



SYRIA: UNHCR FLASH UPDATE

20 October 2016

ALEPPO CITY

- A "humanitarian pause" in attacks on opposition-held eastern Aleppo city has come into effect. The unilateral truce announced by Russia was initially scheduled from 08:00 hrs to 16:00 hrs, Damascus time, and then extended by three hours. Today (20 October), Special Advisor Jan Egeland has told the Associated Press that the UN has received verbal assurances for the extension of the humanitarian pause until Monday 24 October (11 hours per day), both from Russia's diplomatic mission in Geneva and in writing from Russian military officials in Syria.
- Upon receiving formal authorization by the Government of Syria for the medical evacuation, the UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Chief Security Advisor and an inter-agency UN team left for western Aleppo city this morning (20 October). The UN team plans to meet with local authorities and medical partners, and will be working closely with WHO, who is coordinating the medical evacuation. The UN hopes to begin medical evacuations from opposition-held eastern Aleppo tomorrow (21 October).
- The Russian Defence Ministry announced eight exit corridors out of eastern Aleppo city, six for civilians and two for armed opposition group fighters to leave with their weapons. This morning (20 October), an AFP correspondent reported that clashes had erupted in an area designated as a humanitarian corridor for civilians. There are unconfirmed reports of a small number of civilians evacuated through the humanitarian corridors.

NORTHERN SYRIA

- The Turkish military said that it carried out airstrikes against Kurdish armed groups in northern Aleppo Governorate, killing up to 200 fighters. The jets reportedly targeted positions of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in three villages near al-Bab, which is the last major town held by extremist militants in north-western Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, however, reported a much lower toll of 11 dead and dozens wounded. Kurdish officials in north-eastern Syria said dozens had been killed, according to Reuters.

EVACUATIONS IN RURAL DAMASCUS

- Yesterday (19 October), more than 1,600 people were reportedly evacuated from the town of Moadamiya (Rural Damascus), which has been under siege by Syrian government forces since 2012. Opposition fighters and their families were transported by bus to opposition-held areas of Idlib Governorate.
- This is the fourth such evacuation in Rural Damascus in the past two months. Similar agreements and evacuations took place last week (14 October) in Qudsaya and al-Hameh, and in Darayya, located just southeast of Moadamiya, in late August.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

- Yesterday (19 October), for the first time in almost a month (since 25 September), an inter-agency humanitarian convoy delivered humanitarian assistance to the besieged city of Duma in East Ghouta, Rural Damascus. The convoy delivered food, health, water and sanitation and other emergency supplies for 35,000 people.

KEY DISPLACEMENT STATISTICS

- Over 423,800 people are displaced in areas of northern Syria due to developments since 1 February. This represents an increase of 4,159 people since 30 September, including around 2,400 due to fighting and airstrikes in Hama Governorate and 1,600 due to ongoing fighting in Aleppo Governorate.