

November 2022

Humanitarian Access Team Syria

Syria Monthly Report



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Overview

6 November

Fuel tankers from Turkey arrive in Idleb, only partially alleviating the fuel shortages in the governorate. Fuel supply to Idleb has been disrupted throughout October and November, amid changes to the control of supply-lines: In October, HTS gained control of a key oil trading route with Administration-held areas. Supply lines from Turkey could also be disrupted, with the SSG's fuel directorate revoking a license for the Watad fuel company (a previous monopoly in the region) to operate. The repercussions are as yet unclear.

1–7 November

Six camps in northwest Syria are struck by missiles, killing ten people and damaging over 3,000

shelters. This, combined with poor winterization preparedness for camp residents, has left many shelters exposed to flooding and further damage, and residents exposed to the cold. Attempts by the humanitarian community to secure sufficient funding have fallen short, while efforts at repatriation to more permanent housing remain limited – conditions for the 1.7 million IDPs living in informal shelters are worsening.

20 November

Recep Tayyip Erdogan announces the start of the military aerial offensive, operation Claw Sword, against Kurdish political and military parties in northern Syria. The operation, ostensibly in retaliation to a bombing in Istanbul which killed six, has targeted Menbij, Tall Refaat and Ain Al Arab (Kobane), in an

attempt to rid the areas of Turkey's long-standing enemy, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and its sympathisers. The US and Russia have condemned the attacks, and appear reluctant to take further action.

Ongoing

Near-complete paralysis in the provision of state-controlled services and commodity markets continues to deepen throughout Syrian government areas, emanating from a severe fuel shortage that has resulted in increased fuel, water, and electricity rationing, greatly impacting household conditions and economic activity. The government is struggling to cope, has reduced subsidies further, and appears to have critically low foreign currency reserves, affecting essential imports.



Recep Tayyip Erdogan has launched military operation Claw Sword, against Kurdish political and military groups in northern Syria. The operation has so far involved aerial bombardments of targets close to the Turkish border, in Menbij, Tall Refaat and Ain al Arab (Kobane). The Turkish president has said that ground operations are likely, citing the need to secure border areas. Displacement in the targeted areas has been recorded, while the Syrian government and its allies have sent reinforcements to the north. The US has called for calm.

Summary

The Turkish aerial bombardment of northern Syria, operation Claw Sword, has targeted a number of civilian and public infrastructure, causing damage to private property, and the destruction of oil stations, gas fields, power plants, grain silos, and health facilities. The US and Russia have both called for a de-escalation, and condemn a potential ground invasion, fearing further destabilization of security in the northeast, particularly (for the US) in relation to the presence of ISIS. Despite this, Turkey's role as a US ally in NATO, and economic facilitation of Russian exports amid Western sanctions, have reduced those countries' ability to criticize.

Disruptions to the fuel supply chain from Administration-held areas into south and central Syria, as a result of the ongoing aerial bombardments in the north are likely to have reduced deliveries of much-needed fuel. Severe fuel shortages in government-held areas are causing near-complete paralysis in the provision of state-controlled services and commodity markets. The paralysis has resulted in increased fuel, water, and electricity rationing, greatly impacting both household conditions and economic activity in the region. Damascus and the Central Bank continue to grapple with problems of the depreciating pound and dwindling foreign currency reserves, implementing unfeasible restrictions on import payments, and currency traders, and promoting digital payments as a way to monitor (and generate) taxes – measures which are currently limited in their success.

The northwest is also facing fuel shortages, with supply chain disruptions, this time from Turkey, affecting deliveries into Idleb. Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham and the Syrian Salvation Government appear, through military and administrative means, to be gaining control of more of the supply and distribution of fuel; a recent revocation of the Watad Fuel Company's license to operate in Idleb, and the granting of licenses to six other companies indicates change, however what the extent of these changes are is unclear.

With the coming winter, and potential new waves of displacement in northern Syria, focus is on winterisation efforts in IDP camps. In the northwest, these efforts are falling short, as shelters in many camps are insufficient; tents are reaching their end-of-life, and residents are exposed to flooding and cold temperatures. Also concerning is the continued cholera outbreak, and other health problems related to contaminated water – in some camps, sewage contaminates household water, while potable water provision is lacking. Targeted missile strikes on the camps have damaged living areas further. Efforts to repatriate IDPs continue, with successes seen in the provision of housing by humanitarian groups, and governance actors, however the scale of displacement undermines their impact.

Cover photo: Cases of cholera have been diagnosed throughout Syria, with the primary infections found in polluted water sources. Here, a child walks in open sewers outside a camp in northwest Syria (Source: AP/Gaith Alsayed)

Humanitarian Access Team Syria

Economic indicators

	September 2022	October 2022	November 2022
SYP/USD official exchange rate	3,000	3,000	3,000
SYP/USD parallel market rate	4,581.1 (4.6%)	5,089.7 (11.1%)	5,373.8 (5.8%)
TRY/USD official rate	18.3 (1.5%)	18.6 (1.6%)	18.6 (0.1%)

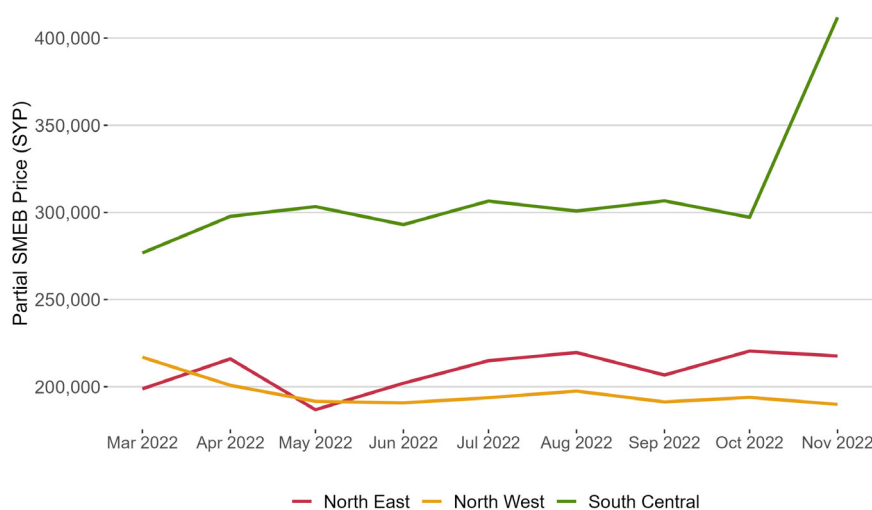
Economic indicator 1.

Official and parallel market exchange rates, SYP/USD and TRY/USD, August–November 2022



Economic indicator 2.

SYP/USD and TRY/USD, January 2021–January 2023 (predicted)

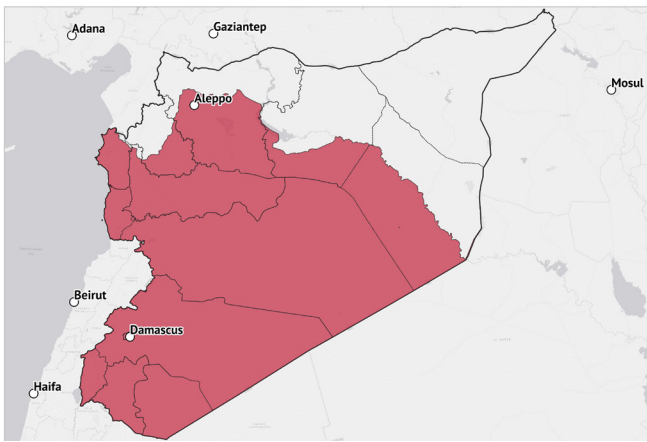


Economic indicator 3.

Change in partial SMEB price by zone of control, March–November 2022

HAT's partial SMEB price monitoring tool is in part built on Sphere recommendations of a 2100kcal daily diet per person. Items covered in the assessment include basic food items such as bread, rice, bulghur, lentils, oil, sugar, meats, vegetables, and fruits.

South & central



Service provision collapse reaches unprecedented depths

Near-complete paralysis in the provision of state-controlled services and commodity markets continues to deepen throughout Syrian government-held areas. The paralysis emanates from a severe fuel shortage that has resulted in increased fuel, water, and electricity rationing, greatly impacting both the household conditions and economic activity.

Electricity rationing has become crippling to the extent that daily blackouts have reportedly [exceeded](#) 22 hours. Unsurprisingly, the lack of electricity has affected other basic services; the Syrian Telecommunications Company [stated](#) that many of its infrastructure has gone out of service due to prolonged periods of electricity outages, coupled with a difficulty procuring enough fuel for the generators necessary for service continuity.

Water availability has also been affected; many have complained about the lack of water throughout government-held areas while sources report that prolonged electricity cuts have given water stations insufficient time to pump water to residential neighborhoods. As a result, many communities in Rural Damascus governorate have not received water for several weeks.

Local sources reported that subsidized fuel delivery has been significantly delayed with recipients receiving their petrol and gas canister subsidies after more than 15 and 100 days, respectively. Subsidized petrol should, according to the government's allocation schedule, be delivered on a weekly basis, while gas canisters should be delivered every 21 days. Public transport vehicles have not been receiving their fuel subsidies either, resulting in shortages [of public transportation](#) across government-held areas. For example, local sources report that public transportation throughout As-Sweida city is no longer functional, while taxi drivers are asking for an inflated 12,000 SYP for rides within the city limits, a price which is unaffordable for many. Pro-government media [attributed](#) the delays to the reduction of fuel allocations for most governorates by 50%. The reduction in fuel supply also led fuel black market prices to [skyrocket](#) with diesel and petrol prices reaching 10,000 SYP and 17,000 SYP.

Government enacts mitigation measures

Fuel shortages have prompted the Syrian government to enact significant (and perhaps unrealistic) measures to cope with the insufficient service provision. Hussein Arnous, the Syrian prime minister, [issued a directive](#) asking all public institutions to lower the petrol and diesel allocations for government service and 'tourism' (small-capacity) vehicles by 40% per vehicle.¹ Arnous also directed public institutions to suspend travel that requires fuel consumption, which exceeds the allocation, except if it is an urgent matter. Syrian Parliament speaker, Hammoud Sabbagh, also [reduced fuel allocations](#) by 40% for the parliament's vehicles. Additionally, the Ministry of Electricity is taking measures to combat excessive and illicit electricity consumption. The Ministry reportedly [cracked down](#) on 'gold line' (uncapped) electricity subscribers unlawfully selling electricity to nearby houses and facilities. Pro-government media stated that the ministry raided industrial facilities in the Zalbatani area of Damascus city, fining seven facilities, three of which are gold line subscribers, an amount

¹ Tourism vehicles is the term used by the Syrian government to denote vehicles with a carrying capacity up to eight people.

of SYP 50 million per violation.² Pro-government media added that the Ministry is likely to continue doing so systematically across government-held areas and is reportedly measuring electricity consumption for any irregularities.

Sanctions, low imports behind current crisis

Government officials offered multiple reasons behind fuel and electricity shortages in government-held areas. Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Bassam Tohmeh, [stated](#) that the current situation is the result of 50 consecutive days of low fuel supply during which the government has had to rely on its fuel reserves. Tohmeh added that the increased fuel rationing for government vehicles is a necessary step to conserve the remaining fuel reserves, and redirect it to hospitals, bakeries, and other facilities providing essential services for citizens. Tohmeh blames the global energy crisis following the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, western sanctions, and the insufficient oil shipments from Iran. Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumer Protection, Amro Salem, also [blamed](#) insufficient oil imports as the reason for the recent fuel shortages. Moreover, Syrian member of parliament, Dr. Safwan al-Korbi, [blamed](#) the increased electricity rationing on a 25% reduction in gas supply from Autonomous Administration-held areas. Pro-government media later [reported](#) that gas pumped from the Jebesa field was reduced by one million cubic meters per day (cmbd) resulting in the stoppage of several generators at al-Zara power plant; 185 MW of electricity produced were lost, bringing total production under 2,000 MW at a time when the maximum generation capacity is 5,000 MW.

Rumors that service provision collapse may be engineered

Local sources stated that citizens have doubted the government's rhetoric on the collapse of service provision, alleging that it may be intentional to force citizens to accept additional subsidy removals as the government's recent budget reduces its social

support expenditure, and shortages are not as critical as they have been made out to be: The Iranian government had recently announced in mid-November that it would [increase its oil shipments](#) to Syria to 3 million barrels per month. Ibrahim Raisi, the Iranian president, reportedly made the decision to increase oil exports to Syria from 2 million to 3 million barrels per month to help the country cope with its fuel crisis. Iran has been steadily supplying the Syrian government with oil since its credit line was reinstated in May, and has reportedly [exported](#) over 17 million barrels as of September. Additionally, the Banyas refinery's general manager, Mahmoud Qassem, [stated](#) in September that the company had run out of storage capacity for crude oil, and production had not stopped. Moreover, the government's intention to reduce subsidies was made clear following a 12% [reduction](#) in social support expenditure, which funds subsidized food and fuel items, in the 2023 state budget.

However, speculation that Iranian imports have increased could be misrepresented. Claire Jungman, United Against Nuclear Iran's chief of staff, [alleged](#) that Iran's oil shipments to Syria were reduced from 3.5 million barrels in October to 1.39 million barrels in November, hinting at the possibility that Iran's oil supply to Syria has indeed decreased. Regardless, Syria requires a supply of approximately 6 million barrels per month, an amount that could not be met even if Iran was able to provide a steady 3 million barrels as reported. There seems to be a correlation between the low level of oil imports, as reported by the government, and a reduction in oil supply from Administration-held areas; supply has likely decreased following the Turkish military operation Claw Sword, making the situation more difficult for the Syrian government to meet the required [monthly amount](#) (6 million barrels) and force the authorities to draw more from its dwindling oil reserves to make up for the shortfall.

More on Operation Claw Sword's impact on northeast Syria can be found in the northeast section.

² The "gold line" refers to a special electricity supply line which is exempt from electricity rationing and provides an uninterrupted electricity supply. However, it is noteworthy that the line is more expensive than the normal electricity lines.

Government policies constrain economic activity

In parallel to the decaying services and commodity provision, the economic and financial situation in government-held areas continues to deteriorate. The Syrian pound has reportedly depreciated 9% through November, from 5,200 SYP per USD to the all-time low of 5,650 SYP per USD. Local sources stated that Damascus traders and businessmen continue to complain about the government's increased scrutiny over their finances, denouncing the frequent raids launched by security agencies and customs officers in markets.

Traders and shop owners often have their financial and accounting documents, sometimes even security camera recordings, confiscated during a raid. Additionally, if foreign currency is found in shops, the owners are fined up to millions of pounds, their shop forcibly closed, and potentially jailed under [law 54/2013 and law 3/2020](#). Local sources stated many traders and businesspeople believe that the increased financial scrutiny, coupled with insufficient service provision are an indication that the government has reached dangerously low levels of foreign currency reserves and that its official revenue streams are drying up; local sources reported that remittances to Syria have significantly reduced due to [global economic stagflation](#), among other factors.

High service costs and policies restrict economic activity

The high prices paid by business owners for sufficient services, in addition to restrictive economic policies have constrained economic activity. Hotel owners in Damascus city [told](#) pro-government media that they are struggling to remain open in the face of mounting challenges. Hotel owners complained about the high electricity bills they were paying as gold line subscribers. Paying for a gold line used to be a financially feasible option as opposed to private generators, which require high maintenance costs and frequently unavailable diesel. However, the subscription has become a finan-

cial burden after their [prices increased](#) in November 2021 from 300 to 800 SYP per KW; some hotels received electricity bills amounting to 900 million SYP. Hotels have also been subjected to “illogical taxes” such as the “hospitality tax” where they are taxed for any free food or drink which they offer to guests.

Member of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, Fayeze Qasoumeh, identified Circular 1070 as being a main reason behind the price increases seen in 2022. The circular requires importers to purchase foreign currency from designated exchange companies, placing tremendous pressure on them to meet the demand. It is becoming increasingly difficult for these companies to supply the necessary foreign currency on time given its reduced availability on the market. The delays and insufficient foreign currency provision are leading to a reduction in the amount of imported items subsequently resulting in low supply and high prices. Qasoumeh also identified the [devaluation of the pound](#) in September, the 130% [increase in official fuel prices](#) in August, and the pound's approximate 40% depreciation since March as additional reasons resulting in price increases.

Lack of price control enforcement leads to discrepant pricing

The general economic situation in Syria – including the Syrian pound's instability – has led traders to ignore statutory price ceilings for goods, setting their own prices to maintain revenue. Moreover, the absence of proper price and market control measures have reportedly led to enormous price differences within the same governorate.

Pro-government media [documented](#) the difference in fruit and vegetable prices (shown below) between Damascus city and Qudsiya (Qudsiya subdistrict), which are approximately 12km apart. The discrepant pricing further exacerbates unaffordability for residents in certain areas amid increasing economic and financial hardship.

Price differences of food between Damascus city and Qudsiya suburb (Source: [Al-Watan Newspaper](#))

Item	Price in Qudsiya (SYP)	Price in Damascus (SYP)	Difference
Bananas	21,000	14,000	40%
Apples	4,000	2,000	67%
Tomatoes	3,000	1,700	55%
Green peppers	3,500	2,000	55%
Oranges	3,000	2,500	18%

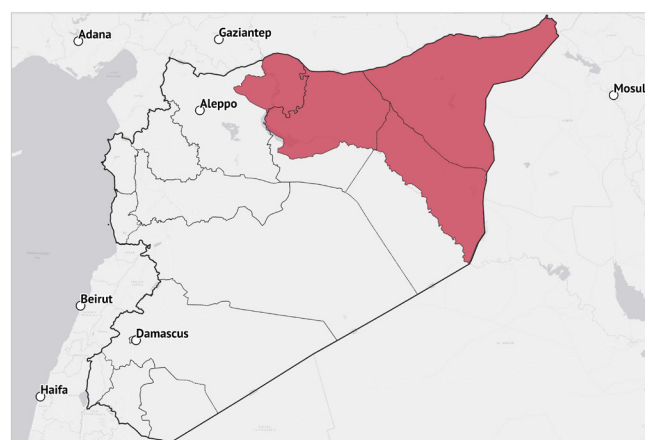
Electronic payment system, the go-to solution

Government officials have increasingly referred to electronic payments as the solution for many of the economic and administrative problems. The system, [launched](#) by the Central Bank back in January, aims to connect the Central Bank, banks, ministries, businesses, and citizens together. According to the Syrian Electronic Payment Company (SEP), the [system is a central hub](#) connecting businesses and banks and the only platform for electronically paying both recurring and non-recurring taxes and fines.

The government has continued efforts to develop and expand the system's reach. Minister of Public Works and Housing, Suheil Abdelatif, [stated](#) that the electronic payment system will be launched in the Ministry next year, enabling license and tax payments to be conducted electronically. The Syrian Commercial Bank [stated](#) that the bank is working towards setting up a digital platform capable of providing banking services through the electronic payment system, which will act as an alternative to ATMs. Members of the Chamber of Commerce have attempted to convince traders and businesspeople of the benefits of the system. Head of the Damascus Chamber of Commerce, Mohamad Abu-Hoda, [stated](#) that the system is an organizational process which is in their favor since it direct-

ly connects them to the Ministry of Finance. Qasoumeah [said](#) the electronic payment system should be followed through for all sectors to include both producers, importers, and wholesale traders to fight tax evasion. However, local sources stated that traders and businesspeople are not convinced and are still trying to avoid fully using the system since it increases the government's ability to further scrutinize their accounts, revealing their revenue and taxing them accordingly.

Northeast



Turkey launches Operation Claw-Sword

The Turkish aerial bombardment of northern Syria, operation Claw Sword, has targeted a number of civilian and public infrastructure, causing damage to private property, and the destruction of oil stations, gas fields, power plants, grain silos, and health facilities.

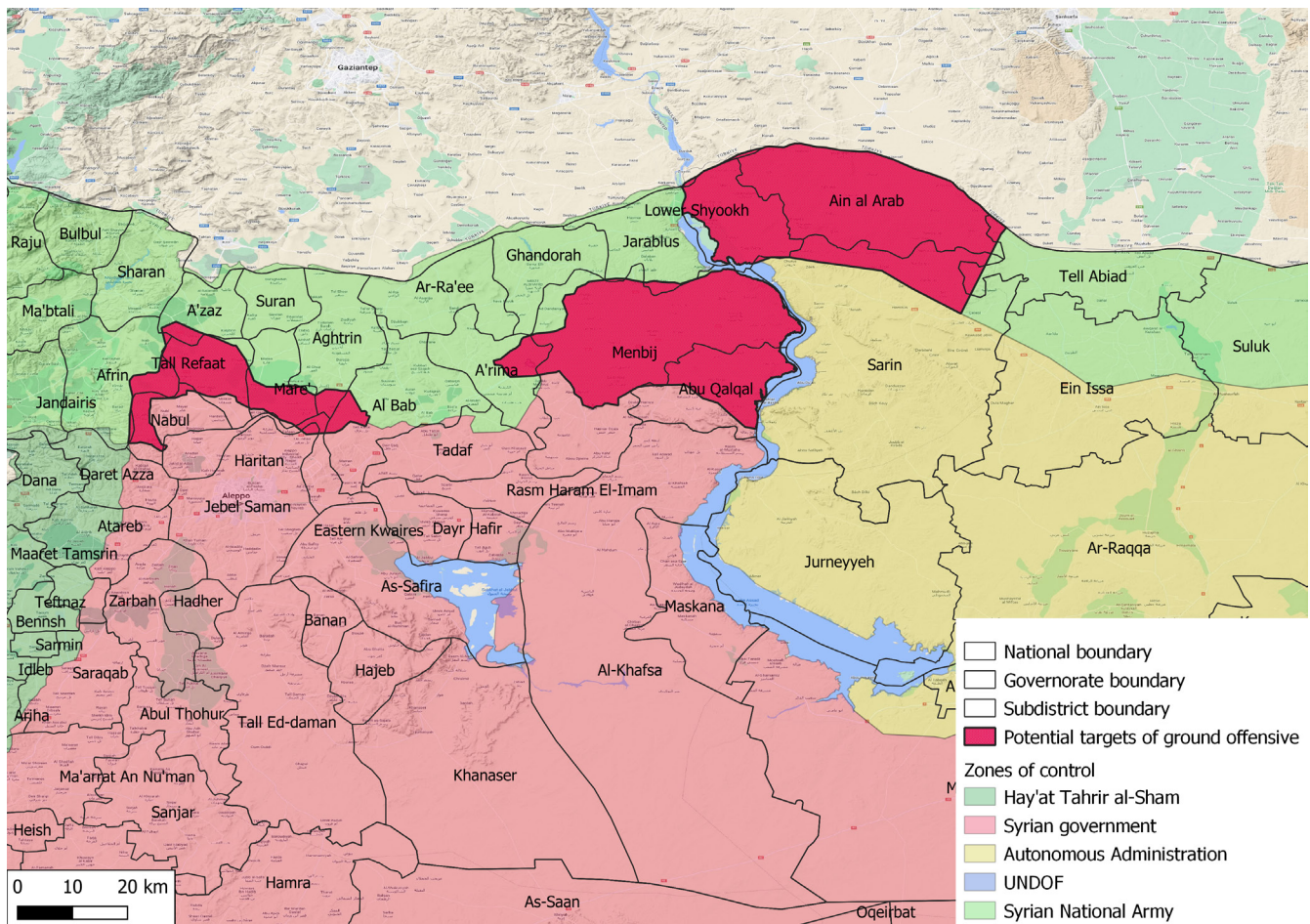
On 20 November, Turkish Ministry of National Defense [announced](#) the launch of operation Claw Sword [against](#) Syrian Democratic Forces' (SDF) and People's Protection Units (YPG) military positions in Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa and Al-Hasakeh governorates, as well as Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) positions in northern Iraq. The Operation is ostensibly a Turkish retaliation against an alleged Kurdish attack in Istanbul, in which six people were killed, and up to eighty people were injured. Recep

Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish president, has threatened action in northern Syria for some time, as part of its long-term conflict against the PKK and its Syrian affiliates the YPG/J and, by extension, the SDF.

Erdogan has [stated](#) that the aerial operation will be accompanied by ground operations, to establish a ‘safe zone’ of 30km on its southern border with Syria, free of Kurdish militia and where some of the nearly four million Syrian refugees in Turkey can be repatriated. (Similar to territory gained during previous operations Peace Spring and Olive Branch – the YPG’s expulsion from some border regions was agreed in [Sochi in 2019](#), as part of a truce between Russia and Turkey to prevent further Turkish incursion.) Turkish diplomatic sources [stated](#) that the Turkish operation will target three areas of

Tall Refaat, Menbij and Ain al Arab (Kobane³), and will aim to cut off SDF supply routes by deploying Turkish-backed forces along the A’zaz–Tall Refaat, Marea–Sheikh Issa–Tall Refaat, Al Bab–Menbij, Jarablus–Menbij, Jarablus–Ain Al Arab and Tal Abyad–Ain Al Arab routes. With presidential elections upcoming in Turkey, Erdogan will be hoping for a decisive victory.

According to the SDF [press center](#), the Turkish operation has bombed civilian and military sites, supply routes, and economic facilities in several villages of Tal Tamer, Amuda, Quamishli, Zarkan (Ras Al Ain), Al-Malikeyyeh (with the Semalka border crossing), Ein Issa, Tal Abyad, Tarwaziyah, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, Ain Al Arab, Afrin, Tall Refaat, and Menbij. Additionally, media sources [indicated](#) that Turkish forces launched airstrikes against Syri-



Locations highlighted as targets for a potential Turkish ground offensive.

3 Ain Al Arab is called Kobane by the Kurdish population, referred throughout the text by the official name of Ain Al Arab.

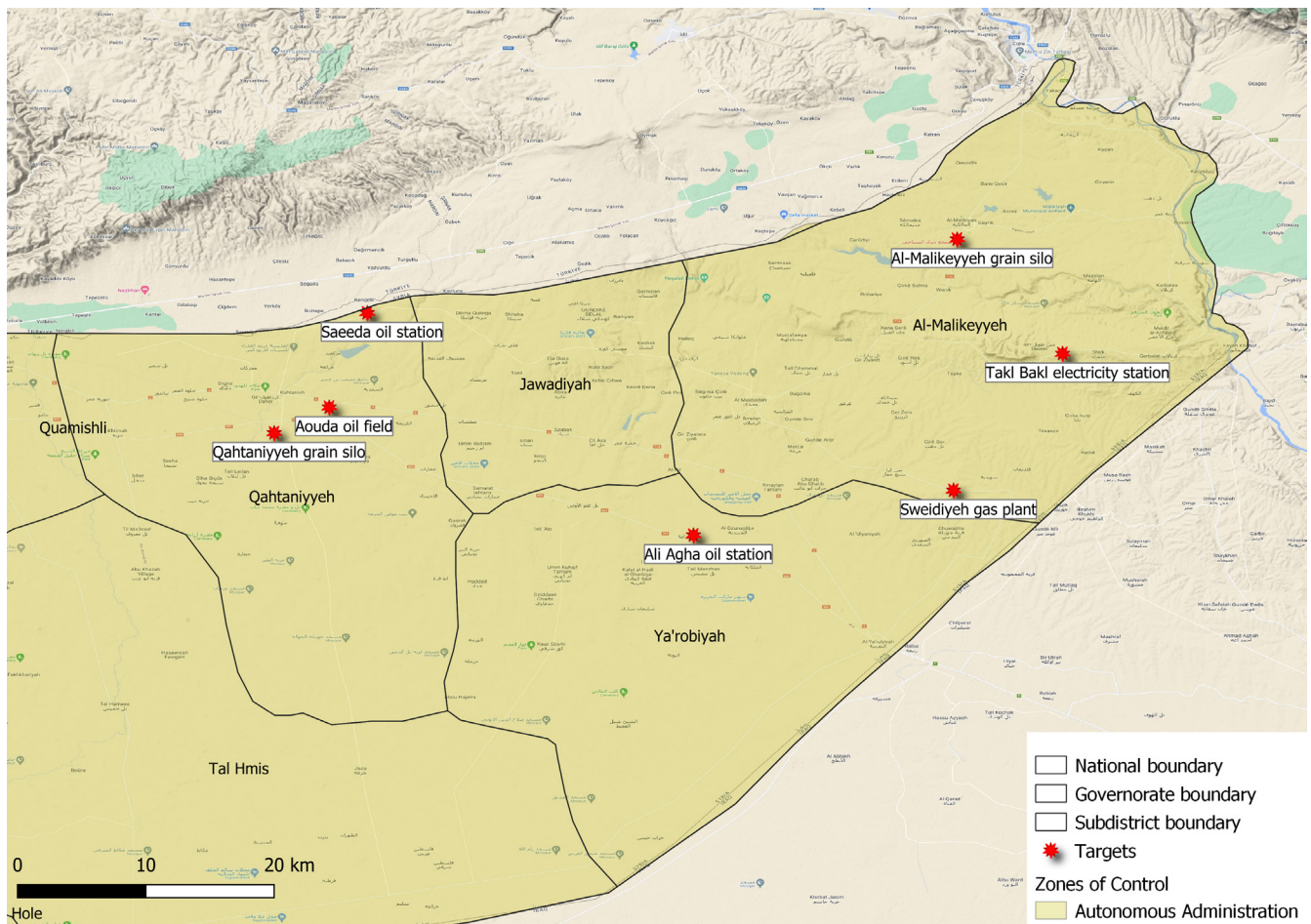
an government forces in northern Al-Hasakeh, Tall Refaat, and Ain Al Arab. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that during the first ten days of the Operation, more than [70 people](#), including civilians and members of Turkish, SDF, and Syrian government forces, were killed.

Damage to services, economic, and civilian infrastructure

[Reports show](#) that Turkish bombs have hit the Aouda oil field, and the Saeeda and Zarba oil storage facilities in Quamishli, and the Tigris oil station and Suwaydiyah gas plant in Al-Malikeyyeh among others. Further, local sources stated that intense bombing in Administration-held areas between 20 and 26 November led to a near-halt in daily life as both civilian and military infrastructure were rendered inoperable, resulting in prolonged power cuts in Quamishli and Al-Malikeyyeh districts which lasted for approximately ten days. Local sources

stated that energy facilities were closed as employees were instructed to stay at home. Interruptions to oil and gas production could disproportionately impact the local populations of the affected regions and further [delay](#) the distribution of fuel allocations (including heating diesel) during winter season, amid ongoing fuel shortages in northeast Syria.

The attacks also impacted Syrian government-held areas, already struggling with fuel shortages. Stay-at-home orders hampered the movement of oil trucks, preventing the supply of oil from the north-east for at least six days. Media sources stated that the Autonomous Administration [typically sends](#) approximately 180 oil trucks (or, 45,500 barrels) per day to the Syrian government; the amount may have [increased](#) in August to 250 (63,000 barrels) per day, following a Russian brokered deal. This increase in cross-line oil trade coincided with the deployment of Syrian government forces to the bor-



Locations damaged by Turkish aerial bombardment, which targeted oil infrastructure, as well as civilian areas

der region in the northeast, apparently to support the SDF.

Targeting the oil and gas infrastructure in northeast Syria could destabilise the Autonomous Administration, whose control over the natural resources, supported by the US, has been a key contributor to its authority.

Further displacement for northern populations

The military operation is also likely to cause waves of displacement from the targeted areas, although options for the population are limited; many have faced multiple displacements in northern Syria, when fleeing from government, opposition or Turkish forces in previous military offensives. According to local sources, displacement has been seen from Ain al-Arab, Menbij, and Tall Refaat, while border-villages in northeast Syria have been turned into military sites, to which villagers were prevented from returning due to persisting instability and possible military escalation.

Further, humanitarian need could continue to worsen. This has already been seen in the new tents set up within Ras Al Ain camp near the Syrian-Turkish border, to accommodate those fleeing the volatile regions; the displaced populations are **reportedly** in dire need of shelter and winterization assistance amid heavy rains in northeast Syria.

US and Russia condemn military escalation

The US has **called for** immediate de-escalation, stressing that a military operation is likely to destabilise the region, and impact the International Coalition and SDF's ability to counter ISIS insurgencies. Additionally, all US civilian and diplomatic staff were evacuated from northern Syria, to Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, on 29 November. Despite condemning Turkey's actions, and attacks on civilians, the US has pulled back from fully criticising its NATO ally, with a spokesperson for the White House National Security division **stating** that "Turkey has the right to defend itself."

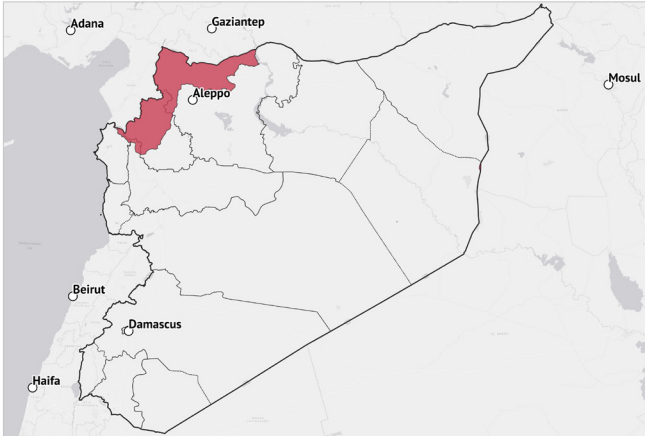
The primary change in US activity in northern Syria is in relation to the SDF. The International Coa-

lition (run and supported by the US) has worked with the SDF to first defeat ISIS, and then prevent its regrowth, and further insurgencies, since 2014. Now, with the stated need to redirect resources to fight against the Turkish offensive, the SDF has **suspended** all counter-terrorism operations with the Coalition forces for the first time. SDF leadership also warned of the **potential risk** from residents in Al-Hol camp accused of ISIS affiliation, should the security be compromised by aerial bombardments from Turkey.

Russia has similarly **called** on Turkey to refrain from using 'excessive' force to prevent escalation. In response the SDF's commander in chief has **stated** that it is Russia's responsibility to prevent military escalation in northeast Syria, as the guarantor of the ceasefire agreement in Sochi in 2019. The SDF has also asked for Russian support to conclude an agreement with the Syrian government, to provide military support to its regions, with the aim of protecting Administration-held areas against the Turkish offensive – increased reinforcements of Russian and government soldiers have been reported in northern Syria.

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has presented Turkey with the opportunity to **position** itself as a mediator and power broker. Turkey has maintained ties with both Ukraine and Russia by providing military support to the former, and economic support to the latter (it has facilitated export trade to the Russia, amid Western sanctions). Turkey also continues to play a decisive role within NATO, using new member's **need for unanimous approval** to condition Sweden and Finland's accession on ceasing their support to the PKK. This newfound leverage with the US, Russia, and within NATO itself, has encouraged Turkey to push for its national interests inside Syria's borders. However, the relationship between the different actors remains complicated. Turkey and the US both recognize the PKK as a terrorist organization, while Turkey claims the YPG is affiliated the PKK, the US has maintained its cooperation with the YPG (and the SDF), in its fight against ISIS. The US' presence in northeast Syria hinders Turkey's goal of limiting the SDF's military presence on its borders in northern Syria.

Northwest



IDP camps unprepared and underfunded for winter

The humanitarian situation in northwest Syria's IDP camps deteriorated at various levels over the past month. Storms, low temperatures, fires, the spread of disease, and a deterioration in the educational and health sectors have exacerbated the poor living conditions of residents. Although residents of the camps have come to expect these conditions in winter, their ability to cope is worsening; 90% of the shelter in camps have exceeded [their lifespan](#), and there is less and less funding for improvements. Against this backdrop, the bombing of several camps near Idlib further added to their misery.

Missiles fired at six camps

In early November, [six camps](#) (Maram, Watan, Wadi Haj Khaled, Kfar Ruhin Water Station Camp, Murin Village Camp, Beab'a) near Kafr Jales north of Idlib city were reportedly struck by surface-to-surface missiles, allegedly loaded with cluster munitions. As a result of the bombing, [ten civilians](#) were killed, including four children and a woman, and 75 others injured. More than [2,183 families](#) were displaced while the shelters of 3,621 families were exposed to material damage. The targeted area includes 23 formal camps and informal settlements; no known military targets were identified.

Shelters insufficient for winter

The attacks on camps damaged shelters, coinciding with falling temperatures and winter storms; floods were recorded throughout the more than 5,000 IDPs were affected at the same time as plummeting temperatures, and winter storms; already insufficient shelters were further damaged, flooded, and roads to and from the camps were blocked. Last winter, camp residents faced the same problems, and say that repairs and improvements to protect against the coming winter are lacking. The Response Coordination Group (RCG), a Syrian research organization, interviewed more than 60,000 IDPs of different age groups, in more than 285 camps in the northwest about their needs; 83% said their tents were damaged and needed replacing. Reportedly, the humanitarian response in camps last year only reached 22% of residents in need.

The low degree of preparedness for winter, despite appeals made by the IDPs and the humanitarian agencies operating in the region, indicates the continued atrophy of camps in the northwest. With a funding shortfall of over 70%, and no plans to replace tents (the vast majority of which are worn out), many solutions by humanitarian organizations are likely to be short-term, and insufficient. International and local NGOs made attempts to secure permanent housing for the IDPs by building small villages to transfer IDPs to. In mid-November, the Turkish Minister of Interior, Suleiman Soylu, attended the handover of [600 brick houses](#) to the IDPs in Idlib, which were built by the Turkish Association of Independent Industrialists and Businessmen (Musyad) and the Sadaqa Tashi Association. Soylu stated that Turkey has finished building 75,000 brick houses in Idlib within two years, as part of a plan to build 100,000 houses by the end of this year. With over 1.7 million people living in camps, these solutions are limited in their impact.

Polluted water and poor healthcare facilitates

The RCG also provides evidence for the continued effect of cholera outbreak through northwest Syria, and the poor conditions in camps, which have affected camp residents, [with 25%](#) of the total [18,584](#)

[suspected](#) cases in the northwest recorded inside camps. Contaminated water – not to mention the lack of potable water – remains a significant issue; only 37% of camps have [proper sewage systems](#) installed, and some informal settlements have no sewage infrastructure. Clean and potable water is difficult to access for 47% (658) of the camps, which are not regularly served with water. If people do get sick, only 16% of the camps have mobile clinics or healthcare services, and so residents must be transferred to hospitals (made more complicated and costly in winter conditions).

Controlling the fuel sector in Idleb

Complications to the supply-chain for oil derivatives continue to cause shortages throughout Idleb, based on several factors in recent weeks. Supply of fuel in northwest Syria is almost entirely dependent on Turkey, reliant on both the benefactor's supply chain [including delays at ports](#), as well as instability along the Syria–Turkey border and recent infighting between armed groups. The clashes last October between Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the SNA-affiliated group Al-Jabha Al-Shamiyah appeared to indicate a shift in fuel supply chain control from the Autonomous Administration in the northeast – where HTS became part of the fuel delivery process from the Autonomous Administration in October when its allies successfully took over the most important trade crossing of Al-Hamran, in Jarablus.

Indications that HTS and the SSG have sought control over the fuel sector in Idleb have been apparent for a substantial period; this year, increased interference seems to have accelerated. The SSG's General Directorate of Fuel Derivatives, [established in February 2022](#), interfered in northwest Syria's fuel markets by revoking the operating license of the Watad Fuel Company. Watad's monopoly over the Turkey-dependent fuel supply chain, based on the SSG's decision, [effectively ended](#) in late October. The directorate, despite any substantial decisions affecting SSG-controlled areas aside from the recent revocation, is allegedly responsible for setting quality standards, developing procedures and operational protocol, approving licenses for fuel trade,

monitoring prices, and maintaining fuel reserves.

After effectively dissolving Watad Fuel, the Directorate approved six licenses for [new companies](#) to operate in the northwest: Al-Arabiya, Al-Salam, Al-Rahma, Tebah, Al-Ethad, Al-Alamiyah. These companies have already started operations, distributing fuel through a number of petrol stations and fuel tankers. What is unclear is how fuel imports via Turkey are now being coordinated – previously Watad had an exclusive contract with a Turkish company, Transpet Petrol, facilitated by the Turkish Ministry of Trade and Economy. Some sources have said that Watad will continue import operations into the northwest, however will no longer have control over distribution. Whether this mechanism will now be with the SSG, or its approved companies (whose affiliations are undisclosed), is not yet determined. With these developments, it is possible that HTS is looking to control the fuel sector in Idleb; this would increase its takings, and also further embed its, and the SSG's, control in the northwest.

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The Humanitarian Access Team (HAT) was established in Beirut in March 2015 in response to the collective challenges facing the remote humanitarian response in Syria. HAT's most important function is to collect and analyze disparate data and information. Since 2015, HAT analysis has provided a forward-looking template for international interventions in Syria, and facilitated an increasingly adaptive, integrated, and ultimately impactful international response to the conflict.

