

As many as 330,000 displaced by heavy fighting in south-west Syria – UN agency

Intense air and ground-based strikes at multiple locations in Syria's south-western Dara'a governorate has resulted in the "largest displacement" in the area since the conflict began more than seven years ago, the United Nations refugee agency has reported.

A number of civilians are also reported to have been killed in the hostilities and many more injured, said Andrej Mahecic on Tuesday, a spokesperson for the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees](#) (UNHCR).

He said the agency was "[deeply concerned by the escalation of fighting](#)" and called on those involved "to take all necessary measures to safeguard civilian lives, protect civilian infrastructure and allow freedom of movement as required under international humanitarian and human rights laws."

Among those displaced by the fighting – estimated to number between 270,000 to 330,000 – are some 60,000 at the Nasib/Jaber border crossing, between Syria and Jordan, forced to live with sweltering heat, pounded by dusty desert winds.

According to reports, at least twelve children, two women, and one elderly man, have died in the past few days close to the Jordanian border due to scorpion bites, dehydration and disease.

Elizabeth Throssell, a spokesperson for the [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (OHCHR), appealed for the safety of those trapped at the border.

We call on the international community, in particular countries of the region with the financial ability to host refugees, to take in fleeing civilians from Syria – *OHCHR spokesperson*

["We call on the international community](#), in particular countries of the region with the financial ability to host large numbers of refugees, to take in fleeing civilians from Syria ... We call on the Jordanian Government to keep its border open and for other countries in the region to step up and receive the fleeing civilians."

She also called on all parties involved in the conflict to "ensure safe, sustained and unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need, in line with their obligations under international law.

UN agencies on the ground are preparing to scale up their response,

prioritizing life-saving assistance and protection services for those with emergency needs.

The [World Food Programme](#) (WFP), the organization's emergency food and nutrition relief agency, has [delivered enough food for around 200,000](#) people and stands ready to deliver more as soon as security improves and conditions allow.

However, violence has also displaced hundreds of staff of WFP-partner organizations, "leaving few people on the ground to manage aid distribution and limiting possibilities to intervene," said Bettina Luescher, a spokesperson for the UN agency. She added that "other distribution solutions" were currently being examined.