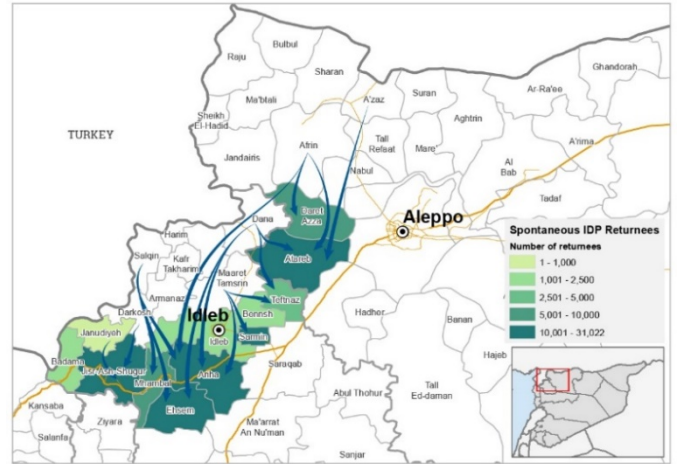


HIGHLIGHTS

- A dire humanitarian situation persists in northwest Syria as short-term emergency needs are compounded by longer-term needs.
- The deteriorating economic situation, coupled with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, exacerbates pre-existing humanitarian needs and creates new ones while vital goods such as food, water and hygiene items become increasingly unaffordable.
- To date, no confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported 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

OF THE OVERALL POPULATION:

51%

CHILDREN (est)

US\$ 162 M

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

2.8 M

People in need in northwest Syria

25%

WOMEN (est)

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The humanitarian situation for people in northwest Syria remains alarming. Ongoing conflict, now in its ninth year, continues to undermine the security and livelihoods of the four million civilians in northern and western Aleppo and Idlib governorates. Before recent escalation of hostilities, humanitarian community estimated 2.8 million people in need of humanitarian assistance to meet their most basic needs like food, shelter, water, health and education. Years of conflict resulting in economic hardship, multiple displacements and exposure to violence have eroded the ability of people to cope, while the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic entrench existing needs and proliferate new ones across the population of northwest Syria.

While hostilities between Government of Syria forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in northwest Syria have been limited since the announcement of a ceasefire on 5 March, incidents between non-state armed groups, and between armed groups and civilians are increasingly reported in northern Aleppo governorate and in the Idlib area. At times, these have escalated into armed clashes that endanger civilians and impede humanitarian work. On 28 May, an incident involving members of a non-state armed group reportedly resulted in the death of at least two people including one child, and injuries to five other civilians including a child. Reports indicated that on 23 and 24 May, clashes involving NSAGs in the vicinity of Salama in northern Aleppo governorate and in Ariha in Idlib governorate reportedly resulted in the death of four people

including a child and a woman and injured two civilians, including one child. Reports of increased prevalence of improvised explosive device incidents during the past three months, both in the Idlib area and northern Aleppo governorate, fuel similar risks for civilians and humanitarian activities. Since 15 May, local sources reported at least 10 IED incidents in Idlib and northern Aleppo governorates, resulting in injuries to civilians and material damage. During the same time period, 5 other incidents where IEDs were identified and defused were reported.

Of the four million people in northwest Syria, 2.7 million people are estimated to be internally displaced. Most recently, some 840,000 of the nearly 1 million people displaced in northwest Syria between last December and early March reportedly remain in displacement, including some 500,000 children and nearly 180,000 women. Longer-term needs are increasing, including for health, nutrition and education services, even as urgent needs for shelter, food, water, sanitation, hygiene and protection persist. For instance, more than 100,000 people who have been displaced during the latest wave of violence were not able to receive emergency food assistance. Just over half of the 81,000 tents needed to accommodate 435,000 people displaced between December and March had been installed as of 19 May. Overall, some 1.4 million displaced people, meaning some 270,000 families, are estimated to be living in IDP sites across northwest Syria. 80 percent of these IDPs, some 1.12 million, are women and children. In May, two children were reportedly killed as windstorms hit camps in Idlib, collapsing walls or tent structures. Since 15 May, several fire incidents in IDP sites were reported, causing the destruction of tents and belongings of IDP families. Displacement not only means the loss of their homes for displaced families in northwest Syria, but also the loss of livelihoods for a predominantly agricultural population who no longer have access to their field or have lost their livestock during displacement. For those 120,000 people who have returned to their home communities, difficulties persist as basic services and humanitarian activities had been suspended due to hostilities.

Displacement and the vulnerabilities that it creates is only one factor that drives humanitarian needs. 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 the pound reached 1,950 SYP per USD for the first time. This compares with rates of some 900 SYP per USD in mid-December 2019 and 570 SYP per USD in May 2019. The devaluation has resulted in the prices of basic necessities such as food, water and hygiene supplies reaching 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. 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.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic not only exacerbates humanitarian needs of people across northwest Syria, but also adds additional complexity to humanitarian activities in northwest Syria. Measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus that include movement restrictions and business closures reportedly have a serious negative effect on the fragile local economy. Moreover, humanitarian actors had to cease or reduce certain activities that could not be adapted to the current environment in an effort to keep people in need and humanitarian staff safe. For instance, protection and education activities had to be suspended to a large degree as the virtualization of these activities was limited due to the difficulties accessing phones and internet for some people. Only 10 percent of the children could be reached through distance learning during COVID-19 out of 415,000 children. Advocacy with the Government of Turkey is ongoing to ensure that COVID-19 preventative measures do not delay critical treatment of urgent medical cases in Turkey, as people who require chronic treatment unavailable in Syria, for example chemotherapy.

While no cases of COVID-19 have been identified to date, readiness and response efforts are ongoing in the Idlib area and in northern Aleppo governorate. Testing and isolation capabilities as well as facilities to treat more severe cases of COVID-19 within northwest Syria are operational and these capacities are being enhanced. However, major gaps in personal protective equipment such as protective gowns and goggles, surgical and N-95 masks persist.

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