



# Protection Sector Update: Al-Hol Camp June 2022

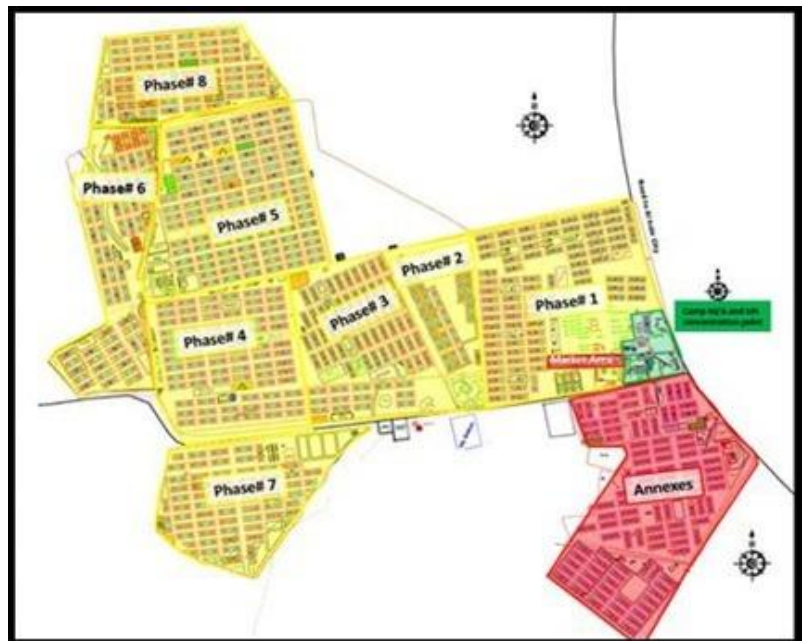


Protection and Community Service Sector

Syria HCT-Coordinated Response

## **Background**

Al-Hol camp in north-east Syria (NES) was established in the early 1990s under emergency conditions to receive Iraqis seeking safety from conflict. The camp was closed in 2013 when Iraqis either returned or found other durable solutions. In May 2016, the camp was reopened to accommodate Syrians and Iraqis fleeing violence in their countries. By late 2018, while most residents had returned to their places of origin, some 9,400 IDPs and Iraqis remained in the camp, unable to access durable solutions. Following further violence and hostilities in late 2018 and early 2019, including in ISIL-controlled areas in Syria, Al-Hol was expanded to accommodate almost 70,000 individuals.



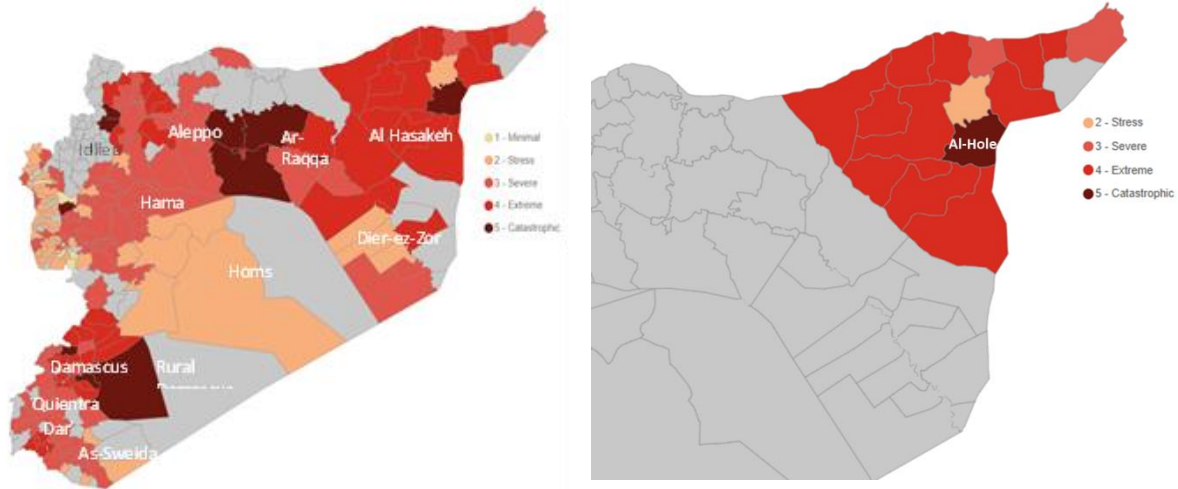
As of June 2022, the population in Al-Hol camp stands at almost 55,000 individuals, including Syrians, Iraqis and third country nationals (TCNs). The camp has a total area of just over three-square kilometres and consists of eight ‘phases’ allocated to displaced Iraqi and Syrians and five ‘annexes’ allocated to TCNs (see Figure 1 above). The camp was designed and developed based on emergency standards with community spaces and communal shared facilities, including kitchens, latrines, and street illumination, which became the target of vandalism attacks by some groups within the camp.

### **Al-Hol camp population by age and gender**

Al-Hol	Total number of households	Total number of individuals	[0-2]	[3-4]	[5-11]	[12-17]F	[12-17]M	[18-59] F	[18-59] M	[+60] F	[+60]M
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,072</b>	<b>55,116</b>	<b>1,416</b>	<b>8,884</b>	<b>16,295</b>	<b>4,297</b>	<b>4,427</b>	<b>15,322</b>	<b>3,349</b>	<b>815</b>	<b>311</b>

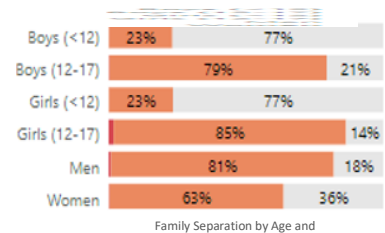
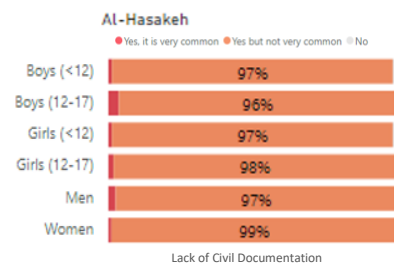
## Overview of Protection Concerns and Needs in NES

According to the 2021 Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) the severity of needs in Al-Hasakeh Governorate is categorized as extreme. Needs in Al-Hol camp are categorized as catastrophic.



Key protection issues identified during the 2021 MSNA:

- Lack or loss of civil documentation in Al-Hasakeh Governorate was reported as occurring in **100%** of assessed communities (compared to **61%** in 2020) and spread across all sub-districts to varying degrees.
- Family separation was reported as occurring in **72%** of assessed communities spread across Al-Hasakeh Governorate.



## **Situation update**

As of June 2022, seven Protection Sector partners operate in the camp under very challenging conditions<sup>1</sup>. Many partners' facilities have been vandalized and attacked, and had their ICT equipment looted. When protection partners have been unable to access the camp due to the deteriorated security situation, only critical activities have been delivered by camp-based recruited staff. One partner has suspended its gender-based violence services since January 2022 due to reduced funding, while another partner has increased its case management capacity by recruiting two additional staff. Since 2021 two partners have suspended four information desks due to lack of funding. There are currently five functional information desks in the camp.

A service area for the annexes was set up in 2020 for service providers to establish static facilities that can be accessed by TCNs. To date the service area only hosts the distribution site, MSF clinic and the info desk run by camp management. A few service providers also provide support inside the annex through static facilities and mobile teams.

In July 2021, camp administration requested humanitarian partners to establish a safe space in Al-Hol as a temporary life-saving solution until families and individuals who have received threats to their lives are either relocated to other camps or urban areas, or repatriated (for Iraqi cases). As of 21 June, 43 households (114 individuals) are being accommodated in the safe space in Al-Hol camp. The safe space is intended for a limited number of people at risk to avoid creating a "parallel camp", however, due to the deteriorating security situation the number of individuals and families referred to the space continues to increase. As of June, a total of 23 IDP households (45 individuals) at risk were relocated from the safe space in Al-Hol to Areesha camp where security conditions are relatively better. The Protection Working Group (PWG) is continuously advocating for the departure of IDPs from Al-Hol camp. Lists of people wishing to depart the camp have been shared with Camp Administration for approval. IDP return trips have not taken place since 13 December 2021.

Camp residents are not allowed to leave the camp. Access to medical care is a major concern. Medical cases are not allowed to receive treatment outside the camp unless referred to the only hospital supported by WHO in Al-Hasakeh/Al-Hikmah or to the national hospital. They are allowed to go to the hospital only under security escort. Moreover, camp authorities have limited the movement of private vehicles in and out of the camp since early May 2022. UNHCR raised the issue with local authorities who informed it was a security measure. Private vehicles have to park outside the camp and only a limited number of vehicles are allowed access to the camp due to security concerns. This new measure has impeded transportation to and from the camp particularly for patients requiring urgent medical care at night. Many camp residents are also compelled to hire small carriers (rickshaws) to fetch items from the market.

Advocacy for the registration and repatriation of vulnerable Iraqis is a priority for the PWG, with a focus on unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), life-threatening medical cases and people who have received threats to their lives. The PWG shared key

---

<sup>1</sup> Protection partners operating under the umbrella of the Syria HCT-coordinated response only

messages to be disseminated by partners to the communities to mitigate protection risks including exploitation throughout the repatriation process. The key messages on repatriation are currently being updated. A fifth repatriation trip took place on 1<sup>st</sup> of June (see separate “Protection Sector briefing note on the fifth Iraqi repatriation from Al Hol camp”).

Since the activation of the NES Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Sub-National In-Country Network (ICN) in November 2021, regular bi-monthly meetings are being organized. A joint PSEA ICN workplan was developed by UNHCR and UNICEF as co-chairs in consultation with inter-agency members, pending further approval from heads of agencies. Discussions on improving the PSEA reporting and coordination with all humanitarian actors in Al-Hol and other camps in NES are ongoing.

### **May updates based on Area of Responsibility**

#### **CHILD PROTECTION**

##### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Partners provided child protection services to approximately 5,000 children and caregivers, including case management, COVID-19 prevention measures and child protection issues, psychosocial support and parental care.
- Coordinated efforts between UNICEF, UNHCR and NES Forum NGOs continue to expedite the repatriation of Iraqi UASC children in Al-Hol camp. This includes developing Best Interest Determination (BID) standard operating procedures and case management services for more than 500 children.
- Partners provided 24/7 care for an average of 50 UASC in interim care centres in Al-Hol camp in addition to protection, health, education, and other basic social services.
- An inter-agency plan was developed to coordinate efforts to address vandalism acts by children/adolescents in Al-Hol camp.
- Key messages on child protection issues were developed with focus on the prevention of family separation for returnees before departure trips. Partners also updated services mapping to inform the referral of children to basic services including in locations of return.

##### **CHALLENGES/GAPS**

- The capacity of local child protection actors is limited and many partners face administrative delays in approvals for partnership agreements.
- Underfunding for child protection activities.

#### **GENDER BASED VIOLENCE**

##### **ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Partners provided gender-based violence services, including case management, psychosocial support, vocational training, recreational activities, awareness sessions through the safe space for women and girls, community centres and the integrated mobile teams. Awareness sessions covered topics related to gender-based violence, reproductive health, PSEA, COVID-19, and menstrual hygiene.

### CHALLENGES/GAPS

- Lengthy and complex procedures are imposed by the camp administration on people wishing to leave the camp including for people who have received threats to their lives.
- Repeated lockdowns in the camp due to security conditions prevent protection staff from regularly accessing the camp.
- The poor cell phone network in the camp hinders survivors of gender-based violence from communicating with case managers.
- The distribution of dignity kits is insufficient due to funding constraints.
- Inadequate PSEA reporting mechanisms in the camp can expose survivors to further harm.
- There is currently only one safe space for women and girls in Al-Hol camp. Given the high number of women and girls in the camp there is a need for another safe space to be established.