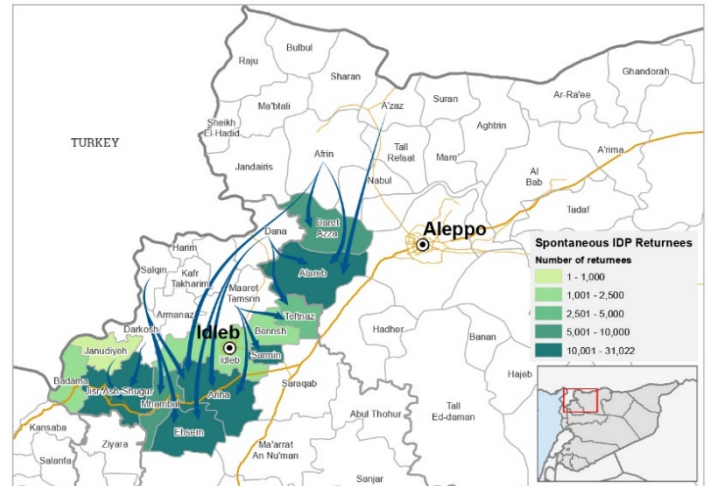


HIGHLIGHTS

- The humanitarian situation for people in northwest Syria remains alarming as short-term needs are increasingly compounded by longer-term needs.
- Humanitarian needs continue to increase in western Aleppo and southern Idlib governorates, where people are moving back after being displaced in recent hostilities.
- The deteriorating economic situation exacerbates humanitarian needs, as the Syrian Pound reaches unprecedented lows, making vital goods such as food, water and hygiene items unaffordable for many.
- To date, no confirmed case of COVID-19 was identified in northwest Syria. Humanitarian partners continue prevention activities and preparations to address potential cases.



Source: Field reports
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

4 M

People in northwest Syria comprising Idlib area and northern Aleppo governorate

840,000

People of those displaced since 1 December remain in displacement

US\$ 500 M

Emergency funding required to provide humanitarian assistance to 1.1 million people in northwest Syria until July 2020

51%

CHILDREN (est)

120,000

People displaced since 1 December returned to their communities

US\$ 162 M

Estimated additional financial requirement for COVID-19 response in northwest Syria until December 2020

25%

WOMEN (est)

20,000

IDPs returned to previous locations of displacement

SITUATION OVERVIEW

A severe humanitarian situation prevails for people living in northwest Syria. Although hostilities have largely halted under the ceasefire established in early March, people continue to be affected by displacement, the military operations effects, and the protracted conflict that has disrupted their lives for nearly a decade. Existing vulnerabilities are further compounded by the threat of a COVID-19 outbreak and by a severe economic downturn.

Reports of tensions and clashes between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in Idlib and northern Aleppo have increased since mid-March, alongside increased protests and IED incidents. Notably, attempts by armed groups to open a crossing for commercial purposes between Idlib and areas controlled by the Government of Syria drew public protests on 18 and 30 April. One civilian was reportedly killed, and several others reportedly injured by small arms fire in the latter incident, sparking further protests across the Idlib area including in Idlib city, Kafr Takharim, Ariha, Teftnaz and Bennsh. The operation of the crossing was subsequently suspended. An increased prevalence of IED incidents has also been observed,

particularly in Afrin sub-district where reports indicate that seven of 12 IED incidents reported in northern Aleppo in the latter half of April occurred. This includes one of the worst incidents recorded in the area, when an IED explosion in Afrin town on 28 April reportedly killed 42 civilians and injured more than 54 others. As a consequence of this incident, new rules were introduced in parts of northern Aleppo governorate to regulate the movement and sale of fuel in towns and cities as a means to reduce the risk of IED explosions in populated areas, including in Afrin town, Mare', Salama and Akhtrein.

Some 840,000 of the nearly 1 million people displaced in northwest Syria between December 2019 and early March 2020 reportedly remain in displacement, some 60 percent of them children and 21 percent of them women. Shelter, food, water, sanitation, hygiene and protection remain the most urgent needs, while needs associated with longer-term challenges, such as health, nutrition and education services, are rising as people remain in humanitarian need for a longer time. Some 141,000 people have reportedly moved to the parts of western Aleppo and southern Idlib governorates from which they were displaced since December 2019, according to assessment findings by a UN partner. This includes an estimated 120,000 people who returned to their areas of origin and an estimated 21,000 people who went back to previous locations of displacement. As such humanitarian needs in these areas increased, with delivery of assistance complicated as humanitarian partners were displaced away from the areas. About 80 percent of those who went back to these areas are women and children, a proportion consistent with the overall population of people recently displaced in northwest Syria.

In addition to the loss of their homes, people have lost their livelihoods and access to agricultural fields, increasing reliance on humanitarian support. This loss exacerbates already dire circumstances caused by the deterioration of the economic situation in Syria, including in the northwest. As markets in northwest Syria are heavily reliant on imported goods and cross-border movements with Turkey, the significant devaluation of the Syrian Pound (SYP) has contributed to the ongoing erosion of local purchasing power as prices of basic necessities such as food, water and hygiene supplies have reached new highs each month since November 2019. This has been aggravated by restrictions in cross-border activities due to COVID-19 countermeasures, which negatively impact the availability of goods in markets, and by the renewed decline of the SYP, which reached record lows against the USD at the beginning of May, exceeding 1,300 SYP per USD for the first time. As of 6 May, exchange rates in Idlib had further eroded to a reported 1,460 SYP per USD – a devaluation of nine percent within two days. This compares with rates of some 900 SYP per USD in mid-December 2019 and 570 SYP per USD in May 2019. These developments raise the cost of living for many people to untenable levels and result in negative and emergency coping strategies to meet their daily needs, such as the sale of assets, child labour, and other forms of exploitation.

No cases of COVID-19 have been identified in northwest Syria, with all 302 samples tested as of 6 May returning negative results. A laboratory in Idlib with a capacity of 100 tests per day remains instrumental in testing samples of potential cases of COVID-19. Samples from patients in the Afrin and A'zaz to Jarablus area of northern Aleppo governorate are sent in some cases to laboratories in Turkey for testing. As part of the ongoing response, 5,000 additional N95 masks have been procured and are in the pipeline to supplement the current stock of personal protective equipment (PPE) in northwest Syria, and some 300 tents have been distributed or installed to serve as dedicated COVID-19 triage stations outside health facilities in northwest Syria, to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in medical settings. More than 60 additional tents are in the process of being distributed for installation, towards meeting a target of two triage stations installed at each of 190 health facilities. Four hospitals with intensive care units are operational to receive severe cases of COVID-19 and two community-based isolation (CBI) centres are now operational to isolate mild to moderate cases. Installation of additional CBI centres is underway to reach a capacity of more than 1,500 beds across 30 locations in northwest Syria. To adequately respond to COVID-19 in northwest Syria until the end of 2020, a funding requirement of US\$ 162 million has been estimated across all humanitarian sectors, including some US\$ 70 million for the health response as set out in the COVID-19 preparedness and response plan for northwest Syria.

Humanitarian partners operating in northwest Syria continue to adjust their ways of working to minimise disruption in the delivery of assistance while accommodating COVID-19 countermeasures. Distribution methods have been adapted to reduce face-to-face contact, and awareness raising efforts on COVID-19 risks and precautions remain widespread through both online and offline mediums. Virtualisation of in-person meetings and activities remains in place, including for coordination and for awareness raising, and education and case management services. With regards to points of entry, the Bab Al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salam border crossings between Syria and Turkey remain open to humanitarian and commercial traffic, while several other points of entry in northwest Syria are also partially open. Monitoring, infection prevention and control (IPC) and referral measures reportedly continue to be implemented at cross-border and cross-line points.

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