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## **In the name of the displaced Afrin people in Shehba To the World Health Organization**

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), issued a report regarding the emergence of corona virus (COVID-19) in the Syrian Republic on / 11th of March 2020 /, the report stated that the Syrian Ministry of Health confirmed the negative of all cases that were suspected and no one was infected.

To counter the threat of the virus, the World Health Organization provides all means of support and assistance to the Syrian Ministry of Health to supplement its ability and preparedness to address this epidemic by providing detection and monitoring equipment, training health personnel in several governorates, and providing quarantine centers in addition to holding workshops aimed at enhancing awareness and understanding the risks of the epidemic.

The report stated that the readiness of isolation centers was confirmed in / 6 / areas, namely (Damascus, Aleppo, Deir Al-Zour, Homs, Lattakia and Qamishli) and a health center is currently being established that deals with corona cases in Dwer region in the Damascus countryside.

### **What about more than two hundred thousand displaced people in the northern countryside of Aleppo (Al-Shahba)?**

Through the report, we see great efforts to help the Syrians ward off the threat of this epidemic, but it is very clear that they forgot a very large geographical spot in which thousands of displaced people are present, and whose presence has reached two years, amid great disregard from the World Health Organization and the Syrian government as well. The areas of the presence of the displaced from the Syrian city of Afrin, who were forcibly displaced from their areas by the Turkish army and its militant Islamic factions, suffer from a significant weakness in providing services, especially health services.

## **Reasons why this geography (al-Shahba) is more vulnerable to infection with the virus:**

Al-Shahba is located in the western and northern countryside of Aleppo and is located between the cities of Al-Bab and Azaz, which is a plain area with vast agricultural lands, fertile soil, and abundant hills. It consists of the following main towns (Tal Refaat - Tal Qarrah - Tal Shair - Al-Ahdath - Fafin - Deir Jamal - Kfarnaya - Ahras), but this geography is not suitable for a healthy living for the following reasons:

1. Al-Shahba is considered one of the liberated areas from ISIS in 2016 after a war that lasted two years, and behind which it left ruins in all infrastructures such as homes, schools, water supply stations, ovens, and health centers.

2. The geography of Al-Shahba is considered to be a contagious geography and a suitable place for the spread of diseases and its transmission as a result of its neglect for many years. It is also famous as a focus of diseases from a long time ago. Unfortunately, the displaced people of Afrin have had to live in this environment against their will being relatively safe, as you will find displaced people living in half-destroyed homes where there are no health conditions for a healthy life.

Here we want to mention that at a time when the world no longer mentions leishmaniasis, there are hundreds of people afflicted with it in this affected geographical spot. They receive treatment with great difficulty due to the lack of medicines and serum for leishmaniasis. Imagine with us what would happen if the region was infected with this dangerous virus ?? !!

3. There is a severe siege on this geography, on the one hand, by the armed factions present on the outskirts of Al-Shahba, and on the other hand by the Syrian government security barriers that impede many obstacles to the movement of the displaced, which makes it dangerous in case of the spread of the virus. All Afrinis ask how will we be able to go to Aleppo, the closest area, for treatment??!!!!

4. As for the displaced people in five camps, it is really disastrous that the camps are the first places to receive diseases and increase the rate and speed of their spread, especially in the absence of sterilization and spraying of pesticides.

## **What will happen if the virus spreads in Shahba?**

Until now, till making this report, there has been no case of coronavirus in this geographical area. The health committees have taken a number of preventive measures, such as preventing gatherings and closing schools, but these measures are not sufficient, but unfortunately this is at least what we can do.

**We will be facing a real catastrophe and a great tragedy if we do not act as quickly as we can. As we said, the results will be disastrous and will affect the safety and health of civil peace in all of Syria for the following reasons:**

### **Infrastructure of the only hospital in Al-Shahba (Afrin Hospital)**

The hospital is located in Fafin, about 10 km away from Aleppo. The hospital is a residential house in the form of a villa consisting of several internal rooms that are not isolated and some basic departments such as operations, laboratory, and intensive care, and some clinics such as the interior, children and women, which are present in the form of mobile clinics (small size). The hospital infrastructure is very fragile as it is a bit old building. The other thing is that the hospital's absorptive capacities are very limited. In normal days, it suffers from great pressure due to a shortage of beds, rooms and incubators for children. The hospital receives patients from the western countryside of Aleppo, from Shirwa, Noble, and Al-Zahra, in addition to more than 200,000 displaced people.

As for the specialist doctors, they are very few, and the academic nurses are also few and the rest of the staff are trainees and volunteers who do not have educational qualifications. But despite that and despite the limited capabilities, the hospital provides its services for free for 24 hours for all citizens without discrimination or racism.

### **What do we miss to face the threat of corona virus?**

- 1. We miss the preventive masks for the displaced, the gloves, the protective suits, especially the N95 masks, helmets, and shoes for care technicians in case of suspected people.**
- 2. We miss the thermal apparatus that reveals the symptoms of the virus, and we do not mean here devices that reveal the body temperature, as these do not fulfill the purpose**
- 3. We miss the human resources of trained doctors and health personnel to help the infected , especially academic nurses. A number of trainees and volunteers work in the only hospital but unluckily they were trained here during their time in Al-Shahba, they cannot intervene in critical situations and their abilities do not rise to the level of how to deal with people infected with the virus, and this in itself is the biggest problem to confront. we know in order to confront this virus, the hospital requires special care for the infected ones with a correct scientific method .**

We miss the academic and scientific qualifications in the hospital and the Kurdish Red Crescent points as well. And if you find the educational qualifications, the number is never enough, as they may only reach five or six academic nurses.

4. We miss the isolation centers (if any case is suspected), so we suggest helping to build a separated health center that meets the health requirements in order to isolate and treat the infected ones.

5. We miss the laboratory equipment for conducting PCR virus analysis. The only laboratory in the hospital is able to perform regular routine analyzes, and even those routines lack many materials and equipment.

6. We lack sterilization materials and sterilizers in the health centers of the Kurdish Red Crescent and the only hospital in the region.

7. We miss the mechanisms of transporting the infected ones within the health conditions to Aleppo, as it considers the closest point to receive treatment , due to obstacles imposed by the security barriers.

8. We miss trained and ambulatory units among the displaced in the villages and towns in this vast geography.

9. We miss the ventilator machines in the only hospital here, where there are only three devices in non-isolated rooms that are sufficient to receive a very small number of patients if any. We also miss oxygen generators, as we depend on oxygen cylinders that do not fulfill the need in cases of infection with the virus.

10. All displaced people suffer from malnutrition and weak immunity, especially children, pregnant women and the elderly, which makes them more vulnerable to the risk of infection.

Therefore, whether the virus has spread or not spread, we will not know because of the weak capabilities and the lack of any support to provide assistance before the spread of the epidemic. And if the virus spreads, the biggest catastrophe is the loss of everyone.

### **Urgent appeal on behalf of the displaced Afrin to the World Health Organization**

In the name of humanity:

We would like to inform you the truth about the situation of the displaced people from the Syrian city Afrin and who are present in Al-Shahba and put you in the picture of the general situation and the weak financial means to face this epidemic and we want to

remind you not to forget more than two hundred thousand displaced people awaiting help and support in order to ward off this danger from them before it is too late .

We affirm that we, as health committees, as a Kurdish Red Crescent, and as a single hospital in the region, do our best to ward off the threat of this virus by educating people and preventing gatherings, but this is not enough at all and the greatest risk that displaced people feel here is that they will not know that they are infected with the virus because of the lack of Special virus detection device.

Afrin IDPs have suffered a lot from the effects of the war and forced displacement and its consequences on the psychological and health status, and it will be advisable to stand with them in this ordeal because it will reflect a positive feeling on the displaced. What matters at this difficult stage is the solidarity and cooperation of the whole world to stand up to this virus with one hand without discrimination or racism.

Therefore, we hope that our appeal will be of great importance to you. This call is from more than two hundred thousand displaced people who need urgent medical logistical support.

our humanitarian Greetings

tip: this call is in the name of Afrin displaced people done by Kurdish Red Crescent but the following signatories support and join this emergent call:

- 1.Democratic Self-Management in Shehba
- 2.Camps Management in Shehba
- 3.Afrin's Hospital's Management
- 4.Health Administration in Shehba
- 5.Human Rights in Shehba
- 6.Kurdish Red Crescent

The next page has a copy of their signatures

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