

Cairo/Damascus, August 13, 2020 - The World Health Organization is appalled and saddened to learn of the deaths of 8 children under the age of 5 in Syria's Al-Hol camp.

These deaths are reported to have occurred within 4 days and due to different conditions, including underlying malnutrition, dehydration from diarrhoea, internal bleeding, heart failure, and hypoglycaemia.

We are extremely saddened to see the situation in Al Hol deteriorate over the past weeks as health facilities inside the camp continue to face several issues, including lack of supplies and shortage of personnel.

We are also concerned that some health facilities have had to temporarily close within the camp, following a surge in COVID-19 cases in northeast Syria, including confirmed cases among health workers in Al-Hol. This is due in part to the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as the partial suspension and disruption of medical services in parts of the camp.

Most deaths may have been prevented and WHO is launching an assessment to better understand the causes and circumstances.

A multisectoral assessment team, led by WHO, will look at the availability and responsiveness of health services for critical and urgent needs of the camp population, and put in place immediate remedial actions.

It is paramount that we identify gaps when health facilities are temporarily closed to ensure continuity of services and avoid any further deaths. This is important given the extraordinary circumstances of COVID-19 and PPE and human resource shortages.

We invite all health and nutrition partners working in the camp to take part in the assessment and to continue working together to maintain essential and emergency health services for this most vulnerable camp population.

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