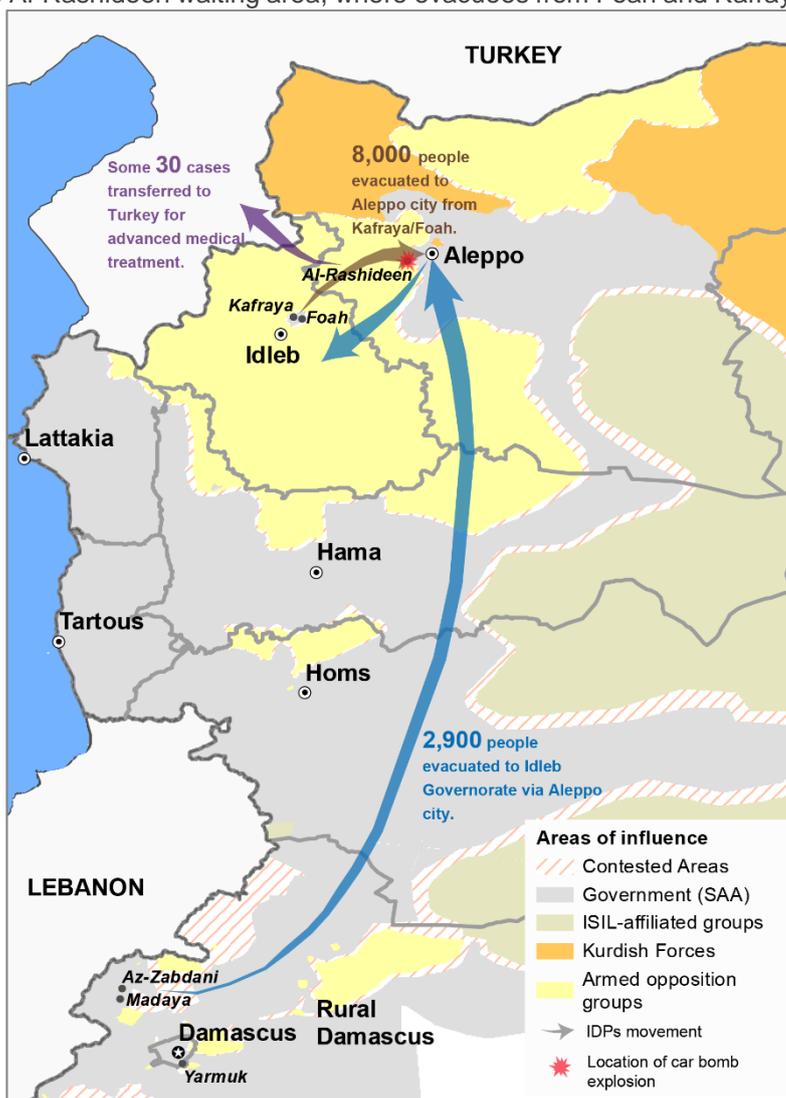


## Highlights

- In late March 2017, parties to the Four Towns Agreement reached an agreement whereby, amongst other provisions, evacuations from the “Four Towns” (Madaya, Az-Zabadani, Foah and Kafraya) were to be carried out. Evacuations were also envisaged from Yarmouk camp in Damascus City.
- On 15 April, the evacuation to Idleb City started for an estimated 2,350 people from Madaya town, and the evacuation to Aleppo City started for 5,000 people from Foah and Kafraya towns.
- On 15 April, a car bomb exploded at the Al-Rashideen waiting area, where evacuees from Foah and Kafraya towns were awaiting their transfer. According to local health authorities, at least 125 people were killed, including at least 67 children, 13 women and 16 men, and 413 people were wounded including 58 children. Seven humanitarian workers were among those injured.
- Immediately following the explosion, humanitarian organizations, including cross-border partners, exerted tremendous response efforts, and 275 people were sent to various hospitals in Idleb, including 30 patients who were sent to Turkey for advanced medical treatment. Some 138 people are receiving medical treatment in Aleppo city.
- Following the attack, evacuees from Madaya town crossed to Idleb City and those from Foua and Kafraya towns to Aleppo city.
- On 19 April, some 550 people from Az-Zabadani (158 people), Madaya (100 people), Bloudan mountain (150 people) and Sarghaya (100 people) departed for Idleb Governorate. Simultaneously, 3,000 people left Kafraya and Foah towards the Al-Rashideen transit area on the outskirts of Aleppo City. At the time of writing, the swap was frozen due to disagreement between the parties. Following this operation, Az-Zabadani is now completely empty of people.



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

The map shows the directions in which IDPs from each location moved

## Situation Overview

The original Four Towns agreement brokered in September 2015 stipulated that parties to the conflict should allow evacuations of people from both locations, evacuation of the injured, facilitation of humanitarian access to both locations, and a truce that was to include several other surrounding communities to the four towns. While some of the terms of the original agreement were carried out, such as the sporadic provision of humanitarian assistance, or the occasional transfer of wounded, the implementation of the remaining components did not fully occur.

In late March 2017, parties to the Four Towns Agreement reached another agreement whereby evacuations were to take place from the non-state armed groups (NSAGs)-controlled towns of Madaya and Az-Zabadani in Rural Damascus, and simultaneously from the Government of Syria (GoS) controlled towns of Foah and Kafraya in Idlib governorate.

The first phase of the agreement for the evacuation of fighters and families from Madaya and Az-Zabadani and the entire population of Foah and Kafraya started on 12 April with the exchange of prisoners and dead bodies between the parties. Reports indicate that sixteen prisoners and eight bodies were released from Foah, and 19 prisoners and one body were released by NSAGs in Idlib Governorate.

On 13 April, prior to the evacuations taking place, an explosion outside of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) office in Idlib city resulted in the wounding of two SARC members and the damaging of a SARC vehicle. During the late evening hours on the same day, and while buses were in Foah and Kafraya for the evacuation, several mortar rounds struck the two towns resulting in the wounding of a number of civilians and some buses were damaged.

On 14 April, 60 buses carrying 2,350 people from Madaya town departed for the GoS-held Ramouseh garage area in Aleppo city after which they were to be transported to Idlib governorate. Simultaneously, 75 buses carrying 5,000 people from Foah and Kafraya towns departed towards the NSAG-held Al-Rashideen area on the western outskirts of Aleppo city, after which they were supposed to cross into the GoS-held area of Aleppo city. The evacuation process faced several delays and challenges due to reported disagreements among the parties to the conflict regarding the details of the agreement, as well as the high levels of insecurity in Idlib governorate. This resulted in the evacuees sitting on the transport buses for many hours waiting for the various parties to reach agreements.

Following the arrival of both groups at the transit points, disagreements between parties to the conflict further delayed the implementation of the evacuation for more than 12 hours. On 15 April, while negotiations to solve the dispute were ongoing, a car bomb exploded in Al-Rashideen area, which according to local health authorities killed at least 125 people, including at least 67 children, 13 women and 16 men, and wounded 413 people including 58 children, and seven humanitarian personnel. Given that the explosion was close to the IDP buses from Foah and Kafraya, the majority of the casualties were from those towns. That same day, the UN Secretary General's spokesperson ([here](#)) and the Under Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs issued statements ([here](#)) in which they condemned the attack and expressed their condolences to the families of the victims.

A few hours after the explosion, all buses started crossing to the other side as had been planned. The IDPs from Madaya were transferred to reception centers in Idlib city and Maarat Misreen, while IDPs from Foah and Kafraya crossed into GoS-held areas in Aleppo city. The UN has not been involved in the negotiations of the agreement and has repeatedly stressed that any evacuation of civilians must be safe, voluntary, and to a place of their choosing. Parties must treat those leaving with dignity, without fear of harm. Those displaced must be allowed to return voluntarily to their homes as soon as the situation allows it.

On 19 April, 11 buses carrying some 550 people from Az-Zabadani (158 people), Madaya (100 people), Bloudan mountain (150 people) and Sarghaya (100 people) departed for Idlib governorate. Simultaneously, 3,000 people left Kafraya and Foah towards the Al-Rashideen transit area on the outskirts of Aleppo City. At the time of writing, the swap was frozen due to disagreement between the parties. Following this operation, Az-Zabadani is now completely empty of people.

## Humanitarian Response

While the UN is not a party to this agreement or the negotiations, resources are being mobilized to respond to the needs in the designated locations, in coordination with ICRC and SARC, to evacuees from Foah and Kafraya, and by SARC and cross-border NGOs in Idlib for Madaya and Az-Zabadani evacuees.

During the delay following the arrival of the IDPs from both sides to the transit points, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) provided IDPs from Madaya and Az-Zabadani with food rations and medication, and dispatched a mobile clinic to the Ramouseh garage area to provide basic health services. Additionally, trucks carrying assistance were sent by SARC to the Al-Rashideen area, where the IDPs from Foah and Kafraya towns were waiting for their transfer.

In the aftermath of the car bomb explosion, more than 15 local NGOs and local health authorities carried out first response operations and transported the injured to medical facilities in the western countryside of Aleppo and Idlib governorate. According to local health authorities, of the 275 injured cases, 114 were received by the Bab Al-Hawa hospital, 77 cases were admitted to Thawret Al-Karameh hospital, 49 cases to Al-Atareb hospital, 25 cases to Audai hospital, 8 cases to Aqrabat hospital and 2 cases to Al-Kinaneh hospital. 27 critical cases were referred for treatment in medical facilities Turkey. Many of these facilities had been previously hit by airstrikes. For instance, the Thawret Al-Karameh hospital was hit more than four times in the past two years and later relocated to another area after the original facility was destroyed. Meanwhile, some 138 people are receiving medical treatment in Aleppo city.

On 19 April, 113 people with light injuries from the attack were transferred to Aleppo city from Bab al Hawa hospital via the Al-Rashideen crossing. Other patients with more serious injuries are to be transferred in the coming days. 19 critical cases remain under treatment in hospitals in Turkey

Since 10 April, in Idleb city, preparations to receive the IDPs were organized by local authorities in cooperation with humanitarian organizations. Two reception centers were ready to receive the evacuees in Idleb city when they arrived. 200 houses were rented in Idleb city as well as 100 houses in Maart Tamsrin town to host the IDPs. Upon the arrival to the reception centers in Idleb city on 15 April, Protection Cluster partners deployed child protection teams and raised awareness on prevention of family separation to 427 children (220 boys and 207 girls) and to 178 adults (110 women and 68 men). Partners provided psychosocial first aid sessions to 427 children (220 boys and 207 girls), and reunited four children with their families in Maart Tamsrin town, as well as distributed risk education materials to 614 new arrivals.

Nutrition Cluster partners launched their rapid response mechanism by deploying two mobile clinics and four community health worker teams to the reception centers. The partners conducted initial rapid assessments using Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) for children between 6 – 59 months. A total of 366 children were screened. No children were assessed to suffer from severe acute malnutrition, while four were identified suffering from moderate acute malnutrition. No severely malnourished children with complications were detected. 95 mothers received Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counselling. In Idleb city, food, shelter and WASH assistance were also provided with no significant gaps reported.

Evacuees from Foah and Kafraya have been offered temporary housing in Mahalej collective shelter, east of Aleppo city. As per SARC estimation, some 4,500 individuals initially took shelter in Mahalej, with unconfirmed numbers of them leaving in irregular intervals for Aleppo city and Nabal and Zahra towns in rural Aleppo, where they take shelter with relatives and acquaintances. For those who remain in Mahalej, SARC has put up partitions inside 13 hangers of the former cotton factory to divide the 45 large halls into 1,540 smaller spaces, to provide more privacy to the IDPs. IDPs have also been provided with individual mattresses. SARC has been providing ready-to-eat food rations to the IDPs, while hot meals are provided from a hot kitchen inside the collective shelter by an individual actor. The Department of Health in Aleppo City has dispatched mobile clinics to the collective shelter, which now provide health services to the displaced. Several water points have been installed inside the shelter on behalf of SARC, and SARC stands ready to install shower facilities in the area should IDPs stay for the longer term in the shelter. Electricity is available following the installation of a large generator in the shelter. SARC is providing psycho-social support activities to the population of concern.

The final destinations of the Foah / Kafraya evacuees are reportedly areas in Homs, Tartous and Lattakia governorates. On 18 April, around 1,800 evacuees from Foah and Kafraya towns were transferred to Hassya camp in Homs Governorate. Local NGOs will provide humanitarian assistance to the newly displaced. This includes dispatching a mobile clinic to the camp site, and dispatching a mobile nutrition team, who will screen all children under five years and all pregnant and lactating women and provide nutritional support.

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