



DESPERATE MEASURES

Syrians fleeing Turkey's military operation

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Norwegian Refugee Council is an independent humanitarian organisation helping people forced to flee. For further information, please contact advocacy@nrc.no or visit www.nrc.no

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Front Cover: "There is nothing to go back to, they burnt my house, and in Ras al Ayn the original people of the area have left. Even if I have to eat soil here I would not go back to Syria." Sorya Ahmed, 55, a grandmother from Ras al Ayn

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

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NRC team unloads a truck during an aid distribution in Bardarash refugee camp in the Kurdish Region of Iraq.

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

SUMMARY AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Since Turkey launched a military operation in north east Syria on 9 October, over 220,000 people have been displaced inside Syria, and 17, 926 Syrians¹ have sought refuge in northern Iraq² The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) surveyed 208 newly arrived families in Bardarash refugee camp, where the majority of those who fled Syria to the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI), are housed, and collected 15 case studies on both sides of the border.

Refugees told NRC of harrowing journeys as they fled shelling and troop advances, often enduring long walks to cross the border to the KRI. The overwhelming majority of Syrians surveyed were forced to cross into Iraq through informal

channels, making them more vulnerable upon arrival. They report that regular border crossing points were inaccessible to them. Some had been turned away, others had been made aware by family members they would not be able to meet administrative requirements to leave through regular means. Relying on informal routes poses serious risks for refugees and has led to family separation and exploitation. Families surveyed in the camp report spending between USD 200 and USD 800 a person to reach the other side.³ Such experiences raise critical questions about the Autonomous Self-Administration of North and East Syria's" (Self Administration)⁴ border policy, and its effect on Syrians' ability to access safety amidst ongoing violence.

NRC'S RESPONSE TO THE NEW DISPLACEMENT CRISIS

NRC is responding to the latest Syrian displacement crisis in northern Iraq with humanitarian assistance. NRC is partnering with local organizations at the irregular border crossings and reception sites to provide new arrivals with drinking water and other basic items. In the newly-established Syrian refugee camps, Bardarash and Gawilan, NRC is distributing essential items for infants and 'hygiene kits' for families -- with basics for winter such as shampoo, soap and kerosene heaters -- and is building communal kitchens. NRC is also expanding its education programs by establishing an informal school in Bardarash camp, so that children have a place to learn until they are either able to integrate into the formal education system in the KRI or return to school in Syria.

With many parts of northeast Syria still contested militarily, the future for the vast majority of refugees and those residing in this part of the country is still unclear; they report that ongoing hostilities in places such as Qamishli and Tal Tamer as well as conscription by armed forces reduce any prospects for safe and voluntary return. In fact, 95 per cent of Syrian refugees surveyed say they prefer to stay in northern Iraq and have no desire to return at any point in the near future. The refugees identified issues such as freedom of movement and access to residency permits as key concerns, as well as access to work opportunities, the recovery of lost legal identity and civil documents, and integrating their children into the local school system in the KRI. More immediately, as temperatures drop with the onset of winter, camp residents cited access to adequate shelter as an urgent concern.

More than 17,900 Syrians have already undertaken perilous journeys to flee to northern Iraq. Tens of thousands more remain displaced within Syria. As the situation remains uncertain, more movements are expected to occur. The parties to the conflict must ensure civilians are protected, and should ensure that those who have been displaced as a result of fighting have the option of returning to their homes as soon as it is safe to do so. The Self Administration should simplify procedures to enable people to seek asylum without putting themselves at further risk. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), together with its international partners, should ensure new Syrian arrivals are able to access the same rights afforded to Syrian refugees who arrived during the earlier years of the Syrian conflict in a timely manner.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- » The Government of Turkey should take all possible measures to protect civilians and ensure that they have access to humanitarian assistance in north east Syria;
- » The Autonomous Self-Administration of North and East Syria should revisit its policy on departure from the region to allow safe passage to the KRI. This includes simplifying exit procedures which allow Syrians to seek asylum without incurring added personal safety risks;
- » The Kurdish Regional Government should speed up measures to improve Syrian refugees' freedom of movement in the KRI, including the option to apply for residency permits from within the new camps;
- » All parties to the conflict should ensure that refugees and IDPs alike are able to access the full range of durable solutions, including return if they wish to do so.



"I never thought that one day I would be displaced and seek refuge in another country." Ali Hussain, 25, an aid worker from Qamishli.

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

BACKGROUND

On 9 October, Turkey launched a military operation in northern Syria following the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras Al Ayn. After an initial round of intense airstrikes and artillery bombardment, the Turkish army and associated Syrian armed groups (including the Syrian National Army) launched a ground offensive in multiple areas along the border. In the span of a month, 220,000 people fled the violence and, as of 5 December, 68,000 remain displaced in this part of Syria.⁵ More than 17,900 refugees have crossed into the KRI since the military operations began, and more are expected.⁶ NRC is present at the border and in camps providing drinking water, non-food items, counselling and legal assistance, education and psychosocial support.

Turkish forces now control several towns, including Tal Abyad and Ras Al Ayn, and have made incursions as far as the M4 international highway, reaching Ayn Issa town. As clashes continue in areas around Tal Tamer, more than 123,000 Syrians have begun to return to their homes, predominantly in areas now under the control of Turkish forces, including Suluk and Tal Abyad, and Ayn Issa, which is currently contested between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Russian forces.⁷ Meanwhile, Syrians continue to cross the border into the KRI, albeit at a decreased rate, from communities in Syria. Fleeing heavy violence, these families have relied on irregular means to traverse rocky border regions to reach safety, and now face an uncertain future in the KRI.

Since 2012, nearly 250,000 Syrians, largely of Kurdish origin, have sought refuge in the KRI. Although the Government of Iraq (GoI) is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, policies in the KRI have to date been largely favourable towards refugees from Syria.⁸ Though there are no formal pathways to citizenship or even the option of long-term residency,⁹ Syrian refugees who have valid temporary residency permits issued by the KRG are typically able

to access education, gain employment and, for the most part, move about freely.¹⁰ A study conducted on the Syrian refugees in the KRI prior to the new arrivals found that more than 90 per cent of registered Syrians have residency permits.¹¹ New Syrian refugee arrivals to the KRI are transferred to either Gawilan or Bardarash camp, which reopened in October 2019 to accommodate new arrivals.



Hind, 6, fled Ras al Ayn with her family and was separated on the way. "I lost them and I was afraid that they were captured or killed" Hind's father told NRC. Luckily, they were reunited and made it to Iraq. Hind has registered to start at NRC's school in Bardarash camp.

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

FINDINGS

Between 26 and 28 November 2019, NRC conducted a rapid needs assessment in Bardarash refugee camp in Dohuk, Iraq. NRC teams surveyed 208 newly arrived families in the camp¹² and collected 15 case studies on both sides of the border.



Syrian refugees arrive at a reception center on the Iraqi side of the border.

Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

1 EXPERIENCE FLEEING THE MILITARY OPERATION

The vast majority (78 per cent) of households surveyed by NRC in Bardarash are from Qamishli and Ras Al Ayn. They told NRC they fled aerial bombardment, artillery shelling and ground fighting. Forty-one per cent of the refugees interviewed departed Syria between 19 and 22 October, however, some of the earliest displacements date back to the announcement of the operation on 6 October. “We left the day the operation officially started and decided to go to Hassakeh because it was far from the clashes. The journey took three hours when it usually takes an hour and half because of the severe congestion on the road,” a mother of two from Ras Al Ayn, now living in Hassakeh city center, told NRC.

This four-day mass exodus came in the wake of the five-day ceasefire agreement reached between the SDF¹³ and Turkey on 17 October, negotiated by the US, creating the perceived stability in which families felt they could flee more safely. The ceasefire required the SDF to withdraw from areas between Tel Abyad and Ras Al Ayn towns, which had come under the control of Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) in the preceding days. While sporadic skirmishes continued around Ras Al Ayn, the absence of airstrikes and indirect fire allowed for greater mobility, with thousands of civilians fleeing south to Raqqa city and east toward the border with Iraq. The announcement of this agreement came as Turkey-affiliated Syrian National Army¹⁴ and TAF appeared poised to take control of the town of Ras Al Ayn imminently. As Ali Hussain* told NRC, “I was in Ayn Issa when I received a call that there was an explosion in Ras Al Ayn. It took us two hours to reach Tal Tamer, where we saw a mass of people coming from Ras Al Ayn. Some were walking, others were on motorcycles or using cars.” Only days prior, a military agreement

had also been struck between the SDF and Syrian government (GoS), shifting conflict dynamics in Qamishli, Hassakeh governorate and other areas under SDF control.

DISPLACED PERSONS INSIDE SYRIA ENDURE SIMILAR PERILS

Father of three Walid* and his family fled their ancestral home near Kobane on 16 October, bringing with them his parents and his 82-year-old grandmother. “Thousands of children, women, elderly and men were either sleeping or crying on the side of the highway all night long. I could hear bombs and clashes coming from my village all night.” Walid helped his family settle in an Arab village south of the M4 international highway. He explained, “We came to this village seeking safety. We were willing to go to Raqqa city then to the Iraqi border but the people here made us feel at home. The safety of my family is my top priority, especially my grandmother and my youngest son who has problems with his heart.” It has been difficult for Walid to get news of his hometown: “Shops are closed, there are no services or no civilians in the village. I’m not even sure if Turkish-affiliated groups are still close by. I heard that people who returned to Tal Abyad are suffering from the lack of water, food and safety. They cannot work on their farms because they might be arrested. I also heard that so many families have moved to Raqqa city and there are no more houses to rent.”

* Pseudonym has been used to protect the identity of those interviewed.

The peak period of arrivals in Bardarash camp also dropped off at the same time that the Turkey – Russian memorandum was agreed in Sochi, which led to another relative reduction in active hostilities. One family of five told NRC, “We fled the day after the big car explosion happened in Qamishli city. The explosion was on 11 October in an area close to our home.” Lacking the funds for the entire family to reach the KRI, some fled to Derek, in Hassakeh governorate, where they “are waiting and hoping that the situation will get better....There is fear that anything could happen at any time.”

For the Syrians who have arrived in Iraq, they told NRC their journey took anywhere from one to 14 days, with the average refugee traveling over two days to reach the camp. Two-thirds of families were forced to stop along the way, reporting a range of experiences including being blocked by the SDF, coming under indiscriminate shelling, having to travel long distances after nightfall, having to rest and facing delays because the route was not clear. As one mother told NRC, “Finally, the third smuggler worked out. We crossed the border walking for about an hour and a half. My children got injured. They were asking us to move fast, and it was not easy to do so carrying our children.” Facing similar troubles, Mohammad explained, “The road was tough and full of thorns and stones. All of the families with us crossed the border on horseback, but we were the only family walking that night. It was cold, dark and scary, especially for the children.”

TRAVERSING NORTH EAST SYRIA OVER 14 DAYS

Shirin and her six siblings left their parents behind to reach safety in the KRI. “It was not easy for my dad to send all his children with a smuggler. We didn’t know if he would actually bring us to Kurdistan or take us somewhere else...that was a big risk for my dad, but it was safer than staying under bombs and airstrikes. We cried a lot saying goodbye to my father.” The family travelled a total of 14 days to reach Bardarash camp, having paid USD 150 per child to get to the border: “We actually tried to cross legally in Semalka. We asked our relatives who live there to check it for us, but they said it was closed [to us].”¹⁵ As the eldest child, Shirin must look after the youngest, brothers ages eight, 10 and 14. “I need to leave the camp so I can find a job and financially support my siblings. They need to finish their studies and go to school. Life in the camp is so difficult. I am too young to handle this responsibility.”



"On our way, airstrikes hit somebody in front of my eyes, his head was ripped off his body. I could only see his head, the body was missing." Suleiman, 18, from Qamishli.

Photo: Karl Schembri/NRC

2 BARRIERS TO REACHING SAFETY

In practice, there are two grounds on which Syrians can exit through the crossing point at Feshkapour/Semalka¹⁶: with possession of a valid residency permit in the KRI, or by submitting a "guarantee" of sponsorship from remaining family members in Syria that the individual will return to the region by an agreed date. Those seeking to exit must coordinate permissions with local authorities, a sponsor (meeting specific criteria including being aged 30 to 60 and usually a relative), the local court and the Self Administration's Emigration Office in Qamishli. It typically takes between a week and 15 days before the applicant receives an exit permit and is approved for departure to the KRI. If the individual does not return by the agreed

date, the sponsor risks being arrested and fined up to SYP 800,000.

While NRC was unable to identify official communication of these procedures to civilians, there was common awareness of its parameters and implications among respondents. Many, like Hussein, "didn't try because for the men, and especially the youth, it's so difficult to cross legally. Armed forces would force us to stay and fight to protect our land." Ninety percent of the families NRC surveyed said they left family behind in Syria. Half of respondents who reported having left family members behind said it was because they could not pay the cost to reach the crossing point. Over half of Syrians surveyed by

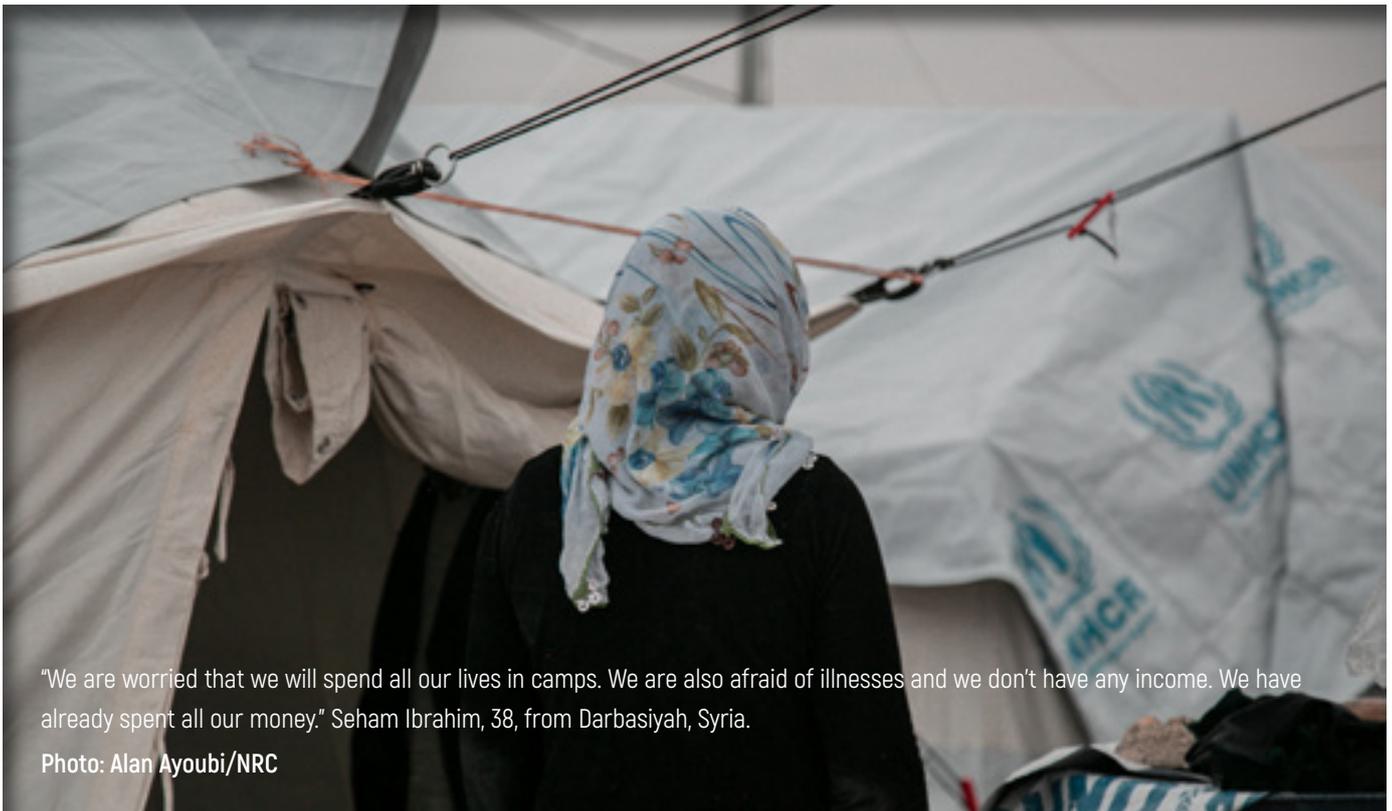
NRC reported having paid between USD 200 and 800 per family member. Shirin, mother of three, explained, “Most of the people who fled, they left everything behind. Many sold everything they owned to pay the smugglers.” She and her husband paid USD 600 to cross, noting that “they were not taking money for the very young children.” Respondents acknowledged that other family members also stayed in Syria because they were too frail to travel or needed to look after property and land. “I have brothers there,” explained one father of three from Qamishli. “They are not leaving because they have property there, they are afraid they will lose everything they have if they leave. Plus, smugglers are now asking for much more money nowadays.” While these administrative requirements are by no means new, Turkish advances in north east Syria prompted unprecedented levels of displacement.

There is also a degree of coordination between the Self Administration and security forces on the KRI side of the border. While the regular border crossings into the KRI officially remain open, Syrian refugees who arrived in Iraq report being deterred from taking those routes,¹⁷ requiring that they travel through more difficult, informal channels.¹⁸ On the Iraq side, entering the country through a regular border crossing, such as Feshkapour (Semalka on the Syrian side), is only possible for those who already have KRI residency or who have coordinated entry before arrival at the border. When they reach one of the irregular crossings on the Iraq side of the border, Syrian refugees are transported to a reception site at the Sahela crossing where they are screened by the Assayish (Kurdish security), and then transported to one of the two camps in Dohuk governorate.



Sahela, a village on the Syria-Iraq border

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC



"We are worried that we will spend all our lives in camps. We are also afraid of illnesses and we don't have any income. We have already spent all our money." Seham Ibrahim, 38, from Darbasiyah, Syria.

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

3 EXPERIENCE IN THE CAMP: Lack of freedom of movement a primary concern

Many Syrians NRC spoke to are relieved that they managed to reach safety but show growing signs of despair about life in the camp. More than 40 per cent of respondents report that their inability to leave the camp premises is their primary concern. By issuing temporary residency permits, the KRG has long allowed Syrian refugees to fulfil their rights to freedom of movement and to work in the KRI. To date, 6,329 newly arrived Syrian refugees have managed to obtain 'sponsorship' that gives them permission to leave the camps.¹⁹ However, many refugees said that the granting of these clearances has been slow, resulting in significant frustration. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, has acknowledged that the need for residency documents for new arrivals remains a significant gap.²⁰

"My main concern is my children's education and finding a job to support my family. I need to go out of the camp to be able to get that," Radwan, father of three teenagers, told NRC.

In a small number of cases, the absence of freedom of movement may have been one of several factors which prompted some of the 525 refugees to return to Syria, despite the lack of guarantees of safety or protection.²¹ At least once a week, transportation is available in the camp to cross back into Syria through the Feshkapour/Semalka border crossing. While the numbers of those returning are relatively small, frustration among those who lack immediate relatives outside the camp to 'sponsor' them to leave is mounting (see text box on procedure

to leave the camp). NRC spoke to a 15-year-old from Qamishli as he boarded the bus to leave. He said, "I don't have a family sponsor out of the camp to go to, and that means I will never be able to leave the camp except to go back to Syria. It has been 40 days and now I decided to go back."

PROCEDURE TO LEAVE THE CAMP

Upon arrival in the camps, Syrian refugees must seek registration with UNHCR to obtain an 'asylum seeker's certificate.' At present, there are two ways a Syrian refugee in the camps can seek authorisation to leave the camp: medical cases and what is known as 'sponsorship.' In order to seek medical treatment outside the camp, a resident of Bardarash makes a formal request to the Asayish, or local intelligence department, in the camp and seeks their approval. To process a 'sponsorship' request, a refugee should typically have a first-degree relative living in the KRI. This relative must travel to the camp to 'sponsor' them to leave and obtain approval to do so from their local security (Assayish).²² There is currently no official procedure in place for any refugee who wishes to leave, but does not fall under one of these two categories. While Gawilan camp now has a residency office and begun processing applications, Bardash camp does not. Older Syrian refugee camps in the KRI have typically had offices where they can independently apply for a residency permit. Those like Hussein have a better chance, "I have a sister living in Dohuk. She is trying to sponsor me and take me out of the camp, but she has yet to get the approval."

Alongside concerns of restrictions on freedom of movement, 27 per cent of those surveyed in Bardarash also raised concerns regarding the distribution of food in the camp and the availability of heating (21 per cent), followed by the availability of safe, clean drinking water (11 per cent). As one family explained, "We have not received enough food. The food they distribute cannot all be used for cooking and we don't have enough cooking equipment." According to humanitarian agencies in the camp, refugees are provided hot meals upon immediate arrival in the camp, followed by ready-to-eat meals for the following three days and monthly food rations thereafter.²³ Water storage tanks are provided to each household, alongside water trucking for sectors of the camp facing shortages, while monitoring of water quality is ongoing.²⁴



Bardarash refugee camp, Kurdish Region of Iraq
Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC



"We wanted to flee somewhere that is safe and stable, to save my life and my children's lives." Mohammed from Qamishli, Syria.

Photo: Alan Ayoubi/NRC

4 OFFICIAL IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AND EDUCATION

Fifty-seven per cent of families surveyed by NRC said that they have at least one family member who does not possess his or her legal identity and civil documents, largely children under 18. As there is no office processing residency permits in the camp, organizations providing legal assistance are unable to undertake procedures to recover civil documents, which may require leaving the camp. Therefore, restrictions on freedom of movement create added barriers to restoring lost civil documents or participating in residency processes.

Just over half of Syrians arriving to the KRI are under 18 years old. Humanitarian agencies have established temporary learning spaces and are conducting psychosocial support and informal education programs, including recreational

activities. However, gaps remain.²⁵ In interviews, residents of the camp indicate a strong desire to get their children back to school. However, UNHCR has noted that many children lack the documents to integrate into formal schools at the moment. About 80 per cent of families surveyed say that they did not bring copies of their children's school records. While there is a secondary school in Gawilan camp, Bardarash does not have secondary school options in the camp.²⁶ "My children are smart and they have always been among the top students in their class. I want them to finish their studies and reach their dreams. That's not possible in Syria with the current situation. I want to be in a place where my children are protected and can access education," said Radwan, father of three from Qamishli.

5 LOOKING AHEAD:

Intentions to stay in Iraq or return to Syria



While 525 Syrians have returned to north east Syria in recent weeks,²⁷ 95 per cent of Syrians in Bardarash report that they intended to remain and settle in the KRI. “We left everything behind and came here searching for peace. As long as there is no peace in Syria I am not returning for sure,” said one man from Tal Abyad. “The lives of my family members are more important than anything else. I doubt that the situation in Syria will get better anytime soon.” A 55-year-old refugee, Sorya Ahmed, told NRC, “Where would I go if I had to go back? My house was burnt down, and the original people of my area have left. Even if I had to eat soil here in the camp I would never go back to Syria.”

Given the fluid military situation in the north east and ongoing clashes around and east of Tal Tamer, it is unsurprising that the primary deterrent for refugees is the ongoing hostilities

and insecurity (69 per cent), followed by the fact that as many as 17 per cent have no home to go back to. As one new arrival told NRC, “When the war first started in Qamishli, our home was partly destroyed because of airstrikes and bombing. After what we saw...we cannot return. Even our house that we left there, we are not planning to go back for it.” About 10 per cent also report fears of potential reprisal, by either Turkish-backed forces or the Syrian army.

Unless conditions in Syria substantially change, it is unlikely that the majority of Syrians in Bardarash will return to Syria in the coming months. One woman from Derbasiya, now displaced in north east Syria, explained, “Today I called my brother. He told me that the situation is not good. There is no water, no electricity and the Syrian Lira is falling quickly against the dollar.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

As refugees from Syria continue to arrive in Iraq, and many more remain displaced inside Syria, all relevant authorities should take measures to ensure protection of civilians in conflict and their ability to flee to safety, including across international borders to seek asylum. The absence of physical safety in north east Syria has meant that families on both sides of the border remain in limbo and will require humanitarian assistance in the coming months. Looking further into the future, those who have fled must be able to seek the durable solution of their choice, whether that is returning to areas from where they have been recently displaced, or settling and integrating elsewhere.

TURKEY:

- » Take all possible measures to protect civilians and ensure that they have access to humanitarian assistance in north east Syria;
- » Enable Syrians to move freely within the area under its control and enter and leave it without undue restrictions.

AUTONOMOUS SELF-ADMINISTRATION OF NORTH AND EAST SYRIA:

- » Revisit its policy on departure from the region to allow safe passage to the KRI. This includes simplifying exit procedures which allow Syrians to seek asylum without incurring added personal safety risks;
- » Communicate changes in the exit procedures transparently to the civilian population, including through traditional and social media.

KRG/GOI:

- » Dedicate resources to expedite current 'sponsorship' applications to enable those who wish to leave the camps to do so;
- » Open a residency office in Bardarash camp in a timely manner to enable those who do not have first degree relatives currently residing in the KRI to leave the camps in search of work opportunities, formal schooling, and to recover civil documents.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, INCLUDING DONOR GOVERNMENTS:

- » Ensure sufficient funding is made available to respond to the immediate and long term needs of displaced Syrians on both sides of the border.

ENDNOTES

1. [IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix, Displacement Movements from Syria Weekly Update #7: 5-11 December 2019.](#)
2. "Situation Report #12: Humanitarian impact of the military operation in northeastern Syria," OCHA Syria, 1-19 November 2019; [Rapid Displacement Overview: Displacement from Syria, REACH, UNHCR, Update as of 9 December 2019.](#)
3. REACH's Rapid Displacement Overview published on 9 December 2019 report based on Key Informant Interviews conducted at the border report families paid \$180 per person. For more information see: [Rapid Displacement Overview: Displacement from Syria, REACH, UNHCR, Update as of 9 December 2019.](#)
4. The "Autonomous Self-Administration of North and East Syria" is a civilian government-type organization established with a view to being a member of a federated Syria, established by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD). It governs northeast and east Syria.
5. "Flash update #18: Displacement in Northeast Syria," Humanitarian Needs Assessment Programme (HNAP), 5 December 2019.
6. "Inter-agency operational update," UNHCR, 3 December 2019.
7. "North East Syria displacement," OCHA, 26 November 2019.
8. [Far from Home: Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq, Durable Solutions Platform, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, IMPACT \(January 2019\), 10.](#)
9. [Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan \(3RP\) in Response to the Syria Crisis, Iraq Country Chapter 2019-2020, 11.](#)
10. This residency permit is limited to the KRI. It does not enable one to travel to federal Iraq.
11. [Far from Home: Future Prospects for Syrian Refugees in Iraq, Durable Solutions Platform, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Danish Refugee Council, IMPACT \(January 2019\).](#)
12. This is a representative sample of the Bardarash camp population with a 95 per cent confidence rate and a 6 per cent margin of error.
13. The Syrian Democratic Forces is an umbrella organization of Kurdish and Arab combatants. It is considered by the Self Administration to be the defence force for north and east Syria.
14. The Syrian National Army, also known as the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army, is a non-state armed group which has served as a supporting force of the Turkish military in northern Syria.
15. While tens of Syrians interviewed described the regular border crossing as 'closed,' this is in reference to the barriers to exit caused by the procedures of the Self Administration.
16. The border crossing is known as Feshkhapour on the Iraqi side.
17. Representatives of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) have also stated "there are strict security controls at the border inside Syria which are preventing people from fleeing." [See "Syrian refugees lack basic services, need more support: JCC," Kurdistan24, 12 November 2019.](#)
18. The International Office for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix is monitoring new Syrian refugee arrivals at all irregular border points on a daily basis.
19. Information provided by UNHCR.
20. Ibid.
21. NRC was unable to verify any information about the whereabouts of those who returned to Syria through this process.
22. The criteria and requirements may vary depending on the governorate in which the 'sponsor' resides. In some cases, being a first degree relative is not required.
23. The monthly food rations are dry food which include 45 kg of cereal, 10 kg of pulses, 5 kg of bulgur, 5 kg of sugar, 4.55 kg of oil, 0.75 kg of salt, as well as rice, as well as a stove and kerosene (information provided by the World Food Programme).
24. [Interagency Operational Update, Iraq, 17 November 2019.](#)
25. [Interagency Operational Update, Iraq, 3 December 2019.](#)
26. [Ibid. It should be noted that Bardarash is a more transient camp and it is unclear at the moment to what extent current residents will remain in the camp.](#)
27. [Ibid.](#)



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