The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

Coordination Saves Lives

This report is produced by the OCHA Syria Crisis offices in Syria, Turkey and Jordan. It covers the period from 18-31 October 2016. The next report will be issued on or around 17 November.

Highlights

- Building housing UN in western Aleppo targeted by Non-State Armed Opposition Group
- Medical evacuations from eastern Aleppo City did not take place due to lack of agreement by parties
- Following a unilateral pause in fighting in Aleppo, hostilities resumed on 22 October
- Hostilities in western Aleppo City intensify
- Humanitarian partners prepare for refugees from Mosul offensive
- Medical authorities in Madaya and Bqine towns suspend medical services

Situation Overview

On 17 October, the Governments of Russia and Syria announced a unilateral pause in hostilities which lasted from 18-22 October, presenting an opportunity for medical evacuations from eastern Aleppo City. Despite long and complex negotiations during the pause, medical evacuations from eastern Aleppo City did not take place, as a result of various factors impeding the process, including a lack of security assurances from all parties, delays in receiving the list of patients from authorities in eastern Aleppo City, and the Government of Syria’s (GoS) refusal to allow medical and other relief items into eastern Aleppo City. Nevertheless, the pause witnessed a decrease in fighting. However, within minutes of the end of the pause on 22 October, military operations resumed throughout Aleppo City with shelling reported in several neighbourhoods (Al-Mashhad, Sallah Eddine, Al-Sukkari). The next day, airstrikes reportedly hit the same neighbourhoods, in addition to Al-Marjeh, killing five people. Meanwhile, from 27 to 28 October, armed opposition groups (AOGs) attacked Government-held areas in western Aleppo, including al-Hamdaneyah and 3,000 Housing project. On 27 October, a mortar on the Al Wataniya School in West Aleppo city killed three students and one teacher, in addition to injuring 23 students who were admitted to two hospitals. Amidst the increased fighting, civilians are extremely vulnerable and in need of immediate relief.

In his statement on 24 October, the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O’Brien, expressed his deep frustration that the UN and its partners had to abort their plans to evacuate critically injured and sick people from eastern Aleppo City. He stressed that political and military considerations are trumping humanity once again in Syria, noting that all parties to the conflict have a duty to protect civilians, not as favours to be granted, but rather as fundamental obligations under international humanitarian law. On 30 October, the building where UN staff reside and work in western Aleppo, was targeted and hit by a tank shell. In a statement on 31 October, the UN strongly condemned the attack on the UN hub and the increase in violence in all of Aleppo.

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Availability of medical supplies in eastern Aleppo City remains a major concern, health partners report, with medical stocks predicted to last less than three weeks. Meanwhile, the food situation remains unchanged, with humanitarian partners predicting that remaining food stocks may run out in mid-November. As of 21 October, some 12,000 food rations are stored in eastern Aleppo City, plus 100 metric tons of bulgur. Chicken, eggs, canned food, fresh vegetables and cooking gas are reportedly unavailable in eastern Aleppo City. The UN and its partners continue to stand ready to deliver cross-line assistance to 137,500 people in eastern Aleppo City.

Over the two weeks since the beginning of the Mosul offensive in Iraq on 17 October, 44 Iraqi refugees have arrived at the Al Hol Camp in Al-Hasakeh Governorate. This is a significant decrease compared to the 912 refugees arriving to the camp in the weeks before the offensive. With more refugees projected to arrive, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has extended the camp’s capacity to 15,000 people, planning to extend further to host up to 50,000 people.

On 19 October, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) evacuated 1,626 fighters and accompanying family members from Madamiyet Elsham in Rural Damascus Governorate to Idleb Governorate. Following the evacuations, civilian movement and commercial access into and out of Madamiyet Elsham became possible again. In Madaya town, a civilian and a ten-year old boy reportedly died on 26 and 28 October respectively, as a result of insufficient medical supplies. Two days earlier, the medical authorities in Madaya and Bqine towns suspended their activities due to lack of medical resources and specialists.

“As this situation report goes to press, hostilities in both east and west Aleppo have intensified. Since 23 October, increased attacks on western Aleppo (including the deployment of VBIEDs) have resulted in at least 65 deaths and the displacement of at least 5,460 people, OCHA reported on 3 November. Registration efforts of the displaced are ongoing and numbers are expected to rise.

Access Developments

Inter-agency cross-line convoys

Six inter-agency convoys were completed during the reporting period; three of them to besieged areas:

- **East Harasta**: On 29 October, a UN/ICRC/SARC convoy reached East Harasta in Rural Damascus with food, nutrition, agriculture, education, non-food items (NFIs) and water/sanitation (WASH) supplies for 11,000 people. Some medical equipment and flashlights were not allowed on the convoy by GoS authorities. The last inter-agency convoy to East Harasta was on 29 August.
- **Al Wa’er**: On 26 October, a UN/ICRC/SARC convoy reached Al Wa’er neighborhood in Homs city with NFIs as well as food, nutrition, education and WASH supplies for 70,000 people in need. Health materials were not included due to a procedural issue. Another mission to the area is planned to deliver the outstanding assistance.
- **Al Houla**: On 24 October, a UN/ICRC/SARC convoy reached Al Houla in Homs Governorate with food, health, WASH, NFIs and nutrition supplies for 71,000 people in need. Surgical items and vegetable seeds were not permitted on the convoy. In addition, 2,600 winter clothes kits for children were not included in the convoy after two of the contracted trucks were seized.
- **Madamiyet Elsham**: On 23 October, a UN/SARC convoy to Madamiyet Elsham in Rural Damascus Governorate delivered food, health, education, WASH and NFI supplies for 35,000 people. Surgical materials, medical equipment and several kits (pneumonia and burn) were not permitted on the convoy. Several medications were only approved in reduced quantities.
- **Dar Kabira**: On 20 October, a UN/SARC convoy reached Dar Kabira in Homs Governorate with multi-sectoral assistance for 33,500 people. The joint convoy, originally planned for 12 October, had to be delayed due to missing security approvals. The last convoy to the area was on 29 August.
- **Duma**: On 19 October, a UN/ICRC/SARC convoy reached Duma in Rural Damascus Governorate with multi-sectoral assistance for 35,000 people. The GoS authorities did not permit selected medical equipment, surgical items, and medicine. Some approved medical equipment and medicines were allowed in smaller quantities than initially agreed. The last convoy was on 10 June.

November Plan

On 27 October, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) approved for the UN and partners to deliver assistance to 623,000 of the 904,500 initially requested people (69 per cent) under the November inter-agency convoy plan. Eastern Aleppo City remains the only besieged location not approved for humanitarian delivery. If fully implemented, the November plan would reach an estimated 337,300 of 505,000 people (67 per cent) in besieged areas.

As a general trend, the gap between people requested and those approved to receive assistance continues to shrink. The only notable exception are people in Hamra (Hama Governorate) with only 10,000 of the 100,000 requested people approved to receive assistance (10 per cent).
UN cross-border operations from Turkey

Over the reporting period, the World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR shipped 135 trucks of assistance via Bab al-Hawa and Bab Al-Salam border crossing points. The assistance included food for 167,980 individuals, NFIs for 14,100 individuals, WASH/NFI assistance for 70,000 individuals and health assistance for 461,700 individuals, in Aleppo and Idlib governorates.

UN cross-border operations from Jordan

Over the reporting period, five convoys comprising of 77 trucks crossed the Al-Ramtha border crossing into southern Syria. WFP provided 54 trucks with 20,500 food rations for 102,500 individuals in Dar’a and Quneitra governorates. UNHCR sent 10 trucks with NFIs/shelter items for 23,500 individuals in Dar’a and Quneitra governorates. The UN’s Children Fund (UNICEF) provided 12 trucks with WASH items in Dar’a and Quneitra, while IOM provided a truck of medicines and medical consumables in Dar’a Governorate.

Spotlight on nutrition

Ongoing conflict, insecurity and continued population displacement have led to an increase in the vulnerability of children under five years of age, as well as pregnant and lactating women to acute malnutrition. The level of acute malnutrition among women and children under five years of age in specific locations was found to be within acceptable WHO global acute malnutrition (GAM) levels. Given challenging access to food, diminishing availability of fresh produce, high food prices, already poor child feeding practises and decreasing employment opportunities, an increase in malnutrition among the Syrian population, particularly children, is predicted by nutrition partners, unless efficient and integrated assistance can be strengthened.

Limited access to quality water and medical services, as well as poor hygiene practices, contribute to a high prevalence of untreated diarrhoea and other childhood diseases, further exacerbating potential impacts of malnutrition. These factors can negatively influence the nutrition situation, especially in the context of a collapsing healthcare system, lack of medical supplies and coverage of medical services, especially in besieged and hard-to-reach locations.

Over four million girls and boys under five years of age are in need of nutrition services, nutrition partners estimate, with over 70,000 girls and boys aged 6-59 months acutely malnourished. Across Syria, an estimated 1.5 million pregnant and lactating women require preventive nutrition services, according to partners.¹

Lack of information and proper data are major challenges to effective programming, with civilians living in hard-to-reach and besieged areas deprived of basic social services at a high risk of malnutrition.

Other Humanitarian Developments by Governorate

Aleppo Governorate

Without medical evacuations, yet with many newly injured as a result of resumed hostilities, the medical infrastructure of eastern Aleppo City is close to collapsing. Less than 30 doctors currently work in only six partially-functional hospitals. This means there only is one doctor for every 9,000 civilians and only 11 operational ambulances remain for transporting injured people, leaving many unattended. Within these six remaining hospitals, essential medicine, including anaesthetics, intravenous fluids, vaccines and trauma supplies, are running out. Available beds and blankets are insufficient, and some patients are instead using body bags to stay warm.

Although the water situation in eastern Aleppo City has improved recently, the Sulaiman Al-Halabi water station remains operational at only 20 per cent of its total capacity. Recent damages sustained by the pipeline between the Bab Al-Nayrab water station and an intermediate water tank have cut off water supply to several neighbourhoods. As of 29 October, 12 neighbourhoods in eastern Aleppo City are receiving water from the Bab Al-Nayrab and the Sulaiman Al-Halabi water stations, according to a local partner. The local authorities continue to repair damaged water pipes throughout the city, but the lack of equipment and vehicles presents a major limitation to these efforts. With increasing prices and inconsistent supplies of diesel fuel, an increasing number of civilians are reportedly resorting to using firewood as a substitute for diesel fuel.

From 27 to 30 October alone, the Directorate of Health in western Aleppo City reported 43 casualties, including one woman and nine children, and over 600 injured. On 26 October, a school compound in western Aleppo City was hit, killing several children. On 28 October, the UN Secretary-General condemned the reported attack and stated that,

¹ Figures in this paragraph are estimates based on calculations for the draft 2017 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).
if deliberate, such an attack might amount to a war crime. Shelling on the neighbourhoods of western Aleppo City also continued during the pause in hostilities, killing five and injuring 41 people.

On 29 October, non-state armed groups (NSAGs) announced a curfew in several GoS-held neighbourhoods in Aleppo City (Halab Al-Jadeedeh, Al-Hamadaniyeh, Saif Al-Dawleh, Masharqah, Sallah Eddin) to ensure the safety of civilians. On 30 October, barrel bombs containing chlorine were reportedly dropped on Khan Al-Assal town and Al-Rashideen District on the western outskirts of Aleppo City, however, no civilian impact has been reported.

On 30 October, the building where UN staff reside and work in western Aleppo, was targeted by a non-state armed group and hit by a tank shell. In a statement on 31 October, the UN strongly condemned the attack on the UN hub and the increase in violence across Aleppo.

Idleb Governorate

Between 24 and 27 October, airstrikes damaged several schools in Khan Ashkyun town (Khaled Al-Najm Elementary School), Ariha town (Al-Sabbagh School) and Jisr Ash-Shugur town (Bashi Hall School). On 26 October, at least six airstrikes on a school complex (two elementary schools and a high school) in Has town reportedly killed 34 people, including 22 school children, four internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the northern Hama countryside, and a general surgeon, who worked at the town’s only hospital and others in nearby towns.

Homs Governorate

In the besieged Al Wa’er neighbourhood of Homs city, humanitarian access continues to depend on the state of negotiations between the GoS and the local negotiation committee. Following a disagreement over the release of or information on detainees, the GoS closed Al-Mohandseen and Al-Shoun checkpoints for civilian movement and commercial access on 23 October. Military activity close to the checkpoints prevented the entry of GoS employees, students and staff of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who theoretically have permission to use the checkpoints. On 25 October, however, deliveries of bread and a small truck of vegetables to Al Wa’er were reportedly permitted. This may indicate that negotiations are picking up again, and an agreement regarding the relocation of 400 fighters from Al Wa’er to Idleb Governorate seems imminent.

Rural Damascus

On 16 October, SARC Damascus evacuated 1,287 fighters and family members from Al Hameh and Qudsaya in Rural Damascus Governorate to three locations in Idleb Governorate (Idleb city, Atma near the Turkey border, Maat Mohandseen near Maat Al Numan city). These evacuations are part of a local agreement, following two weeks of heavy clashes, stating that medium and heavy weapons will be handed over to the GoS. In turn, roads are to be re-opened for commercial access and government services will resume in the towns. On 17 October, a day after the evacuations, SARC delivered 7,000 food parcels and hygiene kits to Qudsaya and 3,000 food parcels and hygiene kits to Al Hameh.

On 27 October, a civilian was killed on the Khan Elshih – Zakye Road trying to smuggle bread bags into Khan Elshih town. Since 29 October, the Zakye – Khan Elshih Road has been blocked by GoS forces, impeding the delivery of supplies to Khan Elshih town from nearby Zakye and Mqelilbeh towns.

Al-Hasakeh Governorate

A total of 5,023 refugees, some of whom arrived as early as April 2016, are currently residing at the Al Hol Camp. According to unconfirmed reports, some 200 Iraqi refugees and 800 Syrian IDPs are currently stuck at Rajem Al Sleibi village on the Syrian side of the border with Iraq, some 17km from the camp, undergoing security screening by Kurdish police forces prior to being allowed to the camp. At present, there are 384 latrines available in the camp, with sufficient food and NFIs in place for 50,000 people, through airlifts administered by WFP and partners.
Key Humanitarian Reports and Updates

- Statement by Mr. Al-Za'tari, the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for Syria and Mr. Kevin Kennedy, the Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Crisis in Syria, on Attack on UN Offices in Western Aleppo
- Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien Statement to the Security Council on Syria
- Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien Statement on Syria
- Syria: Flash Update - Developments in Eastern Aleppo (as of 27 October 2016)
- Syrian Arab Republic: Whole of Syria sectors’ response to hard-to-reach and besieged locations
- Syrian Arab Republic - 2016 UN Inter-Agency Humanitarian Operations
- Syrian Arab Republic: Whole of Syria Who does What Where per Governorate