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Glossary

3RP	The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan
AOG	Armed Opposition Group
ESSN	Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN)
GoR	Government of Russia
GoS	Government of Syria
GoT	Government of Turkey
HTS	Hay'at Tahrir al Sham (alliance of 'extreme' AOGs, notably Jabhat al-Nusra)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
YPG	Peoples Protection Unit
PYD	Democratic Union Party
TRC	Turkish Red Crescent
WFP	World Food Programme

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Sources of information include Mercy Corp Humanitarian Access Team (MC HAT), INSO, and websites including, but not exclusive, Institute for the Study of War, Chatham House, Human Rights Watch, Al Jazeera, SouthFront, Rudaw, and Al-Monitor.

In the text when '*Comment: ...*' appears in *italic* and the subsequent text is also in *italic*, this information is not fact, but the opinion of the author.

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1. Domestic News

PRESIDENTIAL & PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

The GoT has brought forward Presidential & Parliamentary elections by 18 months to 24 June 2018. The winner will assume the presidency of the Turkish republic with broad powers that were approved after a constitutional referendum last year. The changes include abolishing the Prime Minister and the existing parliamentary system of government would be replaced with an executive presidency and a presidential system. The president will also be given more control over appointments to the Supreme Board of Judges and Prosecutors. The elections will take place under a State of Emergency that has been in place since the coup attempt in July 2016.

Comment: The main reason for calling early elections is Turkey's faltering economy. President Erdogan's hope is to win the election before the economy crashes. There is also hopes to benefit from nationalist sentiment following the successors of the Turkish military in their fight against the PKK. However, even this is fragile. Turkey's growing presence in Idlib, Syria is a high-risk strategy. Should Erdogan win, which is likely, it could pave the way for a single-party state with few checks on the power of the president. There are also questions over the legitimacy of the elections; several opposition leaders have been imprisoned, all opposition media outlets have been closed and many journalists imprisoned. The only operating media outlets are either state owned or pro-government. Adding to this is the governments two payments of 1000 lire to retirees. The payments will be made a week before the elections and is a blatant attempt to buy more than 12 million Turkish votes, or about 15 % of the total population.

GoT PURGE

On 1 June 2018, the website 'Turkey Purge' <https://turkeypurge.com> reports that since 15 July 2016:

- 138,579 people have been detained in Turkey
- 78,687 have been arrested
- 319 journalists arrested (a third of the journalists imprisoned around the world are in Turkey)
- 4,463 judges & prosecutors have been dismissed
- 189 media outlets shutdown



ECONOMIC TROUBLES

Economic growth in Turkey was 7.4 % in 2017, one of the highest in the world. However, estimates are it will be below 4% at the end of 2018. Worse is the current rate of inflation at over 10% and the value of the Turkish Lira – in 2007, the dollar was worth 1.3 Turkish liras, on 23 May 2018, the lira was at a historic low with a dollar worth 4.92. The Turkish lira regained some of its value after Turkey's central bank raised the interest rate from 13.5 % to 16.5 %. It was also hoped the raise will stem an outflow of capital from Turkey to more stable currencies. Additionally, Turkey suffers from large trade deficit with imported products and raw materials that benefit from low tariffs, and foreign direct investment has declined to a third of previous levels.

Comment: Even though the central bank is independent, it has been strongly influenced by Erdogan who has insisted interest rates be kept low. Whilst higher rates can support a currency and ease inflation, they also tend to hinder economic growth by making it expensive to borrow and can arouse public discontent. It's reported global money managers were not reassured when some met with Erdogan on his recent visit to the UK. Rather than reassuring investors, he argued for policies that defy economic orthodoxy and declared his intent to assume a greater say on interest rates if he wins the election, flouting the central bank's independence. However, some economists and financial analysts say the real problem lies within Turkey, where crony capitalism and corruption have grown as the rule of law and an independent judiciary, essential bulwarks for foreign investors, have been eroded under Mr. Erdogan. Credit rating agencies have downgraded Turkey's sovereign debt rating in recent months, citing a lack of economic structural reform and a removal of checks and balances by Mr. Erdogan.

2. Operations in Syria

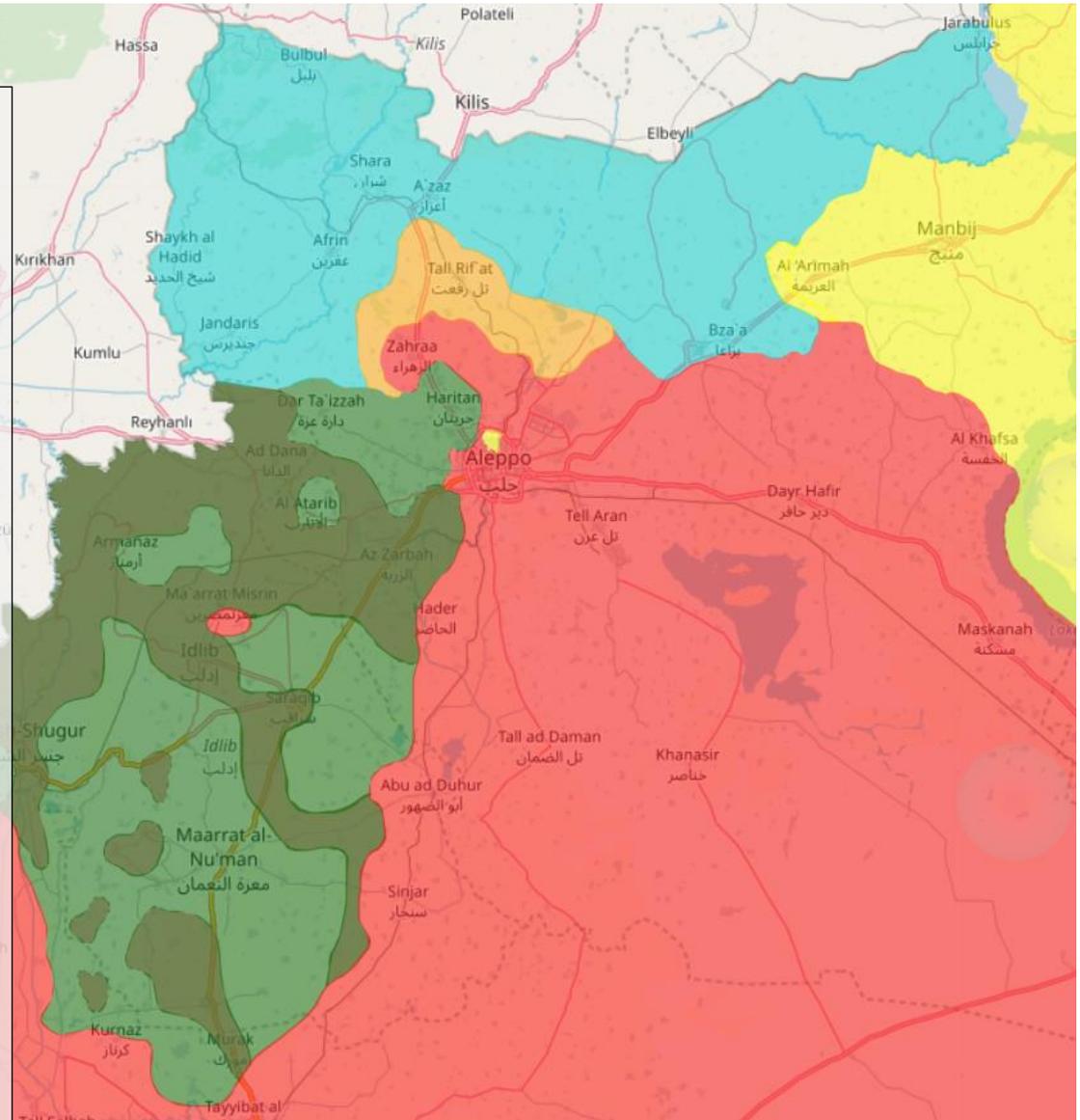
MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IDLIB, SYRIA

During May the GoT's involvement in the opposition enclave in the northwest of Syria, encompassing Idlib governorate, west-rural Aleppo and northern Hama, grew and became more complex.

- Turkish military established several more Observation Posts in west-rural Aleppo and the eastern border of Idlib governorate. GoT has now all 12 Observation Posts detailed in the de-escalation zone agreement with Russia & Iran.
- A new alliance of 10 armed AOG in northwest Syria was formed called 'National Liberation Front' & will comprise of an estimated 50,000 fighters. It is reported the alliance will receive direct funding from the GoT.
- GoT has reportedly requested the disbanding of HTS in the next 2 months.
- Reportedly, as part of the de-escalation process agreed between Turkey, Russia & Iran, GoS forces will withdraw from front line positions close to Turkish observation posts in northern Hama & eastern Idlib governorates & be replaced with Russian Police. Similarly, it's claimed the GoS will hand over other areas on the border to GoT supported armed opposition groups, probably the newly formed National Liberation Front. In return, the Government of Turkey will commit to ending the presence of extremist AOGs in Idlib and northern Hama, notably HTS.

Comment: On 14 & 15 May was the 9th round of the Astana talks between the governments of Turkey, Russia & Iran. It seems much more was discussed there than was reported at the time. It seems likely that final plans for Turkey's greater involvement in the opposition held northwest was finalized. This is a high risk strategy for the GoT, much depends on them disbanding the AOGs considered extremists, notably HTS but also others aligned with al Qaeda. Not all will voluntary disband and fighting is highly likely between the extremist AOGs & Turkish supported AOGs.

It seems unlikely that GoS forces will launch an offensive on Idlib & northern Hama, now that GoT forces and its aligned AOGs will soon occupy much of the enclave's borders. Here probably lays a main driver behind Turkey's involvement in Idlib. Turkey already hosts over 2.5 million Syrian refugees. In Idlib there is an estimated 2.3 million people, half of them IDPs. Should there be a Syrian offensive on the opposition held enclave, many of these people would be displaced to Turkey, putting further pressure on government & the economy. Controlling the northwest enclave will also allow Turkey to relocate some of the Syrian refugees from Turkey.

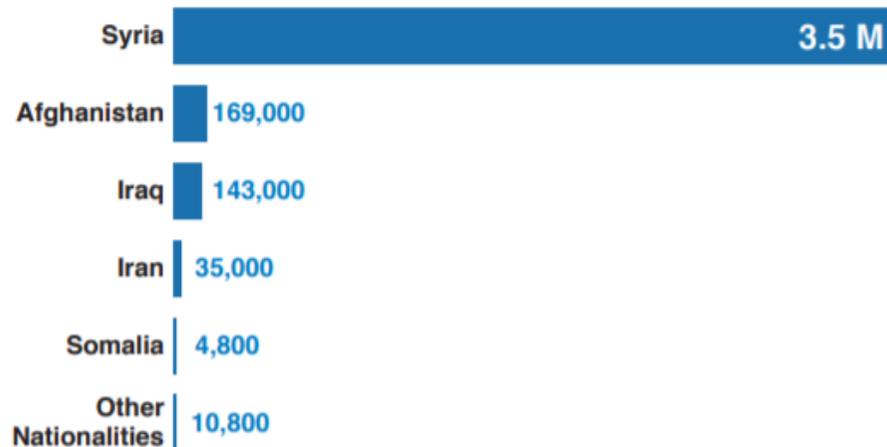


3. Humanitarian Situation

PROTECTION

Since border protection increased & with the Turkish military occupying Afrin, there have been no major influx of refugees. However, for those who have illegally crossed from Syria, due to changes in the registration policy, it will be more difficult to register, increasing the need for protection related projects.

 **3.9 million**
Number of Persons of Concern (as of 30 April 2018)



EDUCATION & HEALTH

Syrians under temporary protection are increasingly accessing services that are provided through public systems. For example, Education sector data shows that at the start of the 2017/2018 school year more than 600,000 Syrian children of school-age are enrolled in primary & secondary education, & just under 17,000 students are attending tertiary education. Progress within the health sector demonstrates how the Government of Turkey, with the support of 3RP partners, continues to support the resilience of the health system. Over one thousand Syrian doctors & nurses have been trained so far on the Turkish health system & more than 400 of them are now working in refugee clinics throughout the country.

BASIC NEEDS

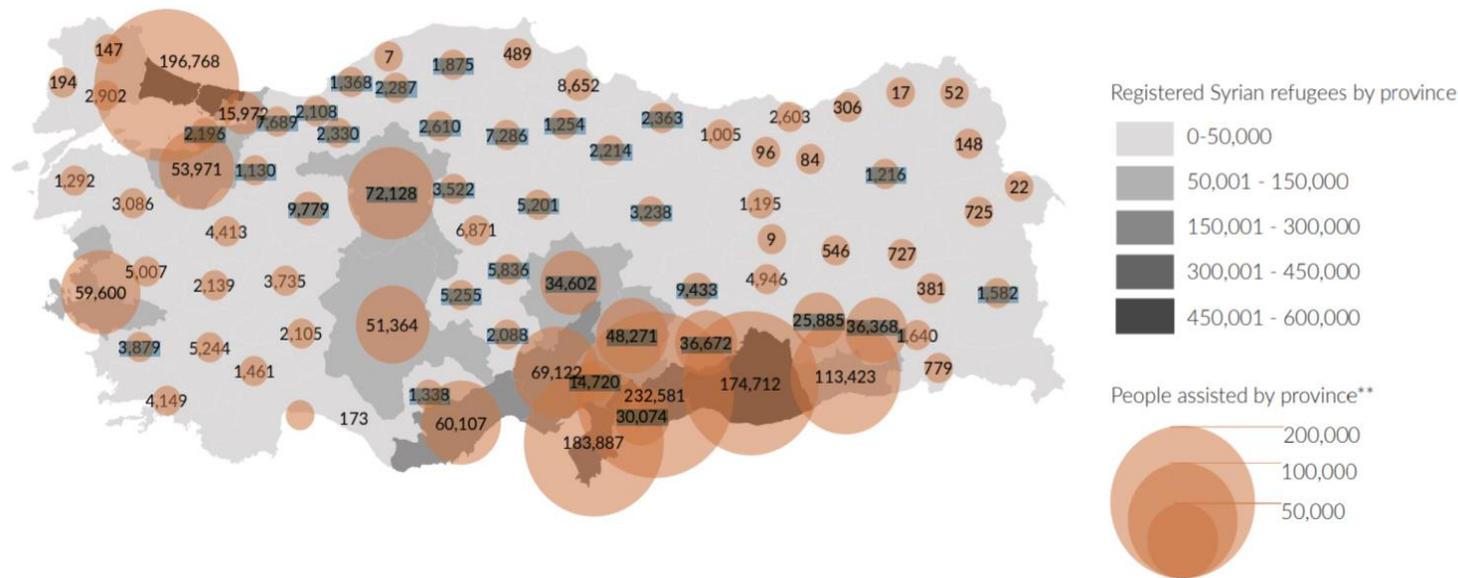
Through the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Program, Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and WFP reaches 1.250.000 people monthly. The ESSN system is also used for one-time assistance such as winterization & shelter. However, there is none or very limited cash-based intervention on basic needs. For more information see – <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63437>

LIVELIHOODS

In Jan 2016, the Regulation on Work Permits of Refugees under temporary protection was adopted, granting all IDPs with temporary protection the right to apply for work permits & access formal employment. This was to enable the Syrians under temporary protection to become more self-reliant & resilient. Since its introduction, 26,000 work permits have been granted to Syrians. While work regulations are becoming less restrictive & jobs are more accessible, challenges remain in terms of the implementation of the Regulation. Job prospects among Syrians under temporary protection & host communities continue to be challenged by administrative & social barriers as well as increasing levels of unemployment. Across Turkey, the unemployment rate in the formal sector reached 10.2 percent (3.25 million people) by Jun 2017. Therefore, income levels among refugees remain insufficient & social assistance programmes are still needed for those who barely make ends meet as well as those with specific needs. Many NGOs are conducting projects on vocational trainings or on the job trainings in partnership with municipalities or Life long Education Centers of the government. Additional to these trainings, some of the NGOs do job placements & facilitate local business owners to obtain work permit for their Syrian employees.

TURKEY FACT SHEETS BY UNHCR

- Education - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63882>
- Strengthening Legal Protection and Access to Justice - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63878>
- Resettlement - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63880>
- Communication with Communities - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63879>
- Strengthening a Quality Asylum System - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63877>
- Key Facts and Figures - <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/63543>



SOCIAL COHESION

The increase in demand in all areas of governmental services has led to challenges in terms of access to adequate services and increased competition between Syrians under temporary protection and host communities, risking a further increase in social tensions. With the elections, the Syrian population is becoming a target of politicians and some rhetoric fuels the tension between communities. This is a crucial area that NGOs are also trying to tackle.

4. Risk Levels

Locations	Risk Level	Comment	Forecast
Turkey except for those areas specified below	Low	The number of terrorist incidents, especially those targeting civilians and internationals have reduced significantly over the last 2 years. Post-coup policing has been very effective in eliminating terrorist and militant activity.	Whilst there is the potential for pre-election violence, the risk will remain low (except for the southeast). In the short-term risk levels are expected to remain low. However, due to the political sensitivity in the country, visitors should refrain from openly criticising the government.
With-in 5km of Syrian border	High	Tensions are particularly high on the border with Syrian territory controlled by the Kurdish PYD & YPG. GoT force regularly shoot small and heavy weapons across the border at YPG targets.	Tensions on the border with the PYD & YPG will remain high & could increase should Turkey launch an offensive against the Kurdish region, although there are currently no indicators to suggest this will happen in the short term. On the border with areas controlled by Turkey & its aligned AOG, risk levels may reduce in the short to medium term as Turkey reinforces its control over the region it occupies in northern Syria.
Turkey South East: Sirtak, Hakkari, Diyarbakir, Van, Batman, Siirt, Bitlis	High	Even though the threats in these areas are indirect, the number of incidents are high. In addition, there are numerous Police/military checkpoints and often curfews. Visitors will raise suspicion with the authorities and visits must only be made if essential.	As the 24 June election approaches, pre-election violence is likely. PKK attacks and anti-PKK operations by the police & military are likely to increase as well. The risk-level is expected to remain high. It will increase in some areas should the GoT launch an offensive against the PYD & YPG in Syria.