

## Syria: 'Violence, displacement' and cold kill 11 infants 'in the past two days'

"Violence, displacement and extremely harsh conditions" in northern and eastern Syria have killed at least 32 children since December – including 11 infants in the past two days, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) revealed on Thursday.

In eastern Syria, persistent fighting around Hajin has forced thousands on a long, arduous journey almost 300 km to the north, to Al-Hol camp for internally displaced people.

"The difficult journey, cold weather and long waiting periods at screening centres, where families wait sometimes for days, have reportedly contributed to the death of at least 29 children – including [11 infants](#) in the past two days alone", said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

She explained that UNICEF is assisting the fleeing children and mothers at the camp with blankets, winter clothing, food, water, health and nutrition services, child-friendly spaces and child protection and family reunification services.

However, the "lack of security has made humanitarian access to children en route to the camp's screening area all but impossible", she continued.

*Keep children out of harm's way, even in areas of active conflict –  
UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore*

Since last December, some 23,000 mostly women and children have arrived at the camp completely exhausted after a three-day journey in harsh desert winter conditions, with little food or shelter along the way. More than 5,000 people have arrived over the past three days alone.

"Since last week, fighting in Ma'arat al-Nu'man in Idlib, in northwestern Syria, has reportedly killed three children and injured scores more", informed Ms. Fore, adding that a teacher working for a UNICEF-supported partner and his son were killed in the violence.

Moreover, fighting has also badly damaged a school and a community centre for children.

As UNICEF and its partners continue to deliver lifesaving supplies and services to children and their families in Idlib, Ms. Fore appealed to all parties to "facilitate safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all children in need".

“Parties to the conflict have shown a callous disregard for the laws of war” she lamented, calling again on those fighting to “keep children out of harm’s way – even in areas of active conflict”.

“There are no excuses: children are not and must never be the target of violence”, concluded the UNICEF chief.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator [Mark Lowcock](#) told the Security Council that millions of Syrians “are living under tents or tarpaulins or in damaged buildings with no power or heating” with “severe shortages of all the basics – from blankets to baby milk to bandages”, adding that the harsh weather is destroying makeshift shelters.