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# MIDDLE EAST OVERVIEW

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## 1. BACKGROUND

While tensions have simmered in certain areas of the Middle East, confrontational rhetoric is once again stirring in the Persian Gulf. Two major oil facilities have been attacked in Saudi Arabia, causing regional players to exchange accusations. As a result, chances for diplomatic talks or negotiations have reached an all-time low, gravely impacting the overall stability of the region. Even hopes for mediation have dwindled as nations that once sought to bridge differing nations to each other, have now taken a more forward and one-sided stance.

Away from all of this brawl, the MECC has continued to work at an incremental yet impactful level to diminish the effects which arise from the regional tensions. The MECC has participated in international conferences, whose theme resonate around peace-building and inter-religious dialogue. Moreover, the Diakonia, the humanitarian arm of MECC, have concluded several events that aim to improve the conditions of forced migrants in Lebanon and Syria.



## 2. THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

### Egypt

- Moody's, a financial services company, placed Egypt at a B2 incurring no changes from the previous periodic review.<sup>1</sup>
- This month, the Egyptian Exchange Indexes posted that the stock market grew by 2.8 billion EGP.<sup>2</sup>
- Egypt's central bank, during the beginning of September, claimed that the country's foreign reserves grew from \$44.916 billion last July to \$44.969 billion last August.<sup>3</sup>
- The vice president of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Dario Scannapieco, during an interview, has claimed that after investing 3.6 billion USD in Egypt, the bank is commencing a new phase of financing projects, mainly in the sectors of clean transportation and wastewater treatment.<sup>4</sup>
- According to Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, Egypt's economy is expected to grow 8% by 2022, due to the favorable current investment climate.<sup>5</sup>
- Martin Roseke, public policy and government relations manager at Google for the MENA region, made a public statement that Google will open an office in Cairo soon, as there are immense growth potentials in Egypt.<sup>6</sup>
- 16.5392 EG/USD official currency exchange rate.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ahram, Sept 3, 2019,

<http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/345064/Business/Economy/Moody%E2%80%99s-announces-completion-of-Egypt-s-periodic-re.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Ahram, Sept 5, 2019, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/346261/Business/Economy/Egypt-bourse-gains-EGP--billion.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Aawsat, September 5, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1888381/egypt%E2%80%99s-net-foreign-reserves-rise-45bn>

<sup>4</sup> Egypt Today, September 6, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/3/74630/EIB%E2%80%99s-Scannapieco-Lauds-Egypt%E2%80%99s-Reform-Program>

<sup>5</sup> Reuters, September 15, 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFKBN1W00BS-OZABS>

<sup>6</sup> Ahram, September 18, 2019, <http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/3/12/351038/Business/Economy/Google-to-open-Cairo-office-soon-MENA-public-polic.aspx>

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



## Jordan

- In its quarterly unemployment report, the Kingdom's Department of Statistics reported that the unemployment rate registered a 0.5 per cent increase at the end of this year's second quarter, currently standing at 19.2 per cent.<sup>8</sup>
- During a ceremony involving transport Minister Anmar Khasawneh and Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker, the ribbon was cut, opening a new Qatar Airways office in Jordan.<sup>9</sup>
- In a meeting held between the Minister of State for Media Affairs, Jumana Ghunaimat and representatives from the official media outlets in Amman, she claimed that the government is implementing a set of policies to strengthen the partnership between public and private sectors.<sup>10</sup>
- A new anti-corruption Law in Jordan was passed, prohibiting ministers, officials, and parliamentarians with businesses from involvement in government contracts while in office.<sup>11</sup>
- The European Commission proposed a new Macro-Financial Assistance program to Jordan worth up to €500 million, to assist the country in its economic reform plan.<sup>12</sup>
- 1.428 USD Jordanian official currency value.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Zawya, September 3, 2019,

[https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Unemployments\\_upward\\_trend\\_continues\\_unabated\\_in\\_Jordan-SNG\\_153013258/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/economy/story/Unemployments_upward_trend_continues_unabated_in_Jordan-SNG_153013258/)

<sup>9</sup> Jordan Times, September 2, 2019, <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/qatar-airways-opens-new-offices-amman>

<sup>10</sup> Ammon News, September 1, 2019, <http://en.ammonnews.net/article.aspx?articleno=41395#.XW9XoCgzZPY>

<sup>11</sup> Al Jazeera, September 9, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/jordan-anti-corruption-law-praised-questions-remain-190905171205639.html>

<sup>12</sup> Europa, September 6, 2019, [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-19-5530\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-19-5530_en.htm)

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



## Iraq

- In September, the Oil Ministry of Iraq claimed that the country's oil exports rose to 3.6 million barrels a day during August.<sup>14</sup>
- Iraq this month started sending 10,000 barrels per day to Jordan as part of a deal established between the two countries during 2019.<sup>15</sup>
- In partnership with Alpen Asset Advisors, the Trade Bank of Iraq (TBI) has announced the launch of Dananeer Fund, a 100 million USD investment portfolio fund.<sup>16</sup>
- The Iraqi Oil Ministry has signed an agreement with Russia's Stroytransgas Company to explore and develop an oil and gas field which it can yield an estimated 2-4 billion barrels of oil, while gas accounts for 60-70 percent of the reserves.<sup>17</sup>
- Protests were organized in front of government ministries asking for better job prospects, as 22% of young adults are unemployed.<sup>18</sup>
- 539 Dinar /USD Iraqi official currency exchange rate.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Financial World, September 3, 2019, <https://www.financial-world.org/news/news/economy/3144/iraqs-oil-export-rises-to-36-million-barrels-per-day-in-august/>

<sup>15</sup> Kurdistan 24, September 1, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/economy/7cdcb00e-f9a4-4857-ba2e-6b799711faaf>

<sup>16</sup> Zawya, September 1, 2019, [https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/Trade\\_Bank\\_of\\_Iraq\\_partners\\_with\\_Alpen\\_Asset\\_Advisors\\_to\\_launch\\_the\\_Dananeer\\_Fund-ZAWYA20190901123552/](https://www.zawya.com/mena/en/press-releases/story/Trade_Bank_of_Iraq_partners_with_Alpen_Asset_Advisors_to_launch_the_Dananeer_Fund-ZAWYA20190901123552/)

<sup>17</sup> Hellenic Shipping News, September 6, 2019, <https://www.hellenicshippingnews.com/iraq-inks-preliminary-deal-with-russian-oil-firm-to-develop-exploration-block-in-western-iraq/>

<sup>18</sup> Aljazeera, September 8, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/iraq-protests-thousands-graduates-demand-jobs-government-190905103347165.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.cbiraq.org/DataValues.aspx?dtFrm=10/31/2003&dtTo=02/18/2019&tMId=175&dtformat=MMM,yyyy>



## Lebanon

- During September the government issued a “state of economic emergency” reflecting the dire situation of the country.<sup>20</sup>
- Pierre Duquesne, the French inter-ministerial delegate for the Mediterranean who is in charge of following up on the implementation of the CEDRE conference resolutions, stressed that all countries are still willing to send the agreed upon funds.<sup>21</sup>
- U.S. Assistant Secretary of State David Schenker held a meeting with Lebanese Parliament speaker Nabih Birri. The latter informed U.S official that Lebanon cannot withstand any more economic pressure and that his country has abided “financial laws that make it compliant with the highest international standards in the field of combating the smuggling and laundering of funds.” From his end, David Schenker vowed to revive mediation efforts with Israel over maritime disputes, after they were stalled over the past few months.<sup>22</sup>
- According to Finance Minister Ali Hassan Khalil, Lebanon's draft 2020 budget, contains a lower deficit projection than in the 2019 budget.<sup>23</sup>
- Since banks are reluctant to issue dollars gas station owners conducted a strike to protest being forced to pay high rates from high-street currency exchanges.<sup>24</sup>
- A trade continuity agreement between the UK and Lebanon has been signed during September. With total trade worth £603 million, this agreement provides a platform for trade between the UK and Lebanon to grow.<sup>25</sup>
- After a national panic because of a rumored dollar shortage crisis, Protests were launched, denouncing the worsening economic condition, the political class, and the corrupt government.<sup>26</sup>
- The U.S during September, has slapped sanctions on four additional Hezbollah party members, making matters worse for the economy.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, U.S envoy assistant secretary of state for Near

<sup>20</sup> Daily Star, September 3, 2019, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Sep-03/490944-lebanon-declares-state-of-economic-emergency.ashx>

<sup>21</sup> Naharnet, September 8, 2019, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/264485-duquesne-says-cedre-donors-still-ready-to-help-oil-not-magical-solution>

<sup>22</sup> En Nahar, September 9, 2019, <https://en.annahar.com/article/1026319-hezbollah-leader-warns-against-new-us-mediator-with-israel>

<sup>23</sup> Aawsat, September 11, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1897881/lebanon-draft-2020-budget-deficit-lower-2019s-says-finance-minister>

<sup>24</sup> Daily Star, September 18, 2019, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/Business/Local/2019/Sep-18/491816-cars-queue-at-gas-stations-on-eve-of-strike-over-dollar-shortage.ashx>

<sup>25</sup> Naharnet, September 20, 2019, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/264885-uk-and-lebanon-sign-trade-continuity-agreement>

<sup>26</sup> Daily Star, September 30, 2019, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Sep-30/492541-protesters-paralyze-life-in-beirut-over-economic-woes.ashx>

<sup>27</sup> Daily Star, September 12, 2019, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Sep-12/491472-us-issues-new-sanctions-on-four-hezbollah-members.ashx>



Eastern affairs David Schenker warned that prospective sanctions may target Hezbollah allies as well.<sup>28</sup>

- 1507.5 LBP/ USD Lebanon official currency exchange rate.<sup>29</sup>

## Palestine

- In Qalqilya, the Palestinian Authorities launched a \$23 million Agricultural Cluster Program to able Palestine to independently produce Palestinian fruits and vegetables.<sup>30</sup>
- According to the latest UNCTAD (The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) report, Palestine socioeconomic crisis is now at breaking point as the per capita income continues to fall and depression-level unemployment worsens.<sup>31</sup>
- During the 104<sup>th</sup> regular session of The Arab Economic and Social Council, Arab Ministers of Trade and Economy stressed that Palestine is in dire need of economic assistance to face Israeli occupation. They also urged the General Secretariat to launch development programs for the sake of Palestine and other least developed countries.<sup>32</sup>
- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warned of the collapse of the Palestinian economy due to the measures executed by Israel.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Reuters, September 12, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-lebanon-economy-sanctions/new-sanctions-could-extend-to-allies-of-hezbollah-in-lebanon-u-s-envoy-idUSKCN1VX2E1>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.bdl.gov.lb/tabs/index/6/289/Daily-Exchange-Rates.html>

<sup>30</sup> The Media Line, September 4, 2019, <https://themedialine.org/by-region/palestinian-government-to-invest-millions-for-agricultural-independence/>

<sup>31</sup> UNCTAD, September 10, 2019, <https://unctad.org/en/pages/newsdetails.aspx?OriginalVersionID=2180>

<sup>32</sup> Aawsat, September 6, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1890031/arab-economic-ministers-stress-continued-support-palestinians>

<sup>33</sup> Middle East Monitor, September 11, 2019, <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20190911-un-warns-of-eminent-collapse-of-palestine-economy/>





## Syria

- The Central Bank of Syria has issued a circular to local banks asking them to restrict credit facilities they grant to importers as a result of the pressures on the economy.<sup>34</sup>
- The Public Establishment for International Fairs and Exhibitions (PEIFE) has managed the 61st Damascus International Fair 2019, which was held from 28 August to 6 September under the slogan “From Damascus... to the World,” with the participation of 1500 national and international companies and delegations, including a high-level 40-people delegation from The United Arab Emirates and a 35-people one from Oman.<sup>35</sup>
- The Syrian pound fell to a record low in the black market, to reach 695 S.P for 1 dollar. It was driven down by lack of central bank intervention and damage to the war-torn economy from the tight Western sanctions during last year.<sup>36</sup>
- A French hotel management group has reportedly signed a contract to manage two Syrian hotels, the first such contracts with western companies in the hospitality industry since 2011.<sup>37</sup>
- The government has awarded two Russian companies three contracts for the exploration and production of oil and gas in various parts of the country, the first such deals for onshore blocks since 2011.<sup>38</sup>
- A new gas well in the Arak field located east of Palmyra started production on September 5, according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources.<sup>39</sup>
- A joint report by the FAO and the World Food Program has highlighted the performance of the Syrian agricultural sector this year, which includes a doubling of the wheat crop and a stabilization in some sub-sectors thanks to the improvement of the security situation<sup>40</sup>
- Official Current Exchange Rate SP/USD: 435

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

<sup>35</sup> Mena Fn, September August 21, 2019, <https://menafn.com/1098910286/Damascus-Fair-expects-1500-companies>

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

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.syria-report.com/>



## Cyprus

- According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus, the Cypriot economy grew by 3.2% during the second quarter of 2019.<sup>41</sup>
- Cyprus has repaid the remaining 1.58 billion euros of a 2.5 billion euro loan it received from Russia, ahead of schedule, in an attempt not to receive a penalty.<sup>42</sup>
- According to recent studies, the value of Cyprus credit card transactions in the domestic market increased by 6% in August to €421.85 million compared to last year, reflecting steady consumer confidence.<sup>43</sup>
- In a bid to strengthen innovation within the country, the Research Innovation Fund (RIF) signed a deal with Cyprus Seeds to support seven teams, which will aim to attract foreign experienced entrepreneurs and experts in innovation and start-ups.<sup>44</sup>
- 1.126 USD Euro official currency value<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> In-Cyprus, September 6, 2019, <https://in-cyprus.com/gdp-growth-rate-at-3-2-in-second-quarter-2019/>

<sup>42</sup> Federal News, September 2, 2019, <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/world-news/2019/09/cyprus-repays-remainder-of-russian-loan-2-years-early/>

<sup>43</sup> Financial Mirror, September 11, 2019, <https://www.financialmirror.com/news-details.php?nid=37532>

<sup>44</sup> In-Cyprus, September 16, 2019, <https://in-cyprus.com/government-and-cyprus-seeds-join-forces-to-strengthen-innovation/>

<sup>45</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 September, several countries made several contributions for the sake of the UNHCR. Japan (\$2,443,838), UK (\$62,118,077), Republic of Korea (\$1,500,000), Canada (\$56,063,910), and the EU (\$7,522,124) were among the contributors.<sup>46</sup>
- At the request of Palestine, an emergency meeting of Palestinian affairs supervisors in the Arab world was held in Cairo. The Palestinian delegation presented a plan of action to renew UNRWA's mandate for three years.<sup>47</sup>
- The latest estimates of the number of Syrian refugees in Egypt is 130,371 .<sup>48</sup>

#### Jordan

The UNHCR states that there are currently 657,445 registered refugees in Jordan up until September.

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

- 193,361 in Amman Governorate (29.4 %)
  - 162,311 in Mafraq Governorate (24.7%)
  - 135,945 in Irbid Governorate (20.7%)
  - 94,905 in Zarqa Governorate (14.5%)
  - 18,680 in Balqa Governorate (2.8%)
  - 13,169 in Madaba Governorate (2%)
  - 9,562 in Jarash Governorate (1.5%)
  - 8,744 in Karak Governorate (1.3%)
  - 8,192 in Maan Governorate (1.2%)
  - 6,670 in Ajlun Governorate (1.0%)
  - 3,466 in Aqaba Governorate (0.5%)
  - 1,698 in Tafilah Governorate (0.3%)
- In a statement by the interior minister, around 153,000 Syrians have returned to their country from Jordan since last October, due to the reopening of Jaber post at the border.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> <http://reporting.unhcr.org/egypt>

<sup>47</sup> Egypt Today, September 4, 2019, <https://www.egypttoday.com/Article/2/74465/UNRWA-symbolizes-int-l-responsibility-toward-Palestinian-refugees-AL>

<sup>48</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/1>

<sup>49</sup> Daily Sabah, September 17, 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/syrian-crisis/2019/09/17/over-150k-syrian-refugees-return-home-from-jordan-in-a-year>



- Germany has contributed 56 million Euros to the World Food Programme (WFP), allowing the organization to continue providing monthly cash-based transfers to some 500,000 refugees.<sup>50</sup>

## Iraq

The UNHCR states that there are currently 228,573 registered Syrian refugees in Iraq.

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

- 117,446 in Erbil (51.4%)
- 79,437 in Dahuk (34.8%)
- 28,807 in Sulaymaniyah (12.6%)
- 1,108 in Anbar (0.5%)
- 1,775 in other areas (0.8%)<sup>51</sup>

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there are 1,552,994 IDPs scattered across Iraq up until the end of August.

The IOM estimates the most sizable number of IDPs in the following governorates:

- 217,494 in Erbil (14%)
  - 323,148 in Dahuk (20.8%)
  - 143,034 in Sulaymaniyah (9.2%)
  - 453,168 in Ninewa (29.18%)
  - 99,708 in Kirkuk (6.4%)
  - 316,442 in other areas (20.37%)<sup>52</sup>
- The Iraqi government during this month, closed the Jadah camp in the Nineveh governorate.<sup>53</sup>
  - Human Rights Watch published a report warning that 2,000 IDPs have been forcibly expelled from camps in Nineveh to their areas of origin.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Relief Web, September 19, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/germany-increases-support-wfp-jordan>

<sup>51</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/5>

<sup>52</sup> <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/IDPsML.aspx>

<sup>53</sup> Kurdistan 24, September 15, 2019, <https://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/6bf56e41-d6dd-43d4-8915-de4ecf41dbb9>

<sup>54</sup> Rudaq, September 4, 2019, <https://www.rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/040920193>



- As part of the efforts to enhance the efficiency of cash assistance delivery, for the 2019-2020 winterization assistance distribution UNHCR plans to roll out a new biometric payment authentication system.<sup>55</sup>
- As an incentive for Iraqis to return to their places of origin, the Iraqi government plans to increase stipends to ID 2.5, to rebuild destroyed homes and businesses.<sup>56</sup>

## Lebanon

Since the beginning of September, the number of registered refugees in Lebanon is 924,161.

Refugees in Lebanon are distributed as follows:

- 341,691 in Bekaa (37%)
  - 244,549 in North Lebanon (26.5%)
  - 231,089 in Beirut (25.0%)
  - 106,832 in South Lebanon (11.6%)<sup>57</sup>
- The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center presented three ambulances equipped with medical equipment to the Association of Sobol Al-Salam, in the presence of Saudi Ambassador to Lebanon Walid bin Abdullah Bukhari, and a number Lebanese officials.<sup>58</sup>
  - During the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Michel Aoun renewed his call for the international community to bear the burden of securing a safe return of refugees.<sup>59</sup>
  - Foreign Minister Maas met with his Lebanese counterpart Gebran Bassil in Berlin, where they discussed several topics, among which the refugee situation and how the two counties can collaborate in that regard.<sup>60</sup>
  - During September, hundreds of Palestinian refugees rallied again in front of the Canadian Embassy to request asylum in Canada. Many during the protest, expressed their disapproval of the deteriorating economic and living conditions in Lebanon.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Relief Web, September 12, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/71296.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Relief Web, September 19, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/ishm-222-september-12-september-19-2019>

<sup>57</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/71>

<sup>58</sup> Aawsat, August 31, 2019, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1880781/saudi-ksrelief-delivers-aid-syrian-refugees-lebanon>

<sup>59</sup> Daily Star, September 23, 2019, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2019/Sep-23/492108-aoun-to-see-international-help-in-solving-refugee-crisis.ashx>

<sup>60</sup> Relief Web, September 18, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/german-support-lebanon-promoting-stability-tense-region>



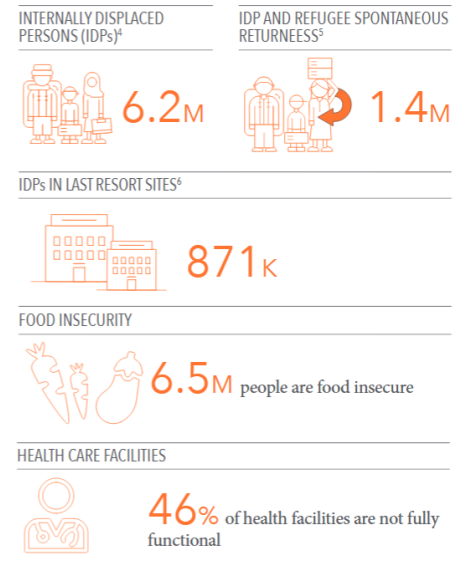
- 37,000 Palestinian refugee children began the 2019-2020 scholastic year in the 65 schools run by UNRWA in Lebanon.<sup>62</sup>

## Syria

### Humanitarian facts and figures:

#### Women and children on the frontline in north-west Syria:

- Out of 3 million civilians in north-west Syria, an estimated 76 per cent are women and children (51 per cent children and 25 per cent women).
- The UN has documented over 550 civilian deaths since the violence began, including 450 women and children confirmed by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), unconfirmed sources suggest the figure could be significantly more.
- More than 630,000 individual displacement movements have been recorded in north-west Syria since the beginning of May.<sup>63</sup>
- Seven health centers in Syria's north-west have been reportedly attacked in recent days and two of them have been destroyed according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- According to WHO, some 13.7 million people need health assistance in Syria, including an estimated 4 million in the north-west.<sup>64</sup>



<sup>61</sup>Nahar Net, September 6, 2019, <http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/264487-palestinian-refugees-in-lebanon-rally-for-asylum-in-canada>

<sup>62</sup>Relief Web, September 12, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/lebanon/37000-palestine-refugee-students-lebanon-return-unrwa-schools>

<sup>63</sup>Relief Web, August 29, 2019,

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINAL%20HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%205%20.pdf>

<sup>64</sup>UN website, September 2, 2019, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/09/1045412>



### **Humanitarian situation in south fragile as tensions rise:**

The humanitarian situation remains complex and fluid in southern Syria where tensions continue to mount following an increase in armed attacks, assassinations and killings in recent months. Overall, some 970,275 people are in need of humanitarian assistance across as Sweida, Dar'a and Quneitra governorates.

- Out of the almost 1 million people in need in the south, more than half or 537,000 people are in areas of high severity.
- In Dar'a Governorate, between January and April 2019, some 50,935 people have returned. Needs in Dar'a are particularly acute with five out of six health facilities are partially damaged. Needs in the region remain critical largely due to a lack of services, shops, bakeries, medical services and schools, as well as missing civil documentation, shortages in drinking water, and limited livelihood support.
- Due to depleted socio-economic resources, combined with high prices, the average cost of the food basket in Dar'a is the second highest in Syria; approximately 1,000 SYP (US\$4.65) higher than the national average. This in turn forces residents to resort to negative coping mechanisms, including the selling off of household possessions and livestock or borrowing money.
- As of April 2019, southern Syria hosts 149,000 IDPs. High density of displacement and return overburdens communities and local services in poor condition. Southern Syria continues to experience population movement, receiving almost 123,000 spontaneous IDP returns since the beginning of 2018 – 11 per cent of the overall total – placing additional strain on what are already limited and partially functioning basic services.<sup>65</sup>

### **Humanitarian situation in the most underserved areas of Aleppo rural:**

- Aleppo is among those governorates that is expected to receive the highest number of returnees in 2019. However, large parts of the Governorate remain poorly prepared for accommodating that influx. Because most of public infrastructure is fragmented, including schools and medical facilities. There is a general lack of livelihood opportunities and services across southern rural Aleppo, which has a potential of triggering a second displacement for returnees
- Aleppo hosts some 2.5 million people in need, of which 1 million are in acute need. Before the crisis, the population of southern rural Aleppo was 255,000 people, compared to today's population of 88,000. Large areas have been under Government-control since early 2018.
- Today's low return rate is attributed to the lack of services and infrastructure. Although humanitarian actors reach the area with humanitarian assistance from inside Syria, needs remain staggering.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Relief web, August 29, 2019,

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINAL%20HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%205%20.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Relief We, August 29, 2019,

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FINAL%20HUMANITARIAN%20UPDATE%20NO.%205%20.pdf>

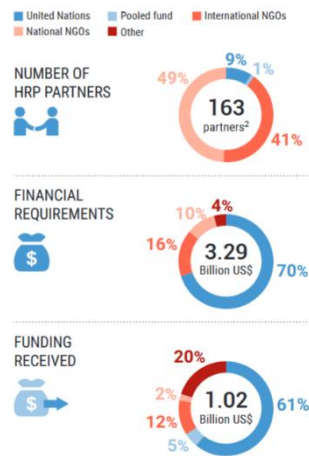


**Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) FUNDING OVERVIEW (as of 8 September 2019):**

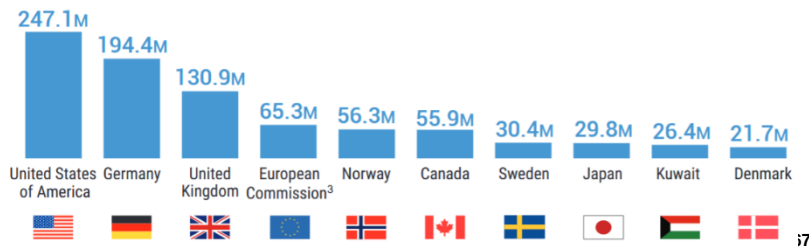
**BY SECTOR (US\$)**

Sector/Cluster	% Covered	Funding Received	Requirements
Food security	23.8%	255.9M	1.1B
Health	12%	54M	449.1M
WASH	16%	44M	274.2M
Protection <sup>1</sup>	8.5%	30M	352.6M
Education	10.5%	26.5M	251.1M
Shelter/NFI	4.1%	21.7M	526.6M
Nutrition	20.2%	16.8M	83.2M
Early Recovery and Livelihoods	6.5%	11.3M	173.6M
Coordination	20.8%	11M	52.9M
Camp coordination and camp management	21.9%	10.7M	48.6M
Logistics	23.5%	1.5M	6.4M
Emergency Telecommunications	9.2%	0.1M	0.8M
Not specified		529M	-
Multiple Field clusters (shared)		6.3M	-

**BY ORGANIZATION TYPE**



**BY DONOR (TOP 10 DONORS) (US\$)**

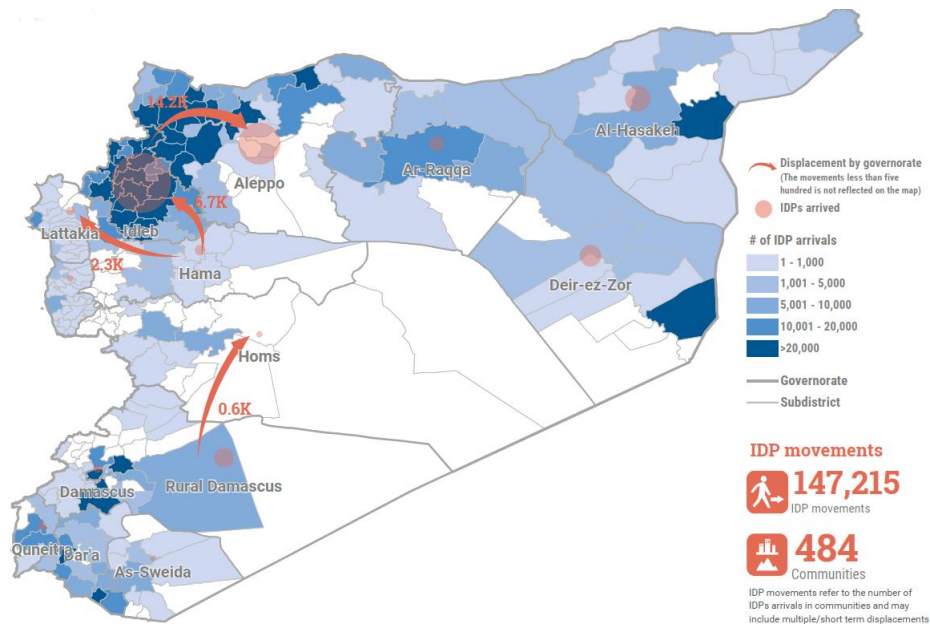


<sup>67</sup> Humanitarian response, September 8 2019, [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hrp\\_weekly\\_funding\\_status\\_190908.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hrp_weekly_funding_status_190908.pdf)





### IDP Movements Map, July-2019



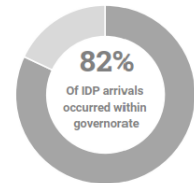
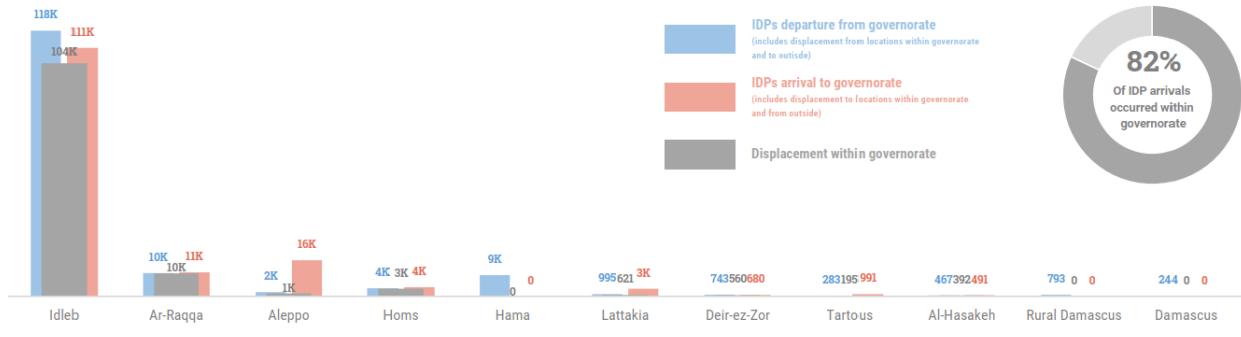
### July 2019 Updates

In July 2019, the humanitarian community recorded 147,215 internally displaced people across Syria. The great majority of this population, 110,796 individuals, were displaced to locations in Idlib governorate with 103,906 being displaced within Idlib governorate and 6,678 individuals being displaced from Hama governorate. The second largest population movement was recorded in Aleppo governorate with a total of 16,124 individuals, including 14,219 arriving from Idlib governorate and 1,366 within Aleppo governorate. Overall, this large population movement is due to the ongoing violence in southern Idlib, northern Hama and western Aleppo governorates where people from communities affected by airstrikes, shelling and ground fighting are fleeing to find safety. The third largest movement is recorded in Latakia governorate where a total of 3,358 people from Hama governorate were tracked.



### Governorate Summary

(K: thousand)



Creation Date: 09 Sep 2019

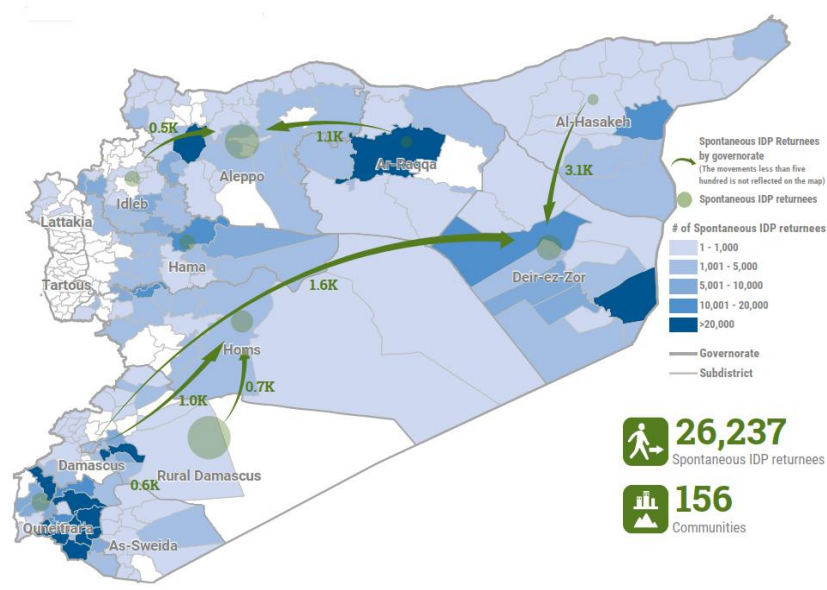
Source: Information as reported by CCCM, OCHA Syria and HNAP for July 2019.

Feedback: siddiqik@un.org

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

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### IDP Spontaneous Returns Map, July-2019



### July 2019 Updates

In July 2019, the humanitarian community recorded 26,238 spontaneous IDP returnees in several areas across Syria. The largest of these returns were recorded in Aleppo governorate with 5,267 returnees, about 3,600 of which returned from within the governorate and about 1,000 returnees from Ar-Raqqa governorate.

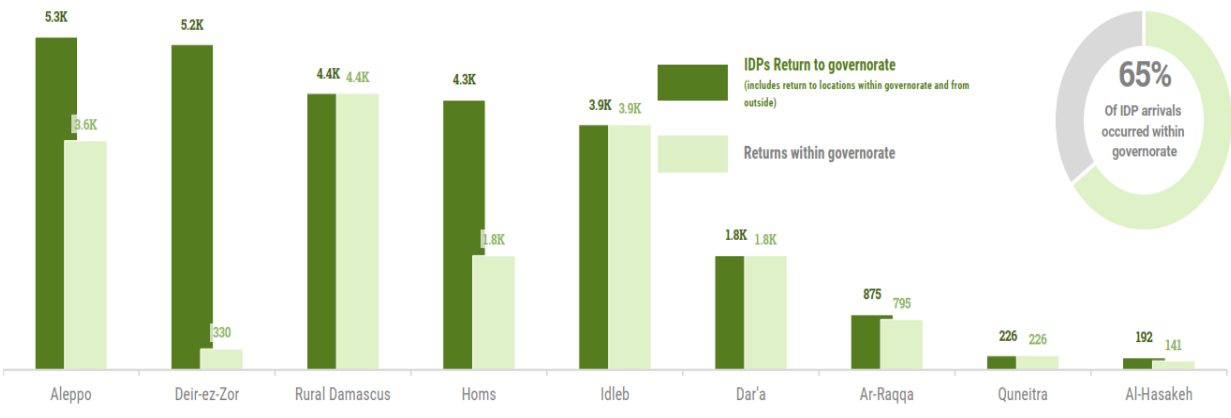
<sup>68</sup> Relief web, September 9, 2019, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/idpmovements\\_201907jul\\_final\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/idpmovements_201907jul_final_en_0.pdf)



Deir-ez-zor governorate received the second largest number of IDP returnees with 5,150 spontaneous returns majority of which returned from Al Hasakeh governorate, while 4,375 returns were recorded in rural Damascus and 4,269 were recorded in Homs governorate, followed by Dar'a Governorate with 1,810 recorded spontaneous returns.

### Governorate Summary

(K: thousand)



Creation Date: 09 Sep 2019

Source: Information as reported by CCCM, OCHA Syria and HNAP for July 2019.

Feedback: siddiqik@un.org

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

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## Cyprus

- Dimitris Avramopoulos, the EU's Commissioner for Migration, sent a letter to the Cypriot government the EU is considering relocation of refugees to other EU countries.<sup>70</sup>
- The House refugee committee launched discussions on a bill proposal which aims to impose a 0.4 per cent levy on real estate sales in the government-controlled area. This money would be used to create a fund to financially support refugees with property.<sup>71</sup>
- Cyprus Education Minister Kostas Champiaouris declared in a statement there will be no tolerance for racism after an incident concerning a refugee girl.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Relief Web, September 9, 2019,

[https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/idpspontreturns\\_201907jul\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/idpspontreturns_201907jul_final_en.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> DW, September 9, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/refugee-crisis-in-cyprus-close-to-tipping-point/a-50352565>

<sup>71</sup> Cyprus Mail, September 3, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/09/03/mps-start-talks-on-compensating-owners-of-property-in-north/>



## 4. CHURCH ACTIVITIES

### Egypt

- His Holiness Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria and Patriarch of the Holy See of St. Mark, opened the Conference of Servants of the Parish of Al Qusiyyah and Mir, in the presence of Anba Thomas, the Bishop of the Parish and a number of priests. In his speech, His Holiness spoke of the seven principles that every servant must abide by in order to be in Christ's service.<sup>73</sup>
- His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, held a meeting with The Secretary General of World Student Christian Federation, Mira Gorge Naima, at the St. Mark's Cathedral in Abbassia, in which the regional secretary Ayman Karam attended it. During the meeting, she presented the vision of the federation and in return, His Holiness blessed the federation and hoped it would continue serving the Church.<sup>74</sup>

### Jordan

- Members of the General Assembly of the Jordanian Evangelical Council of Churches convened to choose Rev. Habes Al-Ne'amat as Chairman. During the meeting a new administrative board was also elected for three years at the Evangelical Free Church in Khalda and the Board of Directors submitted a management report consisting of twenty items presented by Vice-President Rev. David Rihani. Moreover, it was decided that the President of the Council write a letter to US President Trump demanding not to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem and to "listen to the wisdom of His Majesty King Abdullah".<sup>75</sup>
- Dr. Ramzi Khoury, Director General of the Palestinian National Fund and Chairman of the Supreme Presidential Committee for Church Affairs in the State of Palestine, during a press release, claimed that the violations of the Israeli occupation, led by Netanyahu and Rivlin, is an extension of the daily desecration and violation of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in occupied Jerusalem. He also added that Israeli are trying to instigate sectarian strife.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Xinhuanet, September 8, 2019, [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/08/c\\_138374350.htm](http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-09/08/c_138374350.htm)

<sup>73</sup> Mobtada, Sept 2, 2019, <https://www.mobtada.com/details/867826>

<sup>74</sup> Albalad, September 11, 2019, <https://www.elbalad.news/3976332>

<sup>75</sup> Alwatan Voice, September 5, 2019, <https://www.alwatanvoice.com/arabic/news/2019/09/05/1272293.html>

<sup>76</sup> Palsawa, September 4, 2019, <https://palsawa.com/post/223633>



## Iraq

- His Holiness Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans and head of the Chaldean Catholic Church claimed on the patriarchate website that Iraqis must be open for a 'courageous' political dialogue and develop a common strategy by all political parties, striving "for its implementation" to emerge "from current crises and calamities". He also urged Iraqi parties not to become entangled within the proxy war between Washington and Tehran.<sup>77</sup>
- His Holiness Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako stressed that the government has a "humanitarian, moral and national" duty to support the survival and permanence of Christians in the Nineveh Plain which are "integral part" of the local and national social fabric.<sup>78</sup>

## Lebanon

- His Holiness Patriarch John X, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All The East, presided over the prayers at the Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand in the presence of the Metropolitan Ephraim Kyriakos, Bishop Dmitri Shrik, the Dean of the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology Institute Father Porfirios Georgi, a group of priests, deacons, educational and administrative bodies, and students. At the end of the prayer, His Holiness Patriarch John X told the students that they are at the institute to study theology which is an important matter, since it is something we practice in our way of life.<sup>79</sup>
- Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, appointed Father Mario Abu Daher, as Head of the Saint Hanna Seminary for Priestly Vocations.<sup>80</sup>
- Organized by the Qannoubine Association for Mission and Heritage, the first conference on "Common Christian Heritage in the Holy Valley" was launched at the "House of Memory and Information" at the in Deeman. The point of the conference was to shed light on the sacred valley as a valuable national and spiritual landmark and a key element of domestic civil and religious tourism. Attendees were Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East, Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, Archbishop Royce of Jerusalem, The Head of the Coptic Orthodox Sect in Lebanon (representing Patriarch Tawadros II Pope of Alexandria), Catholicos Mar Aram I Keshishian The Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Patriarch

<sup>77</sup> Asian News, September 3, 2019, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card-Sako:-common-strategy-and-protection-of-Christians-to-guarantee-a-future-for-Iraq-47900.html>

<sup>78</sup> Asia News, September 12, 2019, <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Card-Sako-urges-support-for-the-Christian-presence-in-Nineveh,-threatened-by-tensions-and-violence-47987.html>

<sup>79</sup> NNA Leb, September 4, 2019, <http://nna-leb.gov.lb/ar/show-news/431393/>

<sup>80</sup> Albawab News, September 9, 2019, <https://www.albawabhnews.com/3722465>



Marguerio Pedros X Catholicos of House of Cilicia for Armenian Catholics, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Joseph III Jonah Patriarch of the Syriac Antioch, Patriarch Mar Ignatius Ephrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Syriac Orthodox, Cardinal Angelopiansco President of the Council of Bishops of Europe, the Metropolitane Theoklitos, and Metropolitane Stagon Meteora (from Greece).<sup>81</sup>

- Patriarch Cardinal Mar Bechara Boutros Al-Rahi, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East during a mass ceremony, denounced the political campaigns that targeted the army, Lebanon's Central Bank, and its Governor.<sup>82</sup>

## Palestine

- Atallah Hanna, Archbishop of Sebastian Greek Orthodox, unveiled a new Israeli conspiracy aimed at taking over Christian estates and ancient buildings at the Gate of Hebron in occupied Jerusalem. He emphasized that some brokers and Arab states are facilitating the takeover of Islamic and Christian places in the city of Jerusalem and the diversion of land to Israeli settlers, by passing deals and settlement projects.<sup>83</sup>

## Syria

- The Syriac youths from Lebanon and Syria met at the Syrian monastery of Saint Ephrem in Saydnaya. The gathering came as a confirmation of the return of coexistence, security and safety to Syria. The event was presided by Patriarch Mar Ignatius Ephrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East of the Syriac Orthodox.<sup>84</sup>
- Under the patronage of the Melkite Roman Catholic Church and Patriarch Youssef el Absi, The Patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, opened the Hagia Sophia Church Museum in Sednaya, Syria.<sup>85</sup>
- The Christ the King Church for Capuchin Fathers in Sweida held a prayer for peace in Syria and the world. The participants prayed to God to restore security and stability to all parts of Syria, which has long been a cradle and a beacon of brotherhood, love and peace.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Annahar, September 18, 2019, <https://www.annahar.com/article/1031365>

<sup>82</sup> Annahar, September 30, 2019, <https://newspaper.annahar.com/article/1039014>

<sup>83</sup> Felesteen, September 10, 2019, <http://www.felesteen.ps/article/hna-ykshf-lflstyn-mkhttaa-asraylyaa-jdydaa-lthwyd-awqaf-msyhyt-balqds>

<sup>84</sup> El Nashra, September 11, 2019, <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1345961>

<sup>85</sup> El Nashra, September 17, 2019, <https://www.elnashra.com/news/show/1347486/>

<sup>86</sup> Sana, September 15, 2019, <https://www.sana.sy/?p=1016842>



## Cyprus

- The church of Panayia in Lysi, a region in occupied Famagusta area, hosted a service for the first time in 45 years.<sup>87</sup>

## 5. MECC HEADQUARTERS ACTIVITIES

### *MECC at CEC Peace Conference 2019 (September 10-12)*

Represented by Mr. Ziad El Sayegh, Policies and Communication Advisor of MECC, the council participated at the 2019 CEC Peace Conference held in Paris on September 10-12. Focusing on the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, attendees reflected on the contemporary world and identified a theological way of living and acting that can enable CEC and its member Churches to apply it faithfully and practically in transformation, healing and reconciliation. Moreover, the conference identified the current threats to peace in Europe and articulated the challenges presented by the global experiences of the 21st century.



*Mr. Ziad El Sayegh during the CEC Peace Conference 2019, September 10-12, 2019, photo credit: MECC website.*

Mr. Ziad El Sayegh delivered an intervention under the theme “West’s Legacy in the Middle East” in which he spoke about the dilemma of colonial mentality, minorities and majorities between Islamophobia and Christian phobia, and tragic geopolitics.

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<sup>87</sup> Cyprus Mail, September 6, 2019, <https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/09/06/lysi-church-to-hold-first-service-for-45-years/>





He concluded that it is necessary to build an interreligious peace alliance, as expressed by the leading Swiss theologian Hans Küng. His argument was summarized in the now well-known mantra: “No peace among the nations without peace among the religions”.

### *MECC at the "Peace with No Borders" Conference (September 19, 2019)*



The MECC, represented by Secretary General Associate Michael Spiro, participated in the 33rd international meeting entitled "Peace with No Borders", convening in Madrid- Spain, from September 15 to 17, 2019

The meeting, which was organized by the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Archdiocese of Madrid, gathered more than 400 religious personalities from 60 countries of five continents and thousands of pilgrims.

The organizers sought to promote an open dialogue between representatives of the world's major religions, intellectual leaders and representatives of civil society, with the conviction that today more than ever, religions are called to work together for peace, conflict prevention and dialogue to rebuild human fraternity, in a divided world, with the increasing exclusionary nationalisms, xenophobic and violent rhetoric.





## *MECC SG at the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy (Oct 3, 2019)*



*Dr. Souraya Bechealany participating at the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy, Oct 3, 2019. Photo Credit: MECC website.*

The MECC, represented by its Secretary General Dr. Souraya Bechealany, participated in the Warsaw Dialogue for Democracy which was held in Bologna on October 3, 2019, under the motto 'Freedom of Religion or Belief as a Pillar of Democracy'.

The opening ceremony was launched with a speech by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz, followed by a letter by the MECC Secretary General Dr.

Souraya Bechealany, addressed to participants from around 30 countries, including politicians and activists in the human rights, freedom of religion and belief, and interfaith dialogue...

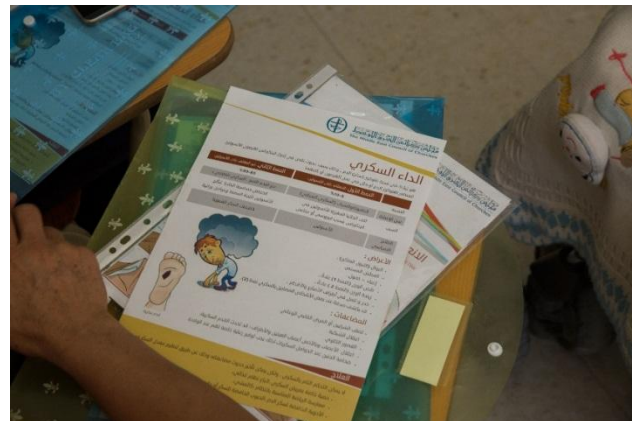
The Secretary General during the conference, claimed that "Policy makers and Religious leaders are together partners to protect the human dignity". Moreover, she stressed on the importance of the Christian role in the East. "Christians of the Middle East are not minorities and don't need protections. Together with the International community we will deploy efforts to save the freedom of religion as a Pillar of democracy". "It is time to be convinced that no peace without justice. It is time to tackle the root causes of the religious intolerance", Dr. Bechealany added.



## 6. MECC Humanitarian activities September 2019:

### Syria

- Completed the waste management activities in Maarba and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Continued vocational training activities for 80 trainees in Maarba and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Prepared for business startup courses for 100 skilled workers in Maarba and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Completed health awareness sessions for 25 women in Maaloula including distribution of hygiene kits.
  - Continued of distribution of 200 startup kits for 200 youth in AlTal and Izraa.
  - Launched Crochet training course for 46 women in AlTal and Izraa.
  - Distributed hygiene kits, blankets and school kits to 991 families in Hama and Damascus.
  - Continued rehabilitation of six public schools in Kherbet Ghazaleh and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Completed PSS training courses for 200 women in Kherbet Ghazaleh and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Distributed 2625 school kits in six schools in Kherbet Ghazaleh and Daraa AlBalad.
  - Completed the rehabilitation of 24 shops in Aleppo and Daraa.
  - Launched labor market assessment in Aleppo.
  - Prepared to launch remedial classes courses for 250 students in Latakia.
- Prepared to launch rehabilitation of two medical centers in Damascus rural.



*Health awareness session for 25 women in Maloula, September 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia*



*PSS training for 200 women in Dara'a, September 2019, photo credit: Diakonia*



*Continuation of rehabilitation of 6 schools in Dara'a, September 2019, Photo Credit: Diakonia*



## 7. CONCLUSION

MECC's successes lie in the joint effort of our local staff and partners that have massively contributed to the cause of the organization. It is because of this cooperation and of past successes, the MECC continues to become stronger; a fact which enables it to yield more results. As such, the faith based organization will continue to thrive and cultivate its strengths to expand its sphere of influence, hoping to mend what was broken in the Middle East and to alleviate the burdens of the stagnation of political dialogue.