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**Exceedingly Difficult Human
Conditions Agonize Mabroukeh
Camp's IDPs While Winter Sets in**

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Introduction:

In the Mabroukeh Camp¹, west of the [Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City](#) in [al-Hasakah Province](#), northeast Syria, thousands of internally displaced persons/IDPs continue to suffer from extremely severe humanitarian conditions, especially with winter being around the corner, not to mention the almost non-existent healthcare services they are offered. According to testimonies obtained by Syrians for Truth and Justice/STJ, 10 children at least were recorded as having developed malnutrition², in addition to 40% of the camp's child population which is tormented by acute diarrhea in October 2018 alone. These extreme medical cases are the result of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions and the shutting down of two medical posts —the first, United Nations Children's Fund /UNICEF-affiliated, was closed in August 2018, and the second, World Health Organization/WHO-associated, was stopped from offering services in October 2018.

The agony of the camp's residents is not limited to healthcare alone, for many of the residents are maltreated by the Autonomous Administration-associated Camp Authority/Management, not to mention that some of the IDPs, who demanded services, were accused of affiliation to the Islamic State/ISIS, which is acronymed Daesh in Arabic, as several witnesses reported to STJ in late October 2018.

According to STJ's field researcher, the Mabroukeh Camp incubates (2123) internally displaced persons³, the majority of whom is from [Deir ez-Zor Province](#), who fled the military action⁴ witnessed by their areas in massive waves, seeking a shelter in the camps of the Autonomous Administration-held Northern Syria. The children, the researcher pointed out, constitute the class most affected by the diseases spreading in the camp, for they form 50% of its population, many of whom have to deal with diarrhea, given the lacking medical care within the camp and the scarce food aid the people are provided, not to mention that they are coerced into making houses of shredded inhabitable tents. Together, these conditions, steered the camp's population to hold a demonstration on October 18, 2018, on which they

¹ The Mabroukeh Camp is located in the rural parts of the city of Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani, al-Hasakah Province, about 40 kilometers away from its center and more to the west. It was founded on January 28, 2016 by the Autonomous Administration, which still runs its affairs under the supervision of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees/UNHCR.

² "Malnutrition remains one of the most serious health problems in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. It is the single biggest contributor to child mortality: 15% of the global burden of newborn and child mortality occurs in countries of the Region." WHO. <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/malnutrition/index.html>.

³ These statistics, obtained by STJ from the camp's management, are indicative of the camp's population up to early November 2018.

⁴ On September 9, 2017, the Deir ez-Zor Military Council, operating under the Syrian Democratic Forces/SDF, declared the start of the military operation decoded Jazira Storm, backed by the US-led coalition, which sought to take over the last of ISIS strongholds in the Syrian Jazira region, the area east of the Euphrates River and the eastern rural parts of Deir ez-Zor City. In July 2017, the Syrian regular forces, for their part, have announced a military operation in Deir ez-Zor as well, as to rid of the militants of ISIS, stationed in the west of the Euphrates River. These operations were accompanied by brutal aerial shelling, launched by the Russian and Syrian warplanes, in addition to the airstrikes which the US-led coalition embarked on. The military action, thus, sent daily massive numbers of Deir ez-Zor's people out of their houses on a flight of displacement.

called on the United Nations/UN and other international organizations, demanding that they step in and better the living and healthcare reality in the camp.

In May 2018, the Mabroukeh Camp bore witness to the death of a child and the deteriorating health of eight other displaced persons, who were all affected by food poisoning. In the same month, several cases were rushed to the camp's medical center, who suffered from food poisoning, only a few days after expired food aid was distributed to the camp's population.⁵

In December 2017, the camp's population was also saddened by the death of three children, who were affected by cold and shortage of medical services.⁶

Reportedly, the areas in northern and eastern Syria, held by the Autonomous Administration, are a location to more than 10 IDP camps, including those of al-Hawl, Roj, Nowruz, Mabroukeh, al-Shadadi/al-Sad, Ain Issa, Mashta Nour, al-Twaihneh and al-Karameh, among others. The population of these camps, however, is made mostly of Syrian internally displaced persons and a number of Iraqi refugees. These camps are administratively run by the Autonomous Administration while they are managed by non-governmental organization, both local and international, on the level of services. Addressing a few aspects of the service reality of these camps, STJ published a detailed factsheet on December 17, 2017.⁷



A photo of the Mabroukeh Camp, west of the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani City. Taken on October 25, 2018.
Photo credit: STJ.

⁵ "Food Poisoning Kills a Child and Hit eight others in Mabrouka Camp west of Ras al-Ayn/ Sari Kani City." STJ, June 15, 2018. Last visited: November 18, 2019. <https://stj-sy.org/en/575/>.

⁶ "Cold and Shortage of Medical Services Cause Death of Three Children in Mabrouka Camp." STJ, January 20, 2018. Last visited: November 18, 2019. <https://stj-sy.org/en/387/>.

⁷ "Fact Sheet on Camps for 'the Internally Displaced' Located in Autonomous-Administered Areas in Northern Syria." STJ, December 17, 2017. Last visited: November 18, 2019. <https://stj-sy.org/en/361/>.



Satellite images showing the approximate location of the Mabroukeh Camp.

1. “We Call upon International and Humanitarian Organizations to Show Regard for Our Conditions”:

With winter setting in, the suffering of thousands of IDPs within the Mabroukeh Camp inflated, knowing that it is run by the Autonomous Administration under the auspice of the [UNHCR](#).

Khalil Ismail al-Khlaif, one of the Mabroukeh Camp's IDPs, used to work as an elementary school teacher in [rural Deir ez-Zor](#) before he was coerced out of the area in November 2017, triggered by the confrontations between the Syrian regular forces and ISIS. Khalil today lives with his 7-member-family in a tiny tent, giving STJ the following account of the misery that he bears with there:

“Our journey of displacement to the camp in the Mabroukeh town was one of pain and suffering, for we paid smugglers a million and a half Syrian Pounds to reach this camp, which though safe, it lacks care on every considerable level. All the food materials we are provided with in the form of a monthly food aid basket, including pea, rice, and oil, are of a poor quality, making it impossible for the children to consume and older people, too, who go through hell to digest them, not to mention the poor storage capacity in the camp, which precedes the distribution process. But still, the IDPs are forced into eating this food, urged by their deteriorating economic status. The majority of the camp's population cannot afford the costs of living given the soaring prices of food materials, for in the camp we are not offered meals, breakfast, lunch or dinner. The bread we are supplied is a whole different story, because it is never enough, though we have repeatedly reported this issue to the camp's management, which did not react at all. In addition to this, the tents are all torn and inhabitable; we have been living in this tent for a year now, and it has already housed a family before us for eight months.”



A photo of the Mabroukeh Camp. Taken on October 25, 2018. Photo credit: STJ.

About Mohammad al-Hameed, another displaced man from [the city of al-Bukamal](#), rural Deir ez-Zor, told STJ that he arrived in the camp in early September 2017, after three days of travelling from the city of Deir ez-Zor, pointing out that he sought the Mabroukeh Camp hoping to gain a sense of safety and comfort, only to be shocked by the camp's condition, as it lacks the least of life's basic needs, especially that winter is approaching. He added:

“We resorted to the Mabroukeh Camp in search of security and comfort. But here, we are short on medical support and medicines. The tents, we reside in, are also inhabitable, especially during winter, not to mention that there are no heaters, covers or insulation means. Food lacks, as well. You can see it yourself, I live with my 10-member-family in a small tent, which fails to protect us from summer's heat and winter's cold. I sustain a backbone-related disease; my daughter is handicapped. We hope that the international and humanitarian organizations look into our condition, as I am settled here with my family after our house in al-Bukamal City got destroyed.”



A photo of the Mabroukeh IDP Camp. Taken on October 25, 2019. Photo credit: STJ.

2. Malnutrition Hits Ten Children Recently:

Starting in September 2018, the healthcare reality in Mabroukeh Camp continues to exacerbate, made even worse by the closure of the UNICEF-affiliated medical post in August 2018 and that of the WHO on October 22, 2018, with the end of the partnership contracts these organizations signed with several local organizations, including the Ras al-Ayen/Sari Kani-based al-Bir Wal -Ihsan Association. The camp was thus left only two medical posts, one operating under the Autonomous Administration and another associated with the Médecins du Monde/Doctors of the World.

The Mabroukeh Camp's healthcare situation, Fatimah al-Ragheb, a woman displaced from Deir ez-Zor City, told STJ, reached its worst when she first arrived in the area, late in June 2017, never to recover, to the date this report was made—early November 2018. On this note, she said:

“Here, we suffer from an acute shortage of healthcare services; let it be fever, cold or flu that a child sustains, the medical post would only offer him/her painkillers such as Paracetamol, saying that this all they have got. If we intend to go outside the camp to get medical treatment, it would be with utmost difficulty, not to mention that emergency services are not available all the time. Once, I found the woman living in the neighboring tent unconscious; I asked her mother for the reason; she told me that it was typhoid fever⁸. The woman's fever kept worsening, so we called an ambulance. The ambulance was there; I saw it with my own eyes, but it was not until two or three hours later that they hospitalized her.”

A health observer, at one of the medical posts in the Mabroukeh Camp, said that malnutrition and acute diarrhea cases have been sweeping the camp lately, narrating the following to STJ:

“In October 2018 alone, we recorded 10 cases of malnutrition among children. Additionally, 40% of the camp's child population has been suffering from severe diarrhea, the reason why the two remaining medical posts are challenged with addressing the cases of malnutrition and acute diarrhea, as they lack both medications and equipment needed for diagnosis, particularly after the UNICEF-affiliated medical post and that of the WHO were shut down.”

⁸ “Typhoid fever is a life-threatening infection of the intestinal tract and bloodstream, caused by the highly virulent bacteria *Salmonella Typhi*. It only lives in humans and is usually spread between humans through food or water which is contaminated with faeces. Symptoms include prolonged high fever, fatigue, headache, nausea, abdominal pain, constipation or diarrhea, and in some cases a rash. Severe cases may lead to serious complications or even death.” WHO. <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/typhoid-fever/Page-1.html>.

The observer pointed out that the last two medical posts—of [the Doctors of the World](#) and the Autonomous Administration— are incapable of treating severe diarrhea because they cannot conduct the needed tests as to know the type of the germ causing the diseases and also due to the camp's shortage of medication, not to mention that cases of burns, bone fractures, and heart attacks are left untreated as a result of the almost non-existent resources.

According to STJ's field researcher, the Doctors of the World-affiliated medical post offers its services on Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday every week, from 8:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The Autonomous Administration's post, nonetheless, provides its service every day, except for Fridays, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



A photo of the Mabroukeh Camp, showing the now-closed medical posts of the UNICEF and the WHO. Taken on October 25, 2018. Phot credit: STJ.

3. IDPs Ill-treated:

In late October 2018, several of the Mabroukeh Camp's residents told STJ that the IDPs are being ill-treated, some of whom are additionally accused of affiliation with ISIS by the Camp's Authority, which operates under the Autonomous Administration.

Mahmoud Mohammad al-Ali, a displaced from the city of al-Mayadin, rural Deir ez-Zor, informed STJ that the identity documents of the IDPs and their families, including their passports and the vehicle registration certificates, have all been confiscated by the Autonomous Administration-affiliated Camp Authority once they arrived in the camp, pointing out that the authority is restricting the movement of the displaced and is denying them services and permission to travel most of the time. Sometimes, it even accuses those demanding services of affiliation to ISIS. He added:

“During the period from early August to September 20, 2018, the displaced were tormented only to get a travel leave or to exit the camp, for the Camp's Management did not facilitate the residents' requests, who wished to visit other areas to address certain affairs or needs. I am one of these people. I filed a request to visit my 90-year-old father, who came from Damascus to al-Hasakah to see me. The Camp Management, however, did not grant me a permission, though I filed a leave request four times in ten days, but it was all to no avail. On September 16, 2018, I was left no choice but to leave the camp without a permission, to go and visit my father in al-Hasakah. A few days into the incident, the Camp Security Forces, Asayish, summoned me and held me captive in the prison, consisting of a locked room in the camp, accusing me of affiliation to Daesh/ISIS, in addition to the charge of leaving the camp without a permission. After they imprisoned me for 24 hours, they released me, on the condition that I pay a fine of 30,000 Syrian Pounds, which I paid to get out of the prison. However, I am still faced with accusations and slanderous statements by some of the people running the camp.”

In early August 2018, Human Rights Watch published a report⁹, saying that authorities of the Syrian Democratic Council/SDC and the Autonomous Administration are unlawfully restricting the movement of people who escaped from Islamic State (also known as ISIS)-held areas in displacement camps in northeast Syria. It added:

“The authorities should revoke unlawful restrictions on free movement of internally displaced people, including those displaced because of the ongoing fight against ISIS. Restrictions should only be imposed if ‘provided by law ... and necessary to protect national security, public order, public health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others,’ as outlined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Any restrictions must be

⁹ “Syria: Thousands of Displaced Confined to Camps.” Human Rights Watch, August 1, 2018. Last visited: November 18, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/01/syria-thousands-displaced-confined-camps>.

nondiscriminatory, in accordance with national law, and 'necessary' to achieve legitimate aims. The restrictions must also be proportionate – that is, carefully balanced against the specific reason for the restriction.”



The photos are of the Mabroukeh Camp. Taken on October 25, 2018. Photo credit: STJ.

4. Protests against the Camp's Poor Humanitarian Conditions:

On October 18, 2018, the Mabroukeh Camp bore witness to a protest, where hundreds of displaced took to the street, calling on the UN, humanitarian and international organizations to step in and address the living and medical reality in the camp.

The protest, STJ's field researcher reported, was held on one of the camp's squares, where the people gathered for two hours without intervention on the side of the Autonomous Administration-affiliated Camp Authority. The protesting displaced carried up signs, demanding the provision of sufficient amounts of food and healthcare services, as well as addressing the humanitarian condition in the camp while winter approached.



A photo of the protest held in the Mabroukeh Camp on October 18, 2018. Photo credit: [Autonomous Administration-affiliated Labor and Social Affairs Authority](#).

In late October 2018, STJ interviewed several of the Mabroukeh Camp's authority officials, expressing concern over the poor humanitarian conditions the displaced are forced to deal with, to which the authority replied that it has been doing all that can be done to help the IDPs, adding that the deteriorating humanitarian reality is due to the scarce funding offered by non-governmental organizations, both international and local. On October 27, 2018, STJ has also contacted the camp's authority, asking the latter to define the basis on which it is charging the displaced civilians with affiliation to ISIS, to which STJ never got a response.

سوريون
من أجل
الحقيقة
والعدالة
Syrians
For Truth
& Justice



History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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