

OCHA Syria | Flash Update #6

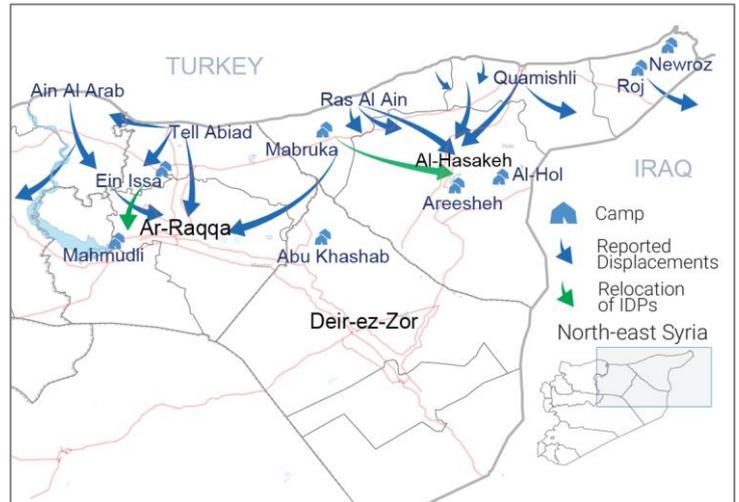
Humanitarian impact of the military operation in northeastern Syria
15 October 2019



**This update is compiled with inputs from different sources, reflecting developments as they unfold and/or as they are reported to OCHA Syria. The situation on the ground is fluid and volatile. While striving to be as comprehensive as possible, information in this update, especially with regards to numbers of displaced people and civilian casualties, is susceptible to revisions as further information becomes available.*

Highlights

- The security situation in northeast Syria remains highly volatile as the military operation enters its seventh day. Airstrikes and intense hostilities appeared to de-escalate slightly during 15 October. Clashes continued however in Ras Al Ain.
- While no further territorial advances were reported on 15 October, the humanitarian access landscape in the area has rapidly changed in the past few days as Turkish Armed Forces made significant territorial advances and Government of Syria forces continued to deploy forces across various Governorates, reportedly reaching the Al Yarobiyah crossing point with Iraq. Turkish and Syrian armed forces have reportedly been in close proximity in various locations, but clashes appear to have been avoided so far.
- An estimated 160,000 people have recently been displaced since the beginning of the crisis on 9 October, fleeing military advances and hostilities. Many have displaced multiple times from one area to another. Some 1,000 individuals have reportedly fled to Iraq.
- Military advances to Tal Tamer, now hosting many of the newly displaced, are of grave concern. According to health actors, the hospital in Tal Tamer – one of the few still operational in affected areas – received hundreds of casualties in the past days, against a critical shortage of supplies.
- On 15 October, the evacuation of the Ein Issa camp residents was completed, except a few households that chose to remain. The camp, previously hosting close to 13,000 displaced people, was at a cross road between three different armed forces. Most residents were transferred to Mahmudli IDP camp, while others were able to leave to other areas.
- In total, close to 20,000 IDPs living in Ein Issa and Mabruka camps had to be relocated to safer areas in the past few days. Efforts to provide assistance to the new arrivals at Areesheh and Mahmudli camp are underway. Humanitarian actors continue providing life-saving assistance to over 100,000 displaced people in various camps in the region, including Al Hol.
- Humanitarian partners are also stepping up to provide life-saving assistance and protection services to the newly displaced arriving in collective shelters in Al Hasakeh, Tal Tamer, and Ar-Raqqa. Over 5,000 people are currently displaced across more than 30 collective shelters.
- Significant parts of the M4 highway, which is the main transport route running east-west across northern Syria, remain cut off. Quamishli airport remains open and in use by humanitarian partners to airlift supplies, such as health-related goods. The Al Yarobiyah and Fishkabour border crossings are currently open and reportedly operating normally.
- Despite ongoing efforts, needs across the region remain significant, stretching existing capacities. Additional resources and implementing capacities are urgently needed to adequately respond to needs.



- The United Nations and its partners call for regular, unimpeded and continuous humanitarian access to people fleeing or caught in the violence, across lines of control.
- The United Nations has been liaising with Turkish authorities and other parties on the ground to allow the movement of a repair crew for the Allouk water station as well as for the protection of civilians evacuating Ein Issa and Mabruka camps.

Situation overview

In its seventh day, the military operations in northeast Syria persisted and continued to impact civilians. Advances made by Turkish and Government of Syria forces across the region in the past days brought them extremely close to each other and, in some areas, to places where people have been displaced raising fears of a potential escalation. Clashes have largely been avoided so far.

In the past days, Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) and allies reportedly made significant territorial advances 30 kilometers south of the border, mainly within the Tell Abiad district, while pushing towards northern Menbij, in Aleppo governorate. At the same time, Government of Syria troops have allegedly been sent to Al-Hasakeh, Quamishli, Tal Tamer, Tabqa and around Ein Issa town and have expanded their presence in several villages within Menbij sub-district. Early on 15 October, clashes between non-state armed groups and the Syrian Democratic Forces continued in Ras Al Ain city, Al-Hasakeh Governorate.

Despite reports that Turkish airstrikes decreased significantly in the last two days compared to the first days, hospitals in various areas report receiving numerous casualties as a result of hostilities, stretching limited capacities and availability of materials. WHO completed their second airlift of medical items, to distribute materials across hospitals and health centers in the region.

Civilian casualties are being reported in the media from both sides of the border as a result of shelling.

Update on Menbij, Aleppo governorate, as of 15 October

On 14 October, the Turkish army and the Syrian National Army announced the beginning of “the battle for Menbij” aiming at capturing the district of Menbij in Aleppo Governorate, reportedly controlling several villages (Bashli- A’zouri) in rural Menbij. On that same day, reports indicated that Government of Syria troops were also entering Ain Al Arab district in northeastern rural Aleppo however, no confirmation received from local contacts as the city. However, operations appeared to be halted. As such, the situation in both Menbij and Ain Al Arab, Aleppo Governorate, remains tense but with neither major shift in control nor IDP movements reported.

Humanitarian impact

Given the rapidly evolving situation, the full scope of the humanitarian impact of the current military operation is still being assessed.

An estimated 160,000 people, including 70,000 are children, have been displaced since the start of the military operation on 9 October towards Al-Hasakeh, Tal Tamer and Ar-Raqqa. As military operations continue to move closer to Tal Tamer and Ras Al Ain city, humanitarian actors expect additional displacements. Population movements remain fluid, with families opting for alternative

accommodations rather than remaining in shelters, or camps, and therefore move several times. The highest displacement figures thus far are movements from Ras Al Ain and Tell Abiad.

The fighting compounds an already dire humanitarian situation in northeast Syria. Of the 3 million women, children and men in the northeast, 1.8 million were already in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 900,000 in acute need. Close to 710,000 of those living in the northeast Syria were already IDPs. Populations that remain along the Syrian/Turkish border face extreme hostilities and the humanitarian community has limited capacity to respond to their needs. The United Nations and its partners continue to strive to facilitate humanitarian assistance to over 100,000 people that remain at several IDP camps and informal settlements and cannot survive without this aid.

Situation at the IDP camps

In the early hours of 15 October, an estimated 2,500 IDPs remained in the Ein Issa camp, in high risk circumstances, as three different forces converged close to the camp. As of the evening of 15 October, most IDPs had been relocated by humanitarian actors to Mahmudli camp, some 90 kilometers south west within Ar-Raqqa governorate. As of late on 15 October, 12 families remained at the camp, while 35 families were reportedly on their way to Mahmudli. A shooting incident at the camp on the evening of 14 October resulted in the death of a young girl and the injury of two people.

As of 14 October, five families remain at Mabruka IDP camp trying to leave. Humanitarian partners are exploring solutions to evacuate these families. Between 11 and 12 October, some 5,000 people were evacuated and transferred to Areesheh camp due to security concerns. Another 100 relocated families remain in communal tents, while the rest of the arrivals received both tents and non-food items upon arrival. Camp management and key service providers remain in place at Areesheh. The camp is however overcrowded due to the recent influxes of people.

The humanitarian situation at Al Hol and Al Roj camps remains stable, with key services continuing, including distribution for the upcoming winter season, despite a reduction in presence of humanitarian workers. The maintenance of health, water, sanitation and hygiene services at the camp continue and services and protection to some 68,500 residents remain a key priority.

Allouk water station

Following the first technical mission to repair the water station in Allouk conducted on 14 October, a plan to continue repairs and efforts to reestablish the water system has been developed. A second mission to the Allouk water station is planned for the coming days. These repairs occurred following UN negotiation with parties to the conflict to allow a pause in fighting and access to these areas. The UN continues to engage with the Government of Turkey to pass information and facilitate humanitarian space, including for the repair team for Alok water station and the evacuation of the Mabruka and Ein Issa camps. While interim solutions with regards to the provision of water have been arranged, the water situation for over 400,000 people in Al-Hasakeh city and surrounding areas remains a critical concern.

Urgent needs for winter planting season

The current military operations in northeast Syria at the beginning of a single winter planting season and in a major cereal production area which usually accounts for over 90% of national cereal production, is of critical concern to food security actors. Any disruption of the upcoming planting season due to displacement of farming communities as result of military operations will worsen the food security situation of the entire country which is already fragile due to a current deficit of 1.7million tonnes of cereal to meet domestic requirements. Every available opportunity needs to be

utilized to avoid widening the gap between stocks and domestic requirements. Lack of adequate preparedness and prepositioning of wheat seeds to proportionately increase planting of major staple in areas hosting displaced population, will impact the population and be costlier to address in the long run for an extended period of time. The food security sector is seeking financial support to preposition seeds in the region immediately to offset potential loss of planting areas along the military front.

Humanitarian response and coordination

The United Nations and its partners remain concerned about the grave impact on the civilian population that continued conflict would have in the upcoming period, leading to additional displacements, and subsequent sets of population movements, adding to the already existing needs.

Currently, humanitarian partners are focusing on maintaining key assistance efforts at existing IDP camps, sites and settlements, while scaling up the response to newly displaced and ensuring critical services such as health and water supplies remain available for residents in the region. This includes continuing to closely monitor how the situation evolves in all camps, especially those that remain in the surrounding vicinities of on-going military operations.

Freedom of movement for people seeking to find shelter in more secure areas as well as safe access to people in need, remains the top priority of the United Nations and its partners.

Needs assessments at IDP sites, camps and settlements continue identifying the priority needs and gaps, in order to adapt the humanitarian response and the protection services offered as the situation evolves. Preliminary results indicate a need for a greater response to meet all newly emerging needs.

Humanitarian actors are presently analyzing various scenarios for the near future and their possible impact on people in need as well as on humanitarian access. A further stock-take of response capacities and resources required to scale up efforts in the area is also underway, including efforts to diversify and find new routes to secure the pipeline of commodities to the area.

Humanitarian actors are committed to stay and deliver vital humanitarian assistance for the people in need, while minimizing any delay or interruption in the delivery of the assistance. The United Nations continues to reiterate that all parties must ensure all civilians, including aid workers, remain protected.

Sector Response

**With information available at the time of reporting, i.e. inputs not fully capturing all planned and ongoing response, nor all needs and gaps, on the ground.*



Protection

Needs and gaps

The protection situation of IDPs and civilian population remains a critical concern given the evolving situation and increasing displacement. There are immediate concerns for the reported 12 families remaining in Ein Issa camp. It is imperative that civilians are protected from direct attacks and the effects of hostilities, allowed to move in safety and voluntarily to safe places, with special protection

afforded to children, including those formerly, and or allegedly, to be associated with armed forces or armed groups.

- There are reportedly approximately 10 families remaining in the Mabruka camp in urgent need of evacuation to Areesheh, including one pregnant woman, and two persons with serious medical conditions.
- In Areesheh camp, tensions are raising between the residual population and newly relocated IDPs from Mabruka as humanitarian assistance is being perceived to be diverted to the new arrivals. Protection issues are being exacerbated due to overcrowding and stretched service provision.
- In Mahmudli camp, 63 HH are awaiting camp administration permission to voluntarily leave and the return of their documentation.
- Protection assessments in 28 communal/collective shelters in Al-Hasakeh (20), Tal Tamer (8) and Raqqa are ongoing. To date, 32 women at risk, 87 elderlies in need of support, 17 persons with disabilities, 27 persons with serious medical conditions, 1 unaccompanied child, 115 children at risk have been identified (referrals and individual follow-ups are ongoing).
- Many families have reportedly settled with the host communities and their needs are also being assessed, including over 5,000 households in Al-Hasakeh town.
- A rapid protection assessment was carried out in Maabada, where 111 households/539 individuals were identified in four schools and a mosque. This includes 304 children in need of psychosocial support services. Secondary displacement has occurred for 84 households, previously been displaced from Afrin.

Response

- Protection coverage is currently reaching over 100,000 individuals.
- Due to ongoing hostilities and the situation on the ground protection partners are unable to assess and respond in parts of Ras al-Ain, Ein Issa and Tell Abiad. Protection partners formerly present in Ras al-Ain, Tell Abiad and Ein Issa are diverting their programs and resources to respond to the protection needs of the newly displaced population of Tall Tamer, Al-Hasakeh and Raqqa areas.
- Protection partners, despite a reduction in staff, are continuing operation of regular protection activities in Al Hol, Mahmudli and Areesheh camps, including awareness, psychosocial support, child protection, GBV support, case management etc.
- Following advocacy with the local authorities and camp administration in Mahmudli camp 54 IDP families who arrived from Ain Issa received back their confiscated IDs and were able to leave the camp to their areas of origin in Raqqa.
- Interim care arrangements for the recently evacuated 27 children from Ain-Issa camp, from the temporary shelter (where they are hosted now) to an interim care center remains challenging. Advocacy for a permanent solution is ongoing.
- Protection partners are coordinating on the ground for pre-departure safety messaging, family separation prevention, mine risk education and ensuring the return of civil documentation from camp administration for 70 families, registered for return to Deir-Ez-Zor from Areesheh camp.
- Despite stretched capacity and the ongoing situation protection partners continue to support Community Centres both static and mobile across all IDP sites and in host communities receiving

IDPs. Support provided includes awareness, psychosocial support; child protection; GBV support and case management, informal education, assistance for persons with specific needs, legal assistance); specialised services for children and women/girls are also provided.

- In addition, protection partners are carrying out regular consultations with affected people through mobile teams (CP and GBV) outreach volunteers (ORVs) to understand the protection needs in IDP hosting areas and conduct rapid needs assessments, identification of persons with specific needs, case management and referrals.
- GBV partners are currently providing GBV services through a mobile team in the Al-Ameria area. Specialised GBV personnel have been deployed to Al-Hasakeh city and Tal Tamr to provide services as per needs on the ground through mobile teams.
- Some 30,330 protection kits and 55,000 sanitary napkins are being delivered to Quamishli.
- To date, GBV partners have distributed 560 protection kits and 516 Sanitary Napkins to 1,224 beneficiaries
- Through Women and Girls' Safe Spaces (WGSS), GBV monitoring teams have intensified efforts in the distribution of dignity/hygiene kits for the most vulnerable population and affected women and girls.
- GBV partners continue providing GBV services integrated with reproductive health services through mobile teams and SRH clinic.
- A mobile CP team has mobilised at the entrances of Raqqa city, accompanied by the Civil Raqqa Council, to receive displaced families. Case managers are referring people to applicable service providers. To date, the team has received 3,000 families. This afternoon the mobile team targeted children with PSS to CP programs within the villages of Al-Asadia and Alqahtaniah. Another CP mobile team assisted IDPs from Ain Al-Arab and Tell Abiad with first aid sessions, health and hygiene awareness sessions and MRE sessions for children. The team also conducted a field survey in indifferent areas of Raqqa to identify unaccompanied and separated children for family reunification. Displaced families received by the mobile teams at the entrance of Raqqa and were assisted in reaching their relatives.
- Mobile teams assisted families in transporting the injured to hospitals. Fixed CFSs in Al-Raqqa (Al-Mishlab - Jawad Anzour) continue to provide psychosocial support sessions for children.
- Child protection (CP) partners continue to monitor and document children for further assistance through case management.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) mainstreaming is being addressed by GBV partners in all facilities during provision of services and follow-ups.
- Protection monitoring remains ongoing.



Needs and gaps

- Ready-to-eat rations (RTEs) needs in Menbij and Ain Al Arab sub-districts, Aleppo governorate, and Ein Issa and Ar-Raqqa city, Ar-Raqqa governorate.
- Lack of access to Mabruka and Ein Issa camps for RTEs and general food rations (GFRs) distribution, Twahina camp with needs for RTEs and GFRs.
- Cooking gas and heating fuel needs in all camps.

Response

- WFP's response as of the end of 15 October has reached more than 108,300 people across Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa governorates, including close to 35,400 people in Al-Hasakeh governorate with emergency food assistance, the majority in collective shelters and host communities, as well as 73,000 people in Ar-Raqqa governorate. Distributions continue at the time of writing
- RTEs distributed to 29,930 individuals in Tal Tamer, Al-Hasakeh, Areesheh, Quamishli, Tal Hamis and Al-Malikeyyeh, Ras al-Ain and Areesheh camp at both collective centres and villages.
- RTEs distribution ongoing for 5,000 individuals in Areesheh camp – 3,000 reached to date.
- Bread was distributed to 5,347 individuals at the collective centres in Al-Hasakeh and Areesheh camp.
- Date bars distributed to 5,735 individuals at the collective centres in Tal Hamis and Areesheh camp.
- Planned rapid needs assessment in Ar-Raqqa city.

Capacity

- Overall, 10,000 RTEs dispatched to respond in Tamer, Al-Hasakeh, Areesheh, Quamishli, Tal Hamis and Al-Malikeyyeh, Ras Al Ain and Areesheh camp in collective centres and villages with an additional 4,000 are being dispatched to Ar-Raqqa city.
- A total of 70,000 general food rations in stock for immediate response will be used to support displaced families living in collective centres or urban locations – 400 are being dispatched.
- Some 30,00 general food rations are in the pipeline to respond to displaced families living in collective centres or urban locations.
- Some 17,000 RTEs are in the pipeline to respond to displaced families living in collective centres or urban locations and to be delivered within the next ten days.



Highlights

- More health provision operations are needed in both Mahmudli camp and Areesheh camp.
- Decrease in the number of functioning health facilities across the northeast.
- More than 146 civilian casualties reported since the start of the conflict, in addition to 42 recorded death cases.

Needs and gaps

- More support is needed for the frontline hospitals and functionality should be scaled up.
- Need to increase number of first aid points (trauma stabilization centers) at the nearest safe locations to receive injured and refer them to the involved hospital and strengthen and coordinate the referrals pathways between active partners.
- Need to preposition sufficient life-sustaining medicines and medical supplies at Quamishli hub to support health partners in the affected locations.
- Need to conduct an assessment for the general health situation at locations where IDPs have arrived; apply early warning, alert and response system; and establish a system of water quality control at these locations within locations.
- Need to provide a comprehensive MHPSS/GBV integrated response.

- Need to preposition items for winterization
- Need to expand vaccination coverage specifically in Raqqa, where it remains low,
- Need to sustain continuity of basic health services across IDP camps.

Response

- Two ambulances and two mobile clinics support the shelters in Al-Hasakeh city.
- The third day of the ongoing polio campaign was completed.
- Referral pathways were established.
- Partners at Areesheh and Al Hol camps provided health and nutrition services to 837 women and children under five years.
- Mobile teams provided 206 primary health care consultations for women and children at the collective centers in Al-Hasakeh city.
- UNFPA provided reproductive health services for over 690 patients at the shelters and main camps and distributed 243 female dignity kits and 92 pregnant and lactating women kits so far.
- WHO through its partners provided medical consultations and medications for over 1,000 patients, including the main camps and shelters, as well as more than 400 mental health and psychological support services.
- Six cases were referred to WHO-supported hospitals and two deliveries were done through UNFPA support.
- Water quality control activities are ongoing as per plan in Al Hol – 25 water samples were tested and three of them were non-potable.

Readiness/preparedness measures

- Plans by health actors to increase the response through additional health facilities.
- Resource mobilization is in place to respond to both national hospitals' and emergency health care needs.
- Assessments are being conducted for Tal Tamer hospital and plans are underway to assess Al-Hasakeh national hospitals.
- Five mobile clinics are planned to be set up to support health services provision.
- An airlift shipment of more than 10 tons arrived to Quamishli airport and will be distributed as per to date assessed needs.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Needs and gaps

- Continued close coordination with WASH cross-border partners to ensure continuity of service.
- Continued advocacy for protection of critical water and electricity supply infrastructure within NES.
- Due to the fluid security situation, at least three cross-border partners have suspended their activities, while other partners continue with remote implementation. Discussions initiated with as to how best ensure continuity of service delivery.

Response

- Water quality monitoring continues at camps and communities. From 8 to 14 October, a total of 143 samples were collected (39 samples from Areesheh, 42 samples from Al Hol, 35 samples from Abou Khashab, 2 samples from Al Hassaker/Tal Tamer road and 25 samples from Al Hol). From the collected samples, eight samples (collected from jerrycans) were found to have microbial contaminants, and three samples from Al Hol had chemical contaminants.
- Provision of safe drinking water at healthcare facilities: WHO started the procurement process of 60,000 bottles of water (1.5L) and 1,000 jerry cans (25L) to support 7 health facilities in Al-Hasakeh, including Al-Hasakeh National Hospital, Al-loloa, TB center, Al-Nassrah, Al-Nashwah, Al-Salhyah, and Tal Hajar, serving 56,370 patients for none month and 123 healthcare workers.
- Emergency water trucking continues at Al Hol camp, with a total of 1,495m³ delivered. Additionally, and for Al Hol, the two reverse osmosis stations installed in the camp remain functional. The water trucking is hugely reliant on Allouk, and its non-functionality presents a significant challenge to the sector.



Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Needs and gaps

- Concerns regarding sufficient humanitarian support given that some organizations have pulled out, reduced staffing particularly in Ein Issa, Roj and Al Hol camps while overcrowding is a serious concern in Mahmudli and Areesheh camps.
- Approvals for partners to distribute 400 tents from the Governor's office is on hold pending clarity on the recent agreement with the Syrian Democratic Forces.
- As new tents and NFIs were distributed at Areesheh camp, tensions were reported. Partners will be distributing to all camp residents.
- Partners encouraged to work through the Cash Working Group before distributing vouchers as access to markets, and goods and items could prove challenging given the fluid and volatile situation on the ground.
- Concerns with regards to adequate shelter and heating as winter approaches.
- Mission to Al Hol and Areesheh were suspended since 6 and 8 October respectively.

Response

- Core NFIs distributed to 19,523 individuals, an estimated 3,924 households, at Areesheh, Ein Essa, Mahmudli and Al Roj IDP camps.
- Core NFIs distributed to 11,550 individuals, an estimated 2,310 households, at 14 communal shelters in Al-Hasakeh and Tal Tamer. Also, 1,750 individuals in Tal Tamer, an estimated 350 households, were reached with additional blankets, diapers and water.
- Assessments have taken place for a small number of host communities in Tal Tamer.
- Tents for 770 households, approximately 3,850 individuals, were provided at Areesheh camp.
- A shelter assessment was conducted at the collective centres to determine shelter needs and findings will be provided soon.

Capacity (continued evaluation)

- Currently, two UN partners and three INGOs are either providing shelter and NFI assistance or planning to. As some organizations have evacuated their staff, or suspended operations, this could limit the response capacity.

- Core NFIs – an estimated 10,000 kits are en route to Quamishli.
- Tents to respond to 4,000 households in Quamishli, and an additional 1,000 are being dispatched. An estimated 2,000 tents are available in country, while another 4,960 are in the pipeline.
- Emergency shelter kits can be used to support displaced families living in collective centres or urban locations – 1,000 kits are being dispatched.
- Some 11,550 winter clothing children kits are available, with distribution expected to start on 17 October.
- There is capacity to provide 4,000 households with winter cash but given limited market access and security this need will need to be reassessed.
- NGO partners are reporting lack of extensive stocks.
- Current routes available are via Homs/Tartous to Tabqa.



Logistics

- On 14 October, two logistics partners dispatched a total of 1,595 m3 of relief items for transport from Quamishli.
- Road access assessments to, and within, the northeast are ongoing. The Logistics Cluster will continue to keep partners updated on road accessibility as new information is received.
- The Logistics Cluster is conducting ongoing assessments with partners to define the key logistics gaps and needs for the northeast response. Specifically, partners were asked to advise on current stocks in Al-Hasakeh and Quamishli, as well as needs for the upcoming month, to support with operational planning and prioritization on cargo.
- The Logistics Cluster is facilitating access to warehouse space in Quamishli and Aleppo. In Quamishli, three UN agencies are currently storing goods within the warehouse.
- The Logistics Cluster is facilitating access to road transport services from Quamishli warehouses to destination in support of the immediate response in the northeast. Interested organisations are asked to provide a completed Service Request Form and submit it to syria.cluster-cargo@wfp.org.

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