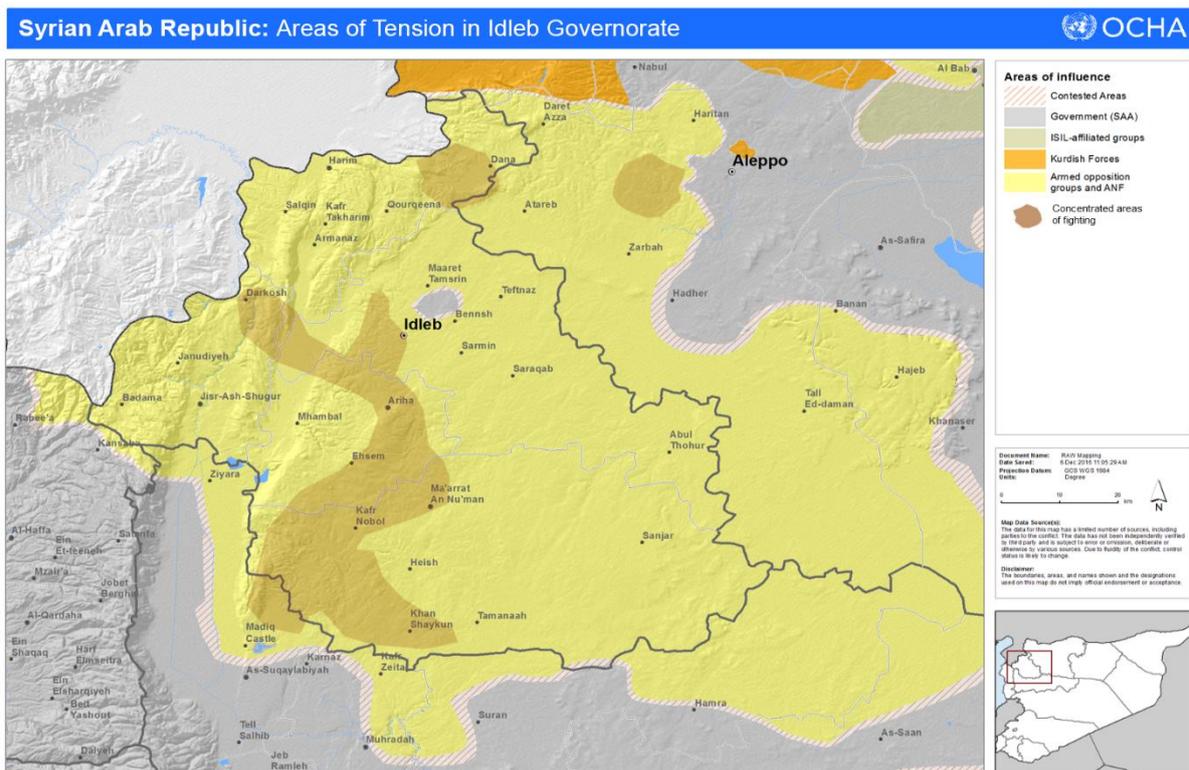


## Highlights:

- On 23 January, tensions and small-scale clashes erupted between non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in Idleb Governorate and the western countryside of Aleppo, hindering civilian and humanitarian movement.
- On 24 January, due to the escalation in tensions and continued clashes, UN cross-border shipments were suspended, but resumed the next day. Additionally, a number of humanitarian organizations temporarily suspended food distributions, education activities, and WASH projects.
- Following a period of decreased hostility since the ceasefire went into effect on 30 December, civilians and civilian infrastructure continue to be attacked. On 07 February, 30 people were killed after airstrikes struck multiple locations in Idleb city.
- In spite of the challenging circumstances, humanitarian partners continue to respond to the needs of the affected population in Idleb Governorate, including the 17,000 IDPs from eastern Aleppo City. This also includes 2,059 internally-displaced people who arrived in Idleb Governorate from the Wadi Barada area on 28 January, after a reconciliation agreement was reached between the parties to the conflict.



## Situation Overview:

On 23 January, tensions and small-scale clashes reportedly erupted between the NSAGs in several parts of Idleb Governorate and the western countryside of Aleppo Governorate. What initially started as small-scale clashes between two NSAGs quickly escalated involving other groups. Within a few hours, checkpoints were reportedly erected along several roads hindering the movement of civilians and humanitarians.

Tensions in the vicinity of Bab Al-Hawa border crossing point and other areas resulted in the suspension of UN transshipments on 24 January, though the border itself remained open for commercial and NGO

humanitarian traffic. During this time, a number of humanitarian organizations shared that they had to temporarily suspend food distributions, education activities and WASH projects due prevailing insecurity in both the Idleb Governorate and the western countryside of Aleppo. While the NGOs were not directly targeted or affected, programmes were temporarily suspended for fears for the beneficiaries and staff safety. Most organizations resumed their regular programming by the end of January, and UN transshipments resumed on 25 January.

After several days of clashes, a series of mergers between NSAGs took place. In the aftermath of these mergers, armed clashes ceased completely. Humanitarian organizations concerned about the potential impact the evolving dynamics on the ground and the change in control might have on humanitarian access. Unconfirmed reports indicate that a NGO staff member was recently detained for unknown reasons by an NSAG; while in Atareb an NSAG attempted to take-over a community bakery. Except for the besieged towns of Foah and Kafraya, the Governorate is currently under the general control of two major NSAG 'factions', though a number of smaller NSAGs remain non-aligned in parts of the southern countryside of Idleb and northern Hama.

While a decrease in hostilities is noted following the ceasefire announced on 30 December, airstrikes continue to pose significant risks to civilian and humanitarians alike. On 07 February, at least 30 people were killed and more than 50 were wounded after multiple airstrikes struck various locations in Idleb City. Also, an airstrike on 01 February struck the Carlton Hotel, where SARC Idleb is based, causing extensive damage to the building and wounding at the Head of SARC Idleb.

Shelling and sniper fire on the besieged towns of Foah and Kafraya continued in the past period, reportedly wounding five people. The humanitarian situation inside the two towns has severely deteriorated as it has been two and a half months since the last UN/ICRC/SARC convoy reached the two communities. While airdrops, which take place 1-2 a week, continue, they are unable to meet the increasing needs of the besieged population. As such, prices of commodities such as flour, rice, sugar and dairy products increased significantly, making the humanitarian situation of utmost concern. Furthermore, the 21 drivers which had gone into Foah and Kafraya for the third stage of the evacuation remain trapped as the evacuation was put on hold.

Idleb Governorate continues to be the destination to which IDPs from across the country seek refuge. The arrival of thousands of people in the past six months from Darayya, Khan Elshih, Moadamiyet Elsham, Qudisya, Hama (Hameh) and At-Tall towns has further strained the already stretched resources of the host community, as well as the capacity of humanitarian organizations in the Governorate. More than 900,000 IDPs from across Syria currently reside in Idleb Governorate. Of the total population number (1.78 million), 1.3 million are assessed to be in need of one or more forms of assistance. Such alarming figures reflect the urgency of sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to the communities in the Governorate.

Despite ongoing insecurity, humanitarian organizations continue to respond to the needs of the affected population. This includes providing humanitarian assistance to the 36,000 IDPs from eastern Aleppo city and those arriving from Rural Damascus, as well as the responding to needs of the host community. The 36,000 IDPs who were evacuated from eastern Aleppo city in December 2016, have been integrated into the regular programming of organizations in the western countryside of Aleppo and Idleb Governorate. The response to the evacuation included the distribution of more than 60,000 non-food items, thousands of food and ready-to-eat rations and the provision of medical, WASH, nutrition and protection services.

On 28 January, IDPs arrived to the Idleb Governorate after 2,059 IDPs were evacuated from the Wadi Barada area, Rural Damascus. Several humanitarian partners responded by providing transportation from the drop-off point (Al-Madiq Castle) to collective shelters and IDP settlements. At least 70 medical cases were transferred to the Ma'arret An Nu'man hospital in the southern countryside of Idleb Governorate. Assessments and food distributions have been undertaken by at least three Food Security and Livelihood partners; however, the continuous movement of some of IDPs makes responding to their needs challenging.

In a complementary effort to the activities and services that are provided by humanitarian organizations, UN transshipment through Bab Al-Hawa crossing continues. Since the beginning of 2017, 374 trucks of NFI, Health and FSL assistance were shipped to Idleb Governorate. Furthermore, 85 trucks were sent to the western countryside of Aleppo.

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