

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	885
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	United Nations
Titel:	Statement by the UN in Syria on civilians impacted by violence in Hajin, eastern Syria.
Udgivet:	16. oktober 2018
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	22. oktober 2018

Statement by the UN in Syria on civilians impacted by violence in Hajin, eastern Syria

DAMASCUS, 16 October 2018

The ongoing violence in the Hajin area in the eastern governorate of Deir-ez-Zor is having a devastating impact on civilians. Armed hostilities, air and ground, have reportedly resulted in the deaths and injuries of civilians, particularly around the towns of Al-Sha'afa, Al-Baghouz, Suwaidan and Hajin. There are indications that on 12 October the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) attacked a makeshift settlement where internally displaced people had gathered. Initial unverified reports suggest that several internally displaced people have been abducted or killed, while others were forced to flee the area.

The UN estimated that at least 10,000 civilians are exposed to hostilities in the Hajin area; while some 7,000 civilians have been displaced from Hajin to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) controlled areas in the past month —the majority of whom are women, children and elderly. Many of the displaced are sheltering in Gharanij town, while others are in makeshift settlements, where the humanitarian situation is reportedly extremely dire. While UN partners were able to provide a one-time delivery to some 5,000 displaced people with food, nutrition and water, hygiene and sanitation assistance, more assistance is needed to respond to the needs of displaced people and host communities.

Civilians affected by hostilities in eastern Syria urgently need protection and must be spared during fighting. The UN calls on all parties involved to protect civilians and to support greater access to the area as required under International Humanitarian Law. This includes enabling the freedom of movement of civilians and the proposed relocation of makeshift settlements away from frontlines to safer areas.

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