

HIGHLIGHTS

As of 19 July 2020, 65,406 people (17,962 households) live at Al Hol, comprising 47 per cent Iraqis (30,573), 38 per cent Syrians (24,914) and 15 per cent third country nationals (TCNs) (9,912). There has been little change in the camp population in recent months, largely due to authorities suspending all visits and departures from the camp as part of COVID-19 precautionary measures implemented in late March. However, following resumption of infant registration in the past two weeks, 66 new camp residents have been recorded. Since last June, more than 5,870 residents departed Al Hol including 4,345 Syrians and 1,527 Third Country Nationals (TCN) women and children. This includes ten French national children who departed on 22 June accompanied by a French delegation, and 47 unaccompanied or separated children who were earlier returned to their respective countries between 21 November 2019 and 6 February 2020. On 19 July, 460 individuals departed the camp for Deir-Ez-Zor governorate under tribal sponsorship arrangements; the first such organized departure since 12 March, when 191 individuals (44 households) left for Al Sha'afa, Basira and Sousa villages, also in Deir-Ez-Zor.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Since WHO officially declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on 11 March, humanitarian actors have implemented a wide range of activities at the camp aimed at reducing the risks of transmission. This has included adjustment of distribution modalities to reduce overcrowding at gathering points such as combining NFI, food and hygiene distributions and switching to two-month rotations. In addition, humanitarian



actors have implemented comprehensive risk communication and community engagement activities with awareness campaigns, hygiene outreach and dissemination of information materials across all phases. Infection prevention and control measures have also been enhanced, including rehabilitation of WASH facilities, and disinfection of communal kitchens, latrines and showers. To date, 28,640 items of personal protective equipment and six thermal screening devices (four for the main gate, two for the Annex) have been delivered and more than 100 personnel, health workers and community leaders trained in thermal screening, case management (resuscitation and ventilation management), and community engagement and mobilization.

An eighty-bed isolation area has been constructed in Phase 7, comprising two rub-halls, two large tents and three family-size tents. The center has been equipped with beds and other medical supplies and is ready to receive patients as necessary; the camp's health committee are currently finalizing standard operating procedures, including on the activation and operation of the space and the establishment of referral pathways. Outside of the isolation center, three ventilation devices are confirmed to be on-site, and the one 24/7 operational field hospital has allocated five beds for moderate COVID-19 cases. Dedicated case management capacity inside the camp remains extremely limited, including due to a reported decrease in available health services in recent weeks due to issues with the contract renewal of



KEY MESSAGES

Water supply to Al Hol – made even more critical in summer and to protect against COVID-19 – has been increasingly compromised in past months, endangering the health and well-being of camp residents and causing increased camp tension. Frequent disruptions to Alouk water station, reduced supply at Euphrates Dam and a volatile informal exchange rate are factors.

Increasing and persistent protection concerns have also emerged in recent months, including over lack of information relating to the planned relocation of 400 families to Al Roj; the reported transfer of unaccompanied youths aged 12-15 to Alaya prison; the biometric registration of Annex residents, including children, in June; and the lack of clarity over planned repatriations of third country nationals, including children, and departures of Syrian IDPs.

Humanitarian actors also report increased limitations on access to the service center in the Annex, limiting the range and availability of necessary humanitarian services to residents.

several health partners. Currently, only 12 out of 18 health points and two out of three field hospitals are active, compared to 14 and three respectively six months ago. The most pronounced gaps are in Phases 6 and 8, and in the Annex, although a recent decision by Camp Administration to suspend mobile health services in the latter has now been reversed. Referral capacity to external facilities remains limited and is currently restricted to emergency and complicated malnutrition cases only, although it is expected this will improve in the coming weeks once the contract with Al-Hikmah hospital is renewed and the one remaining off-line field hospital resumes operations.

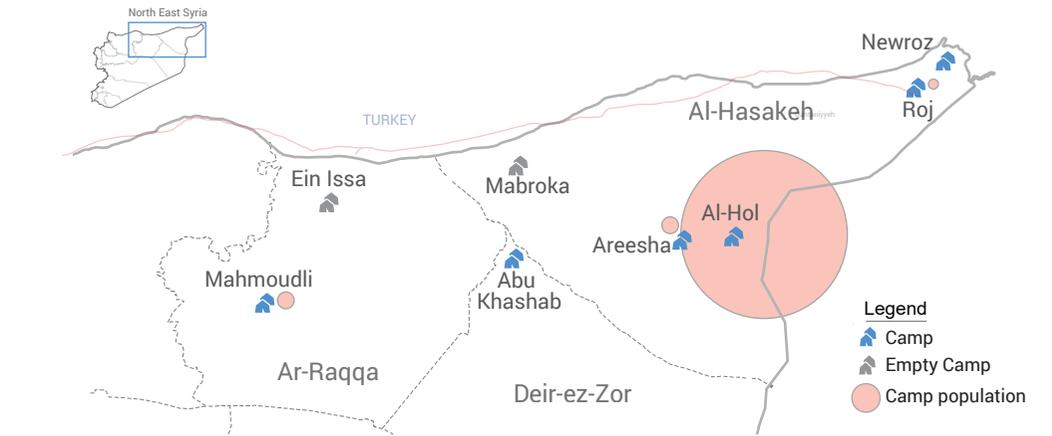
Water supply to the camp is increasingly compromised. Over the past six months, the Alouk water station – which provides the camp population with 50 per cent of its water supply – has been disrupted on at least twelve occasions including due to interference from parties in control. The fluctuating unofficial exchange rate has further exacerbated the issue, leading to recurrent delays in the provision of water in several phases and the Annex due to difficulties in securing agreements with contractors. In recent weeks these challenges have been further compounded by a reported 65 per cent reduction in the rate of water flowing from the Euphrates river (to less than 200 cubic meters per second), negatively affecting power and electricity supply across Al-Hasakeh governorate, where outages now reportedly occur up to 12 hours a day. This has contributed to severe shortages of ice at Al Hol – all six ice factories supplying the camp are located in Al-Hasakeh. On 7 July, a protest about a lack of ice led to a security incident in which two women were injured and two more camp

residents were arrested. As the demand for water is expected to remain high over the coming months, due to both the hot weather and COVID-19 preventive efforts, further unrest cannot be ruled out. Intensive and higher-level advocacy with the relevant parties is ongoing through diplomatic channels to restore Alouk water station to full functionality and secure adequate and reliable water supply to the camp.

Notwithstanding the presence of these acute WASH and health needs and the general challenging humanitarian situation at the camp, overall mortality rates in Al Hol have been within international standards since April 2019 and under-5 mortality rates within international standards since May 2019. Of the 637 people who have sadly died at Al Hol between December 2018 and June 2020, some 40 per cent died between February and April 2019, likely due to the high numbers of people arriving at the camp in poor health, including traumatic injuries, from Baghouz. In the last 12 months, an average of 24 to 25 people have died at Al Hol each month.

PROTECTION

In recent months, humanitarian actors have faced considerable challenges in accessing the Annex where TCNs are located, disrupting assistance and service provision. Despite efforts by humanitarian actors to activate the recently constructed service center in the Annex, Camp Administration has adopted an increasingly highly securitized approach concerning the movement of both partners and TCNs, which has led to serious delays in assistance provision. This includes the requirement a checkpoint be installed at the service center entrance and that people are



searched before they enter; and that women and children are accompanied by security escorts for the duration they access humanitarian services in the area. Furthermore, a reluctance from Camp Administration to provide 24/7 security to the service area has undermined the purpose for which it was designed – to allow permanent presence of humanitarian services, particularly medical teams – and harmed relations between TCNs and humanitarian actors. The lack of deployed security guards has also enabled residents to vandalize several rub-halls and containers installed in the service area. Advocacy with Camp Administration regarding the accessibility and working hours of the service center is ongoing. Four partners have confirmed readiness to deliver assistance and services at the service center, with another two awaiting the relevant approvals.

Between 10 and 12 June a verification exercise of 700 TCN families took place in the camp without humanitarian or protection actors present. During this process, it was reported TCNs were required to provide all personal

information including country of origin, fingerprints/biometrics, and DNA samples, including for children under the age of 10. Notwithstanding the various concerns regarding the civilian nature of this exercise – there were a reported over 1,000 military personnel present in the camp at the time – protection partners remain concerned about the selection criteria authorities are using to identify families or individuals to be moved to Al Roj when the planned relocation of 400 TCN families takes place later this month. Protection partners are urgently seeking further details from Camp Administration on this process, whilst continuing to advocate on protection issues, particularly in relation to family separation. Additional reports have further emerged that recently 32 unaccompanied youths aged 12-15 years were transferred from Al Hol to Alaya prison close to Qamishli. The UN stresses that the rights of children must be respected; that they should be treated as victims and not perpetrators; and that they have quick access to justice through child-friendly procedures.

An unaccompanied/separated children (UASC) verification exercise in the camp has been completed by a UN agency in all phases bar the Annex where consultations are ongoing with Camp Administration on the questionnaire tool. The assessment identified 875 UASC in the camp, however this number may increase once the verification exercise has been completed in the Annex. Currently, 93 UASC live in three interim care centers at Al Hol, while 312 children have been reunified/repatriated with their families and relatives both inside and outside the camp.

