

'Warehouses emptying' amid growing humanitarian needs in south-west Syria

More than 180,000 people are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in south-west Syria after weeks of escalating hostilities that have restricted aid access to the area, the UN said on Friday.

At a briefing in Geneva, Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#), said that there were particular concerns for an estimated 55,000 civilians whose movements have been restricted by the extremist group Jaysh Khaled Bin Walid (JKBW).

"We are, of course, very concerned about this particular group's policy of restricting freedom of movement for civilians who are trying to flee the area and only a very limited number of civilians had been able to escape," Mr. Laerke told journalists.

The ISIL-linked terrorist affiliate's area of control, spans around 200-square kilometres of Syrian territory near the Jordanian border, OCHA said in a statement, noting that the development follows five weeks of territorial gains by Syrian Government forces against opposition armed groups in the south-western governorates of Dara'a, Quneitra and Sweida.

Several thousand people have nonetheless managed to seek safety from JKBW, but those who remain "are now subject to increasing hostilities", the OCHA official said, adding that between 21 and 23 July, "intense air strikes" were reported in the so-called Yarmouk Basin of Dara'a Province.

The targets included al-Shajra, Hayt, Tasil, Jellin, Sahm al-Golan, Adwan and Tal al-Jumou', OCHA said in a statement.

Reports suggest that at least 32 civilians were killed in these attacks, including 11 children and three women.

On Wednesday 25 July, a multiple suicide attack by ISIL in Sweida city also resulted in more than 240 casualties and injured at least 170 people.

United Nations [Secretary-General António Guterres strongly condemned](#) the incident, which came as UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura briefed the UN Security Council on efforts to end the more than seven-year Syrian war.

According to OCHA, one other area remains in opposition hands in south-west Syria, near the Golan Heights.

There, civilians face ongoing violence and cross-border humanitarian actors report that they only have limited supplies left.

"Our humanitarian partners who have operated across borders from Jordan are highly restricted," Laerke said. "In fact, it's over a month since there has

been a cross-border convoy from Jordan into the area.”

According to OCHA, the last cross-border convoy from neighbouring Jordan was dispatched on 25 June, in line with UN Security Council resolutions.

The delivery of humanitarian aid from within Syria also continues to be hampered, OCHA said, as aid partners in Damascus “still (have) not been granted the necessary approvals” to reach communities in Quneitra.

The restrictions mean that significant unmet needs continue to increase dramatically, and the situation has been made worse by the fact that many local aid partners have also been forced to flee the fighting, leading to a significant scale-down of some assistance.

“More warehouses are now empty or emptying, which mean that we are very concerned about the continued delivery of lifesaving assistance to those many thousands of affected people,” Laerke said.