

Fourth monitoring report of the Corona epidemic inside Syria

8 April 2020

The Center for Civil Society and Democracy continues its work in monitoring the outbreak of the Corona epidemic inside Syria as well as the precautionary measures taken and the effects of the Coronavirus epidemic on Syrians through the fourth monitoring report.

We observed an increase in precautionary measures being implemented, as curfews were enforced in most areas and violators were fined, with the exception of the Northwest, where there were no curfews or any other measures taken for quarantine.

First: The Regime's control areas:

The officially announced cases in the Syrian Regime-controlled areas have risen to 19 in total, with two deaths recorded (as of the date of preparing the report). However, not a lot of information is provided about the number of daily examinations conducted by the Ministry of Health, nor estimated numbers of suspected cases.

A complete closure of the areas of “Mnin and Sayida Zeinab in Damascus countryside” has been observed due to the presence of several confirmed cases, without any indication or details about the number or the procedures followed. In other areas, isolation takes place for buildings where cases are registered. In Jaramana in Damascus countryside, 3 buildings were quarantined for a week after a resident of one of these buildings arrived at Al-Radi Specialist Hospital. The quarantine was not lifted until it was confirmed that the resident did not have Coronavirus virus.

Security authorities directly supervise quarantine and prevention procedures in all regions. All markets, commercial, service, cultural and social activities in all governorates will continue to be closed, and work is suspended in public offices from Sunday, 22-3-2020. Public transportation is banned to suspend study and business. According to the circular of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers in the Syrian government, food and supply centers, pharmacies and private health centers are excluded from closure. It has been indicated that citizens will be exempt from fines resulting from late registration of events and the granting of personal and family cards for this period.

The Ministry of Health has equipped military hospitals to reduce the spread of the epidemic. The Ministry of the Interior has also been directed to investigate all news related to the virus, and take it from its official sources which are the Ministries of Health and Media. The Ministry of Interior is also directed to follow up and pursue false news promoters and take the necessary legal measures against them.

Decree No. 6 was issued in 2020 to release prisoners, which has many exceptions, and includes only cases transferred to the judiciary. While many of the detainees are not included in the text of the decree, the decree also does not include the persons transferred to exceptional field courts. Women and men detainees transferred to the terrorism court, including the prisoners of conscience, are included in the decree. However, lawyers report that daily requests have reached thousands since the decree was announced. However, the detainees must pay financial guarantees according to each issue to implement the release. All cases in which the amount is less than one million Syrian

pounds fines are paid by the family or by some aid, while cases with larger amounts of up to 20 million involved are hard to collect, as they will not benefit from the decree if they do not pay the sums. Since the start of the quarantine procedures, and the reduction in the number of employees, including judges, the issue of releasing prisoners has become very slow, as there is one judge who is looking into the thousands of requests submitted to him for release.

There are also fears of peoples' inability to pay their rents if the quarantine continues. On the other hand, the bread crisis continues to persist and cases of discrimination against the displaced people in different regions emerged when buying items in terms of standing in line and quantity, which may show violent reactions. Continued fraud in selling sterilization materials was also observed, as it is the only method to prevent coronavirus, which makes the possibility of the spread of the epidemic and its spread more.

Second: Northeastern Syria:

In Al-Hassaka, the Al-Jazira Provincial Health Authority confirmed that no confirmed cases of Coronavirus were reported, and that it had equipped quarantine places in each area. The Kurdish Red Crescent set up two tents in Al-Derbasiyah to receive patients and examine their initial conditions. An emergency room was also established in Al-Qamishli, whose work outcome reached 60 cases, the result of which was negative. Further, passengers on a plane coming from Damascus to Qamishli were quarantined for 14 days in a quarantine center.

The General Authority of the Qamishli National Hospital received 20 tons of medicines and medical supplies sent from the Ministry of Health. Several local and international organizations and private parties appealed to the World Health Organization and the United Nations to provide assistance and support to the region to confront the Corona pandemic, knowing that the international coalition had announced aid worth one million and 200 thousand US dollars to the Syrian Democratic Forces to counter the emerging Coronavirus in its areas of control.

The Education Authority of the Self-Administration distributed salaries to the school managers to distribute them later to the teaching cadres, who in turn organized the curriculum lessons and filmed videos for students to ensure that students would not discontinue their education.

Syriac activities canceled the Akito Festival, and instructed people to celebrate in their homes, in compliance with the ban. They also distributed gas cylinders and bread to people's homes as directed by the local authorities.

Villages in the countryside of "Derek and Al-Malikiya" are witnessing noncompliance with the decision of the ban. Several people have been caught violating the ban despite the commitment of the people in Derek to adhere to preventive measures during their shopping in the crowded vegetable market in the morning.

More than one disease campaign and initiative has been launched by Al-Hassaka Relief and Development Organization to raise awareness about Coronavirus for members of the security forces and protection of volunteers and provided them with sterile materials, gloves and muzzles. This campaign will continue until the end of the curfew.

Al-Jazira doctors also launched an initiative in the name of the virtual clinic to provide counseling through social media. Also, dentists in Qamishli district began doing shifts in the dental clinic to receive emergency cases in the Eastern and Western part. The Kurdistan Women's Union launched a campaign to manufacture muzzles and distribute them for free in Qamishli.

As for Deir Al-Zour, awareness-raising, sterilization and spraying campaigns continued. The presidents and members of the Legislative Council in Deir Al-Zour contributed to this awareness campaign, and the Al-Hadaf organization launched a campaign in the Eastern countryside that includes the distribution of brochures and sterilization of roads and public facilities, in addition to the distribution of muzzles.

The medical staff of the International Alliance also began training local medical cadres in the "Omar Oil Field" to deal with the virus. These cadres transported 3 people, including a woman, to the Quarantine Center in Abu Khashab on suspicion of infection with the virus, after coming from Regime-controlled areas despite the closure all crossings into the areas of Self-Administration. However, it turned out that the women and men came through smuggled transport, and the Syrian Democratic Forces closed roads in the city of Basir with dirt berms to ensure the precautionary measures to impose a curfew.

Although a "fatwa" was issued to avoid gathering in closed places and places of worship to prevent the virus, some mosques continued with Friday prayer congregation. The Religious Affairs Foundation of the Deir Al-Zour Council also issued a circular criticizing the raising of prices and the monopolization of food commodities and basic goods by merchants, and called for deterrent sanctions against monopolized merchants.

In Al-Raqqa, the ban continued, with the security forces disciplining the population to abide by it. All shops and markets were closed down, except for food stores and other essential shops that were not covered by the ban and owners in violation would be fined a sum of 10,000 SP. The fine is doubled in case of repeated violation with waxing the shop with red wax throughout the ban. The decision also included all car mechanics and vehicle vendors (cars, motorcycles, etc) and owners in violation would be fined a sum of 5000 SP, which will be doubled in case of repetition and confiscation of the vehicle.

Sterilization campaigns also continued through the disinfecting of neighborhoods and main and subsidiary streets in the city of Raqqa, institutions and public places along with a campaign to clean the streets and remove debris carried out by the cleaning department and the service office.

The Social Affairs and Labor Committee in the Raqqa Civil Council and the management of Abu Kbea Camp continued to provide health care, medical services and other services to the displaced women and men in the camp, and educate the population about the importance of quarantine and staying at home except for emergencies as a preventive measure to reduce Corona.

The Market Follow-up Section has determined the prices of basic supplies to prevent merchants from monopolizing the materials and raising their prices.

Third: Northwestern Syria:

There were no official cases of Coronavirus in the Northwest. The Ministry of Health of the Provisional Government announced on 7 April that 59 tests had been conducted for suspected patients, but all tests were negative.

On April 6, the Minister of Health in the Provisional Government stated that large gatherings, especially at popular markets, and Friday prayers were suspended for two weeks. He also clarified that a follow-up committee has been formed whose mission is to monitor the implementation of the decisions taken by the government to prevent the virus. With regard to the spread of the disease, he indicated that it is not possible to exclude the onset of the disease soon and urged people to comply with the directives and decisions of the authorities and take preventive methods to protect their safety. He also called on all humanitarian organizations, particularly the World Health Organization, to play its crucial role, especially with regard to Support to the health sector.

On 2 April , the Ministry of Awqaf in the Salvation Government issued a decision to suspend Friday prayers in mosques for a period of two weeks. On the same day, the police and public security forces in the city of Afrin issued a circular that intensive police patrols will be conducted to disperse any gatherings. Deir Ballut crossing point also restricted entry into the areas of the “Naba Al-Salam” for one day per week.

On the other hand, the civil defense teams conducted disinfectant spraying and sterilization campaigns in the camps and in the city of Idlib to prevent disease, and awareness-raising seminars and brochures were distributed to prevent the virus. There are also several awareness-raising seminars via the Internet for prevention and protection methods. The monthly relief has been cleared this time by an escort team for the distribution team. Some relief organizations have extended distribution days to prevent gatherings. Atma Charitable Hospital also suspended the outpatient clinics to prevent gatherings.

There was a rumor that a group of people sent by the Regime were infected with the virus to ensure the spread of the disease in the Northwest. As for the people in Atma and Atma camps, there is still indifference to the disease as there was a market assembled last week.