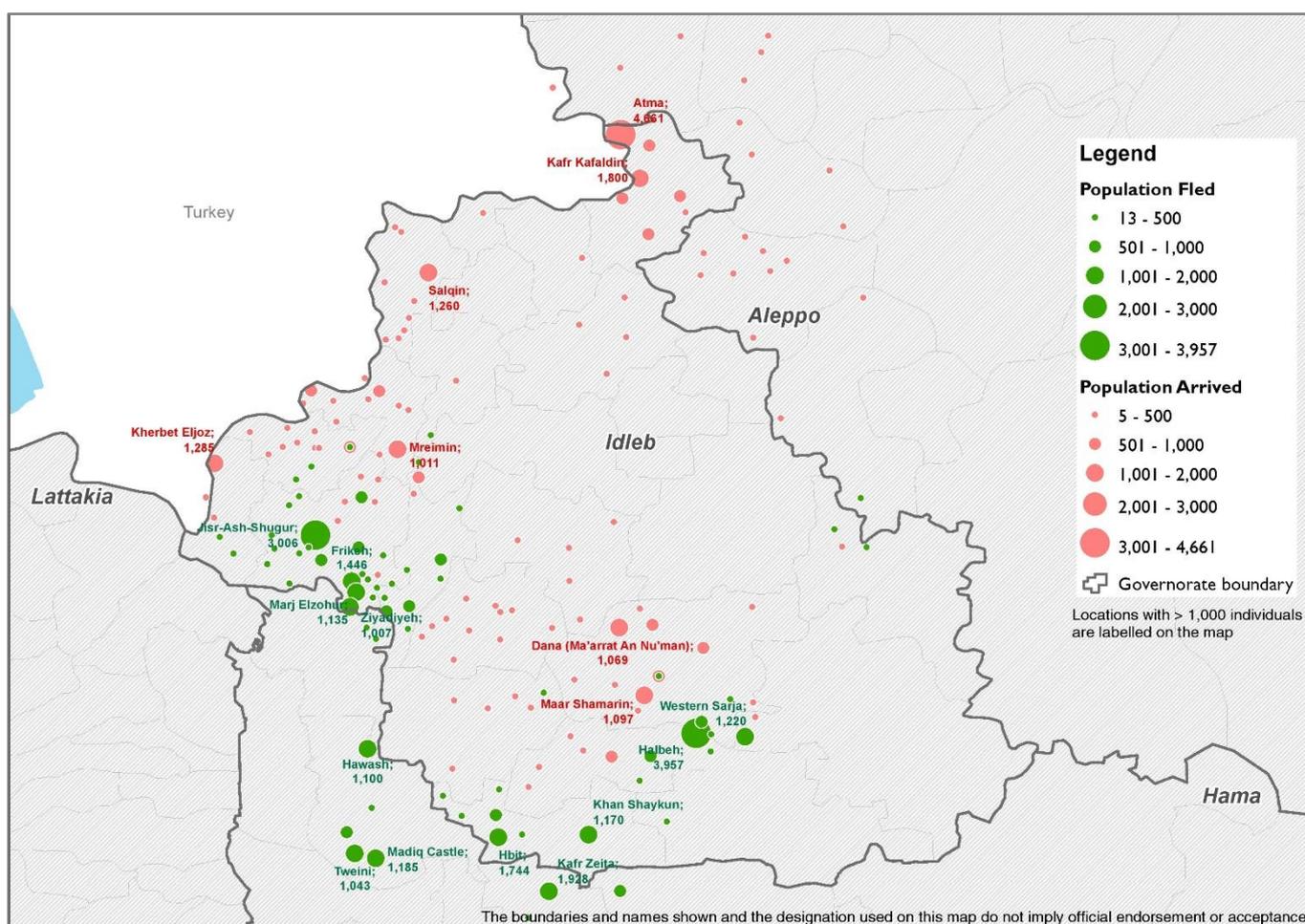


## Highlights:

- The north-west de-escalation area, comprising most of Idleb governorate, is home to approximately three million people, of whom 2.1 million are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance, including 1.4 million people, who are internally displaced persons.
- Since the beginning of September, there has been a significant increase in aerial bombardment and shelling IN north-west Syria compared to the whole of August.
- This increase in hostilities has caused civilian deaths and injuries, as well as, damage to vital civilian infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools and other service-related centers in north-west Syria.
- Between 1 – 12 September, available information indicates that a sharp increase in hostilities and fears of further escalation has led to the displacement of over 38,300 people, of whom over 4,500 are estimated to have spontaneously returned between 10 – 12 September, to their homes following a relative decrease in hostilities in Jisr Ash-Shugur and Mhambal sub-districts in western and southern rural Idleb.



## Situation overview:

The north-west de-escalation area, comprising most of Idleb governorate, is home to approximately three million people, of whom 2.1 million are estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance. Around 1.4 million people are internally displaced persons (IDPs) from across Syria, as well as, people who had been displaced within the Idleb governorate. This includes around 95,000 IDPs, who arrived in north-west Syria under provisions made in local agreements reached between the parties to the conflict in previously besieged or hard to reach areas, such as East Ghouta, northern rural Homs and south-west Syria, between March and August of 2018.

Since the beginning of September, a worrying increase in hostilities was observed in the north-west de-escalation area. In comparison to the whole of August, available data indicates a threefold increase in aerial bombardment and accompanied by a significant escalation in shelling. While bombardment was reported on many parts of the north-west de-escalation area, the northern countryside of Hama and the southern countryside of Idlib were most affected.

Given the insecurity in the north-west, it was not possible to obtain a comprehensive list of all attacks and casualties. A United Nations report that does not purport to give the full list of casualties indicated that between 4 and 9 September, 33 people, including women and children, were killed and 67 were wounded due to aerial and ground-based bombardment. Of note was the death of five people, including four children, and the wounding of 12 people, including six children due to aerial and ground-based bombardment on the non-state armed group (NSAG) held town of Jisr Ash-Shugur on 4 September. Furthermore, nine people, including five women and three children, were killed and 22 were wounded in shelling on the Government of Syria (GoS) controlled town of Muhradah on 7 September.

Similar to previous periods of increased hostilities, numerous attacks on civilian infrastructure, including hospitals and schools, in north-west Syria have been reported so far in September. On 6 September, an NGO-supported hospital in Kafar Zita town in northern rural Hama was allegedly hit by an airstrike and caused major structural and equipment damage. Subsequently the hospital was rendered out of service. This hospital was de-conflicted<sup>1</sup> and provided an average of 780 consultations, 50 admissions, 15 major surgeries and 200 trauma case treatments monthly. On 8 September, an NGO-supported hospital in Hass town in southern rural Idlib was rendered out of service allegedly by aerial bombardment. Two hospital staff members and two other people were wounded. On the same day but in northern rural Hama, an NGO-supported hospital in Latmanah town reportedly went out of service, as a result of the heavy bombardment allegedly from air and ground-based strikes that hit within the vicinity of the hospital. On 8 September, in Khan Shaykun town in southern rural Idlib, an airstrike reportedly struck close to an ambulance center, causing damage to one of the center's ambulances.

Education activities in the areas that have witnessed an increase in bombardment have been adversely affected. Since the beginning of September, education authorities in Jisr Ash-Shugur, Ma'arrat An Nu'man and Khan Shaykun sub-districts, as well as, northern rural Hama were forced to suspend activities on multiple occasions due to the increase in hostilities. The latest suspension occurred on 10 September in Khan Shaykun and Ma'arrat An Nu'man sub-districts after multiple shells hit a primary and secondary school in Jarjanaz town, reportedly wounding seven children, who were taken to a hospital. Their status remains unknown. The Education Directorate in Idlib reportedly gave authorization to all sub-district level education authorities to suspend activities depending on the security situation in their respective areas.

In addition to the attacks on education and health structures, on 6 September, airstrikes on Tamanaah town reportedly rendered a center managed by first responders out of service and caused damage to their equipment. On 8 September in Khan Shaykun town, another center run by first responders was rendered out of service. On the same day, an electrical sub-station in Kafr Ein village in Khan Shaykun sub-district was damaged by an airstrike.

## Displacement and Readiness Efforts:

The humanitarian community developed a readiness plan which aims to respond to the needs of an estimated 900,000 people that could be affected by hostilities. 700,000 people could displace to NSAG-held areas, whilst up to 100,000 people either stay in the area, or flee to GoS-controlled areas. In addition, up to 100,000 people from Tall Refaat and surrounding areas will be considered for assistance should there be any change in control in northern rural Aleppo.

Based on previous experiences, sustained levels of hostilities often severely impact the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance, making it difficult to meet the needs of the affected population. The readiness of the humanitarian community stems from its commitment to alleviate the suffering of the conflict-affected population in Syria. It does not in any shape or form provide an excuse, or justification, for the parties to the conflict to pursue their agendas with disregard to the suffering of civilians. All parties should do their utmost to prevent an escalation of conflict and subsequent increase in humanitarian needs, placing the protection of civilians, in line with International Human rights and Humanitarian law, at the forefront of their actions

Between 1 – 12 September, available information indicates that a sharp increase in hostilities and fears of further escalation led to the displacement of over 38,300 people, of whom over 4,500 are estimated to have spontaneously

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<sup>1</sup> The hospital in question was de-conflicted on 12 March 2018. Through the de-confliction mechanism, location details of humanitarian sites and activities are shared with the parties to the conflict to ensure that they are not part of military considerations. The request to de-conflict a site or an activity is channeled to the parties to the conflict through UNOCHA upon request from the humanitarian organization that is running the humanitarian site or implementing activities.

returned to their homes between 10 – 12 September, following a relative decrease in hostilities in Jisr Ash-Shugur and Mhambal sub-districts in western and southern rural Idlib. The bulk of displacement originated from Jisr Ash-Shugur and nearby communities in western rural Idlib; Kafar Zita, Al-Madiq Castle and surrounding communities in the Al-Ghab plain in northern rural Hama, as well as, Jarjanaz, Halbeh and Western Sarja in southern rural Idlib. Some IDPs chose to displace to agricultural lands that are proximate to their original communities, with the hope that they will be able to quickly return to their communities should hostilities stop. Nevertheless, the majority of IDPs reportedly headed northwards to communities and IDPs settlements along the Syrian – Turkish border, such as in Atma, Salqin and Harem. A number of families reportedly displaced to areas surrounding the Turkish observation posts in southern rural Idlib, due to the perception that these areas are less likely to be attacked.

The Protection Cluster is currently updating its key protection messages to the civilian population in the north-west. These messages will help inform civilians on the dangers associated with going to, or residing in, certain areas, with the expectation that it will help them in their decision-making process.

As of 10 September, no displacement to GoS-controlled areas in north-west Syria was reported, as all three identified crossing points (Abul Thohur, Murak and Al-Madiq Castle) remain closed. The Abul Thohur crossing point had previously been opened between 20 - 26 August, during which an estimated 4,000 people crossed, but has since closed. The Russian Federation has indicated that the Abul Thohur crossing point will eventually open for civilian and humanitarian movement; while the Al-Madiq Castle and Murak crossing points will be used for humanitarian relief convoys only.

In anticipation of a potential civilian outflux to GoS-controlled areas, local authorities in GoS-controlled Hama governorate are looking to identify areas and buildings in rural Hama, which, once identified, will be assessed by UN teams and humanitarian partners. Local authorities in GoS-controlled Aleppo governorate informed that they planned to host IDPs in uninhabited houses in southern rural Aleppo, noting that other locations with additional hosting capacity could be made available. A preference would be given by the local authorities to host the majority of IDPs in private houses rather than collective shelters. In total, approximately 4,800 houses with capacity to host up to 77,000 individuals could be made available in southern rural Aleppo. A challenge with hosting communities in private houses is managing house, land and property concerns. With regards to humanitarian assistance, the Relief Office of the Governor of Aleppo indicated they would only be able to sell bread to IDPs, and that they will rely on humanitarian actors to deliver life-saving assistance.

Humanitarian organizations working from within Syria continue to preposition supplies in anticipation of a potential increase in hostilities. The food sector has prepositioned a sufficient number of ready-to-eat rations for a week and food rations for a month, in addition to cooked meals, which collectively would be sufficient to assist as many as 850,000 people. Shelter kits and tents sufficient for 53,000 people and non-food items and kits for about 300,000 people have also been prepositioned. WASH Kits and aqua tabs, sufficient for 50,000 people are available, with possibility of scale up if the situation requires. In addition, the Health Sector stands ready to respond to the full caseload with available medical supplies.

Cross border humanitarian actors have also taken advantage of warehousing within Syria, and most sectors have prepositioned humanitarian assistance. For example, the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster prepositioned 30,000 ready-to-eat meals that will provide a one-off meal to 350,000 – 400,000 people. The Protection Cluster has prepositioned a considerable amount of dignity kits, recreational kits, children's wristbands and risk education materials. The Health Cluster has taken a novel approach by providing chronically-ill patients with medical supplies directly and for up to three months. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster has identified space for an estimated 26,000 people in existing IDP sites, with efforts ongoing to identify an additional 10,000 spaces. In terms of NFI emergency response capacity, the Shelter/NFI Cluster reported that current stocks are sufficient to respond to the needs of 400,000 people with further stocks being procured.

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