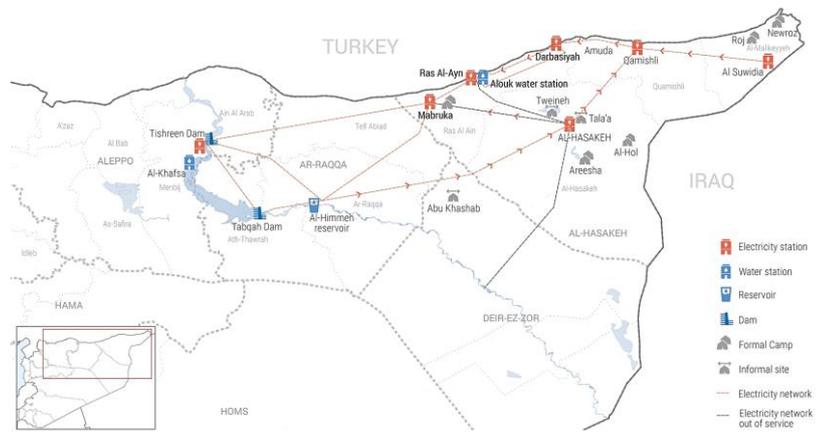


This report is produced by OCHA Syria in collaboration with humanitarian partners.

HIGHLIGHTS

- On 23 June, the Alouk water station in Al-Hasakeh Governorate ceased functioning, affecting direct access to water for approximately 460,000 people in north-east Syria, primarily Al-Hasakeh and Tal Tamer cities. In total, up to one million people are impacted, including 100,000 people in Al Hol and other IDP camps and settlements.
- Prior to this latest disruption, Alouk had been operating at limited capacity since May due to a number of factors, including reduced access for technicians to carry out essential maintenance and repairs. Reports indicate that, prior to a full electricity cut to the station on approximately 26 June, as few as five out of 21 boreholes and one out of four horizontal pumps had been operational.
- Consequently, water levels at Al-Himmeh reservoir, which is supplied by Alouk and serves in turn as the direct water source for Al-Hasakeh city, are now reported below minimum operating levels.
- WASH sector partners have again activated emergency water trucking in response, delivering approximately 3,380 m³/day to an estimated 169,000 people across Al-Hasakeh city. While a necessary stop-gap measure, it is sufficient to cover only 20 per cent of daily water needs. Additional resources of US \$2.5 million are urgently required to enable partners to increase water trucking to more cover the needs of all 460,000 people, and to install reverse osmosis units across Al-Hasakeh Governorate.
- High-level advocacy is also ongoing to enable resumption of operations at Alouk water station, including the regular, unhindered and safe access for technical teams to the station, and related electrical and pipeline infrastructure.



SITUATION OVERVIEW

Alouk water station remains a critical source of water in north-east Syria (NES), directly or indirectly providing clean drinking water to around one million people. On 23 June, the water station reportedly completely ceased operations – the 24th such disruption to the station recorded by OCHA since November 2019. This latest disruption comes following months of reduced functionality, for reasons including reduced access for technical teams, an electrical fire in April at the Derbasiyeh electricity substation, which serves as the main source of electricity for the station (as detailed in an OCHA Flash Update on 28 April, available [here](#)), and reduced overall electricity available in the region due to reduced water levels at Tishreen Dam (as detailed in an OCHA Euphrates Water Crisis & Drought Outlook published on 17 June, available [here](#)).

Since then, and at other times since the station was first impacted in November 2019, technical teams have been periodically unable to access Alouk to carry out necessary repairs and maintenance. At the time of writing, reports indicate that technical teams have been unable to access the station since around 10 May. Furthermore, on 26 June, electricity to Alouk from the Derbasiyeh electricity substation, the sole source of power for the water station, was reportedly cut.

Due to the extended period of low-capacity operations at Alouk, the Al-Himmeh water reservoir and water treatment station, which directly serves Al-Hasakeh city and neighbouring areas and is fed by Alouk water station, has also now ceased operations. Water levels at Al-Himmeh, which has a capacity of 30,000 m³, has now reportedly dropped to approximately 7,500 m³, below the minimum operating, or “dead” level. Prior to ceasing operations, and since December 2020, none of the 50 boreholes at Al-Himmeh were reportedly operational, due to reasons including brackish water. On 29 June, teams from UNICEF visited the Al-Himmeh water reservoir and confirmed it was effectively empty, and further confirmed that Al-Aziziya water station (a booster pumping station located in Al-Hasakeh) and the Tal Tamer water filling station/stand were empty/non-functional.

In light of persistent issues at the station, the Alouk Technical Working Group (ATWG) continues to explore options for more sustainable solutions. While partners have prioritized initiatives to diversify water supply, including installation of reverse osmosis units across Al-Hasakeh city, the ATWG emphasize that the regular and uninterrupted operation of Alouk water station remains at present the only viable source for drinking water which can fully serve the needs in the region.

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

Approximately 460,000 people in Al-Hasakeh Governorate rely on Alouk as their primary source of potable water, with an additional 500,000 people served by water trucking supplied from station sources, including in six IDP camps. Other vital services also rely on Alouk, including, as one example, 30 out of 37 assessed healthcare facilities in Al-Hasakeh. In the absence of reliable clean water, communities have few other choices; primarily to purchase limited private water sold at a prohibitively high cost or resort to potentially unsafe water sources. Some partners have received anecdotal reporting of households digging their own wells to find water.

Contaminated water poses severe public health risks, including outbreaks of water-borne and water-related diseases. According to the WHO Early Warning, Alert and Response System (EWARS) data, cases of acute diarrhea increased by 54 per cent in Al-Hasakeh Governorate between 1 January and 6 June 2021, compared to the same period in 2020, with the most pronounced increases reported in Al Hol sub-district from end-April onwards. Across NES, acute diarrhea cases recorded in May increased by 133 per cent compared to the same period in 2020.

At the time of writing, COVID-19 cases continue to rise in NES, including confirmed cases in Al Hol camp. With limited vaccines yet available in Syria, access to safe drinking water in addition to adequate sanitation and hygiene remain an integral first line of defence to prevent further transmission and to support overall already fragile public health. Further, and in the context of several IDP camps and settlements in NES serviced by Alouk, it is important to note that women and children in particular face increased protection risks in the absence of safe and reliable access to water and sanitation, which is generally provided in a communal setting.

HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Currently, six Damascus/Qamishli and cross-border WASH Sector partners are delivering around 3,380 m³/day¹ of potable water to approximately 169,000 people in 31 neighbourhoods in Al-Hasakeh city and its suburbs, however, as noted above, this is sufficient to cover only around 20 per cent of the total minimum needs. In order to increase reach to all individuals directly affected by the lack of water from Alouk, WASH sector partners are planning to reduce the amount of water provided per person from 20L/day to 10L/day, with an overall increase in delivery of 4,650m³/a day² to all 460,000 people.

In addition UNICEF, in partnership with SARC, has started the process to install seven reverse osmosis units at seven boreholes in Al-Hasakeh city, which can serve as a back-up source of water for approximately 42,000 people when Alouk is not functioning. The units/boreholes are located in public parks in Al Nasera, East Nashwa, West Nashwa, Al Shouhada'a Masaken, Al Thawra, Al Balabel and Zanoobia. UNICEF further plans to install an additional 15 units, in addition to increasing water trucking support, however, this will require additional funding of around US \$2.5 million.

In response to the current situation, an emergency response committee has been formed in Al-Hasakeh. The WASH Sector is coordinating with the committee, and plans to undertake further mitigating steps, including securing additional water tanks (with 60 planned to be secured by UNICEF and SARC; three from the Al-Hasakeh City Council and five through other partners/NGOs), and to scale up water trucking and distribution of chlorine tablets. In addition, the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) has informed of plans to install four reverse osmosis units on four further boreholes located in Meridian, Al Thawra Park, Al Balabel Park and Al Waha Park.

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¹ Currently, Qamishli-based partners are providing 2,600m³/a day and cross-border partners 780m³ a day.

² Under scale up plans, it is proposed that Qamishli-based partners will provide 3,144m³/a day and cross-border partners 1,506m³/a day.