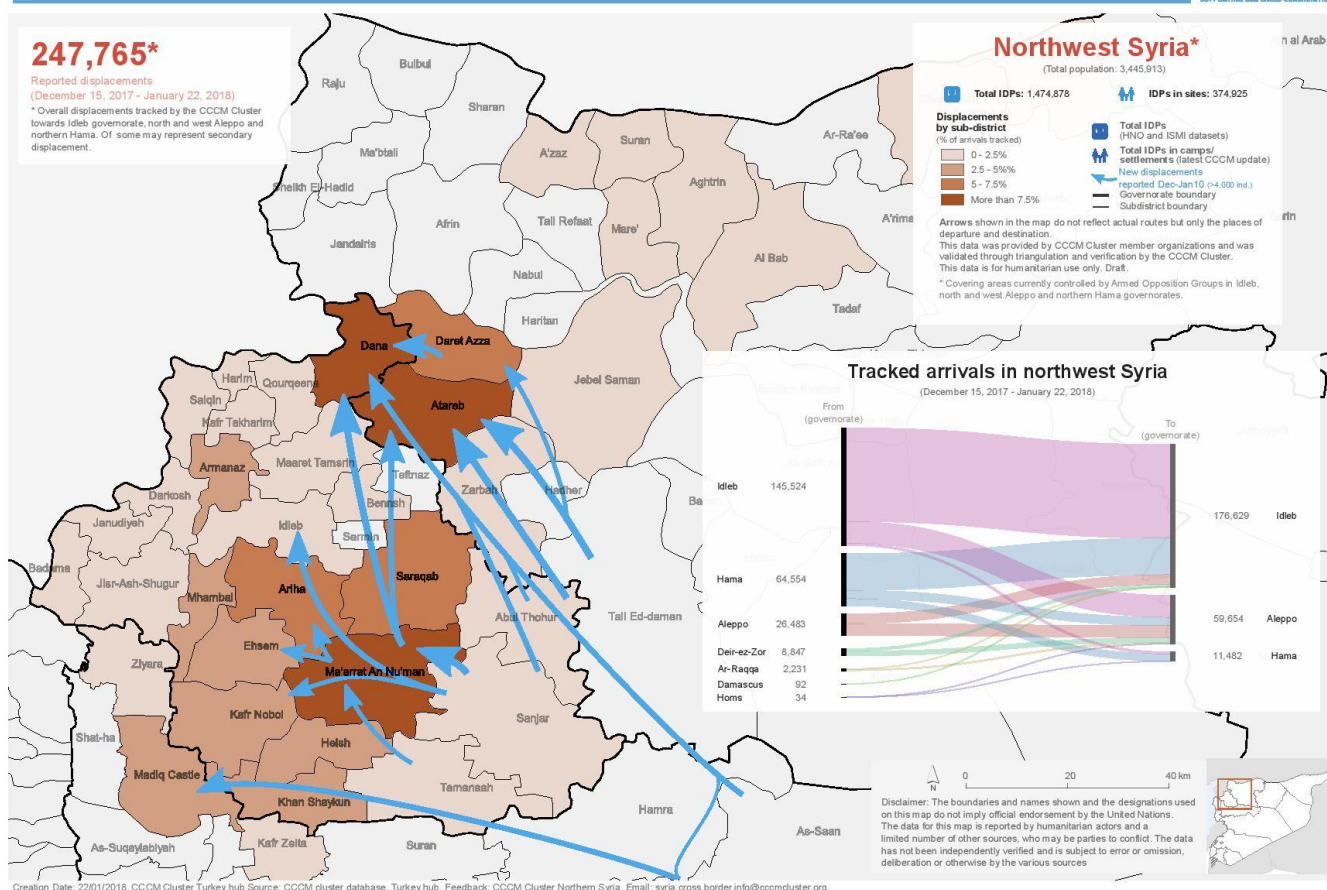


Highlights

- Hostilities in southern and south-eastern rural Idleb and southern rural Aleppo continued throughout the period between 16 and 22 January.
- Civilian displacement in Idleb Governorate continues as hostilities intensify. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster tracked a total of 247,765 displacements to central and northern rural Idleb, as well as northern rural Hama (some may be secondary displacements), between 15 December and 22 January.
- On 20 January, Turkish officials announced the start of Operation Olive Branch in Afrin District. Following the announcement, hostilities intensified significantly in Afrin District, resulting in displacement and casualties.
- The ongoing hostilities in Idleb Governorate and the recent escalation in violence in Afrin District raise concerns regarding the protection of civilians, especially considering the concentration of civilians in both of these locations.
- Concerns are raised about the restrictions on the freedom of movement of civilians in Afrin District which were imposed by the Afrin local authorities. Reports indicate that local authorities closed exit points from Afrin District, making it impossible for civilians to seek refuge in the nearby communities.

Syrian Arab Republic (Northern Governorates): Displacements to northwest Syria as of January 22, 2018



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Situation Overview

Between 16 and 22 January, hostilities between Government of Syria (GoS) forces and non-state armed groups (NSAGs) continued in southern and south-eastern rural Idlib, as well as southern rural Aleppo. Additionally, local media sources reported armed clashes between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and GoS forces in north-eastern rural Hama and southern rural Idlib, particularly in the sub-district of Sanjar.

On 16 January, local media sources reported the death of five people (four children and a woman) after airstrikes struck Tbeish village near Khan Shaykun town in southern rural Idlib. Airstrikes on Saraqab town reportedly killed one person and wounded eight, including six children. In Ma'ar Shamarin town, airstrikes reportedly resulted in the death of two people. Airstrikes on Ma'arrat An Nu'man town reportedly damaged the Ain Al-Zarqa water station, which, according to local media sources, provides water to 125,000 people in Ma'arrat An Nu'man town and surrounding communities.

On 18 January, local sources in Idlib Governorate reported that airstrikes on Saraqab town resulted in the killing of one child and the wounding of nine people, including four children and four women. On the same day, the Health Cluster reported that an NGO-supported blood bank in Saraqab Sub-district was rendered out of service by an airstrike. The attack resulted in structural damages. Initial reports show that one medical vehicle was destroyed, but no casualties were reported. Prior to this incident, on a monthly basis the blood bank was receiving an average of 900 donors, and supporting 700 people. Also on 18 January, airstrikes on Ma'arrat An Nu'man town reportedly resulted in the death of a woman and her two children.

On 18 January, heavy rainfall was reported across many areas of Syria. The heavy rain exacerbated living conditions of the internally-displaced people (IDPs), many of whom are staying in informal settlements and out in the open. The rain reportedly flooded tents causing damage to the belongings of the IDPs. The local council of Sarmada town reported that at one of the new IDP sites close to the town, 20 out of 50 tents were damaged. The families of these 20 tents were transferred to a different IDP site that was mostly unaffected by the heavy rain. The local population in Sarmada town also offered basements to host the affected IDPs.

On 21 January, local sources reported heavy clashes around Abul Thohur military airbase in the eastern part of Idlib Governorate. GoS forces linked areas under their control in eastern rural Idlib with those in southern rural Aleppo. Given the limited communications connectivity in the area, it is unclear whether civilians are still present in the region. On 21 January, local sources reported heavy aerial bombardment on Saraqab town. This resulted in the destruction of the Al-Huda mosque and the town's civil defense centre. On the same day, airstrikes on Khan Shaykun town reportedly resulted in the death of three people (two men and one child) and the injury of four people.

In Afrin District, Turkish officials announced the official start of Operation Olive Branch on 20 January. The announcement was accompanied by a number of airstrikes on Afrin district. Over the 21 and 22 January period, many incidents of shelling and aerial bombardment were reported. While the majority of bombardment was concentrated on communities close to the Syrian–Turkish border in Raju, Sharan and Jandairis sub-districts, airstrikes on Afrin town and surrounding communities were also reported. On 20 January, it was reported that the local authorities in Afrin District ordered the closure of all entry/exit points between the district and the western countryside of Aleppo (Daret Azza), the northern countryside of Aleppo (A'zaz) and GoS-held areas through (Ziyara Afrin). The Ziyara Afrin crossing between GoS-held areas and Afrin District reportedly remains open for those who want to enter the district, but closed for those who wish to exit. Hostilities reportedly caused people – especially those residing in communities near the border – to flee their homes to nearby caves in pursuit of safety. Almost all shops and business are reportedly closed. The onset of the military operation was accompanied by an internet outage in most of the district, which severely impacted the ability of civilians to communicate.

On 21 January, hostilities and bombardment continued. Local sources reported an incident where shelling on a poultry farm which hosted a number of IDPs from southern rural Idlib within Afrin. The incident reportedly resulted in the death of seven people, including five children. Airstrikes on the surrounding areas of Rubar Camp (i.e. Baselhaya camp) were also reported. This resulted in the displacement of 94 families from the camp to the nearby towns of Kafer Naya, Deir Jmail, and Al-Shahbaa camp in Tell Refaat Sub-district. The Rubar camp reportedly hosted 600 families and the Al-Shahbaa camp hosted 250 families who were displaced from Aleppo, Idlib and Homs governorates.

Shelling on the adjacent communities to Afrin District in western and northern rural Aleppo was also reported. On 21 January, shelling on Kaljibrin town reportedly resulted in the death of a father and his son. Prior to that, shelling on Al-Bab city reportedly resulted in the death of a child and the wounding of five people on 19 January. On 18 January, the Health Cluster reported that an NGO-supported mental health hospital in A'zaz Sub-district was impacted by a

mortar. This resulted in the killing of one patient and the wounding of twelve female patients. The facility sustained structural damage and was rendered out of service.

In parallel with the hostilities in Afrin district, two incidents of cross-border shelling from Syria to Turkey were reported. On 20 January, Turkish media reported that at least three rockets struck Kilis city, resulting in the wounding of one person. On 21 January, three rockets reportedly hit Reyhanli city, resulting in the death of two people and the wounding of 47. With cross-border shelling becoming an issue, the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS) advised UN staff against travelling to the border. As such, cross-border shipments from UN hubs near Bab Al-Salameh and Bab Al-Hawa border crossing points were put on hold on 20 January pending a review of the security situation. This affected 123 truckloads of UN shipments, comprising of food, shelter and health assistance that were planned for shipping to Syria this week. With ongoing large displacement in north-western Syria and the increasing hostilities, the need for UN cross-border shipments is critical to address the growing humanitarian needs. Both Bab Al-Salameh and Bab Al-Hawa crossing points remain open for commercial and non-UN humanitarian traffic.

With routes into and out of Afrin District closing, the supply routes for fuel into north-western Syria reportedly came to a halt. As such, prices of diesel fuel reportedly increased in Idleb Governorate from 200 SYP to 350 SYP per litre. Reports indicate that the increase is not related to a lack of diesel supplies in Idleb Governorate, as reports indicate the presence of large amounts of fuel that are stored in the governorate. However, the increase was caused by the local traders who are reportedly using the closure of the roads in Afrin as an excuse to raise prices.

Displacement and Humanitarian Response

1. Idleb Governorate:

The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster tracked a total of 247,765 displacements (some may be secondary displacements) to central and northern rural Idleb, as well as northern rural Hama, between 15 December and 22 January. The cluster reported on the presence of 10 IDP sites in north-western Syria, two of which are under preparation. The total reception capacity of these 10 sites will be 19,380 people. In terms of response to the ongoing displacement Idleb Governorate, the WASH Cluster established an online system to map out the needs of the IDPs and potential gaps in the response. A dedicated group of active partners in Idleb will be responsible to manage and coordinate the response. The cluster's activities are comprised of short term response, which includes the provision of lifesaving services to the displaced population at IDP sites. Medium term response of the WASH partners will be centered around carrying out quick repairs and operating the water systems to sustain the water supply in overstretched communities.

The Education Cluster reported that education activities in contested areas in southern and south-eastern rural Idleb remain suspended. The absorption capacity of the education facilities in the areas that are receiving IDPs is low. Due to the lack of shelter, IDPs might resort to staying in schools, which will further deplete the existing absorption capacity. Previous large displacements showed that it often takes IDPs several weeks – if not months - to settle down. Once IDPs settle down, the provision of education activities to displaced students will commence.

The Shelter/NFI Cluster defined two sets of activities in responding to the ongoing displacement. The first set of activities takes into consideration the fluid and rapidly evolving context of this specific displacement, which means that newly arrivals will displace within Idleb Governorate multiple times. To this end, the SNFI Cluster recommends providing IDPs with a reduced NFI kit, comprised of blankets, sleeping mats, plastic tarpaulins and jerry cans. The second level of NFI emergency response should target the IDPs that settled in a specific location with winterized assistance. This target group should be assisted with NFI winter response in line with the winterization strategy developed by the SNFI Cluster.

As per the response data received by the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) Cluster in mid-January, FSL organizations supported 106,238 people with Ready to Eat Rations (RTERs), 21,483 people with food baskets (covers a family of five for a month) and 6,095 people with cooked meals. As of 17 January, WFP has prepositioned 27,118 RTERs in strategic locations in Idleb and Aleppo. NGOs reported that the prepositioning of 4,000 food baskets (20,000 people) is ongoing. Additionally, 10,000 RTERs (50,000 people) will be prepositioned at the end of this month, provided that border access resumes soon.

In terms of the health response, health organizations are using the existing stocks of medicines and medical supplies to address the urgent needs. To ensure the quick availability of essential medicines and supplies, WHO mobilized the existing resources and discussed the supply chain with the health partners. WHO will also procure kits directly

from the Dubai logistic hub and provide them to the relevant partners and health facilities in the affected locations to prevent the emergence of any gaps in the response. UNICEF and UNFPA advised their implementing partners to relocate their mobile clinics to the areas/districts that have a high concentration of IDPs. UNFPA will work through implementing partners on the ground to provide emergency reproductive health kits. Health NGOs repurposed some their staff and mobilized contingency stocks of medicines and supplies to health facilities in Dana, Ma'arat Nu'man, Saraqeb, Ariha, Idleb and Kafr Nobol sub-districts, to ensure delivery of life-saving and life-sustaining health services.

2. Afrin District:

The 2018 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) data shows that Afrin District, as well as nearby Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)-held areas in northern rural Aleppo, have a population of 323,000 people. Of the total, 192,000 are classified as people in need, and 125,000 are IDPs. Due to access constrictions, the humanitarian footprint in Afrin District has been limited. Over the past years, very few Turkey based cross-border organizations have had operations in Afrin District. Between January and November 2017, cross-border organizations only reached an average of 1,042 beneficiaries with multi-sectoral assistance each month. Through the cross-line modality, 3 inter-agency convoys reached Afrin District in 2016, and none in 2017.

As the military operation continues in Afrin, people reportedly are displacing from villages that are now under the control of the Turkish/NSAGs forces to surrounding villages where they are hosted by the local community. However, some of the most vulnerable families (families with elderly, ill, or disabled persons) reportedly could not flee their areas. As of 22 January, local sources reported the displacement of an estimated 5,000 people from the border communities of Bulbul, Shankal, Admanli, Balal Kuy and Ali Bakki to the central parts of Afrin District. In the absence of an IDP registration mechanism in the area, the total numbers of IDPs could not be confirmed. The freedom of movement of civilians has been adversely impacted by the ongoing hostilities, as well as the Afrin local authorities' decision to close all entry/exit points to the district.

A limited number of families were reportedly able to move out of Afrin District, moving through unofficial routes, towards Nabul and Zahraa areas in rural Aleppo. The families reportedly tried to enter Aleppo, but were reportedly prevented from proceeding at GoS check points. As of 22 January, SARC and the NGOs registered the following IDP families in Aleppo: 15 in Nabul and Zahraa villages, 18 in Old Serian area, 30 in New Serian areas, 3 in Ardh Al-Hamra, and 200 in Ashrafiyeh (only 25 families out of them were registered). Reports indicate that the majority of those families are from Bulbul, Tal Aswad, Qatmeh Afrin and Kafer Janneh communities. Through approvals of the bi-monthly inter-agency convoy plan, the UN stands ready to deliver assistance to 50,000 people in need in Afrin District. Also, UN agencies based in Aleppo city have prepositioned assistance for 30,000 people in need in case further displacement into GoS-held areas in Aleppo Governorate occurs.

The escalation of violence in Afrin District has had an adverse impact on the provision of humanitarian assistance inside and around the district, including delivery to people in Idleb. A health organization suspended operations at a primary healthcare centre (PHC) in Ma'arin village in A'zaz Sub-district due to its proximity to the frontline. The same NGO suspended three mobile clinics that used to operate in Rubar camp, Al-Shahbaa camp, Sharan, Deir Sawan and Bulbul communities. Resumption of these mobile clinics remains contingent on the security situation in the area. Once a security assessment of the situation is completed, the NGO will activate a fourth mobile clinic to respond to the internal displacement in Afrin District. The NGO increased its capacity at the hospital its supports in the district and provided it with an additional ambulance. Sufficient stocks of medicine and fuel for at least a month are available at this hospital.

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