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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the fifty-ninth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of resolution 2165 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2191 (2014), paragraph 5 of resolution 2258 (2015), paragraph 5 of resolution 2332 (2016), paragraph 6 of resolution 2393 (2017), paragraph 12 of resolution 2401 (2018) and paragraph 6 of resolution 2449 (2018), in the last of which the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a report on a regular basis, at least every 60 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained herein is based on data available to agencies of the United Nations system and obtained from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and other relevant sources. Data from agencies of the United Nations system on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for December 2018 and January 2019.

II. Major developments

Box 1

Key points: December 2018 and January 2019

1. Serious concerns persisted about the protection of civilians in the Hajin area of south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate, where military operations against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant continued, and about the well-being of some 25,000 people displaced from this area to the Hawl camp during the reporting period.

2. The humanitarian situation in the makeshift settlement at Rukban continued to deteriorate, with deployment of additional humanitarian assistance to the area becoming increasingly critical. By the end of the reporting period, final preparations were being made for a major aid convoy to Rukban to provide comprehensive assistance to some 42,000 people.



3. Flooding and severe cold compounded the suffering of millions of people in need throughout much of the country, with several camps for internally displaced persons in the north-east and north-west experiencing heavy flooding, resulting in the destruction of shelters and secondary displacement of already extremely vulnerable people.

4. Concerns around the risk of military escalation in Idlib grew, with changes in control over the course of the reporting period further complicating the operating environment for humanitarian organizations. The suspension of funding by some donors for stabilization activities, linked to concerns following changes in control, reduced the coverage of health services in some areas in the north-west of the country.

5. Attacks on educational and medical facilities continued to be reported and verified by humanitarian organizations, with four attacks on schools and four attacks on hospitals confirmed during the reporting period.

6. United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food for an average of 3.37 million people in need each month and nearly 3 million health and medical treatments to people in the country.

7. In several areas that shifted control in 2018, including locations in eastern Ghouta, south-eastern Idlib, northern rural Homs and the southern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, sustained and predictable humanitarian access remained challenging owing to a number of constraints, including administrative restrictions and insecurity.

8. The United Nations and non-governmental organizations continued to deliver life-saving assistance to more than 700,000 people each month in the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic, including recent arrivals in sites for internally displaced persons. The uncertain operating environment, including in the context of recent announcements about possible adjustments to military deployments in the north-east of the country, raised concerns among humanitarian organizations.

3. Throughout December and January, large numbers of civilians were reportedly killed and injured in Hajin and surrounding areas in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate owing to air strikes and intense fighting between the Syrian Democratic Forces and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). During the period, some 25,000 people were relocated from Hajin to the Hawl camp in Hasakah Governorate, approximately 300 km to the north. Women, children and older persons comprised the majority of people fleeing Hajin. Extremely harsh conditions were reported along the route north, including cold temperatures and a lack of food, water, shelter and health services. By early February, at least 39 children were reported to have died either while in transit or shortly after arriving in the Hawl camp, owing mostly to hypothermia caused by exposure and a lack of access to health care, while making the arduous journey northwards.

4. The rapid rate of new arrivals tripled the population of the Hawl camp over the course of the reporting period. While humanitarian assistance was scaled up in the camp, humanitarian access to Hajin itself and to displaced people in transit remained extremely limited, owing in part to insecurity and active conflict. Protection concerns included constraints on freedom of movement, with many of those arriving at Hawl expressing a preference to move to other locations, in most cases to connect with family members or friends in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

5. Humanitarian conditions in the makeshift settlement at Rukban, on the Syrian Arab Republic-Jordan border, deteriorated significantly during the reporting period. Cold weather exacerbated an already dire situation, with an estimated 42,000 people, of whom the vast majority were women and children, facing growing shortages of basic commodities and limited access to medical care and other basic services. At least eight young children were reported to have died in the settlement by mid-January.

6. In early January, armed clashes between the Levant Liberation Organization and other non-State armed opposition groups spread across Aleppo and Idlib Governorates, with some fighting taking place near camps for internally displaced persons and with reports of civilian casualties in a number of locations. A ceasefire was reported on 10 January, with indications that the Levant Liberation Organization had, by that point, significantly expanded its area of influence in the north-west of the country. Fighting between government forces and non-State armed opposition groups also continued to be reported in Idlib and surrounding areas of the north-west, including in areas understood to lie within the demilitarized zone established under the agreement announced by the Russian Federation and Turkey on 17 September (see [S/2018/852](#)). Humanitarian organizations continued to highlight the likely catastrophic consequences of a major military operation in the Idlib area.

7. Severe flooding affected many locations in the north-west and north-east of the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period, with sites for internally displaced persons among the locations worst affected. Humanitarian organizations estimated that more than 70 per cent of the Arishah camp, in Hasakah Governorate, had been flooded by late January, forcing more than 1,000 families from their shelters. Other sites affected by flooding in January included the Karamah camps in Atmah, close to the Syrian Arab Republic-Turkey border and the Salah al-Din, Habi and Shuhada' camps in Khirbat al-Jawz and Zawf, western Idlib Governorate. Close to 82,000 internally displaced persons were directly affected in the north-west alone, with the Zarbah and Atarib subdistricts of Aleppo Governorate among those hardest hit.

8. On 20 December, the then Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, noted that it had not yet been possible to convene a sufficiently balanced, credible and inclusive constitutional committee as part of United Nations efforts to implement Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

9. The new Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Geir O. Pedersen, assumed his functions on 7 January. He reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to moving the Syrian-led political process forward, as mandated in Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and guided by the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. Mr. Pedersen consulted members of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in Damascus and the opposition Syrian Negotiations Committee in Riyadh, as well as regional and international interlocutors in Geneva and in capitals.

Protection

10. Notwithstanding a relative decrease in the overall intensity of violence, civilians in many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be severely affected by the direct and indirect consequences of hostilities. Air and ground-based strikes continued to kill and injure civilians and damage and destroy civilian infrastructure, in particular in eastern Dayr al-Zawr. In addition, in eastern Dayr al-Zawr, ISIL appears to have continued to systematically commit violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights. In areas under its control, it reportedly carried out a range of killings, targeting civilians perceived to be either opposed to its ideology or affiliated with or providing information to rival non-State armed opposition groups. An unknown number of civilians remained trapped in ISIL-held

areas, prevented from fleeing to other areas and effectively being exploited as human shields.

11. Many civilians who were able to flee ISIL-held areas found themselves in camps or sites for internally displaced persons in areas controlled by non-State armed opposition groups, where conditions were dire, with limited access to food, water and medical services and with significant constraints on freedom of movement. Humanitarian protection actors highlighted a number of additional concerns in relation to displacement from the Hajin area, including lengthy security screening procedures, involuntary relocation by non-State armed opposition groups and confiscation of documentation.

12. Ground-based bombardment in the north-west of the country increased, with near-daily reports of shelling along frontlines in northern Hama, south-eastern Idlib and western Aleppo. An increase in the use of improvised explosive devices in various areas throughout the north-west and north-east was also observed. The number of civilian casualties and the scale of the destruction of civilian infrastructure remained a strong indication that the fundamental rules of distinction, proportionality and precaution and, in particular, the prohibition on the launching of indiscriminate attacks may not have been respected.

13. In Idlib and surrounding areas, lawlessness and criminality, including by the Levant Liberation Organization, continued to be reported. Civilians, including human rights activists, health service providers and journalists, were abducted or detained, either on suspicion of affiliation with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic or for being critical of the Levant Liberation Organization. Abductions for ransom by criminal gangs were also reported. The fate and whereabouts of many of those abducted remain unknown.

14. In Idlib, the Levant Liberation Organization appeared to target communities of specific ethnic or religious groups. In December, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented reports of the Levant Liberation Organization seizing the houses, land and properties of absent Christians and Shi'a civilians who had either fled the violence in the Governorate or were displaced following "ceasefire and reconciliation" agreements concluded by government forces and their allies and non-State armed opposition groups, including the Levant Liberation Organization. OHCHR received reports that the Levant Liberation Organization had issued notices claiming as "spoils of war" all properties of Christian families who had fled the violence in Idlib city. The Christian owners had, in many cases, left their houses in the care of neighbours and friends. The Levant Liberation Organization has reportedly given tenants in the Kanisah neighbourhood in Idlib city a three-day ultimatum to either register those houses or evacuate them.

15. In Dar'a Governorate, OHCHR continued to receive reports of the arrest of civilians by government forces, which, in some cases, may amount to arbitrary arrest and detention. OHCHR documented 452 individuals who were detained between 26 July 2018 and 14 January 2019, including 136 civilians, among them 3 women and 115 former fighters. The reasons for those arrests remain unclear. Often, relatives were not informed of the detention of their family members or the location of their detention, raising concerns about whether due process was adequately followed in all cases and whether all relevant rights were afforded to them, as required by international law.

16. Explosive weapons continued to be fired into populated areas, killing and injuring civilians and destroying and damaging vital infrastructure. Explosive hazard contamination in a number of populated areas killed and injured civilians and impeded humanitarian access. The use of improvised explosive devices in some areas

added to the complexity of the explosive hazard threat and hindered the work of humanitarian actors.

17. Attacks on educational facilities continued to be reported by humanitarian organizations. On 1 December, in Tah town in Idlib Governorate, shelling hit a complex of three schools (Al-Mahabba, Walid al-Mohammad and Tah schools), causing partial damage to buildings. The non-State armed opposition group-affiliated “Directorate of Education” in Idlib announced the closure of schools in Tah and its countryside for four days owing to the incident and continued threats. On 12 December, in I‘zaz city in rural Aleppo governate, Ibn Zaydun primary school was damaged and rendered non-functional owing to a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack reportedly targeting the building of the local council. Multiple civilian casualties were reported. On 18 December, in Jarjanaz town, Idlib Governorate, Hittin school was damaged by artillery shelling. No casualties were reported. On 1 January, in Aleppo city, a mortar struck a school in the Nile Street neighbourhood. The mortar damaged a laboratory. No injuries were reported because the school was closed at the time. On 13 December, in Jarabulus, Aleppo Governorate, the education office reportedly announced the closure of schools owing to the deteriorating security situation in the area.

18. During the reporting period, the Surveillance System of Attacks on Health Care of the World Health Organization (WHO) reported four cases of attacks that had struck health-care facilities and assets. The most significant was the vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack in I‘zaz city noted above, which, in addition to damaging a primary school, caused significant structural damage to a mental health hospital and a prosthesis centre. Aa analysis of Surveillance System data over the fourth quarter of 2018 identified a clear correlation between intensified conflict and increased attacks affecting health-care facilities and assets, with a probable air strike against a field hospital and an improvised explosive device attack against an ambulance in Dayr al-Zawr among the more serious incidents recorded during that period. WHO noted that the data were indicative of a disregard for protections for medical personnel and objects in conflict situations, as provided for in international humanitarian law.

Humanitarian response

19. During the reporting period, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. Humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food for an average of 3.37 million people in need each month and nearly 3 million health and medical treatments to people throughout the country (see Table 1).

Table 1

Average number of people reached each month by the United Nations and other organizations through all modalities throughout the Syrian Arab Republic: December 2018 and January 2019

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Average number of people reached monthly</i>
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	102 000
International Organization for Migration	118 000
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	2 340 000
United Nations Children’s Fund	3 000 000
United Nations Development Programme	527 000
United Nations Population Fund	830 000

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Average number of people reached monthly</i>
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East	350 000
World Food Programme	3 375 000
World Health Organization	2 915 000

20. From inside the Syrian Arab Republic, humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies included food for a monthly average of 2.81 million people. More than 3.8 million people received water, sanitation and hygiene services and supplies. Some 2.4 million children and mothers were reached with primary health-care and immunization services. Moreover, approximately 660,000 people benefited from protection and psychosocial support services and child protection services. United Nations operations from within the Syrian Arab Republic also included nearly 2.5 million health and medical treatments to people throughout the country. The Mine Action Service launched its first project from Damascus since opening its office in 2018, which provided training on explosive hazard risk education for 25 young Syrian women and men, complementing ongoing humanitarian mine action activities in the north-west of the country.

21. As part of its country-wide humanitarian response, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continued to deliver life-saving assistance to more than 700,000 people each month in the three governorates of the north-eastern part of the Syrian Arab Republic. This included supporting some of the most vulnerable people in camps for internally displaced persons, such as those who have recently been displaced owing to intense fighting in the last ISIL-held areas in Hajin in south-eastern Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. At the Hawl camp, 24-hour response teams were established to receive the newly displaced, quickly identify the most vulnerable cases and provide urgent assistance, including medical and protection support, with critical medical cases referred to nearby hospitals for treatment. Health assistance was further scaled up through new health centres and mobile clinics, a vaccination campaign for all new arrivals, and nutritional and psychosocial support. Families also received food, shelter, winterization assistance and hygiene kits, and heaters, essential in the cold winter weather, were being distributed. Humanitarian partners are working to rapidly expand the capacity of the camp to host the new arrivals.

22. Cross-border deliveries continued under the terms of Security Council resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#), [2332 \(2016\)](#), [2393 \(2017\)](#) and [2449 \(2018\)](#) (see table 2). In line with those resolutions, the United Nations notified the Syrian authorities in advance of each shipment, including its contents, its destination and the number of beneficiaries expected to be reached. In December and January, 837 trucks (26 consignments) delivered life-saving assistance for more than 1 million people through cross-border deliveries (see figure I).

Figure I
Number of beneficiaries assisted by the United Nations and its partners through cross-border humanitarian deliveries, by cluster: December 2018 and January 2019 (monthly average)

(Thousands)

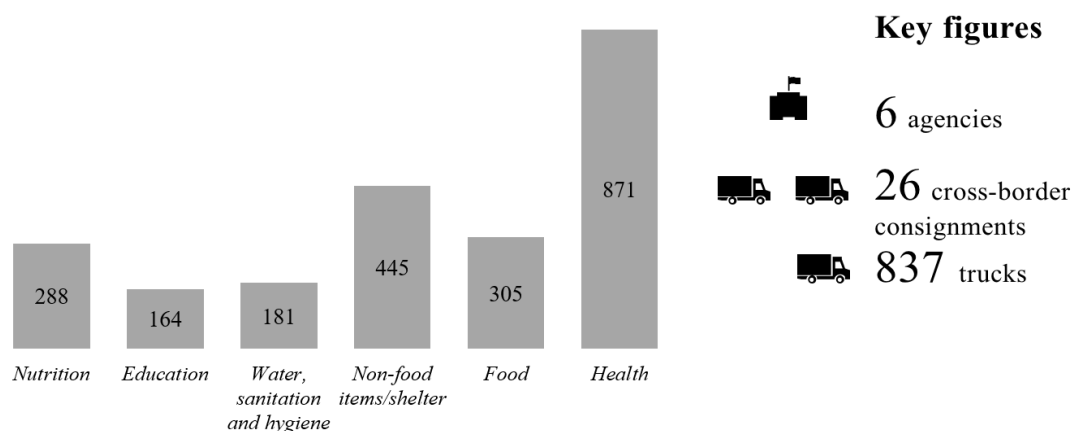


Table 2
Number of beneficiaries targeted through cross-border deliveries, by sector and by district: December 2018 and January 2019 (monthly average)

Governorate	District	Education	Food	Health	Non-food items/ shelter	Nutrition	Water, sanitation and hygiene
Aleppo	Bab	–	–	3 500	–	–	–
Aleppo	I'zaz	–	38 065	136 984	101 837	88 058	25 379
Aleppo	Jarabulus	–	–	1 500	18 012	–	–
Aleppo	Jabal Sim'an	8 760	185 655	88 000	–	–	–
Hasakah	Quamishli	14 100	–	115 000	28 500	68 000	30 000
Hama	Suqaylibiyah	–	–	2 500	–	–	–
Hama	Hama	–	–	10 000	–	–	–
Idlib	Ma'arra	–	34 988	74 100	18 190	–	–
Idlib	Ariha	–	30 000	32 400	15 728	–	–
Idlib	Harim	5 317	–	304 648	172 165	132 105	97 060
Idlib	Idlib	135 960	16 550	64 000	85 748	–	28 220
Idlib	Jisr al-Shughur	–	–	38 000	4 896	–	–

23. During the reporting period, the Russian Federation sent informational bulletins to the United Nations from the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic, which outlined the provision of bilateral relief assistance. Other Member States also continued to provide bilateral and other forms of humanitarian assistance.

Humanitarian access

24. The provision of humanitarian assistance requires timely, safe, sustained and unimpeded access by the United Nations and all humanitarian partners. The access

landscape in the Syrian Arab Republic is complex, with different areas serviced differently, and different types of services requiring different operating modalities. Access is critical for principled humanitarian action, which depends on an ability to assess needs and to monitor and evaluate impact, including by regularly engaging directly with affected people.

25. During the reporting period, the United Nations continued to provide assistance from within the Syrian Arab Republic to millions of people in need in thousands of locations throughout the country. More than 1,700 United Nations staff members are deployed in the country, with more than 500 in nine hubs outside Damascus (Aleppo, Dar'a, Dayr al-Zawr, Hama, Homs, Ladhqiya, Qamishli, Suwayda' and Tartus). Through these hubs, deliveries are made through established distribution points, mobile teams and targeted convoys.

26. Many of the aid deliveries are implemented through national partners, in particular the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. The United Nations regularly deploys alongside the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, including to undertake assessments, accompany deliveries and follow up with monitoring and evaluation missions. In December and January, the United Nations undertook hundreds of missions throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. Some of those missions required formal approval (see table 3 and figures II–IV), while others were deployed in accordance with part of broader agreements with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, where individual mission permissions are not required, including in locations for which blanket approval has been granted (not reflected in table 3).

Table 3

Requests for United Nations access for single agency missions: December 2018 and January 2019

<i>Type of request</i>	<i>Number requested</i>	<i>Number approved</i>	<i>Per cent approved</i>
Assessment missions	31	14	45
Missions accompanying aid deliveries	21	11	52
Monitoring missions	100	42	42
Security and other missions	48	12	25
Total	200	79	40

Figure II
Requests for United Nations access for single agency missions, breakdown by type of mission requested: December 2018 and January 2019
 (Per cent)

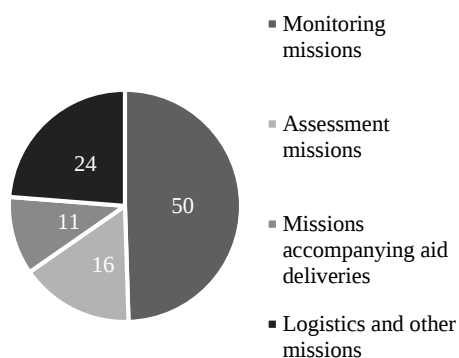


Figure III
Requests for United Nations access for single agency missions, breakdown by responses received: December 2018 and January 2019
 (Per cent)

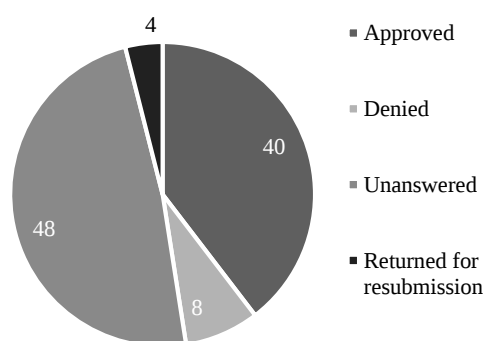
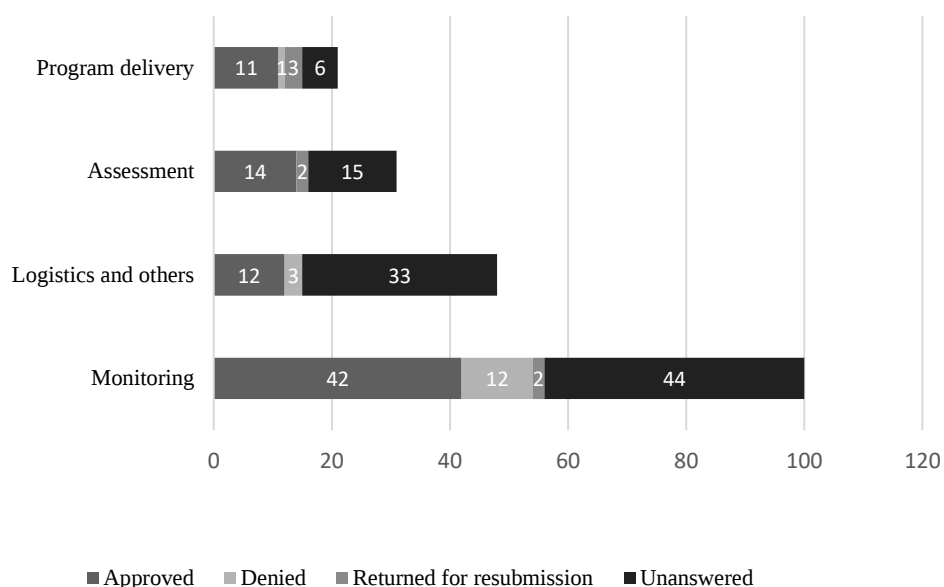


Figure IV
Requests for United Nations access for single agency missions, breakdown by type of mission requested and responses received: December 2018 and January 2019



27. The United Nations continued to face access challenges owing to a number of constraints, including administrative restrictions and insecurity. Some 1.16 million people remained in areas categorized by the United Nations as hard-to-reach. Of the 200 requests made by the United Nations to conduct humanitarian missions referenced in table 3, 114 were either unanswered or denied. This had a considerable effect on the access of the United Nations to specific locations with high severity of need, including in eastern Ghouta, southwest Idlib and the southern part of the Syrian Arab Republic.

28. Advocacy on the urgent deployment of additional humanitarian assistance to Rukban continued at multiple levels during the reporting period. A humanitarian convoy was allowed to proceed following verbal approval on 27 January by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and facilitation by the Russian Federation and the United States. As at the end of January, the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent were preparing to deploy the largest inter-agency aid convoy implemented during the humanitarian operation in the Syrian Arab Republic, involving some 133 trucks and 300 staff and volunteers. The convoy will deliver food, medicines, medical equipment, cold weather items, shelter materials, dignity kits for women and girls, and nutrition and education supplies. Staff will also continue the vaccination programme launched during the previous convoy to Rukban, in November, and carry out a survey of the intentions of internally displaced persons in the site in order to support evidence-based planning on durable solutions for people in the settlement in the longer term.

29. The provision of assistance along the route to Hawl camp, including at screening sites, remains a critical priority, but access limitations and insecurity limited efforts to respond to those most in need. Engagement and advocacy with parties in control of the areas in question continued.

30. In the north-west, expansion of Levant Liberation Organization control over most of Idlib Governorate and surrounding areas was not reported to have resulted in a significant change in levels of humanitarian access, although incidents of

interference continued to be reported. Suspension of funding by some donors, however, for stabilization and, in one instance, humanitarian activities linked to the changes in control did result in reduced coverage of key services for civilians in some areas. Overall, the suspension of funds was estimated to have affected 15 per cent of medical consultations, with approximately 1,400 health workers, half of whom are doctors, nurses and medical technicians, having had their salaries suspended. Suspended funds were also reported to have been supporting the operating expenses of 14 hospitals and 80 ambulances.

31. The United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic continued its operations as authorized under Security Council resolutions [2165 \(2014\)](#), [2191 \(2014\)](#), [2258 \(2015\)](#), [2332 \(2016\)](#) and [2393 \(2017\)](#). On 13 December 2018, Council resolution [2449 \(2018\)](#) was adopted, extending authorization for cross-border humanitarian assistance operations for another year. During the reporting period, the Mechanism monitored the delivery of 26 consignments by six United Nations agencies, consisting of 837 trucks, from three border crossings: 13 from Bab al-Hawa (635 trucks); 11 from Bab al-Salam (192 trucks); and 2 from Ya‘rubiyah (10 trucks). There were no concerns or questions about the humanitarian nature of the consignments sent. The United Nations provided 48-hour notice to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic regarding all shipments. The Mechanism continued to benefit from the excellent cooperation of the Governments of Iraq, Jordan and Turkey.

Visas and registrations

32. The United Nations continues work with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to allow for the timely provision of visas to staff (see table 4).

Table 4

Requests for United Nations visas: December 2018 and January 2019

<i>Type of request</i>	<i>Number requested</i>	<i>Number approved</i>	<i>Number rejected</i>	<i>Number pending</i>
Visas requested during reporting period	118	71	11	36
Renewals requested during reporting period	167 ^a	107	–	59
Visas pending from before reporting period	20	20	–	–
Renewals pending from before reporting period	59	59	–	–

^a One request for renewal was withdrawn by the United Nations.

33. A total of 24 international NGOs are registered with the Government to operate in the country.

Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and premises

34. The United Nations and NGOs continued to implement programmes in areas affected by frequent clashes among parties to the conflict, by air strikes and by the regular exchange of indirect artillery fire and other attacks. Humanitarian relief personnel also operate in areas highly contaminated with unexploded ordnance, explosive remnants of war and landmines.

35. Since the beginning of the conflict, hundreds of humanitarian workers have reportedly been killed, including 22 staff members of the United Nations and organizations of the United Nations system, 18 of whom were staff members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); 66 staff members and volunteers of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent; and 8 staff members and volunteers of the Palestine Red Crescent Society. It is reported that

many staff members of international and national NGOs have also been killed. An NGO staff member was abducted for ransom in Idlib Governorate in December 2018 and found dead several weeks later.

36. A total of 30 staff members of agencies and programmes of the United Nations system (1 staff member of the United Nations Development Programme, 1 staff member of the United Nations Population Fund and 28 staff members of UNRWA) were detained or missing at the end of the reporting period.

III. Observations

37. With almost eight years having passed since the humanitarian crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic began, some 11.7 million Syrians inside the country's borders remain in need of humanitarian assistance, while close to 5.7 million Syrian refugees have been registered in the surrounding countries. The international community must remain engaged in support of efforts to meet basic needs and ensure protection and, ultimately, to find peaceful solutions to the conflict. The third Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, to be held from 12 to 14 March, will be an opportunity to take stock of where progress has been made and to unite behind key priorities for 2019. Syrian people, communities and civil society must be at the centre of these efforts.

38. I am deeply alarmed by continuing reports of civilians being killed and injured by air strikes and ground fighting in eastern Dayr al-Zawr and of the appalling conditions experienced by tens of thousands, mainly women, children and older persons, who have been displaced from the area, having already endured unimaginable suffering at the hands of ISIL. I urge all parties involved in military operations in eastern Dayr al-Zawr, and throughout the country, to respect civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, and take all feasible precautions to avoid harm to civilians. In addition, the parties should allow civilians freedom of movement and must ensure that forcibly displaced persons are received under satisfactory conditions of shelter, hygiene, health, safety and nutrition. The parties must also facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations, including at any screening or transit points along the route to the Hawl camp and within the camp itself.

39. I welcome the progress made on deployment of a second convoy to Rukban, where some 42,000 people continue to face appalling conditions and an alarming shortage of essentials for survival. United Nations and Syrian Arab Red Crescent teams were on the ground in the settlement by early February, delivering assistance and vaccinating children. This, however, sadly came too late for at least eight children who are reported to have died from preventable conditions at Rukban since December. I reiterate that safe, rapid, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access is critical, both for people in need in Rukban and throughout the Syrian Arab Republic. Lives depend on it.

40. The situation in the north-west and north-east of the country has grown increasingly uncertain during the current reporting period. Throughout Idlib and the north-west, massive levels of need persist, and civilians are exposed to hostilities and reportedly to a range of human rights abuses at the hands of the Levant Liberation Organization and other non-State armed opposition groups. The extension of the authorization by the Security Council of cross-border humanitarian assistance was vital, given that it has enabled continued life-saving assistance, but the risk of military escalation, and of potentially catastrophic humanitarian consequences, persists. I appeal to all parties to maintain de-escalation efforts in the Idlib area and to ensure

that respect for international humanitarian law and human rights is at the centre of efforts to address the challenging situation on the ground.

41. I remain concerned about the treatment and conditions of persons who are detained by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic or by non-State armed opposition groups throughout the country. I call upon all parties to ensure fundamental guarantees for persons in their custody and to allow them to inform family members of their detention.

42. Continuing impunity for alleged serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations and abuses by parties to the conflict remains of grave concern. I call upon all parties to the conflict, in particular the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, all States, civil society and the United Nations system to cooperate fully with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011, in particular by providing relevant information and documentation. Accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law is central to achieving sustainable peace in the Syrian Arab Republic. I reiterate my call for the situation in the country to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

43. In view of ongoing serious concerns repeatedly raised with regard to the protection of civilians and other human rights concerns in the Syrian Arab Republic, I strongly urge the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, in line with Human Rights Council resolutions S-18/1 and 19/22, to cooperate with OHCHR, including through the establishment of a field presence with the mandate to protect and promote human rights.

44. I strongly support the efforts of my Special Envoy to advance a United Nations-facilitated, Syrian-led political process in accordance with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. Engagement of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition and international support will be essential to the sustainability of a negotiated political settlement. I welcome my Special Envoy's efforts to explore new entry points, including that of a credible, inclusive and balanced constitutional committee, to advance the full implementation of resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#). Furthermore, I continue to call upon all parties to make progress on advancing confidence-building measures, with a view to creating a conducive environment in which a meaningful political process can emerge, one that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and can ultimately put an end to the unimaginable suffering that the Syrian people have endured for far too many years.

Annex

Reported incidents affecting civilians recorded by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: December 2018 and January 2019*

Aleppo Governorate

- On 12 December, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device detonated near a medical compound in the non-State armed opposition group-held city of I'zaz in northern rural Aleppo. Two civilians (1 woman and 1 twelve-year-old girl) were killed and 19 other civilians, including 2 women, 2 girls and 3 boys, were injured. The explosion was also reported to have resulted in significant material damage.
- On 12 December, five civilians were injured as a result of an alleged explosion of an improvised explosive device attached to a motorbike in a local market in Ra'i town of northern rural Aleppo.
- On 13 December, three civilian men were killed and at least four other civilians injured as a result of an improvised explosive device reportedly attached to a motorbike that exploded in the Nuwruz roundabout in the city of Afrin in western rural Aleppo.
- On 16 December, four civilians were killed as a result of an attack with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device that detonated in the Al-Hal local market in the city of Afrin. The explosion also resulted in significant material damage.
- On 20 January, in the morning, three civilians were killed and seven others were injured as a result of an alleged improvised explosive device detonation on a bus transporting them near Saraya bridge in the city of Afrin in western rural Aleppo.
- On 24 January, several improvised explosive device explosions reportedly occurred in Bab city and in adjacent areas of Qabbasin and Ghandurah in northern rural Aleppo, which is controlled by non-State armed opposition groups. Improvised explosive devices attached to two motorbikes reportedly detonated in the vicinity of the Centre roundabout area in Bab city and another improvised explosive device detonated in a marketplace in the Qabbasin area. At least one civilian was killed and three others were injured.

Idlib Governorate

- On 1 December, five civilians were injured as a result of what were alleged to be ground-based strikes that hit a residential area in the village of Tah in the Khan Shaykhun district of southern rural Idlib.
- On 2 December, Levant Liberation Organization gunmen abducted a medical doctor at one of their checkpoints in the Dayr Hasan area of the Dana district of northern Idlib. The doctor's family was reportedly promised by the Levant Liberation Organization that he would be released quickly, but his fate and whereabouts remain unknown.

* The list of incidents exemplifies human rights issues of concern raised in the report. Owing to the changing patterns of conflict and the loss of networks of credible and/or reliable sources in many conflict-affected areas, however, verifying incidents is increasingly difficult. The list, which contains only those incidents that were reported to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and that have been verified according to its methodology, should not be considered comprehensive.

- On 6 December, a civilian man was injured as a result of what was alleged to be the explosion of an improvised explosive device attached to his vehicle in the vicinity of the Idlib health directorate in Idlib city.
- On 10 December, three staff of the “Hama Health Department”, including its head, were held by Levant Liberation Organization gunmen who raided their office in the village of Kafr Nubl in Ma’arrat al-Nu‘man district of southern rural Idlib. One of the persons held was released the next day, while the other two were released on 13 and 16 December, respectively.
- On 18 December, at least 30 displaced families from eastern Ghutah received notices of eviction and were ordered by the Levant Liberation Organization to appear before a Levant Liberation Organization “judge” to sign a pledge to vacate houses that they had occupied in the village of Fu‘ah. While the displaced families reportedly refused to vacate the houses until the end of winter, they received a written eviction order on 25 December, signed and endorsed by the so-called “Justice Ministry” of the so-called newly established Levant Liberation Organization “Government of Salvation”.
- On 29 January, at least 11 civilians, including 1 woman and 1 boy, were killed and 9 other civilians injured as a result of alleged ground-based strikes by government forces and their allies that hit several areas in the city of Ma’arrat al-Nu‘man in southern rural Idlib Governorate. The first round of bombardment reportedly hit a residential area and killed one boy, and the second round followed 25 minutes later, hitting a busy local market (Bizir market), where the majority of casualties were recorded.

Dayr al-Zawr Governorate

- On 3 December, at least seven civilians, including one boy, were killed as a result of what were alleged to be air strikes that hit a residential area in the village of Albu Badran in Susah district of rural Albu Kamal area in eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr.
- On 4 December, five civilians (three women and two children) were killed as a result of what were alleged to be air strikes and ground-based strikes that hit a warehouse, three houses and an area near Hajin hospital in the Hajin area of eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr.
- On 15 December, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) reportedly executed two civilians (brothers) from Dhiban village in eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr by shooting them in a desert area on accusations of cooperating with the Syrian Democratic Forces.
- On 18 January, around noon, at least 21 civilians, including at least 1 woman and 1 boy, were reportedly killed as a result of what were alleged to be air strikes that hit the ISIL-held village of Baghuz Fawqani in the Sosah district of eastern rural Dayr al-Zawr.

Hama

- On 15 December, one girl was injured as a result of alleged ground-based strikes that hit a residential area in the city of Lataminah in northern rural Hama.
- On 16 December, a 12-year-old boy was injured while helping his father in an agricultural land in the city of Lataminah as a result of unexploded ordnance that detonated near him.
- On 22 December, a 10-year-old boy was killed and one civilian woman was injured when Levant Liberation Organization gunmen opened fire at a minibus

transporting civilians along the Idlib-Bab al-Hawa highway. The Levant Liberation Organization issued a statement confirming the incident and claimed that it would pay compensation to the victims' families.

- On 23 January, a girl was injured as a result of alleged ground-based strikes that hit the town of Murak in northern rural Hama. In another incident, on 22 January, a 12-year-old girl was killed as a result of alleged ground-based strikes that hit Kafr Zayta town in northern rural Hama.
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