



UN Calls for Protection of Civilians in Northeast Syria

Damascus, 11 October 2019. This is the third day of the military operation “Peace Spring” into the northeast of Syria by the Government of Turkey. The area is home to some of the most vulnerable people in Syria due to high levels of violence, large scale displacement and other protection related concerns. It is also one of the most complex and challenging operating environments for the United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Syria.

The humanitarian impact is already being felt. An estimated 100,000 people have already left their homes. Most are being sheltered in host communities but an increasing number of them are arriving at collective shelters in Al Hassakeh City and Tal Tamer. Many are seeking refuge in schools in Al-Hassakeh and Tal Tamer.

The fighting is also already having an impact on basic services. A water station servicing Al-Hassakeh city is out of service, 400,000 people in Al Hassakeh city and surrounding areas rely on this water source. Technical repair teams have not been able to access the station to restore water as clashes are still ongoing. Efforts by the UN to negotiate a ‘humanitarian pause’ with all parties to allow technical teams to repair the station are ongoing at the time of writing. Markets, schools and clinics have been closed since 9 October. Only the National Hospital is operational, with few humanitarian actors available only for emergency cases.

“The United Nations and its humanitarian partners are deeply concerned about the latest turn of events. We remain committed to assisting those in need at this critical time. To do so, the UN asks for civilians and civilian infrastructure, to be protected at all times, in accordance to international humanitarian law and for sustained, unimpeded and safe humanitarian access to civilians to be guaranteed”, said **Mr. Imran Riza, the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria.**

Humanitarian actors now fear the number of those affected may rise very quickly in the coming days, should operations continue. Cold, winter months are also approaching which will increase people’s hardship. *“Nothing is more important than protecting civilians, right now, and doing everything in our power to ensure humanitarian actors can reach safely and deliver assistance to all those in need”,* added Mr. Riza.

The Secretary General recently reiterated that there is no military solution to the Syrian conflict. The only sustainable solution is a UN-facilitated political process pursuant to Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

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