



مجلس كنائس الشرق الأوسط  
The Middle East Council of Churches

# MIDDLE EAST OVERVIEW

**NOVEMBER 2019**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

As socioeconomic conditions continue to deteriorate throughout the Middle East, forms of revolution rekindle hope for a better tomorrow. However, street violence, state oppression, internet blackout, and deaths have been reported as state and citizens clash. There is no doubt that the region is boiling and that change is inevitable. Yet some questions remain: what form of change will all these movements bring? Will they bring justice for the Armenian Catholic Father Hovsep Bedoyan and all the Christian figures which had perished? Will that change, mend the fabrics of society, or are we headed to a more serious backlash?

It is not up to the MECC to answer such questions, but to be ready to face any new situation that may arise. Therefore, the council throughout this month, while committing to deepening its relationship with its partners, have setup internal meetings to discuss several options and possibilities. It has been decided that preemptive plans and proactive policies are to shadow every project the MECC is working on.



## 2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

### Egypt

- Petroceltic, a U.K.-based global energy company, has initiated arbitration proceedings claiming that it has not been fully paid by the Egyptian Government.<sup>1</sup>
- During the 12th Kuwaiti Week in Egypt, Minister of Investment and International Cooperation Sahar Nasr called on Kuwaiti businesses to inject further investments in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>
- Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi hile while opening two military-owned chemical plants in Abu Rawash, claimed that military-owned industrial organizations could be privatized in the future, opening the door for foreign investment.<sup>3</sup>
- Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs Abubakr Hefny participated at the 18th meeting of the African Foreign Ministers held in the Tanzanian city of Dar Es-Salaam. He conveyed his message to the African nations about the importance and benefits of investing in Egypt.<sup>4</sup>
- In November, the country's official statistics agency CAPMAS, claimed that Egypt's annual urban consumer price inflation fell to 3.1% in October, from 4.8% in September.<sup>5</sup>
- Egypt's economic growth is expected to go from 5.6% to 5.9% for the 2019/2020 fiscal year.<sup>6</sup>
- 16.2517 EG/USD official currency exchange rate.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Real Clear Politics , November 2, 2019,

[https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2019/11/02/dc\\_arbitration\\_threatens\\_egypts\\_economic\\_revival\\_141644.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2019/11/02/dc_arbitration_threatens_egypts_economic_revival_141644.html)

<sup>2</sup> Egypt Today, Nov. 6, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/77509/12th-Kuwaiti-business-week-in-Cairo-begins>

<sup>3</sup> Janes, Nov. 5, 2019, <https://www.janes.com/article/92362/egypt-signals-private-investment-in-military-companies>

<sup>4</sup> Egypt Today, Nov. 10, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/77636/Egypt-encourages-African-investments-to-promote-economic-integration>

<sup>5</sup> Nasdaq, Nov. 9, 2019, <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/egypts-annual-urban-consumer-price-inflation-falls-to-3.1-in-october-2019-11-09>

<sup>6</sup> Zawya, Nov. 7, 2019,

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Egypt's\\_economic\\_growth\\_seen\\_at\\_59\\_in\\_FY1920\\_EBRD-SNG\\_158868106/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Egypt's_economic_growth_seen_at_59_in_FY1920_EBRD-SNG_158868106/)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.cbe.org.eg/en/EconomicResearch/Statistics/Pages/ExchangeRatesListing.aspx>



## Jordan

- King Abdullah, at the sixth economy workshop at Al Husseinia Palace, called for the continued monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the first stimulus package which was recently launched by the government.<sup>8</sup>
- Jordan reclaims the villages of Baqoura and Al Ghamr which were annexed by Israel in 1994.<sup>9</sup>
- According to Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply Tareq Hammouri all necessary measures will be taken to accelerate and simplify clearance procedures for products coming into the Kingdom through Aqaba port heading to other countries, especially those to Iraq.<sup>10</sup>
- As part of “rock-solid” commitment to Jordan, details of a US cash transfer to Jordan was finalized.<sup>11</sup>
- Jordan's Prime Minister Omar al-Razzaz reshuffled the cabinet on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November, appointing a former palace adviser as finance minister. This move is intended to push IMF-led economic reforms.<sup>12</sup>
- In an initiative to boost economic cooperation between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, private sector representatives from both countries, during a business forum organized by the Jordan Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Council of Saudi Chambers, claimed that “conditions are ripe” for taking vital steps towards the best interests of both countries.
- 1.428 USD Jordanian official currency value.<sup>13</sup>

## Iraq

- Heavy turmoil is underway in Iraq as protesters clash with security forces. Civilian casualties so far have surpassed 300.<sup>14</sup>
- Iraq's Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi called on demonstrators to stop the protests as they are damaging the country and costing the nation billions of dollars.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Jordan Times, Nov. 7, 2019, <https://jordantimes.com/news/local/king-participates-sixth-workshop-economy>

<sup>9</sup> The National, Nov. 10, 2019, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/mena/jordan-s-king-abdullah-draws-cheers-as-he-declares-return-of-villages-by-israel-1.935836>

<sup>10</sup> Jordan Times, Nov. 13, 2019, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/govt-keen-streamline-aqaba-port-procedures-%E2%80%94-hammouri>

<sup>11</sup> Zawya, Nov. 14, 2019,

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Jordan\\_US\\_finalising\\_details\\_of\\_2019\\_disbursement-SNG\\_159428763/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Jordan_US_finalising_details_of_2019_disbursement-SNG_159428763/)

<sup>12</sup> Reuters, Nov. 14, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-jordan-government-reshuffle/in-major-reshuffle-jordan-pm-moves-to-push-imf-led-economic-reforms-idUSKBN1XH1QB?il=0>

<sup>13</sup> <http://statisticaldb.cbj.gov.jo/index?action=level4>

<sup>14</sup> Reuters, November 4, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-protests/three-killed-as-iraqi-protesters-try-to-break-into-iran-consulate-in-kerbala-idUSKBN1XE0R7>

<sup>15</sup> Middle East Monitor, November 4, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191104-iraqs-pm-urges-protesters-to-stop-says-unrest-is-hurting-the-economy/>



- The Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) has been named the safest bank in Iraq by Global Finance magazine due to the rating received from Moody's, Standard & Poor's and Fitch and due to the assets it possesses.<sup>16</sup>
- According to Major Gen. Abdul-Karim Khalaf, a spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi, Iraq has lost more than 6 billion USD due to the protests and the closing of Umm Qasr port.<sup>17</sup>
- Iraq has imposed an internet curfew making the service only available between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm in an attempt to disrupt communications between protesters, dealing a further blow to the Iraqi economy and raising concerns over human rights abuses.<sup>18</sup>
- Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi announced his resignation after a deadly day of violence in which security forces killed 40 people on the streets.<sup>19</sup>
- 539 Dinar /USD Iraqi official currency exchange rate.<sup>20</sup>

## Lebanon

- PM Saad El Hariri announced his resignation and that of the government due to the large demonstrations which crippled the country.<sup>21</sup>
- The month of November was characterized by demonstrations on the street and in front of government institutions. Some clashes have been reported with the army as protesters attempted to block roads.
- As banks increased credit control, traders found it hard during November to pay for imports.<sup>22</sup>
- Following the resignation of the government, Moody's Investors Service downgraded Lebanon's rating to Caa2.<sup>23</sup>
- The World Bank declared its readiness to help Lebanon, once a new government is formed.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Zawya, November 3, 2019, [https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/TBI\\_receives\\_safest\\_bank\\_in\\_Iraq\\_2019\\_by\\_global\\_finance-ZAWYA20191103081014/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/TBI_receives_safest_bank_in_Iraq_2019_by_global_finance-ZAWYA20191103081014/)

<sup>17</sup> Rudaw, November 6, 2019, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/061120194>

<sup>18</sup> Rudaw, Nov. 11, 2019, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/111120191>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/iraq-prime-minister-adel-abdul-mahdi-says-he-will-resign/a-51469003>

<sup>20</sup> Deutsche Welle, Nov. 29, 2019,

<http://www.cbiraq.org/DataValues.aspx?dtFrm=10/31/2003&dtTo=02/18/2019&tmId=175&dtformat=MMM,yyyy>

<sup>21</sup> Annahar, Oct 29, 2019, <https://en.annahar.com/article/1058445-prime-minister-saad-hariri-announces-resignation>

<sup>22</sup> Aawsat, November 5, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1977701/lebanese-importers-struggle-banks-impose-credit-controls>

<sup>23</sup> Moodys <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1977681/moodys-downgrades-lebanon-cites-default-risk>

<sup>24</sup> Aawsat, November 6, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1979396/world-bank-ready-support-lebanon-urges-quick-formation-new-cabinet>



- The United Arab Emirates' central bank claimed projects are being studied to be implemented in Lebanon, despite the situation in the country.<sup>25</sup>
- As of 26<sup>nd</sup> November, the black market exchange rate has soared to 2,200 pounds to the dollar, almost 50% percent higher than the official rate.<sup>26</sup>
- 1507.5 LBP/ USD Lebanon official currency exchange rate.<sup>27</sup>

## Palestine

- As part of Palestine's attempt to decrease its dependence on the Israeli economy, the Palestinian Minister National Economy Khaled Ousaili al-convened with a Russian official to discuss ways to boost trade and the import of raw materials needed for the Palestinian industries.<sup>28</sup>
- In a new ruling. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) labeled Israeli settlement products as illegal.<sup>29</sup>
- At the 17th Turkey-Palestine Business Council meeting, both parties discussed of enhancing bilateral cooperation. During the event, Mohammad Alamour, the council's Palestinian chair, enticed Turkey to invest in Palestine as the country bears several opportunities.<sup>30</sup>
- More than 24 dead and 70 injured were the result of Israeli attacks on the Gaza strip, as a political deadlock reigns in Israel.<sup>31</sup>

## Syria

- Syrian forces have retaken control of Tishrin power plant, which has an electricity generating capacity of approximately 630 megawatts (MW), located 90 kilometers (55.9 miles) east of the provincial capital city of Aleppo.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Reuters, Nov. 3, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-protests-emirates/uae-central-bank-studying-proposed-projects-in-lebanon-idUSKBN1XD0B5>

<sup>26</sup> Al Arabiya, Nov. 26, 2019, <https://www.alarabiya.net/ar/aswaq/financial-markets/2019/11/26/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.bdl.gov.lb/>

<sup>28</sup> Al-Monitor, November 3, 2019, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/10/palestinians-seek-russia-market-boost-trade-disengagement.html>

<sup>29</sup> Aawsat, Nov.13, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1989931/palestinians-welcome-eu-court-ruling-labeling-israeli-settlements%E2%80%99-products>

<sup>30</sup> AA, Nov. 12, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/economy/turkey-palestine-continue-work-on-trade-relations/1642752>

<sup>31</sup> News Click, Nov. 14, 2019, <https://www.newsclick.in/Israeli-Aristrikes-Gaza-Killed-24-Palestinians>

<sup>32</sup> Almasdar News, November 18, 2019, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/syrian-army-is-now-in-full-control-of-tabaqa-dam-in-western-raqqqa/>



- One of the production units of Syria's Baniyas refinery, which has the capacity to process over 130,000 barrels per day of crude oil, suffered an explosion during maintenance operations.<sup>33</sup>
- Due to the government's change in policies, transit costs have increased.<sup>34</sup>
- A Greek business delegation visited Damascus to search for investment opportunities<sup>35</sup>.
- Syrian currency continues its freefall and prices rise that the dollar has crossed the 700-pound level in the Syrian foreign exchange market for the first time on record.<sup>36</sup>
- Official Current Exchange Rate SP/USD: 768

## Cyprus

- According to Finance Minister Harris Georgiades, Cyprus's economy grew by 3% helping the GDP to achieve a 4% growth.<sup>37</sup>
- The EU sees Cyprus's economy is on the decline as the European Commission forecasted a slump in GDP from 2.9% in 2019 to 2.3% in 2021.<sup>38</sup>
- At the Economist conference in Nicosia, Finance Minister Harris Georgiades claimed that the country is protected from any external threats that may affect the economy. Moreover, he added that a set of reforms are on the way.<sup>39</sup>
- According to the head of the Fiscal Council Demetris Georgiades, Cyprus' economy is still facing internal and external dangers as a result of high bureaucracy, decreased internal competitiveness, issues with the national health scheme (Gesyl) and Cyta, and a high-level of non-performing loans.<sup>40</sup>
- 1.1 USD Euro official currency value<sup>41</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Reuters, Nov. 7, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-security-blast-refinery/syrias-oil-minister-says-production-unit-in-baniyas-refinery-damaged-in-explosion-idUSKBN1XH2NZ>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com>

<sup>37</sup> Xinhuanet, November 6, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/06/c\\_138531276.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/06/c_138531276.htm)

<sup>38</sup> Financial Mirror, Nov. 7, 2019, <https://www.financialmirror.com/news-details.php?nid=37833>

<sup>39</sup> Cyprus Mail, November 5, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/05/high-debt-npls-could-magnify-any-external-shocks-to-cyprus-economy-experts-say/>

<sup>40</sup> Cyprus Mail, November 13, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/13/fiscal-council-warns-of-internal-and-external-risks-to-the-economy/>

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy\\_and\\_exchange\\_rates/euro\\_reference\\_exchange\\_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-usd.en.html](https://www.ecb.europa.eu/stats/policy_and_exchange_rates/euro_reference_exchange_rates/html/eurofxref-graph-usd.en.html)







### 3. THE REFUGEE SITUATION (Updated)

#### Egypt

- In November, several countries made several contributions for the sake of the UNHCR in Egypt. They include Lithuania (\$5,555), Sweden (\$4,113,534), Germany (\$10,091,430), Denmark (\$146,144), Japan (\$288,660), Switzerland (\$504,032), UK (\$10,296,011).<sup>42</sup>
- According to the UNHCR, the Egyptian government issued new digital permit cards for refugees and asylum-seekers instead of permit stickers; a move that may allow them to access social services.<sup>43</sup>
- Startups Without Borders held a summit at the American University in Cairo, Egypt on November 8, 9 under the theme “Think Global, Inside Out,”. The aim of the event was to change perceptions on refugees and migrants, and to help develop an entrepreneurial trend amongst refugees and migrants.<sup>44</sup>

#### Jordan

The UNHCR states that there are currently 654,266 registered refugees in Jordan up until the beginning of November.

The proportion of Syrian displaced people registered within the UNHCR for October, are distributed as follows:

- 192,721 in Amman Governorate (29.5 %)
- 161,995 in Mafraq Governorate (24.8%)
- 134,707 in Irbid Governorate (20.6%)
- 94,662 in Zarqa Governorate (14.5%)
- 18,544 in Balqa Governorate (2.8%)
- 13,098 in Madaba Governorate (2%)
- 9,328 in Jarash Governorate (1.4%)
- 8,448 in Karak Governorate (1.3%)
- 8,300 in Maan Governorate (1.3%)
- 6,594 in Ajlun Governorate (1.0%)
- 3,507 in Aqaba Governorate (0.5%)

<sup>42</sup> <http://reporting.unhcr.org/egypt>

<sup>43</sup> Ahram, Oct 28, 2019, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/354842/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-issues-new-permit-residence-cards-for-refuge.aspx>

<sup>44</sup> Egypt Today, Oct. 31, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/76363/Startups-Without-Borders-holds-1st-summit-in-Cairo>



- 1,682 in Tafilah Governorate (0.3%)
- The UNRWA in Jordan has staged an open-ended strike after suffering a budget crunch which was the result of the White House's new policies.<sup>45</sup>
- King Abdullah II of Jordan convened with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa Canada to discuss the refugee situation and how to promote diversity and counter violent extremism.<sup>46</sup>

## Iraq

The UNHCR states that there are currently 234,831 registered Syrian refugees in Iraq.

The proportion of displaced Syrian people registered within the UNHCR up until the beginning of November, are distributed as follows:

- 118,726 in Erbil (50.6%)
  - 83,977 in Dahuk (35.8%)
  - 29,282 in Sulaymaniyah (12.5%)
  - 1,108 in Anbar (0.5%)
  - 1,738 in other areas (0.8%)<sup>47</sup>
- The US Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration contributed 2.5 million USD for the sake of the World Health Organization (WHO) to continue serving over a quarter of a million Syrian refugees living in the 3 Kurdistan regions.<sup>48</sup>
  - In a new Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment published by the UNHCR in November, 2.9 million individuals, including camp-based and out-of-camp IDPs as well as returnees, are missing at least one form of civil documentation, impeding their access to health and education services.<sup>49</sup>
  - The UNHCR published in November that an estimated 13,634 individuals have crossed into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq since the beginning of Turkish military operation.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Aawsat, Nov.3, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1974336/jordan-un-agency-palestinian-refugees-launches-strike>

<sup>46</sup> Middle East Monitor, Nov. 19, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20191119-jordans-king-praises-canadas-help-with-refugees/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/5>

<sup>48</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 13, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/us-department-states-contribution-boosts-primary-and-referral-health-services-syrian>

<sup>49</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 20, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-unhcr-civil-documentation-idps>

<sup>50</sup> Relief Web, Nov 3, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/unhcr-inter-agency-operational-update-iraq-3-november-2019>



## Lebanon

Since the beginning of November, the number of registered refugees in Lebanon is 918,974.

Refugees in Lebanon are distributed as follows:

- 342,875 in Bekaa (37.31%)
  - 243,125 in North Lebanon (26.45%)
  - 228,009 in Beirut (24.81%)
  - 104,965 in South Lebanon (11.42%)<sup>51</sup>
- 
- The General Security declared that it has returned 85 Syrian refugees in Bekaa area to Syria on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November. <sup>52</sup>
  - The UNHCR has begun winter preparations for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.<sup>53</sup>
  - The LCRP published in November, the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter funding update noting a 62% gap in funding.<sup>54</sup>
  - Lebanese president Michel Aoun, in a statement by the presidential office rejected a declaration by the Foreign Affairs and Budget Committees of the European Parliament calling for the employment and integration of Syrian refugees in host communities.<sup>55</sup>
  - 208 people Syrian, including 63 women and 106 children, have returned from Lebanon to Syria on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November according to the Russian military.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

<sup>52</sup> Daily Star, Oct 31, 2019, <https://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Oct-31/494691-general-security-to-return-syrian-refugees-in-bekaa.ashx>

<sup>53</sup> UNHCR, Nov. 22, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/11/5dd7a6067/winter-preparations-syrian-refugees-displaced-full-swing.html>

<sup>54</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/72348>

<sup>55</sup> Xinhua Net, Nov. 8, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/08/c\\_138540225.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-11/08/c_138540225.htm)

<sup>56</sup> Urdu Point, Nov. 22, 2019, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/world/over-900-syrians-return-home-from-jordan-leb-768622.html>



## Syria

### Humanitarian situation:

- Hundreds of thousands of civilians at risk in Syria amid ongoing violence in northeast and northwest, that almost daily violence targeting built-up areas and health facilities in Syria continues to threaten the lives of civilians there, UN rights experts and humanitarians said on Friday 8 Nov.
- The United Nations is investigating attacks on seven humanitarian sites in Syria. Diplomats say Russia is trying to keep the U.N. findings secret.<sup>57</sup>
- More than 5 million children in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria, including 2.6 million internally displaced children: the scale, severity and complexity of the crisis is staggering.
- The UN has verified 1,792 grave violations against children's rights this year alone.<sup>58</sup>
- Killing and maiming remains the most prevalent violation against children in Syria, with 657 children killed and 324 injured between January and the end of September.<sup>59</sup>

### KEY FIGURES

#### POPULATION in 2019



**4M**

People in northwest Syria



**51%**

of the population in northwest Syria are children



**2.8M**

People in need

#### IDPs in 2019



**2M**

Internally displaced people in northwest Syria



**400,000**

People displaced since 1 May



**388**

IDPs sites\* as of 31 August



**669,000**

IDPs living in camps and informal sites as of Sep

### North West Syria (NWS)

- Hostilities continue to impact the civilian population, with an increase in airstrikes and ground shelling in southern Idleb, northern Hama, eastern Lattakia and western Aleppo governorates, resulting in civilian deaths and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. According to OHCHR reports, these include attacks on 4 and 6 November that impacted four hospitals, including the Kafr Nobol hospital. Moreover, the overall security situation across northwest Syria continues to be challenging due to IED attacks that put at risk the lives of civilians.
- Since the end of April, over 400,000 women, children and men have been displaced by the violence in north-west Syria, many of them multiple times, and over 1,000 have lost their lives, many of them children.

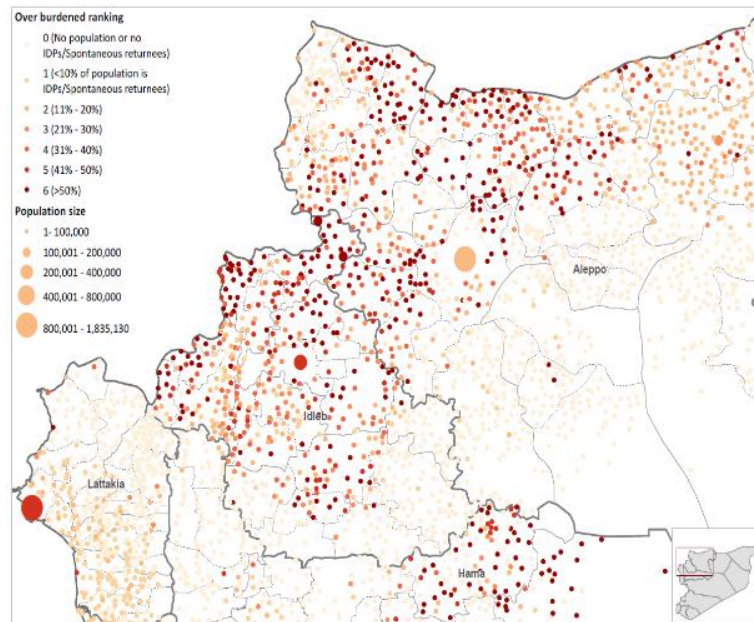
<sup>57</sup>New York Times, Nov 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/14/world/middleeast/russia-syria-hospital-bombing.html>

<sup>58</sup>Unicef, Nov. 21, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/geneva-palais-briefing-note-children-syria>

<sup>59</sup>Unicef, Nov. 21, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/geneva-palais-briefing-note-children-syria>



- 670,000 people who live in areas that may be affected by a further escalation of conflict. Of the 2.8 million Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance in the area, 76 per cent are women and children.
- Schools alone have reportedly been damaged or otherwise affected by airstrikes and shelling in the north-west, while a total of 94 schools have been used as shelters by IDPs as a result of the ongoing violence.<sup>60</sup>
- As of 18 November, around 12,000 people remain in the informal settlement at Rukban on the border with Jordan - almost half of them children.



<sup>60</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 22, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-arab-republic-northwest-syria-snapshot-20-november-2019>



### North East Syria (NES):

- Prior to 9 October, of the three million people living in the area, 1.8 million were already in need of humanitarian assistance, including over 900,000 in acute need. More than 710,000 of those living in the area were already internally displaced.<sup>61</sup>
- The recent wave of displacement comes in addition to more than 91,000 people residing in camps for the displaced, with over 90 per cent of the internally displaced people women and children.
- Nearly 28,000 foreign children more than 60 different countries - including almost 20,000 from Iraq - remain trapped in the northeast, mostly in displacement camps.<sup>62</sup>
- As of 12 November, 220,1801 population movements have been recorded since the military operations began on 9 October. 74,381 people remain displaced from Hassakeh (48,134), Raqqa (19,471) and Aleppo (6,776) governorates.
- 117,132 people have returned to their areas of origin in Hassakeh (65,210), Raqqa (41,817) and Aleppo (10,105) governorates, while 28,667 people were displaced more than once. And More than 15,000 people have reportedly fled to Iraq.
- Over 57,000 are currently staying with relatives or in host communities in Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates, with those remaining staying in 91 active collective shelters in Al-Hasakeh and Ar-Raqqa. Overall, an additional 32 collective shelters, all in Hassakeh governorate, are now empty.<sup>63</sup>
- Prior to the latest crisis, 1.25 million people were being reached each month in north-east Syria, including 850,000 people in Syria Democratic Forces (SDF)-controlled areas. Of the latter, approximately 60 per cent were being reached from Damascus and Aleppo, with the rest through cross-border operations from Iraq (via Peshkabout and Al Yarubiyah).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 14,

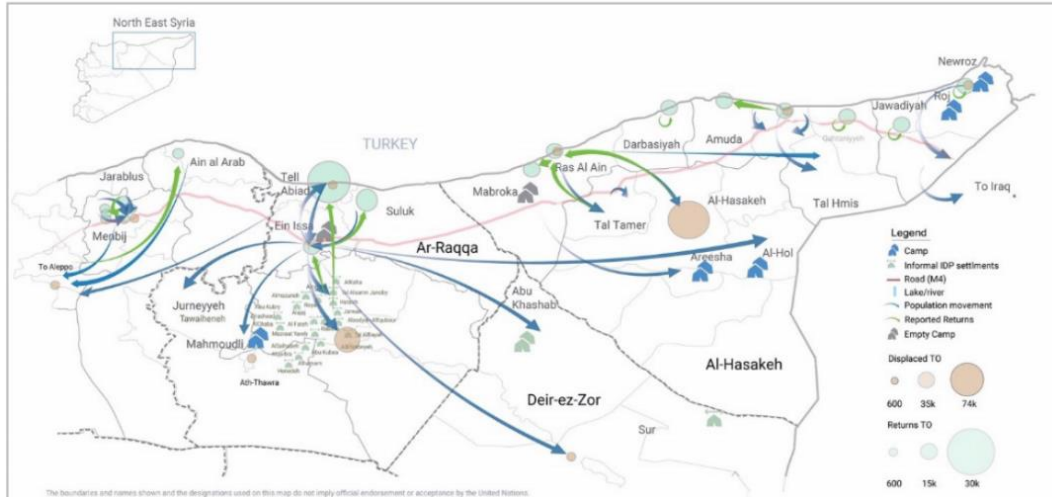
[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%206%20\\_DS.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%206%20_DS.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Unicef, Nov. 21, 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/geneva-palais-briefing-note-children-syria>

<sup>63</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 17, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/unhcr-syria-situation-report-north-east-syria-humanitarian-emergency-0>

<sup>64</sup> Relief Web, Nov. 14,

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%206%20\\_DS.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%206%20_DS.pdf)



## IDP Movements

### Syrian Arab Republic

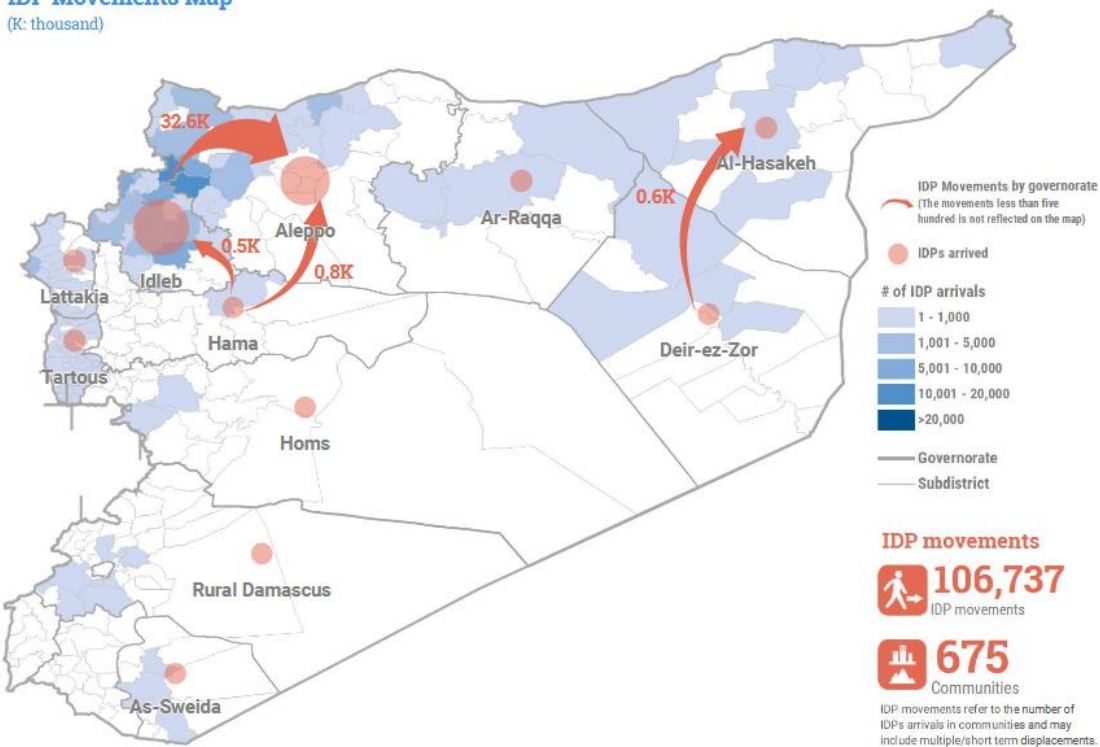
#### IDP Movements

September-2019



#### IDP Movements Map

(K: thousand)



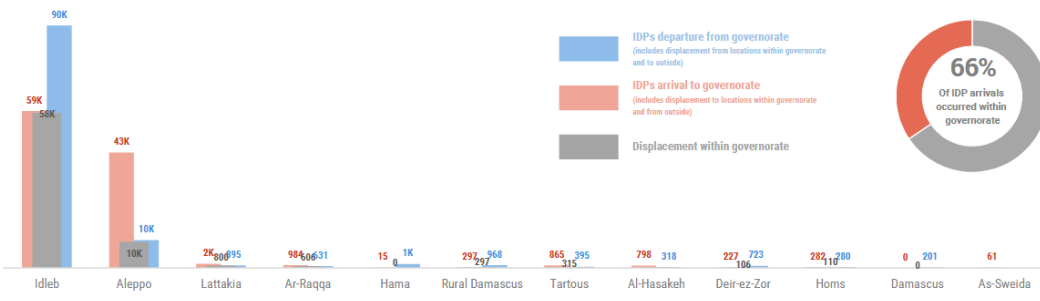




In September 2019, the humanitarian community tracked a total of 106,737 IDPs movement across Syria. The majority of this population, 58,607 individuals, were displaced to different locations in Idleb governorate with 57,824 IDPs being displaced within Idleb governorate while 683 individuals were displaced from north Hama and south Aleppo governorates to north Idleb governorate. The second largest population movement was recorded in Aleppo governorate with a total of 43,086 individuals, including 32,632 people arriving from Idleb governorate and 9,694 IDPs within Aleppo governorate and the rest from north Hama governorate. The third largest movement is recorded in Lattakia governorate where 1,515 people within/from different governorates tracked. Damascus, Dar'a and Quneitra are the three governorates that did not receive any internally displaced people in September 2019.

### Governorate Summary

(K: thousand)

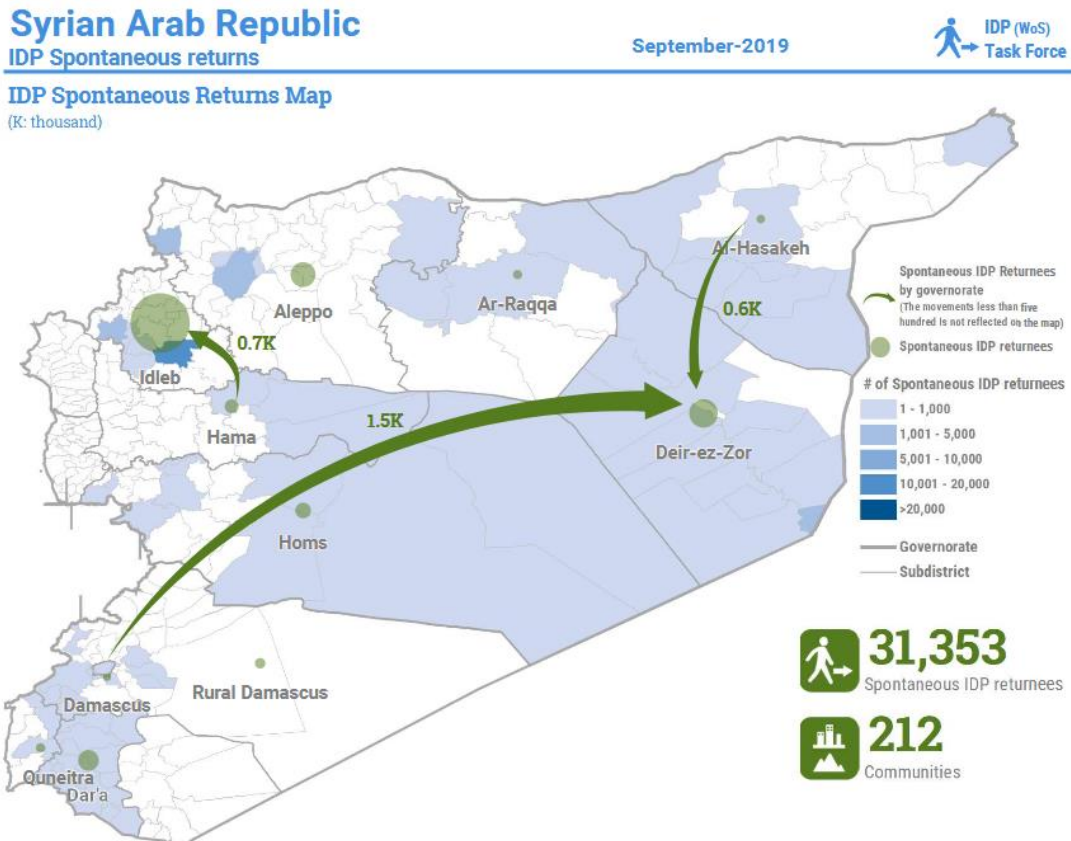


Creation Date: 01 Nov 2019  
Feedback: sapkota1@un.org

Source: Information as reported by CCCM, HNAP and OCHA Syria for Sep 2019.  
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance.



## IDP Spontaneous Returns



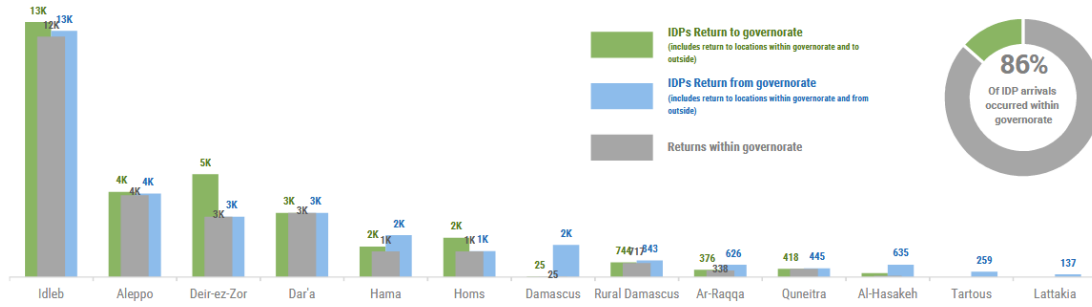
In September 2019, the humanitarian community recorded 31,353 spontaneous IDP returnees in different locations across Syria. The majority of this returns were recorded in Idleb governorate with around 13,000 returnees, about 12,300 of which returned from within the governorate and about 750 returnees from Hama governorate.

Deir-ez-Zor governorate received the second largest number of IDP returnees with 5,273 spontaneous returns, about 3,000 of which returned from within the governorate, about 1,500 returned from Damascus governorate and 570 returnees recorded from Al-Hasakeh governorate. Aleppo governorate comes third with 4,367 returns while 3,290 returns were recorded in Dar'a and 2,000 returns were recorded in Homs governorate, followed by Hama governorate with 1,563 recorded spontaneous IDP returns.



### Governorate Summary

(K: thousand)



Creation Date: 01 Nov 2019

Feedback: sapkota1@un.org

Source: Information as reported by CCCM, HNP and OCHA Syria for Sep 2019.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance.

## Cyprus

- The locations for the construction of new reception centers intended for 1000 refugees have been selected along the Green Line in Cyprus.<sup>65</sup>
- 120 irregular migrants who breached Cyprus's territory went through investigation after being rescued by the coast guard.<sup>66</sup>
- House President Demetris Syllouris in his address at the 11th Annual Symposium of the occupied city of Kyrenia held in Nicosia, will never accept a solution to the Cyprus problem that will not allow all refugees to return to their homes.<sup>67</sup>
- Cypriot Members of Parliament during a meeting of the House Refugees committee, were informed 43 refugee apartment buildings are in bad condition and are a danger to elderly residents.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> In Cyprus, Nov. 1, 2019, <https://in-cyprus.com/new-reception-center-for-1000-refugees/>

<sup>66</sup> In Cyprus, Nov 22, 2019, <https://in-cyprus.com/28-year-old-arrested-as-police-investigate-arrival-of-120-refugees/>

<sup>67</sup> Cyprus Mail, Nov. 16, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/16/solution-should-provide-for-return-of-all-refugees-to-homes/>

<sup>68</sup> Cyprus Mail, Nov. 5, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/05/some-refugee-housing-units-problematic-and-dangerous/>



## 4. CHURCH ACTIVITIES

### Egypt

- His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Holy See of St. Mark, from the papal headquarters in Cairo, claimed that the homeland is of one fabric, and the problems are an exception and not a rule. Moreover, he received a delegation from the "Builders of Dialogue" initiative of KAICIID International. The two parties discussed the successes in Christian-Muslim dialogue and the obstacles the initiative still faces.<sup>69</sup>
- His Holiness Pope Tawadros II and Dr. Abd El Aziz Kansoh Governor of Alexandria Cardinal, received the Bishop of Agrigento of Sicily, Francesco Montenegro at the headquarters of the Cathedral of St. Mark in Abbassieh. His Holiness lauded the great historical relationship between Egypt and Italy and stressed the willingness of Egypt to work with Italy to spread inter-religious peace.<sup>70</sup>
- More than a million Christians and Muslims flocked to Luxor governorate in Upper Egypt to celebrate the consecration of the first church named in honor of Saint George at the Monastery of Mount Rizeigat on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November.<sup>71</sup>

### Jordan

- For the first time, a documentary about the Christian presence in Jordan, was shown at a festival in the Mafraq Governorate. The event was presided by former minister El Ein Hsein Elmajali.<sup>72</sup>

### Iraq

- His Holiness Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church called for 3 days of fasting and prayer for peace as new violence and protests erupt in the country.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Veto Gate, Nov. 18, 2019, <https://www.vetogate.com/3604646>

<sup>70</sup> Youm 7, Nov. 15, 2019, <https://www.youm7.com/story/2019/11/15/>

<sup>71</sup> Egypt Independent, Nov. 13, 2019, <https://egyptindependent.com/photos-thousands-of-egyptians-celebrate-new-church-honoring-saint-george-in-luxor/>

<sup>72</sup> Alrai, November 18, 2019, <http://alrai.com/article/10507639>

<sup>73</sup> Vatican News, Nov 11, 2019, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2019-11/iraq-cardinal-sako-appeal-prayer-fasting-peace.html>



- His Holiness Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako delivered an Ecumenical prayer for peace, stability, and security during which he spoke about the corruption and sectarian divisions which are behind Iraq's problems.<sup>74</sup>
- The faith based organization Aid to the Church in Need has begun repair of churches, church buildings in Christian homeland in Iraq.<sup>75</sup>

## Lebanon

- In an attempt to preserve the Christian presence in the Middle East, The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, HB Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, the Syriac Orthodox Church Patriarch of Antioch and All East HH Ignatius Aphrem II, HB Patriarch Joseph El Absi of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, Patriarch of the Syriac Catholic Church HH Ignatius Joseph III, and Archimandrite Filaret, a deputy chairman of the Russian Orthodox Church's external relations department attended a meeting with Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation and Prime Minister of Hungary Viktor Orban in Budapest on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October. During the meeting, the Russian President expressed his concern about the exodus of Christians in the Middle East and that Christianity is a cornerstone of Russian self-identification.<sup>76</sup>
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on Christian Persecution was held on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November in Budapest, where patriarchs, cardinals, politicians, and Christians from across the globe attended. Participants from the ME region included Ignatius Aphrem II Patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, Najeeb Michael, Chaldean Catholic Archbishop of Mosul, Shahe Panossian, Bishop and Primate of Lebanon of the Armenian Catholicosate of Cilicia (delivering a message of His Holiness Catholicos Aram I. of Cilicia), Rev. Joseph Kassab, head of the Evangelical Community of Syria and Lebanon, Gewargis III, Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, Armash Nalbandian, Bishop and Primate of the Armenian Orthodox Diocese of Damascus, Archbishop Ephram Yousif Mansoor of Baghdad (who represented Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Ignatius Joseph III Younan) and Gebran Bassil Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of the Republic of Lebanon. Participants discussed the recent assassination in Syria of Fr. Hovsep Bedoyan the head of the Armenian Catholic community in Qamishli and how radicalism is once again resurging in the Middle East. Also, it was reported that in Syria there have been coordinated attacks against Christian communities, proving that Christians are

<sup>74</sup> Asia News, Nov. 5, 2019, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card.-Sako:-politicians'-inertia-before-young-peoples-cries-48457.html>

<sup>75</sup> Aletaria, Nov 6, 2019, <https://aleteia.org/2019/11/06/aid-to-the-church-in-need-begins-repair-of-churches-church-buildings-in-christian-homeland-in-iraq/>

<sup>76</sup> TASS, October 30, 2019, <https://tass.com/politics/1086221>



being increasingly persecuted. As for the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, he declared that it is the responsibility of Hungary to protect Christians in the Middle East.<sup>77</sup>

- HB Patriarch John X, The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, during a mass at the Monastery of Our Lady of Sednaya, raised his prayers to the Lebanese people so that they withstand the deteriorating situation. He also claimed that the Virgin Mary will draw Lebanese Officials to heed people's demands and to act responsibly.<sup>78</sup>
- The Maronite Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi during the month of November, released several statements on several occasions regarding the situation in Lebanon. For instance, he stressed that failing to heed people's demands and to form a new government will lead to collapse. Also, he suggested educational institutions to freeze tuitions fees due to the deteriorating living conditions in the country.<sup>79</sup>
- HB Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, during the Council of Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops' 53<sup>rd</sup> session appointed his Excellency Archbishop George Baqouni as Vice-Chairman of the Executive Board and His Excellency Archbishop Adwar Georgios Daher as a member.<sup>80</sup>
- Beirut Metropolitan Orthodox Archbishop Elias Audi during a sermon at St. George's Cathedral in downtown Beirut, warned that Lebanon is in a dire situation and that if the country collapses it will do so "on all our heads". He also condemned the officials' undermining attitude towards the Lebanese citizens.<sup>81</sup>

## Palestine

- His Beatitude Patriarch Theophilos III the Patriarch of the Orthodox Church of Jerusalem, was honored a prize for promoting church unity at a ceremony in Moscow by His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.<sup>82</sup>
- Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastian Greek Orthodox, demanded that Israel lifts the inhuman siege on the Gaza Strip and open the crossings, so that people can move freely from place to place.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Catholic News Agency, Nov. 26, 2019, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/international-conference-on-christian-persecution-convenes-in-budapest-40857>

<sup>78</sup> El Nashra, Nov. 7, 2019, <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1362717>

<sup>79</sup> Annahar, Nov. 12, 2019, <https://newspaper.annahar.com/article/1066452>

<sup>80</sup> Lebanon 24, November 15, 2019, <https://www.lebanon24.com/news/lebanon/645517>

<sup>81</sup> Lebanon 24, November 10, 2019, <https://www.lebanon24.com/news/lebanon/>

<sup>82</sup> The National Herald, Nov. 23, 2019, <https://www.thenationalherald.com/269634/patriarch-of-jerusalem-honored-in-moscow-for-promoting-church-unity/>

<sup>83</sup> Alwatan Voice, Nov. 20, 2019, <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2019/11/20/1293075.html>



## Syria

- Under the patronage of Patriarch HB John X, The Primate of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, The Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and the East, held a ceremony which was attended by Syrian Minister of Agriculture Ahmed Al-Qadri, Papal Ambassador in Damascus Cardinal Mario Zinari, a number of members of the Syrian People's Assembly, a large number of Christian and Muslim clergy, and a crowd of journalists and correspondents of Arab and foreign news agencies. One of the themes prevalent during the event was :”Syria Defeats Pain.”<sup>84</sup>
- HH Patriarch Mar Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Syriac Orthodox, toured North and South American countries such as the US, Mexico, and Guatemala. His holiness was warmly received from local parishes, communities, congregations, and church leaders as a Messenger of Peace.<sup>85</sup>
- An Armenian Church in Tal Abyad district located in north Syria, after restored by Turkey, had its first mass.<sup>86</sup>

## Cyprus

- As a result of residents staging protests against the planned construction of a petrol station above an ancient Church named “Our Lady of the Golden Cave”, the administrative court blocked the town planning permit.<sup>87</sup>
- Takis Hadjidemetriou, head of the technical committee for cultural heritage, claimed that contracts have been signed to start conservation work on the church of Archangelos Michael in occupied Yialousa.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> NNA, Nov. 9, 2019, <http://nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/show-news/446024/>

<sup>85</sup> <https://syriacpatriarchate.org/>

<sup>86</sup> AA, Nov. 10, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/culture/armenian-church-in-n-syria-opens-for-worship/1641069>

<sup>87</sup> In Cyprus, Nov 1, 2019, <https://in-cyprus.com/court-blocks-construction-of-petrol-station-above-church/>

<sup>88</sup> Cyprus Mail, Nov. 10, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/11/10/conservation-work-to-begin-on-occupied-churches/>



## 5. MECC HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITIES

### *DSPR Meeting in Istanbul (November 4-6)*

Mr. Ziad El-Sayegh, the Policies and Communications advisor to the Middle East Council of Churches, attended the DSPR (The Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees) meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey. During the event, the various current and future activities, which play a role in developing the department's work and in achieving justice for Palestinian refugees, were discussed.



*DSPR meeting in Istanbul. Nov. 4-6, 2019, Photo Credit: MECC website.*





### *Danmission Visits MECC HO (November 11)*

Danmission's Secretary General Mr. Kristian Petersen visited Dr. Souraya Bechealany, the Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches at the Council's headquarters in Beirut. Petersen was accompanied by Ms. Line Ramsdal, Ms. Huguette Salameh, the Director of the Department of Communication and Public Relations at the MECC and Mr. Pierre Abi Aoun, the Senior Advisor on Program Management were also in the meeting. The relevant parties first reviewed the historic cooperation between the two organizations and rapidly assessed the success achieved at the level of all departments and programs.

Then, they discussed ways to strengthen this cooperation, especially considering the exceptional circumstances in the Middle East region. They also highlighted the high level of confidence that the organization gives to the General Secretariat of the Council as well as their collaboration at the service of the churches of the Middle East and human dignity.



*Ms. Line Ramsdal, Danmission's Regional Manager to the Middle East, Danmission's Secretary General Mr. Kristian Petersen, Secretary General of MECC Dr. Souraya Bechealany, Mr. Pierre Abi Aoun, the Senior Advisor on Project Management (Left to Right), Nov.11, 2019, Photo Credit: MECC website.*



### *MECC in Jordan (November 15)*

In preparation for the Global Refugee Forum, the UNHCR, in collaboration with its regional office in Amman, has organized a workshop entitled “The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Addressing Displacement in MENA” on 14 November in Jordan.



*Dr. Souraya Bechealany, the Secretary General of the Middle East Council of Churches and Ms. Huguette Salameh MECC’s Head of Communications Department in Jordan, November 15, 2019.*

The participants in the first roundtable included The Middle East Council of Churches, Adyan Foundation, the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies in Jordan, and many social and religious organizations from the Arab world.

The discussions centered on the religious institutions’ contributions and common principles, and on their approach in addressing the refugee crisis; This approach aims at the positive integration of refugees in host countries in addition to the provision of services.

The discussions revolved around means of protecting human dignity, promoting international cooperation and solidarity with refugees and host countries, in addition to recommendations made to be submitted at the Global Refugee Forum that will be held in Geneva on 17 and 18 December 2019.



## 6. MECC Humanitarian Activities November 2019

### Lebanon

- Completed 3 sessions on mental, psychosocial wellbeing, reproductive health, vaccination and its significance, and First Aid, involving 40 women in South Lebanon and in cooperation with the Lebanese Red Cross. At the end of the course, each of the women received dignity and hygiene kits.
- Held 3 sessions for 12 women, on Cervical Cancer pap smear, Hepatitis viruses, protection, Breast cancer and prevention methods as well as a session on First Aid. At the end of the course each woman received a dignity kit as well as a hygiene kit.
- Held 6 sessions of drama therapy as part of MHPSS and GBV resilience activities in Mount Lebanon. The point of the project is to facilitate personal growth, promote mental health and address the types of violence and sexual abuse.
- Conducted for 36 children, 8 sessions of PSS addressing topics such as Stress through sports games and gardening, emotions through mask of emotions and tambourine game, trauma through marionette & modeling clay, and hope through ball of hope, arts and crafts.
- Conducted 3 sessions as part of the MHGBV program in Mount Lebanon for 24 women. The women not only learned a new skill but got the chance to open up to other women, coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds, share similar experiences and eventually make new friends.
- Initiated family counselling sessions for 4 families, with the participation of a MECC family mediator.



Health Awareness Sessions and the Hygiene and dignity kits distributed, Nov. 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia.



Health Awareness and First Aid Sessions, Nov. 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia



*PSS and Soft Skills Sessions for Women, Nov, 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia*



*PSS Children Session, Nov. 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia*



## Syria

- Prepared to provide startup kits for 80 vocational training trainees in Maarba and Daraa AlBalad.
- Prepared to provide grants for 40 skilled workers in Maarba and Daraa AlBalad.
- Completed the rehabilitation of six public schools in Kherbet Ghazaleh and Daraa AlBalad including maintenance of students' desks.
- Continued vocational training and grants project in Aleppo.
- Continued remedial classes courses for 250 students in Lattakia and Jableh.
- Continued rehabilitation of two medical centers in Damascus rural.
- Completed the tender process to purchase barley seeds for 600 beneficiaries in Daraa governorate.
- Prepared to provide tuition fees support for 124 students in Aleppo and Qamishly.
- Prepared to launch waste management activities in Erbin in Damascus rural.
- Prepared to distribute 1800 winter adult jackets and 3596 children winter clothing kits in Tiha and Mal villages in Daraa governorate.



*Maintenance of school desks in Daraa, Nov. 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia.*



## 7. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the Middle East is in a dynamic state and a clear picture of what is yet to come has not yet materialized. Only through patience, forgiveness, and love, can we as a ME society, survive in a time full of deadly political rhetoric and hatred. We must be wary, vigilant, and critical of all attempts that might seek to divide us and spread violence and chaos. If we continue to act as one, we can deliver a powerful blow to all forms of oppression, corruption, and their various aliases.