



Amina and three children are from East Ghouta. Her 7-month-old son is being treated at the Pediatric Hospital in Damascus for malnutrition. Amina's husband is missing, and she has nothing with her except the clothes she and her children are wearing.

WHO supports the Pediatric Hospital with medicines, equipment and staff training

Photo: WHO/L. Mackenzie

389,000

People affected and in need of humanitarian aid

50,000

People displaced

180,000

Medical treatments provided by WHO and **190,516** treatments en route

600+

Average patient consultations per day supported by WHO

277

Patients referred to hospitals from 11-19 March

SITUATION

- Since 11 March, the UN estimates more than 50,000 people have left East Ghouta. UN teams have been visiting collective shelters (Dweir, Adra, Herjelleh, Electricity, Najha, Nashabiyeh, Kherbet Al Ward) in Rural Damascus where people who have left East Ghouta are staying. All of the shelters are well over capacity, with more people continuing to arrive on a daily basis. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) is responding to the unexpected large number of arrivals and the UN is supporting with additional supplies as requested by SARC.
- There is an urgent need for water & sanitation facilities and other essential items. Most of the people interviewed were in poor health condition (intestinal infections, hepatitis, skin disease, trauma injuries) likely due to years of lack of access to medicine and health care.
- The most reported communicable diseases among internally displaced populations (IDPs) are diarrhea, upper respiratory infections, and lice.
- An inter-agency mission undertaken to Najha IDP site on 19 March revealed the following findings about the health situation: The shelter is an unfinished school building. Sanitation facilities are under rehabilitation. Health services are provided by DoH and SARC teams. In general, health care provision is provided on a temporary basis and is highly insufficient, with no NGOs providing fixed medical points or mobile health clinics.

WHO RESPONSE

I. IMMEDIATE INTERVENTIONS

Coordination

- Regular national health sector coordination meetings are taking place with a focus on East Ghouta and Afrin response.
- A meeting took place between the WHO Representative and SARC President to enhance ongoing cooperation and coordination between WHO and SARC in responding to the health needs of the evacuated people from East Ghouta. Regular WHO field visits to IDP shelters is being arranged with SARC. Among other issues, an aspect of strengthening the quantity and quality of outpatient services at IDP shelters was discussed to minimize the burden for functioning hospitals.
- WHO took part in two inter-agency assessment missions to Adra shelters (Electricity and Adra al Balad) and Nashabiyeh shelters.

Outreach essential services

- WHO has received approval to deliver the shipment of health supplies to the DoH Rural Damascus (7.2 tonnes, sufficient for 190,516 medical treatments).
- WHO team identified a number of patients for immediate follow up, including 4 amputees (adult males in need for artificial limbs) and one female baby with right foot amputation; anemia among children, need for verification of children malnutrition and stunting, and suspected renal patients.
- The Al Sham association for health mobile team in Adra collective shelter consists of an internist, a pediatrician, midwife and a nurse. The team delivered medical consultations and treatments to 400 patients on 19 March.
- The Association for poor charity mobile team in Adra collective shelter consists of a general practitioner and a nurse. The team delivered medical consultations and treatments to over 630 cases on 19 March.
- The Circassian Charity Association mobile team was dispatched to Adra collective shelter for the first time and treated 90 patients. The Youth Charity Association of Dummer mobile team is planned to visit Najha shelter on 21 March (the team consists of 2 doctors and 3 nurses).

Mental and psychosocial health support services

- WHO supported a team of 12 community psychosocial support workers from the Association for Poor Charity NGO. The team is now providing MHPSS services in Adra shelter. Psychotropic medicines have been included in the WHO shipment to DoH Rural Damascus.

Immunization and communicable diseases

- The most prevalent communicable diseases are acute diarrhea, upper respiratory infections and ILI within normal limits, 1 suspected case of brucellosis to be verified, 1 suspected case of Hepatitis A was followed up by DOH medical team, Lice and scabies. No suspected AFP, SM, SMN cases were reported. Other noticeable cases resulted from mosquitos' bites (mild dermatological allergy). Some children have digestive disorders (vomiting & gastric spasm symptoms).
- In Adra shelter, 1067 children were vaccinated on 20 March (402 were vaccination dropouts and 206 were partial).

Nutrition

- Nutrition screening is ongoing through 7 teams in Rural Damascus in: Herjelleh, Adra (2), Dweir, Nashabieh, Najha, Khebet al Ward, Hafir Tahta. Moderate acute malnutrition was detected in five children, who were admitted to the Pediatric Hospital in Damascus.
- Three severe malnutrition cases were referred to Al Qutaifeh Hospital on 20 March.

II. HOSPITALIZATION OF CRITICAL CASES

- As of the end of 19 March, 42 patients from EG were referred to hospitals, bringing the total number to 277.
- 30 patients and a large number of companions were referred to Ibn Al Nafees Hospital. The management of the hospital reported that many of these patients do not require inpatient health services, and that while the hospital wards are overburdened. 7 patients were referred to Al Muwasat Hospital (MOHE). Al Zahrawi Hospital (MoH maternity hospital) provided support to 24 pregnant women (including 9 c-sections). At least 3 patients need to be referred to Damascus for heart surgery and are waiting for security clearance.

The ongoing response to East Ghouta involves 13 health partners, including the Syrian Ministry of Health, WHO, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA, International Medical Corps, Syrian Arab Red Crescent, Medair, Monastery Saint James the Mutilated, Syria Family Planning Association, Association for Poor Charity, Al Sham and Circassian Charity Association, and The Youth Charity Association of Dummer