

Seventh monitoring report of the Corona epidemic inside Syria

18 May 2020

Syria has not yet witnessed a wide outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic in all its regions, as only 60 cases have been officially reported (58 in the Syrian Regime-held areas, and two in North-eastern Syria). On the other hand, the various local authorities do not have the capacity needed to conduct extensive tests in their areas of control. Tests that have been conducted thus far are still in hundreds in all of Syria and the Syrian government has not made any concerted efforts towards tackling Coronavirus in some regions, including those with Regime forces such as the governorate of Hassaka.

As for the measures being taken to confront the virus, local authorities in most regions have begun to ease restrictions on freedom of movement and lift the economic ban in part. There is generally no commitment by the population to practice precautionary measures, which makes the risk for the virus quickly spreading from one person to another very high. This report monitors the situation in Syria in most of the Syrian regions during the period from 1 to 18 May 2020.

First - areas controlled by the Syrian Regime:

The number of officially declared cases of the Coronavirus increased to 58, with 3 deaths, and 36 recoveries as announced by the Ministry of Health in the Syrian government.

In addition, it was announced that 3850 tests had been carried out for Covid-19 in the Sayyida Zeinab area, and 850 tests were carried out in the Mnin town - two of the areas that were completely locked down after numerous cases were initially recorded.

On the medical preparations, the following was monitored:

- Announcing the arrangement of 130 artificial respirators in the isolation department equipped to deal with the Coronavirus in Daraa Governorate.
- Rehabilitation, maintenance and operation of 70 artificial respiration apparatus by the engineering team in the Homs Health Directorate.
- In Hama, a technical team rehabilitated and maintained 30 medical devices, including anesthesia, sick-watch, and respiratory equipment
- The Ministry of Health recently launched a monitoring service for cases of Covid-19 registered in Syria through its website, including data on confirmed cases, deaths and recovery and their distribution in the governorates, according to age, gender and methods of infection, as well as information about the distribution of isolation centers (treatment), quarantine, and virus analysis laboratories.
- The declared quarantine centers are in Barzah, Al-Dwer, Damascus International Airport, University City in Damascus, and in Homs, Lattakia, and Hama.

People in quarantine have been expressing their discontent with the basic hygiene conditions and social distancing in the university city in Damascus through their social media. Meanwhile, there are reports that the quarantine center in Hama has far better safety conditions and provides basic needs as well as better healthcare for all coronavirus patients.

- A joint team has been formed from the ministries of health, local administration, the environment and the interior to monitor economic activities, service providers and professionals to ensure prevention measures and regulate closures in case of violation.

- On the other side, the government started measures to gradually lift the embargo on economic and government activities while continuing with the curfew at night:

- Syrian planes transfer those who wish to return to Syria if they had initially left after 1.1.2020. Anyone who had left before then is being denied travel back to Syria the Syrian embassies. Returnees from Russia, Oman, Iraq, Sudan, the Emirates, Turkey and Kuwait are placed in designated quarantine centers so that they can be tested for coronavirus to prevent an outbreak. People have to wait for more than seven days to take the test, and the returned people who had the tests in the countries from where they have travelled are allowed to return to their homes after 3 days.

- School hours have been restored, with the exception of students in homes with children of preschool or kindergarten age.

- Transportation between cities and rural areas and between governorates also began on 10 May 2020, under the condition of reduced congestion, commitment to social distancing and health & safety requirements.

- Friday prayers have been allowed in mosques from 8 May 2020 while other collective prayers are temporarily suspended, provided that mosque committees take responsibility for implementing health regulations.

- Acknowledgment of the reopening of universities and institutes on 31 May 2020.

- Decree 121 was also issued to postpone the People's Assembly elections till 19 July 2020.

At the societal level:

A significant increase in prices was observed, along with the deterioration of the Syrian pound's value against the US dollar. This situation affected the purchasing power of the population as well as creating a monopoly on basic materials by merchants after they were linked to the smart card.

Food prices in the system-controlled areas SP / kilo			
Cucumber	300-400	sheep	Between 8,500 and 11,500 depending on the region
Tomatoes	400-500	calf	8500
Squash	300	Chicken before cleaning	1460
Beans	600	Chicken after cleaning	1700
Aubergines	400	Sugar	subsidized sugar 350 Unsubsidized sugar 650
Potato	250-350	Oil	+1100
parsley	50-100	Bread	50 per 8 loaves 100 per 13 loaves
mint	100	Domestic gas	2800 subsidized price 20000 price in the market
lemon	1900	rice	

The pandemic and seizure of business activities, in addition to the deterioration of the Syrian pound increased the destitution and poverty among the Syrian people. (M. A), who is displaced from the Northern Hama countryside and lives in the city of Hama spoke about the ban in Hama and the difficulty of living. He says:

I am 68. All of my children are outside the country. I used to depend on them and my pension in to meet expenses, but now they are unable to pay for their daily expenses. My son, who is in Lebanon, became unemployed two months ago because of the virus, and has had to sell his wife's gold to live. As for my son who is in Sudan, it has become difficult for him to send us money because of the ban. As for the one in Saudi Arabia, he and his brothers are the same. And here I am, I went back to the pension, which is not worth \$ 25 today and not enough for our basic needs.

And you see them (government) also insist that I do not go out to secure the needs of the house for fear that I could catch the virus, but no one can provide us with our needs. If they were afraid for us, they would not have taken us out of our homes and displaced us from our families.

We ask God to help us.

(M. S), a woman who runs a sewing workshop in Damascus with her husband said, **"We have endured through years of war despite everything, and we did not want to travel before the war, we were comfortable until our living conditions were devastated like all people. But we did not forget the people around us. But with the arrival of the Corona, we had to close the sewing workshop and we are no longer**

able to help anyone. We are all tired and do not know if this situation will continue for a longer period. If the workshop closes, the workers will get much worse.

A general disinterest among people in following basic preventive measures was also observed.

Increased discrimination against IDPs in access to basic services and materials along with high cases of domestic violence and the absence of any serious measures to reduce these phenomenon were monitored.

Civil activity:

As for civil activity, there is a continuity of relief campaigns, but they are not sufficient to meet the increasing need associated with high prices and low purchasing power for the general population. Most of the civil campaigns and initiatives have stopped due to several factors, poor funding being the most important, in addition to the security measures that require the prior approval of the security services to operate.

(S. S) a civil activist says:

"We feel powerless in front of successive calamities and problems without being able to do anything. Fear of not having work permits and even that we are unable to license in addition to the difficulty of funding and various other needs as well as the Coronavirus crisis. We are not able to carry out activities now, we closed the center, we are satisfied with the awareness campaigns, and we used the money that we have with us to buy food baskets, even though they are not sufficient.

Second: North-eastern Syria:

Hassaka Governorate:

Two confirmed cases were officially reported in Hassaka (in a woman over 50 and her husband). Hassaka Governorate has also witnessed several security incidents between the SDF and the factions of the National Army in the Northern countryside of Hassaka. These security incidents continue to affect the lives of the residents, such as stopping the pumping at the Al-Alouk station, and then operating only two out of six pumps (the Al-Alouk station is relied upon by the residents in the Northeast, mainly access to water).

Electricity has not been available for nearly six months to nearly 28 villages located on the line connecting the villages of Tall Tamr and Zarkan due to security concerns like renewed shelling and clashes between SDF forces and the National Army.

Local authorities' actions:

- Extending the period of health bans until the end of Eid Al Fitr, and the daily curfews between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- Movement and transit by mass transport (public and private) is permitted to work inside and outside cities and between departments, taking into account health & safety and social distancing rules.
- The working hours of Self-Management institutions remain suspended until the end of the Eid holiday, except for the service and health sectors, and some workers whom the administration deems necessary to rotate.

- The crossings remain closed until a decision is issued by the Joint Presidency of the Executive Council for Northeast Syria.
- People practice their rituals in mosques and places of worship in the last week of Ramadan, observing health rules and social distancing.
- Medical clinics were allowed to receive patients from 8 pm to 3 pm with the application of preventive measures such as not allowing more than 4 people in clinics and 2 in pharmacies and while ensuring the use of prevention and protection methods.
- Follow-up to the preparation of 550 beds and 2000 test cards by the Health Authority of the island region, and the preparation of a special ward for Corona injuries at Derek Hospital, due to contain 40 beds.

(J. Kh) a member of the Kurdish Red Crescent says, "Every point, every center, camp, and medical clinic has a section equipped with breathing devices and beds, sterilizers, masks and gloves, to be ready to receive cases, in addition to awareness campaigns. The equipment is good within the capabilities and the equipment came as support for us. Our staff follows courses on these devices".

- The arrival of two devices to detect the Corona virus from the Kurdistan region of Iraq, one of these devices for the city of Raqqa and the other for the Self-Management areas.
- Al-Omran neighborhood, the neighborhood where two cases of Coronavirus were recorded, was placed under total quarantine and the entrances and exits of the neighborhood were sealed by the Asayish forces, with distribution of relief kits for the residents of the neighborhood. The ban was lifted after examining the residents of the neighborhood and making sure they were not infected with the virus.
- Removing 3 batches from the quarantine centers, numbering 150 while that there are 6 people in the quarantine centers in "Al-Syrian and Sahara" for the quarantine, who will be released after conducting tests.
- Cafes and other enclosed places remain shut, except for health services while all shops, services and markets are to be opened from 6 am to 3 pm.
- The green sellers strike ended after the Supply Department meeting and determining the percentage of profit for vegetables.

At the community level:

Public satisfaction was monitored by the residents after the recent Self-Management decision that allowed the opening of the stores, after a sit-in by dozens of shop owners in Amouda calling for the lifting of the ban. It is worth noting that the markets witnessed a large movement in the Aljazeera region within the times designated for opening shops and markets. Self-employed or daily-wage workers like taxi drivers were also disheartened at not being able to work.

One resident says:

"The living situation is very poor, especially due to the high US dollar cost in this period, and it has further affected the middle class, limited income and displaced people; Especially workers who were affected by the interruption of their work. For the displaced who left their properties behind, they fled from Ras al-Ain, and have no choice but to work as day laborers. IDPs who are workers and belong to the middle class are greatly affected by these conditions".

List of food prices in the regions of north-eastern Syria, in Syrian pounds / kilo May 15, 2020					
sugar	1000	Banana	1400	Cucumber	400
Oil	700	Apples	900	Tomatoes	500
Bread	200	Orange	750	Squash	400
Tea	8500	Lemon	1750	Beans	500
Sheep yoghurt	800	Sheep	8500	Aubergines	500
Cow yoghurt	500	Calf	8000	Capsicum	400
Eggs	1900	Chicken	1800	Onion	300
Domestic gas	2600	Peanuts	225	Potatoes	500
Garlic	800	mint	150	peas	450

Al-Raqqa Governorate:

No cases were recorded in Al-Raqqa governorate officially. Measures by the local authorities were limited to street sterilization and price control. Meanwhile, the Red Crescent Hospital opened a health center in Al- Mahmoudi camp and Tal Al-Samen camp to follow up on patients.

Among the measures monitored were:

- The curfew continues, with a slight movement of people after breakfast while markets are crowded in the hours during which they are open.
- The Civil Democratic Administration allowed the city to reopen licensed ice cream factories.
- Instructions from the General Control of Municipalities to abide by the application of health conditions to prevent crowding.
- The People's Municipality of Al Hamarat carried out awareness campaigns.
- The continuation of the educational processes online.
- The launch of the Community Action Program in Al-Raqqa municipality - an initiative to help affected families and distribute food baskets by the relief office in Al-Raqqa to needy families.

(M. A) He is a laboratory specialist in Raqqa: He says:

"As for the health sector, I work in a laboratory, and since private clinics have been closed, my laboratory work has been greatly affected, because doctors have been going to private hospitals. All

the pressure is on hospitals. The pressure of patients on hospitals is a big mistake because hospitals do not have health rules at all. Frankly, the lockdown rules are all useless, the ban must be comprehensive with no one allowed to go out and ensure that everyone stays home, or keep things open. It is unreasonable for people to stay out for four hours and then ban them".

Community status and civic activity:

- Numerous complaints were monitored by families about high food and transport prices due to ban on internal public transport, along with demands to ease lockdown and reopen shops even as the Crisis Cell has decided to prevent gatherings and requested standardized pricing and control.

(M . Z) the owner of a clothing store says:

" My shop was closed during the ban, because I was not able to sell my old inventory while the new goods that I ordered did not arrive due to the closure of the crossing, so my work is currently suspended. In addition, the total ban was prolonged. My economic budget has been affected. The situation for me and the people in the market in most sectors of work has been affected to the extent that our economic conditions are severely strained."

Food prices in Al-Raqqa Governorate, in Syrian pounds / kilo May 18, 2020			
Cow yoghurt	400 – 450	Chicken	2100
Onion	700-900	Squash	350
Aubergines	600	Tomato	750-800
Cucumber	600	Apples	1500
Potatoes	500-550	Banana	1500
Meat	6500-7000	Beans	800
		Sheep yoghurt	650-700

Deir Ezzor Governorate:

Deir Ezzor Governorate witnessed many security and military incidents during the reporting period, including raids from Israeli aircraft on 15 locations controlled by the Syrian Regime between Albukamal and Al-Mayadeen in the Eastern countryside of Deir Ezzor. Also, there were separate security incidents instigated by ISIS operatives against targets belonging to the Syrian Regime and the forces of the Syrian Democratic Forces. The international coalition has also strengthened its presence on several military bases, carried out raids and detentions against ISIS personnel, as well as other military exercises.

In addition to the security incidents, four fires also broke out, one due to a short circuit and two due to unknown causes. These three accidents affected nearly 100 hectares of barley fields. The fire of the charges, tens of hectares of agricultural land, was also detected in Abu Khashab village without knowing the reason on 16/5/2020.

Moreover, a rainstorm hit accompanied by strong winds, washing away tents in Abu Khashab camp, leaving the people exposed. There are 1700 families (8900 people).

With regard to the outbreak of the Corona epidemic, 30 cases were suspected during the past two weeks, but after sending samples for analysis the results came out negative, and no deaths due to corona were announced in the region.

The procedures followed by the crisis cell:

- The establishment of an emergency warehouse fully equipped with necessary medical materials and medicines necessary to prevent the virus, in addition to sterilization and protection tools such as masks, sterilizers, protective clothing and other necessary equipment.
- Provision of a quarantine center in Jarwan village within the village dispensary with a number of beds, sterilization tools, necessary medicines and other equipment.
- Equipping the public “ Images Hospital” with the necessary equipment and medication, including: (radiology device, acidification device, sterilizing equipment, eco device, beds for inspection, 50 beds for patients, 3 small oxygen generators, 20 oxygen cylinders, in addition to minimally invasive instruments, baby scales, childbirth beds, nebulizer devices, secretary withdrawal devices, pressure devices, electronic thermometers, and endotracheal implants).
- Providing Al-Kasra Hospital with some equipment necessary for the diagnosis and prevention of the virus, the most important of which are: (radiology device, acidification device, 4 oxygen concentrators, 30 oxygen cylinders, 4 automatic ventilation devices (competitor), in addition to thermometers, detachment devices, and spray devices and others).
- Providing Abu Al-Hassan and Abu Hammam clinics with a number of important equipment, the most important of which are: (inspection beds, residence beds, thermostats, pull-out devices, spray devices, number of surgical tools and sterilization vessels).
- Delivery of equipment, medicines and consumables to "Jadid Bakara" hospital, the most important of which are (20 oxygen cylinders, 2 oxygen concentrators, spray devices, section devices, heat devices, a quantity of medical consumables such as oxygen masks and latex cloves, serum devices, masks, sterilizers, and other consumables).

This cell, in cooperation with the Health Authority, sent a number of medical cadres from various hospitals of Deir Ezzor to the city of Amouda, and trained them to use the examination tapes and provide them with a quantity of these tapes. Three other teams were also formed in the hospitals of Kasra and Jadid Bakara and Albasira. Their mission is to check any suspected case - withdraw expectorant, pharyngeal and nasal samples for examination on a PCR device. These teams have been provided with the necessary equipment, protective clothing, masks, sterilizers, and other materials. They have also been given vehicles for ease

of movement to collect samples from different place. These teams have examined approximately 50 people as suspected cases, all of which tested negative.

At the community level:

There are no apparent measures to monitored or combat the virus. Markets and shops continue to operate normally, movement of markets is not restricted, and neither is movement between regions on a daily basis. Barriers that were at the entrances to some towns such as the town of Basra have been removed, and people go on living their lives normally.

The living conditions are bad because of exorbitant food prices especially after the depreciation of Syrian pound against the US dollar, which creates a general atmosphere of tension.

(Sh . M) 43 years old, who is a housewife and a mother of four children said: " We can no longer meet basic daily needs because of high prices. Meat is no longer part of our diet as the price of 100 grams of meat is 850 Syrian pounds. We have limited our food to pasta, lentils, and sometimes rice. Over the past two weeks I managed to buy chicken once – I had to divide the one chicken between three meals. As for fruits, they are completely absent from our lives ".

List of food prices in the areas of Deir Ezzor that are under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces, in Syrian pounds / kilo May 15, 2020					
Cucumber	400	Banana	1700	Sugar	1000
Tomato	700	Apples	1200	Oil	700
Squash	400	Orange	750	Bread	200
beans	500	Lemon	1750	tea	8500
Aubergines	500	Sheep	8500	Sheep yoghurt	800
Capsicum	1400	Calf	8000	Cow yoghurt	500
Onion	700	Chicken	1800	Eggs	1900
Potato	500	Normal rice	900	Domestic gas	2600
Peas	450	Excellent rice	1400	Peanuts	225
mint	150	Garlic	900		

The security situation is also poor, as shootings, assassinations and clashes have become regular daily matters in light of the activity of the Islamic State’s cells and people or groups affiliated with Hezbollah or Iranian militias (as happened in the village of Jadid Akkidat two days ago where an explosive device implicated Hezbollah personnel in the incident).

(S . Z) 54 years old, who is displaced from Deir Ezzor and supports a family consisting of a wife and 5 children saying: "I am shocked by Coronavirus and the protective measures. I want to feed my children and then think about Coronavirus. I have to pay rent and my two children and I work for daily wages (as construction workers). We only buy very necessary supplies. We have forgotten meat, and see chicken only on occasions, and only get to hear about fruits. We eat what we can afford to buy and cut down on the number of meals. On top of this we face bombings and assassinations every day, and when my children are at work I remain afraid for them to return home ".

Third – North-western Syria:

No confirmed cases of Coronavirus have been officially announced in the Northwest regions. 436 people were suspected of carrying the virus as of 9 May 2020 according to the Early Warning and Response Program (EWARN), however all tested negative. The number of tests conducted up to 15 May is 532.

There are quarantine centers established in Kafr Takharim, Idlib, Sarmada, and in Afrin and Al-Bab. Four hospitals have also been equipped in Idlib, and the North is ready to receive confirmed or suspected cases.

As for preventive measures, the following has been monitored:

- Demonstrations took place in various areas (Idlib Al-Madina, Harbnoush, Bennish, Taftanaz, Maarat Al-Na'asan, Kafr Takharim, Kalli, Daret Azza, Maarat Al-Atareb, Zardana) condemning the opening of the commercial crossing with the Syrian Regime areas by the HTS, for fear of the transmission of the Coronavirus to areas North West.
- There are no precautionary measures against the virus in the Northwest regions, as most areas of the Northwest witnessed crowding in the markets in general and especially due to the approaching festival of Eid Al Fitr.
- Despite the imposition of curfews in the regions of Azaz and Afrin, the interim government failed to implement it, especially due to the approaching festival of Eid Al Fitr.
- The date of the exams has been modified to 4/7 instead of 6/8, provided that the necessary measures are taken for safety in the exam centers.
- Sterilization campaigns continued by the civil defense teams in both Idlib and its countryside.
- Civil society organizations and their employees working in the northwest regions continued to take preventive measures against Coronavirus and look for ways to carry out their activities.

An employee at the Women's Empowerment Center in Atma says:

The effect of the Coronavirus was negative on workers and beneficiaries alike because working from home is difficult and following interventions on the internet is more difficult. There are many beneficiaries in the women's empowerment center in the courses that were cut off from these courses and thus their self-development was delayed. Some women left because they had a fear of following up online with us.

- There was a general dissatisfaction among the population as a result of high prices and low purchasing power, as the US dollar exceeded 1,500 Syrian pounds.

(A . A), a loading worker at Bab Al-Hawa crossing said, "Coronavirus no longer matters to us as much, as our primary concern is securing a livelihood for our children. I work 5 days at the crossing with a daily wage of 30 TL and my family is made up of 8 people. This amount is never enough due to high US dollar rate. My son is sick and I could not bring him a kilo of bananas because the kilo is not enough for him and his brothers. We thank God that there is no coronavirus yet because we are subject to death even without it".

Food prices in northwestern Syria, in Syrian pounds / kilo					
May 16, 2020					
Item	Azaz and Afrin	Northwest areas	Item	Azaz and Afrin	Northwest areas
Cucumber	200	150	Orange	850	850
Tomato	722	800	Lemon	1500	2000
Squash	200	150	Sheep	11000	11500
Beans	400	450	Calf	9000	9500
Aubergines	700	550	Chicken before cleaning	1550	1650
Capsicum	1000	2500	Chicken after cleaning	1900	2100
Onion		200	Sugar	1000	900
Potato	250	250-350	Oil	1200	1300
parsley	300	300	Bread	600	600
Peas	400	500	Tea		9000
Mint	300	300	Sheep yoghurt	900	700
Garlic		700	Cow yoghurt	600	500
Peanuts		250	Eggs	1300	1200
Banana	1500	1500	Domestic gas	12500	12500
Apples	1000	1000			