



13 October, Cairo, Egypt — WHO is gravely concerned about the humanitarian health situation in northeast Syria, where up to 200,000 people have been displaced as a result of increased military operations since 9 October, and almost 1.5 million people are in need of health aid.

Many of those affected by the recent hostilities have already experienced immense physical and mental stress as a result of years of conflict and repeated displacement.

People in need of essential health care services face challenges related to insecurity and limited access to health care. Already weakened health services in northeast Syria have been severely impacted by the latest security developments. The national hospital in Ras Al-Ain is currently out of service, and the national hospital and two health centers in Tel Abyad are also currently non-functional. The three field hospitals in Al-Hol camp have limited their services since 12 October as a result of the escalation of hostilities which has impeded access of health staff to the camp. All health facilities in camps hosting displaced people in Ain Issa and Ras al Ain have also been evacuated, with additional facilities under threat as the conflict rapidly escalates.

A number of health partners have already suspended services due to insecurity, further disrupting access to essential health care services. On 12 October, a trauma stabilization point located south of Ras Al Ain was evacuated after being reportedly attacked, resulting in two health staff injured and two ambulances destroyed. On the same day, the hospital in Ras Al-Ain was also reportedly attacked. There were no casualties as the facility had already been evacuated.

Across northeast Syria, shortages of health workers is widespread as they too have been among those displaced by the ongoing insecurity, aggravating an already critical situation and further depriving underserved populations of access to medical care.

Damages to the pumping station in Ras Al Ain, the main water source for most of Al Hassakeh governorate, has increased the risk of outbreaks of infectious diseases. Even before the current escalation in conflict, acute diarrheal and typhoid were two of the most reported diseases among people in northeast Syria in August 2019. Ongoing displacements, overcrowded living conditions, and limited access to safe water and sanitation services, will likely lead to an increase in the number of people affected by water-borne diseases.

Amid this chaotic and fast-moving situation, WHO and health partners are working hard to respond to urgent health needs. Almost 314,000 medical treatments, vaccines, in addition to trauma medicines for 500 trauma patients have already been prepositioned in Qamishly hub. An additional shipment of more than 100,000 treatments and medicines for 640 trauma patients will be airlifted to Qamishly in the coming week. Medicines for diarrheal diseases, have also been prepositioned for delivery to health facilities as needed. Despite the challenges, many health NGOs continue to operate or shift to new locations. Some casualty cases requiring hospitalization are referred to a WHO-supported facility in Al-Hassakeh, and WHO is in the process of contracting two additional hospitals in Al-Hassakeh and Al-Raqqa to support referral services.

As the situation evolves, WHO and partners will continue to assess health needs and scale up

their response as needed.

WHO calls on all parties to the conflict to preserve the right to health for hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in northeast Syria, and comply with International Humanitarian Law to protect all civilians, including health care workers and patients, as well as health facilities.

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