing. The city of Aleppo was also affected by shelling, including in densely populated neighbourhoods.

5. Multiple unilateral humanitarian pauses were negotiated in December and January to enable safer passage for civilians wishing to leave areas affected by renewed hostilities in the north-west. Two humanitarian pauses on 21 and 24 December enabled thousands of civilians to leave Ma'arrat al-Nu'man under safer conditions. According to available reports, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, a significant population centre, was empty of civilians by the beginning of January. On 25 January, a renewed humanitarian pause enabled the safer movement of 1,888 people from Miznaz and Khan al-Asal in Aleppo. A subsequent humanitarian pause on 30 January was extended twice until 2 February, enabling the safer movement of an additional 2,594 civilians from Ariha, Jabal al Zwiheh, Saraqib and Sarmin in Idlib, including patients from two hospitals in Ariha, to relatively safer areas, mostly in Idlib and western Aleppo Governorates.

6. Overall, some 520,000 people were displaced in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic over the reporting period, 80 per cent of whom were women and children. Almost all moved further north and west, into the areas where civilians hope to find relative safety, outside of government forces' control. Many of those families had already been displaced in the mass-movement of some 400,000 people between May and August 2019. Most moved into urban centres and displaced persons camps in north-western Idlib Governorate. The immediate absorption capacity of the camps was surpassed, while towns and villages were overburdened with new arrivals. Some 144,000 displaced persons moved to areas in northern Aleppo Governorate, such as Afrin and I'zaz. As at 31 January 2020, an estimated 280,000 civilians remained at imminent risk of displacement from military operations.

7. In the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic, fighting in the area between Tall Abyad and Ra's al-Ayn, where Operation Peace Spring was launched on 9 October, decreased during the reporting period, while several military forces continued to operate in proximity to one another. The M4 highway – a critical artery to sustain commercial as well as humanitarian access to the north-east – remained closed to humanitarian transit. Some 70,000 people remained displaced in the north-east since 9 October 2019, including 14,000 in collective shelters for internally displaced persons. Prior to 9 October, the north-east had already hosted approximately 710,000 displaced civilians. Children accounted for 42 per cent of that population, most of whom were hosted by local communities. An additional 90,000 people remained hosted in several displacement camps. The largest of those was the Hawl camp, which hosted more than 66,000 people. Women and children constituted some 96 per cent of the population at the Hawl camp. Those vulnerable populations were among 1.9 million people in the north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic considered to be in need of humanitarian assistance.

8. Residents of Rukban continued to spontaneously depart from the camp by their own means. At the time of writing, more than 19,400 people – almost 50 per cent of the population – had left the Rukban area, most transiting through Syrian government shelters. Information available to the United Nations indicates that several thousand people in Rukban still wish to leave. Many are among the most vulnerable and least able to leave by their own means. Plans by the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to pursue efforts initiated in 2019 to facilitate voluntary departures for those having expressed a desire to leave did not materialize, as conditions for that support were not yet conducive. In the meantime, the United Nations continued to advocate for durable solutions for all Rukban residents. In January, the United Nations conducted four inter-agency assessment missions to areas of return of Rukban residents in Homs.

9. The south-west of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to see tensions between local populations and government forces. Reported anti-government activities included local cells of former opposition fighters carrying out attacks using small arms and explosive devices. Military and security branches of the Government reportedly expanded their deployment to the south-west, detaining individuals with former links to non-State armed groups, searching for perpetrators of acts of violence and attempting to re-establish order and control. Assassination attempts by unknown perpetrators targeting both pro-government and former opposition-linked individuals continued to be reported.

10. The unfolding economic crisis deepened humanitarian needs. Shortages of essential items, such as rice, vegetable oil, sugar and fuel, were reported across the country. Market monitoring by the World Food Programme (WFP) showed food prices at the end of 2019 to be more than eight times higher than pre-crisis levels and at their highest point since the end of 2016, when food prices were 10 times higher than pre-crisis levels. Indebtedness and harmful coping mechanisms, such as selling household assets and livestock and reducing non-food expenses, such as health and education, were increasingly reported, with costs of food and water consuming 75 per cent of household incomes. The number of people affected by food insecurity increased by over one million in 2019.

Update on overall developments

11. During the reporting period, the Special Envoy continued to engage the Syrian parties and key international stakeholders towards the implementation of Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), in which the Council called for a United Nations-facilitated and Syrian-led political process. The Special Envoy has been in communication with the Government and opposition to agree on an agenda for a third session of the Constitutional Committee's small drafting body. He visited Damascus on 29 January 2020.

12. The Special Envoy consulted international and regional interlocutors in an attempt to overcome the deadlock on the Constitutional Committee and advance other items in Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) in a step-by-step manner. Meanwhile, it was agreed that the working group on the release of detainees/abductees, the handover of bodies and identification of missing persons, comprising Iran (Islamic Republic of), the Russian Federation, Turkey and the United Nations, was expected to meet in Geneva for the first time, as part of an ongoing rotation, in February 2020. Efforts in the political sphere were again affected by military escalation, in particular in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Protection

13. At least 427 civilians were killed in incidents verified by OHCHR from 1 December 2019 to 31 January 2020. That included 143 children – 87 boys and 56 girls – and 65 women. Their deaths were attributed to airstrikes, ground-based strikes, improvised explosive devices and explosive remnants of war. Over 90 per cent of civilian deaths were recorded in areas outside the control of the Government and pro-government forces. Based on the consistent pattern of civilian harm, OHCHR has expressed its strong concern that the parties to the conflict have failed to respect the key international humanitarian law obligations of distinguishing civilians from fighters and civilian objects from military objectives; refraining from indiscriminate attacks; respecting the principle of proportionality; and taking precautions in the conduct of military operations.

14. Over the reporting period, OHCHR recorded an intensification of airstrikes and ground-based strikes by government and pro-government forces that hit areas within the de-escalation area in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. Moreover, at least 344 civilian deaths – more than 80 per cent of the civilian deaths during the reporting period – were recorded in the north-west of the country as a result of airstrikes and ground-based strikes in Idlib, parts of Aleppo and Hama. They included 108 children – 55 boys and 53 girls – and 64 women.

15. In areas under the control of various non-State armed groups in northern Syrian Arab Republic, such groups have continued systematically to target civilians, journalists and health service providers, including through killings, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment and enforced disappearances. In Idlib, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham, which the Security Council has designated a terrorist group, systematically imposed rules and codes of conduct in areas under its control that are fundamentally in violation of human rights law, including of the right to life, liberty and security of person, freedom of movement, expression, peaceful assembly and association. Through self-appointed courts, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham members have inflicted harsh penalties and executed persons whom it perceived to be critical of those rules or accused of opposing the group's ideology. OHCHR received reports indicating that the relatives of arrested individuals were denied information related to the fate and whereabouts of their family members.

16. In some areas where control shifted to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, including Dar'a, violence – including the killing of civilians – continued in the context of the volatile security environment.

17. Hostilities affecting educational facilities continued to be reported by humanitarian organizations. In total, 14 incidents were verified by the United Nations during the reporting period:¹

(a) On 1 December, the Barisha primary school in the town of Barisha, Idlib Governorate, reportedly sustained severe material damage to the building and its furniture as a result of an airstrike;

(b) On 4 December, the Bzabur school in Ariha, Idlib Governorate, reportedly sustained severe damage from two barrel bombs that struck the village of Bzabur;

¹ The attacks have been confirmed using tried-and-tested systems, whereby the United Nations receives reports from partners on the ground and reviews them against at least two other independent sources. Only those attacks that are fully vetted and confirmed by all independent sources are included in the list of confirmed attacks. The systems are used worldwide and are widely respected.

(c) On 7 December, the Ahmed Astila primary school and the Balyun High School in Ariha, Idlib Governorate, were reportedly damaged as a result of an airstrike that hit the main market of the town of Balyun;

(d) On 7 December, the Aziziyah school in Idlib Governorate was reportedly damaged as a result of a barrel bomb that struck nearby;

(e) On 8 December, shelling in rural areas in the west of Idlib Governorate reportedly struck and partially damaged an elementary school in the village of Ghassaniyah;

(f) On 10 December, three schoolboys were reportedly injured as a result of ground-based strikes that hit a school in Hambushiyah in rural areas in western Idlib;

(g) On 16 December, the Martyr Mustafa Qasem school in a rural area in the east of Idlib Governorate was reportedly struck by airstrikes in the village of Abu Dafn;

(h) On 19 December, the Hassan Hussam Kamel school in the city of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly severely affected by aerial bombardment, after which it was forced to close;

(i) On 22 December, the Ekayyed and Mahloul schools were reportedly struck and damaged during airstrikes on and the shelling of Ma'arrat al-Nu'man in Idlib Governorate;

(j) On 1 January, the Martyr Abdou Salama primary school in Sarmin, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly damaged when three rockets containing cluster bombs struck the town of Sarmin. The rockets hit when students were about to leave the school. Five students, aged 6 to 13, were killed at the main gate. Two teachers were injured;

(k) On 5 January, the Ma'arr Shurin primary school in Ma'arr Shurin, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly struck and damaged by airstrikes;

(l) On 6 January, the Kafr Battikh primary and secondary schools in Kafr Battikh, Idlib Governorate, were reportedly hit by airstrikes, resulting in the partial destruction of the building;

(m) On 15 January, a complex of three schools (the Martyr Ahmed Qablan school, the Ghadfah school for girls and the Ghadfah secondary school), in the town of Ghadfah, Ma'arrat al-Nu'man, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly damaged by artillery shelling;

(n) On 23 January, the Mazra'at Khan al-Subul school in the town of Khan al-Subul, Saraqib, Idlib Governorate, was reportedly completely destroyed by airstrikes.

18. The Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care of the World Health Organization reported four incidents affecting health-care facilities and assets. In December, two incidents were confirmed, injuring two people. Two hospitals in south-east Idlib were reportedly struck on 26 and 30 January, killing 10 people and injuring 30. One hospital was destroyed while the other was severely damaged. At least 53 health facilities in north-west Syrian Arab Republic were forced to cease operations owing to the ongoing hostilities, security constraints, threats of attack or as areas were deserted by civilians fleeing the hostilities. Additional incidents were yet to be verified.

19. In addition to health and educational facilities, local markets and bakeries were also heavily affected by the escalation in the north-west. In total, 12 markets were directly hit by airstrikes and ground-based strikes attributed to government and

pro-government forces. On 15 January, at least 19 civilians were killed and more than 60 others injured as a result of an airstrike that hit the al-Hal vegetable market in the city of Idlib.

20. The internal United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry continued during the reporting period to investigate a series of incidents that had occurred in north-west Syrian Arab Republic since the signing of the Memorandum on the Stabilization of the Situation in the Idlib De-escalation Area between the Russian Federation and Turkey on 17 September 2018. It will ascertain the facts of the specific incidents concerned and report to me once it completes its work.

Humanitarian response

21. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners reached on average 5.8 million people in need each month in 2019, including children, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age, throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. During the reporting period, humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food delivered for 4.5 million people in December and for 4.3 million people in January. More than 1.7 million health and medical treatments were provided to people throughout the country over the reporting period (see table 1).

Table 1

Average number of people reached each month by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities throughout the Syrian Arab Republic: December 2019 and January 2020

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Average number of people reached monthly</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	47 000
International Organization for Migration	151 000
Mine Action Service	15 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	344 000
United Nations Children's Fund	3 067 000
United Nations Development Programme	650 000
United Nations Population Fund	520 000
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	85 000
World Food Programme	4 419 000
World Health Organization	1 321 000

22. From inside the Syrian Arab Republic, humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food for 3.5 million people in government-controlled areas and in the north-east in December 2019 and 3.2 million people in January 2020. Approximately 3 million people received water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies. A total of 649,000 children were provided with psychosocial support and other child protection services. United Nations operations from within the Syrian Arab Republic also included the distribution of over 1.3 million health and medical treatments to people throughout the country. In December, risk education teams trained by the Mine Action Service delivered awareness sessions to 923 people in Rif Dimashq, Dar'a, Suwayda' and Hama Governorates.

23. As part of its countrywide humanitarian response, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners continued to deliver life-saving assistance to the 1.8 million people in need in the three Governorates of the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab

Republic, namely, Dayr al-Zawr, Raqqah and Hasakah Governorates. An average of 850,000 people in need received assistance on a monthly basis in 2019 from within the Syrian Arab Republic and that number increased significantly during the course of the year. Some 235,000 people received core and winter relief items, with winter distributions reaching all camp populations in Hawl, Arishah, and Ayn Issa, as well as the informal settlements of Abu Khashab and Tuwaynah. Following a suspension of activities due to military operations, humanitarian mine action partners resumed activities in the north-east, where additional explosive hazard contamination exacerbated needs.

24. At the Hawl camp, the United Nations and its humanitarian partners continued to implement a major relief operation. After a temporary reduction in the presence of humanitarian partners and the suspension of several activities owing to military operations in the north-east, most humanitarian activities resumed and health teams were working across the camp. Challenges remained with regard to providing assistance in the annexes that hosted third-country nationals, where the establishment of distribution points had been hindered by tensions and security concerns. During the reporting period, flood mitigating measures were improved, and some 2,900 old or storm-damaged tents were replaced.

25. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of Security Council resolutions 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2449 (2018) and 2504 (2020) (see table 2). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached. In December, 928 trucks of humanitarian assistance were sent from Turkey through the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam border crossings. In January, 1,227 trucks of humanitarian assistance were sent from Turkey through those crossings. Nearly 900 trucks carried food assistance for some 1.4 million people. Other trucks carried health supplies for almost half a million people and non-food items for more than 230,000 people. This was the most aid the United Nations had sent across the Syrian-Turkish border in any month since the operation was authorized in 2014 (see figure I).

Figure I

Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, by cluster: December 2019 and January 2020 (monthly average)

(Thousands)

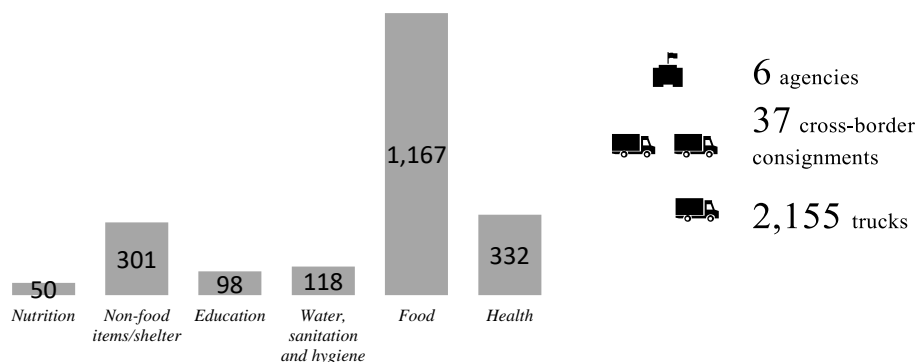


Table 2
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries, by sector and by district: December 2019 and January 2020 (monthly average)

<i>Governorate</i>	<i>District</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Health</i>	<i>Non-food items/shelter</i>	<i>Nutrition</i>	<i>Water, sanitation and hygiene</i>
Aleppo	Afrin	–	1 250	–	–	–	–
Aleppo	I'zaz	5 000	209 683	72 542	47 255	–	24 875
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	–	171 728	–	1 850	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	–	–	3 000	–	–
Idlib	Harim	13 890	783 835	219 999	238 364	50 169	63 680
Idlib	Idlib	79 030	–	39 829	10 100	–	29 280

26. In the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic, in response to the catastrophic deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the United Nations and its partners helped to reach over a million people each month via the cross-border operation. WFP dispatched food assistance to Idlib and Aleppo Governorates for more than 1 million people in December and 1.1 million people in January. However, WFP was only able to distribute to some 895,000 people in January, as a result of the deterioration of the security situation as well as the rapid displacement of people from southern Idlib during the month. In response to evolving needs, ready-to-eat rations were provided for 118,000 people on the move and without access to cooking facilities. WHO and partners finalized the third polio immunization campaign of 2019 in December, reaching more than 830,000 children under the age of five. Developments in the north-west over the reporting period raised concern over access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services as well as gender-based violence response and prevention services for the affected population in Idlib and rural Aleppo, particularly women and adolescent girls.

27. Prior to the expiration of Security Council resolution [2449 \(2018\)](#) on 10 January, WFP undertook a prepositioning exercise. Food rations for some 1.1 million people and ready-to-eat rations for some 500,000 people were prepositioned between 1 and 10 January. With the adoption of Security Council resolution [2504 \(2020\)](#), in which Ramtha and Ya'rubiyah were not extended as authorized crossing points, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council by the end of February 2020 on the feasibility of using alternative modalities for the border crossing of Ya'rubiyah in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance, including medical and surgical supplies, reached people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic through the most direct routes, and in accordance with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. Consultations were undertaken in January on that basis.

28. During the reporting period, the Russian Federation sent informational bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides and Refugee Migration Monitoring, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

29. By the end of December, the humanitarian response plan for the Syrian Arab Republic was funded at 58 per cent, with \$1.9 billion provided of the \$3.3 billion requested for 2019. That total included an allocation of \$25 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund on 12 December. An additional \$19 million was allocated by the Fund to support the Syrian refugee response in Jordan and Lebanon. A medium-term humanitarian strategy for the Hawl camp, covering key requirements until the

end of 2020, was completed in January, with an 18-month funding requirement of \$120 million. A humanitarian readiness and response plan for north-west Syrian Arab Republic, covering both cross-border activities and aid deliveries from within the country, was also completed in January, with a six-month funding requirement of \$336 million. It focuses on critical needs for as many as 800,000 people related to the military escalation in the north-west.

Humanitarian access

30. The provision of humanitarian assistance requires timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded access by the United Nations and all humanitarian partners to people in need across the Syrian Arab Republic. The access landscape in the country is complex, with different areas serviced differently and different types of services requiring different operating modalities. Access is critical for principled humanitarian action, which depends notably on the ability to independently assess needs and deliver assistance and to monitor and evaluate the impact independently, including by regularly engaging directly with affected people.

31. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to provide assistance from within the Syrian Arab Republic to millions of people in need in thousands of locations throughout the country. More than 1,700 United Nations staff members are present in the Syrian Arab Republic, with more than 700 deployed in nine hubs outside Damascus (Aleppo, Dar'a, Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs, Ladhqiya, Qamishli, Suwayda' and Tartus). A further 3,877 staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are deployed across the country. The decentralized presence of United Nations staff contributes to greater access and proximity to affected populations.

32. Many of the aid deliveries are implemented through national partners, in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The United Nations is regularly deployed alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, including to undertake assessments, accompany deliveries and follow up with monitoring and evaluation missions. In December 2019 and January 2020, the United Nations conducted 1,193 missions throughout the Syrian Arab Republic (see table 3).

Table 3

Total number of missions conducted from within the Syrian Arab Republic by United Nations agencies and third parties/facilitators, by type: December 2019 and January 2020

<i>Type of mission</i>	<i>Note verbale</i>	<i>Blanket approval</i>	<i>Governorate approval</i>	<i>Total number</i>
Assessment missions	3	32	1	36
Missions accompanying aid deliveries	3	319	19	341
Monitoring missions	29	735	13	777
Security, logistics and administrative support missions	6	33	0	39
Total	41	1 119	33	1 193

Figure II
Total number of missions conducted from within the Syrian Arab Republic by United Nations agencies, by Governorate: December 2019 and January 2020

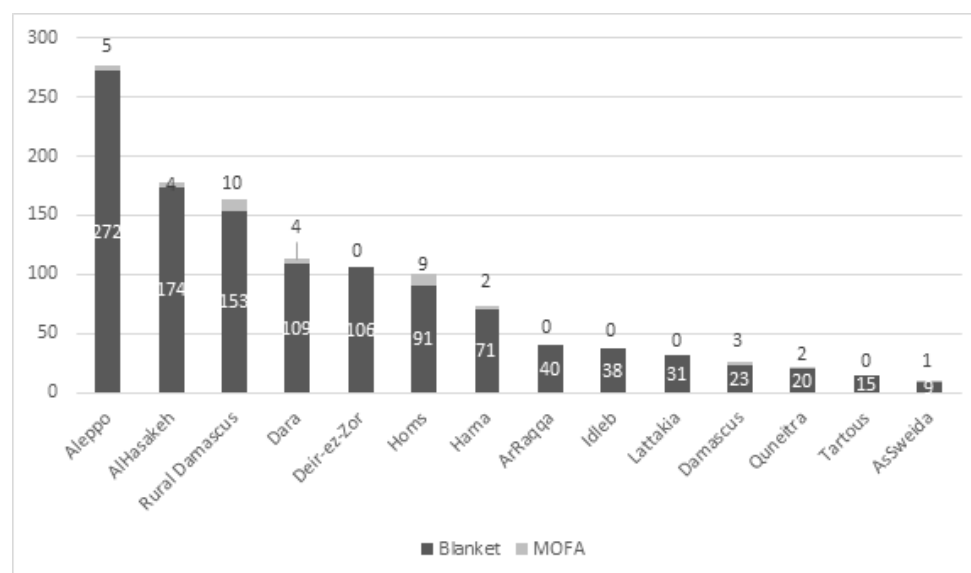


Table 4
Requests for United Nations access for single-agency missions: December 2019 and January 2020

Type of request	Number requested	Number approved	Percentage approved
Assessment missions	38	17	45
Missions accompanying aid deliveries	42	18	43
Monitoring missions	101	45	45
Security, logistics and administrative support missions	16	9	56
Total	197	89	45

33. During the reporting period, the United Nations and its partners received approval from the Syrian authorities to conduct 1,193 missions, 1,152 of which were approved at the local level and 41 at the national level (formal approval) (see table 3 and figure II). During the reporting period, the United Nations and its partners continued to have more sustained access from sub-offices than from missions originating in Damascus.

34. Response efforts from within the Syrian Arab Republic continued at scale based on assessed needs throughout much of the country, even as access to some areas and for some humanitarian actors, including the United Nations, remained limited. Limitations on the ability of certain sectors to carry out structured needs assessments across the country remained. Of the 197 submitted mission requests that required formal approval at the national level by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 89 mission requests were approved (45 per cent). While requests made in the last days of the reporting period would not be expected to receive a formal response before the end of the month, the numbers indicate limitations on access for humanitarian actors (see table 4 and figure III).

35. Violence continued to inhibit systematic access to frontline or conflict-affected parts of Idlib, northern Hama and southern Aleppo Governorates. In January, United Nations missions to Aleppo were suspended for security reasons. In the Dana area, ongoing violence, including incidents involving improvised explosive devices, reports of arrests, assaults and kidnappings, had an impact on access. Access was extremely challenging in the Operation Peace Spring area between Tall Abyad and Ra's al-Ayn following developments on the ground since 9 October and insecurity. Turkish authorities announced that they had been providing humanitarian assistance to the area since 15 October. The United Nations planned to conduct a crossline assessment mission to Ra's al-Ayn during the reporting period, in coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The mission was unable to proceed because of conditions imposed by all parties. WHO continued to airlift supplies to the north-east in line with agreed arrangements, owing to the lack of an agreement to transport supplies over land. WHO conducted three airlifts in December to transport the necessary materials. Insecurity also continued to limit access in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr. Several communities remained difficult to access by the United Nations from within the Syrian Arab Republic owing to issues with administrative and security approvals, including Duma, Zamalka, Irbin, east Harasta, Kafr Batna, Mudayra and Nashabiyah in eastern Ghouta; Bayt Jinn and Mazra'at Bayt Jinn; Zakiyah and Dayr Khabiyah, and Darayya. Cross-line access to Manbij, Hajin and Rukban also remained challenging.

36. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations as authorized under Security Council resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#), [2332 \(2016\)](#), [2393 \(2017\)](#), [2449 \(2018\)](#) and [2504 \(2020\)](#). During the reporting period, the Mechanism continued its operations in Turkey and, until 10 January 2020, in Iraq and Jordan. During the period from 1 December 2019 to 31 January 2020, the Mechanism confirmed the humanitarian nature of 37 consignments, consisting of 2,155 trucks, that crossed into the Syrian Arab Republic from Turkey: 19 consignments from Bab al-Hawa (1,844 trucks) and 18 from Bab al-Salam (311 trucks). That brought the total number of trucks sent since the beginning of cross-border operations in 2014 to 32,493 (23,983 through Bab al-Hawa, 3,806 through Bab al-Salam, 4,595 through Ramtha and 109 from Ya'rubiyah). There were no concerns or questions regarding the humanitarian nature of the consignments. The United Nations provided 48-hour notice to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding all shipments. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Government of Turkey and, until 10 January 2020, the Governments of Iraq and Jordan.

Visas and registrations

37. The United Nations continued to work with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to allow for the timely provision of visas to staff (see table 5).

Table 5
Requests for United Nations visas: December 2019 and January 2020

<i>Type of request</i>	<i>Number requested</i>	<i>Number approved</i>	<i>Number rejected</i>	<i>Number pending</i>
Visas requested during reporting period	108	51	2	52
Renewals requested during reporting period	162	109	1	52
Visas pending from before reporting period	131	42	21	55
Renewals pending from before reporting period	68	58	4	6

Note: The United Nations withdrew 3 visa requests submitted during the reporting period and 13 pending requests from before the reporting period.

38. A total of 28 international NGOs were registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

39. The United Nations and NGOs continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, by air strikes and by the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and other attacks. Humanitarian relief personnel also operate in areas highly contaminated with unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and landmines.

40. Since the beginning of the conflict, hundreds of humanitarian workers have reportedly been killed, including 23 staff members of the United Nations and of the entities of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of 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 NGOs have also been killed. At least two humanitarian workers were killed in the north-west in the last week of January.

41. A total of 27 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (all from UNRWA) were detained or missing at the end of the reporting period.

III. Observations

42. A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in the north-west of the Syrian Arab Republic. Civilians have endured almost nine years of war. Many have experienced repeated shocks since late 2019, with escalating hostilities, harsh winter weather, repeated displacement and the countless other challenges and tragedies of war. At the start of the new year, hundreds of thousands of people – most of them children – have been forced to flee the intensifying aerial and ground bombardment in the de-escalation area, hoping to find safety in ever-shrinking and overcrowded areas. While localized pauses have helped some civilians to flee, millions continue to face some of the most severe protection challenges seen throughout the humanitarian crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Idlib.

43. I am alarmed by the mounting civilian casualties in the north-west and in particular by the death toll on children. I remain particularly concerned about the escalation of attacks that appear indiscriminate in densely populated areas, including inside busy markets, near schools and hospitals and within the vicinity of camps for internally displaced persons. Developments in the north-east have also placed a strain on arrangements that have enabled a continuity of services, including water and electricity. I count on parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law to avoid any additional resulting harm to civilians. The protection of civilian life is paramount. Disregard for civilians' protection runs contrary to the obligations of all parties to the conflict under international humanitarian law. I appeal to all parties to avoid the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area in populated areas, given their likely disproportionate and indiscriminate effects. Developments in the north-west further highlight the urgent need for appropriate operational policies relating to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas consistent with the applicable rules of international humanitarian law.

44. I commend the work of humanitarian organizations, which continue to take all feasible measures to address the needs of some 3 million people who need help in the north-west. Their work continues despite immense challenges posed by hostilities as well as by operating in an environment where the Security Council-designated

terrorist group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham has a significant presence. The cross-border operation remains essential to respond to increasing needs in the north-west. In January, the United Nations dispatched more assistance through the cross-border modality from Turkey than it had in any month since the operation was authorized in 2014. Efforts continue to scale-up operations to reach people wherever they are located. People in need in Idlib cannot be reached at this scale, in such a timely and direct manner, through any other means. The Security Council has a critical role to play in supporting these humanitarian efforts. I count on the members of the Security Council to ensure that the United Nations and its partners are authorized to meet the humanitarian needs of all people across the Syrian Arab Republic through the most direct routes.

45. I commend Member States for their continued financial support of humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic. However, I am concerned that the 2019 humanitarian response plan was only 58 per cent funded as at the end of 2019. I urge all Member States to support urgently humanitarian operations in the Syrian Arab Republic.

46. Continued impunity for alleged serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law by parties to the conflict remains of grave concern. I remind all parties to the conflict to comply strictly with international humanitarian law, including the principles of distinction and proportionality, and take all feasible precautions to avoid and, in any event, to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects. It is incumbent on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other parties to the conflict, as well as the international community, to ensure that those who perpetrate international crimes be held accountable. I remind all States, particularly those with direct influence over parties to the conflict, that they are required to take proactive steps to ensure respect for international humanitarian law, including as it relates to the protection of civilians.

47. I call upon all parties to the conflict, in particular the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, all States, civil society and the United Nations system 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, in particular by providing relevant information and documentation. Accountability for serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law is both a legal requirement and 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.

48. In view of the ongoing serious concerns repeatedly raised with regard to the protection of civilians and other human rights concerns in the Syrian Arab Republic, I continue to strongly urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with Human Rights Council 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.

49. The Special Envoy will continue his efforts to seek a political solution in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). However, in order for those efforts to be successful, the commitment of all parties to the conflict and relevant international actors is required to ensure that an enabling environment is in place to encourage the necessary compromise and constructive engagement needed to end the war in the Syrian Arab Republic. I continue to call upon all parties to work towards that endeavour, with ending the suffering of the Syrian people and ensuring sustainable peace as the absolute priority.

Annex

Reported incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: December 2019 and January 2020*

Idlib Governorate

- On 2 December, 10 civilians, including 2 women, were killed after an alleged airstrike near a market in Ma'arrat al-Nu'man. On the same day, one civilian man was killed in an alleged airstrike near a market in Saraqib. On the same day, at least five people, including a civilian woman and her two sons, were reported to have been killed in several airstrikes near the Idlib Central Prison in the city of Idlib. An unidentified number of other people were also injured.
- On 2 and 11 December 2019, respectively, Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham executed a female detainee and a male detainee in the city of Idlib. On 12 December 2019, the group also executed a male detainee. On 13 December, the group executed a male detainee.
- On 7 December, 10 civilians, including 1 woman, 1 girl and 3 boys, were killed in an alleged airstrike near a local market in Balyun. On the same day, four civilians, including two women and a boy, were killed in alleged airstrikes in Barah. The explosions also damaged a local market, two schools and a bakery. Later that day, a civilian woman and four boys were killed in an alleged airstrike in Ibdita.
- On 10 December, three children were injured in alleged ground-based strikes near a school in the village of Hambushiyah.
- On 15 December, 2019, a boy was killed and a local bakery was damaged in an alleged airstrike in the town of Ma'arr Shurin.
- On 16 December, 2019, a boy and girl were killed in an alleged airstrike near a makeshift camp for internally displaced persons in the city of Binnish. On the same day, two women and a girl were killed in an airstrike in the town of Ma'ar Shamarin.
- On 1 January, at least 12 civilians, including 2 women, 4 boys and 2 girls, were killed in alleged ground-based strikes that hit the main gate of a school in the town of Sarmin. In addition, 11 civilians, including 2 women and 3 boys, were injured in the reported incident.
- On 5 January, 13 civilians, including 1 woman and 3 boys, were killed as a result of what were alleged to be airstrikes by pro-government forces that hit near to a local market in the city of Ariha in southern rural Idlib.
- On 11 January, a civilian woman and six girls were killed when alleged airstrikes hit several neighbourhoods in the town of Binnish. On the same day, five civilians, including two women, a girl and a boy, were killed after alleged airstrikes hit the village of Nayrab.

* The list of incidents exemplifies human rights issues of concern raised in the report. Owing to the changing patterns of conflict and the loss of networks of credible and/or reliable sources in many conflict-affected areas, however, verifying incidents is increasingly difficult. The list, which contains only those incidents that were reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that have been verified according to its methodology, should not be considered comprehensive.

- On 15 January, at least 19 civilians, including 3 boys, were killed, and more than 60 other civilians, including 4 women, 12 boys and 5 girls, were injured after an alleged airstrike near a market and surrounding areas in the city of Idlib. On the same day, seven civilians, including two women and three boys, were killed when an alleged airstrike hit a local market in Ariha. A nearby girls' school was damaged in the incident.
- On 23 January, five civilians, including a woman and three boys, were killed and three civilians, including a woman and a boy, were injured after an alleged airstrike hit an informal settlement for internally displaced persons outside the city of Saraqib. On the same day, two women, three boys and three girls were injured when alleged airstrikes landed in Ariha.
- On 25 January, a woman and her son and daughter were killed and three other civilians, including a woman and boy, were injured after an alleged airstrike landed near in Shinan.

Aleppo Governorate

- On 2 December, 10 civilians, including 1 girl and 7 boys, were killed and 12 civilians, including 2 women and 7 boys, were injured when alleged ground-based strikes landed in the city of Tall Rif^{at}.
- On 3 December, 1 civilian woman was killed and 15 civilians, including 3 women, 1 girl, and 7 boys, were injured after alleged ground-based strikes hit the city of I[']zaz.
- On 12 January, four civilians, including a woman, were killed and three civilians, including a boy and a girl, were injured when ground-based strikes hit several residential neighbourhoods in the city of Aleppo. One of the reported strikes damaged a building at the Ittihad Private University.
- On 16 January, at least 2 civilians, including 1 woman and 1 boy, were killed and 12 others, including 2 women and 3 boys, were injured after alleged ground-based strikes landed in the city of Aleppo.
- On 17 January, a boy and a girl were killed and four other civilians, including three women, were injured after an alleged airstrike hit near a settlement for internally displaced persons known as the "Baituni Factory".
- On 18 January, four civilians from the same family, including a woman and her two sons, were killed after an airstrike hit their home in the village of Bala.
- On 21 January, eight civilians from the same family, including a woman and her three sons and three daughters, were killed after an alleged airstrike hit the village of Kafr Ta[']al. On the same day, at least 10 civilians, including 2 women, 3 boys and 1 girl, were killed after an airstrike struck their home in the village of Kafr Nuran.
- On 22 January, two civilian women were killed and two civilians, including a woman and a girl, were injured when an airstrike landed near an informal camp for internally displaced persons outside the city of Atarib.
- On 23 January, a civilian man was killed and seven boys were injured when unexploded ordnance detonated in a field outside Darat Izzah.
- On 26 January, 1 boy was killed and 46 other civilians, including 13 women, 1 girl and 1 boy, were injured after an alleged vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated inside a local market in the centre of the city of I[']zaz.

- On 26 January, two civilian men were killed after alleged ground-based strikes landed in the city of Aleppo.
- On 28 January, a girl was killed and a woman and two girls from the same family were injured after an alleged airstrike hit their house in the village of Anjarah in western rural Aleppo.

Hasakah Governorate

- On 18 December, six civilians, including a woman and four boys, were killed when an alleged vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated inside a local market and near a restaurant in Mabrukah.
- On 19 December, five civilians, including a woman and a girl, were killed and seven civilians, including a woman and two boys, were injured after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated in a residential area of Tall Halaf.

Hama Governorate

- On 8 December, a child was killed after ground-based strikes hit Aziziyah.

Raqqah Governorate

- On 18 December, a woman and a girl were killed after an alleged vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attached to their vehicle detonated near the crossing area of Tall Abyad.
- On 23 December, 3 civilians, including 1 woman and 1 girl, were killed and 21 civilians, including 7 women, 3 girls and 2 boys, were injured when an alleged vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near a school and a local market in the city of Suluk.

Dar‘a Governorate

- On 10 December, the Chief of the Shajarah local council was killed in front of his house.
 - On 21 December, three civilian men were killed and two civilians, including a boy, were injured when unexploded ordnance detonated in the outskirts of the city of Nawa.
-