

27 NOVEMBER–18 DECEMBER 2024

ICRC DELEGATION IN SYRIA



The past few weeks in Syria has seen its people bear witness to colossal changes in the country and to events that have unfolded very quickly. The initial days were marked with tens of thousands of families on the road, crossing borders where and when possible, travelling to find safety and assistance or trying to go back to their places of origin. For a country and its people who have already lived through 13 years of devastating armed conflicts and other crises; where 90% of the people live below the poverty line; where over 7 million people are internally displaced; and where essential services, such as water, health care and food production are operating at less than half of their capacity, the recent developments brought with it new humanitarian needs and widespread displacement – internal as well as across borders. While recent changes prompted people to return to their homes, it is not a return devoid of challenges as they come back to cities and towns partially destroyed and contaminated by explosive ordnance. Further, as prisons were opened and detainees released, and as mass graves were found and at times unearthed, families also went through emotionally trying moments filled with hope but also with anguish, anger, and frustration.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in close coordination with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society (SARC) has been responding to some of the most urgent needs of the past weeks, including in areas affected by ongoing armed conflicts and other situations of violence. Meanwhile, it has adapted its response to the changing operational context by focusing on:

The missing and their families and former detainees: More than ever, we remain committed to bringing answers to the families, while continuing our efforts in favor of persons deprived of freedom, trying to gain access to all places of detention and, re-establishing family links (including between former detainees and their families).

Emergency response: We will continue to respond to the most pressing needs of the civilian population, ensuring the continuity of essential services, and the preservation of critical infrastructure and access to water, electricity and essential items for the most vulnerable.

Access to essential services: We will pursue our efforts to maintain the availability of and access to essential services for the civilian population, be it resident, displaced or returnees, and continue our longer-term programming and contributions to early recovery, through strengthening the health system, supporting livelihoods and mitigating the risks of weapon contamination.

OUR RESPONSE

The ICRC has been working in partnership with the SARC, to assess and meet the immediate needs of the affected people on the ground. Despite the volatile situation and security challenges, emergency response has been strengthened, allowing the ICRC and the SARC to respond effectively to some of the most critical humanitarian needs, such as water and hygiene, medical care, food, and protection, including in areas of ongoing armed conflicts in the North, Northeast and South of the country, or other situations of violence, including in the coastal areas and in Homs Governorate. We have been providing emergency relief to tens of thousands of people who fled the violence to Rural Damascus or Raqqa, helped prevent the failure of critical infrastructure like the Tishreen dam or Al-Khafsa water treatment station in Aleppo Governorate amidst shifting frontlines, and offered emergency medical supplies to hospitals receiving patients wounded by gunshots or released detainees from places of detention.

PROTECTION AND PREVENTION



ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE FAMILIES OF THE MISSING

Following the recent displacements of people and release of detainees, the ICRC and the SARC have activated phone lines, where families of the missing as well as former detainees themselves can call to register and/or open tracing request for missing family members. The ICRC and SARC have jointly received approximately 8,000 requests through the various hotlines and self-registration systems.

At Sednaya Prison in Damascus, the SARC offered first aid services and the ICRC provided 5,000 water bottles to families outside the prison while they anxiously waited and sought further information about the released detainees and missing family members.

The ICRC will continue supporting released detainees and families of the missing to meet their most urgent needs, offering mental health support, and healthcare services where needed. We will also continue offering our services to the Syrian authorities and other relevant parties to visit detainees under their responsibility.



ADVOCATING FOR THE PRESERVATION OF RECORDS AND DIGNIFIED TREATMENT OF THE DEAD

As prisons and other detention centres were opened and detainees released, critical information – such as arrest records, detainee lists, and documentation held by state institutions – stood at risk of being lost or compromised. The past few weeks have also seen reports of alleged mass graves being discovered and the remains of the dead being exhumed across the country. In light of these incidents, the ICRC has launched public calls for the preservation of vital records of arrest, lists of detainees or deceased, hospital records, court records and any other official documentation that can help clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons. An offer of services has also been made to the relevant authorities to provide technical support for the preservation of these vital records and burial sites. We have further emphasized on the preservation/protection of possible grave sites that may contain the remains of missing persons, the proper exhumations of which should be carried out according to proper forensic standards.



REDUCING THE IMPACT OF WEAPON CONTAMINATION

In response to the increasing accidents related to explosive ordnance, the ICRC and SARC are actively promoting safety awareness through Risk Awareness Safer Behavior (RASB) sessions and public campaigns on social media/SMS. Teams from the SARC and ICRC are assessing contaminated areas, such as Rukn Al-Din in Damascus, to evaluate the condition of explosive ordnance and determine appropriate follow-up actions, which may include RASB, non-technical surveys, technical surveys, and explosive ordnance disposal. In some cases, the SARC has coordinated with the civil defense for the disposal or removal of threats.



Syria, Quneitra

ICRC

EMERGENCY RESPONSE



HEALTHCARE SERVICES

In close coordination with the SARC and the Ministry of Health (MoH), the ICRC assessed, monitored and supported healthcare responses at both national and sub-national levels. **To address the immediate health needs of people affected during the initial escalations:**

- We provided four war wounded (WW) kits to Al-Muwasat, Al-Mujtahid, Douma, and Qutaifeh Hospitals in Damascus and Rural Damascus.
- Additionally, two first aid kits were donated to Zahira and Jaramana SARC Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
- Over **385,000 litres of water** was **delivered** through trucking services to **Aleppo University Hospital, Ibn Khaldoun Hospital, Al Razi Hospital**, as well as to the **Ibn Rushd** and the **Pediatric Hospital** in Aleppo.
- **Over 11,000 litres of water** was also **provided in three health structures managed by SARC** in Aleppo.
- Many of the regular **ICRC-supported SARC and MoH structures** (Primary Health Care Centres, Emergency Medical Services, hospitals, Physical Rehabilitation Programme Centers and Mobile Health Units) continued or have now **resumed their activities**, responding to the existing and exacerbated health needs of the populations, including the internally displaced people in northeast Syria.
- **Rehabilitation work has also been initiated at the Aleppo University Hospital** in areas that were damaged due to airstrikes during the early days of the fighting.



ENSURING ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

- In response to the increased displacement, **the ICRC and SARC provided 64 internally displaced shelters in Raqqa and 17 shelters in Tabqa with 75 water tanks**, including the metal bases and tap stands and 582 jerry cans to improve water access in these shelters.
- Following the developments in Quneitra in the occupied Golan, 4,000 bottles of water were distributed to families across four villages to address the urgent lack of water access.
- **168,000 liters of water was distributed to some bakeries in Aleppo, to Al Fourdous neighbourhood, and to other community areas like** (churches, mosques) through water trucking services which helped to ensure the continuity of their daily work and services



ADDRESSING BASIC DAILY NEEDS

To address the emergency needs of displaced communities:

- **600 mattresses and 1,600 blankets were distributed** to approximately **500 households** residing in two collective shelters in **Raqqa**.
- The ICRC in agreement with all parties, reached **354 families in Quneitra to address their urgent food and relief needs** after access to essential services was hindered by the recent military operations in the area.
- With **support from the ICRC, the SARC branch of Hassakeh distributed several non-food items** comprising of 3,156 mattresses, 6,312 Blankets, 838 solar lights, 1,266 mats, 1,266 mosquito nets, moquette and 779 hygiene kits, in Ghweiran, Nashwa, al-Salihiyah neighborhood to 838 families.



Syria, Aleppo

SUPPORT TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In its role as a neutral intermediary, the ICRC has engaged in confidential and bilateral dialogues with relevant parties to the conflict, advocating for the protection of critical civilian infrastructure. These efforts have enabled the safe access of technical staff to repair and maintain essential facilities so that affected communities do not lose their access to vital resources such as electricity and water.



ENSURING PROVISION OF POWER AND ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER

- In agreement with all the parties to the conflict, the ICRC, jointly with the SARC **supported the engineers and technical staff of the General Organization of Euphrates Dam (GoED)** in carrying out several urgent repairs to ensure the structural safety and sustainable functioning of the Tishreen dam.
- The ICRC and the SARC completed the repair of two power lines from Maskaneh and one from the Thermal Station and installed much needed equipment at Babiri Water Pumping Station, restoring the power and water supply to Khafseh Water Station. Both interventions led to the gradual return of water to Aleppo, serving over 3.2 million people.
- The **provision and installation of spare parts and the maintenance of two pumps in Suliman Al Halabi Pumping Station**, the main station in Aleppo city, was also completed ensuring the provision of water to city residents.
- Working jointly with SARC and the Damascus Water Board (DAWSSA), the ICRC completed the installation of an electrical cable, restoring the power supply to the water tank of Al Bouhouth in Barzeh, which provides water to approximately 35'000 people in Barzeh neighbourhood.

As ongoing hostilities and skirmishes flare up time and again, the ICRC remains committed in its efforts to continue its dialogues with all concerned parties reminding them of their obligation under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure.

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