

Week Ending 29 August 2020

**Coronavirus Cases**

	Overall	New This Week
Total Cases	527	200
Deaths	34	17
Recoveries	88	58

**Cases by Region**

Jazira region: 161

Deir-ez-Zor region: 6

Euphrates region: 17

Shebha pocket: 6

**Key Developments**

- First coronavirus case confirmed in Hol camp
- Water has been restored to some neighbourhoods in the Heseke region, but many areas still have no steady access to water despite summer heat and the fast-spreading pandemic
- 2000% increase in coronavirus cases throughout August, New cases in NES this week reach 200, an 61% increase, while deaths double (17,34) and recoveries increase 73% (51, 88)
- Again the majority of new cases were documented in the Jazirah region at 81% (161, 200), followed by Euphrates (9%) and 3% being documented in both Deir-ez-Zor and Shebha.
- Despite only 6 cases being confirmed in Shebha, there were also 3 fatalities this week.
- Many areas of NES have no access to information about Covid-19 or prevention, especially within IDP camps and Deir-ez-Zor region, while economic crisis also hampers response.

**In Depth**

**First coronavirus case confirmed in Hol Camp resident**

The first coronavirus case has been confirmed in a Hol Camp resident. Previously, five health-workers working in the camp were diagnosed with coronavirus, but they were able to self-quarantine, and up to 27 August corona had not yet spread among camp residents.

With the first case confirmed the situation looks grim, with medical staff estimating at least a 10% death rate if the disease is allowed to spread within the camp. Due to the crowded nature of the camp self-isolation is not a realistic possibility, and many camp residents are suspicious of or actively hostile to health-workers, with some relying on traditional Islamic faith cures. Many residents refuse to be transferred to the coronavirus isolation unit appended to the camp.



The possibilities for treatment are also limited as water access is unstable due to Turkey cutting water from the Allouk water station (see below), while tuberculosis was already widespread in Hol Camp, putting further strain on medical resources. Hol camp has 14 health points, 5 isolation beds, and 3 ventilators total in the whole camp, inhabited by approx. 65,000 IDPs and ISIS linked individuals. While this leaves Hol with more access to medical care than many other IDP camps in NES, it is nowhere near enough to deal with the fast-approaching pandemic.

### **Waterflow restored to some Heseke neighborhoods – situation remains unstable**

As of 28 August some western neighbourhoods in Heseke are once again receiving water-flow from Allouk station. The entire region spent weeks without access to mains water after it was cut by Turkey for the 13th time this year. The situation has been unstable since Turkey fired on and subsequently occupied the station in October 2019. Though water flow has been partially restored many areas, especially the surrounding countryside of Heseke, remain dry – and unable to adhere to the hygiene practices recommended to prevent coronavirus.

To provide these communities with water, NGOs, the Kurdish Red Crescent, and the Autonomous Administration have been trucking 2500M3 of water to Heseke on a daily basis. This falls drastically short of the minimum 4000M3 the UN estimates as the absolute daily minimum for this crowded region. This leaves many individuals purchasing water out of pocket, for drinking and hygiene, with .

In another effort to combat the water shortage the AANES created new wells at the Hema pumping station, to provide water to some of the dry neighbourhoods of Heseke. This remains insufficient, as according to AANES officials it will meet only 30% of the demand for water.

Despite many efforts, until Turkey stops cutting off the water supply over 1 million people will remain in an unstable situation – without regular access to water to combat the heat, prevent the

### **High levels of trust, but low levels of awareness, drive spread of coronavirus**

Despite information on Covid-19 having been spread to all regions of NES many remain ignorant about the severity of the disease and how to prevent it.

People in North and East Syria have the highest level of trust in their local authorities' response to coronavirus of any region across Syria, as well the most-trusted local media. But the economic crisis and lack of understanding are badly impacting the coronavirus response. 98% of people are experiencing fresh economic hardship, and only 7% are wearing face-masks – the worst rate in Syria. There are shortages of PPE, with some locals organizing cooperative organizations producing masks to combat this, while the AANES has just lifted coronavirus travel restrictions between regions of NES, as well as re-opening the key Semalka border crossing to civilians.

According to UNOCHA, in Raqqa very few restrictions have been put in place to stop the spread of the virus. It is estimated less than half of the IDPs residing in many of the informal sites in the Deir-ez-Zor countryside have received any information on COVID-19. Many civilians are not aware of the virus or are not taking the risk it prevents seriously. UNOCHA also reports that in 80% of the settlements of Deir-ez-Zor 25% or less of the population are practising or have even