



**SYRIA**  
**NINE YEARS**  
**OF SUFFERING**



**COVER PAGE:** Fatima, displaced with her young children from the eastern countryside of Ma`ra, is now staying in a camp on the Syria-Turkey border.

**INSIDE COVER:** Bombing of Al-Jeneh village in the western countryside of Aleppo.

**MORE THAN 11 MILLION  
PEOPLE REMAIN  
IN NEED OF  
HUMANITARIAN  
ASSISTANCE**





## THE SUFFERING CONTINUES

2020 marks a grim milestone for the people of Syria, as the crisis enters its tenth year. There is still no sign of an end to the violence that has torn families apart and shattered lives and futures. A generation of children are growing up knowing nothing but war.

More than 11 million people inside Syria urgently need humanitarian assistance. Millions have been uprooted from their homes – many fleeing time and time again in search of a safe place in a country devastated by conflict. In northwest Syria, where Islamic Relief is one of the few international non-governmental organisations still working on the ground, violence has recently escalated and terrified families tell us they fear there is no safe place left for them to go.

And there is little respite for the more than 5.5 million people who have fled Syria. Other countries in the region are straining to meet the needs of refugees within their borders. The majority of refugees live in poverty, having exhausted any savings they were able to bring and often facing limited opportunities to earn a living.

Many are praying for an end to the war, but for millions, the suffering continues.

Islamic Relief has been responding since the onset of the crisis, and from January to December 2019 was a lifeline for over 2.3 million vulnerable people in Syria. Spending £30.3 million on humanitarian programming in the country, our interventions provided critical support for many in their time of need.

The healthcare sector is on the brink of collapse, so we helped over 80 health facilities deliver lifesaving and life-changing care. We provided clean drinking water, vital sanitation facilities and helped combat the spread of disease. And we gave survival items to thousands of displaced families.

With livelihoods ruined by the violence, millions of Syrians do not know where their next meal is coming from. Islamic Relief distributed food to help meet short term needs and empowered households to earn a living and provide for themselves once more.

Hundreds of thousands of children are unable to go to school. We helped children to return to education and worked with schools to improve the learning environment. We also worked in neighbouring countries to support people affected by this complex crisis.

At Islamic Relief we are doing all we can to ease the suffering caused by the unrelenting war but the needs are great and the dire humanitarian situation outstrips available resources.



The recent escalation of violence in Idlib, in which one of the hospitals Islamic Relief supports came under attack, is a reminder of how urgently we need to see an end to this crisis. So as the people of Syria enter a decade of brutal conflict, we urge the international community to remember their plight and push harder than ever before to end this catastrophe.

**Dr. Naser Haghamed**  
CEO-Islamic Relief Worldwide



Islamic Relief provides displaced people with tents, blankets and bedding in the camps of Al-Mashhad, near Deir Hassan.

## Act now to end the worsening crisis

For almost a decade, the conflict in Syria has taken a terrible toll on the civilian population and in 2019 the humanitarian situation in the north-west deteriorated amid shortages of food, medicine and fuel. An escalation in fighting triggered a massive exodus with hundreds of thousands of people - many of whom had been displaced many times before - fleeing north.

Conditions remain grim. Tens of thousands of people are living out in the open and many are struggling to meet even their basic needs. The healthcare system is close to collapse.

- At least 11.6 million people in Syria are in dire need humanitarian assistance.
- Most of the population of Idlib, where we operate, are now in need.
- Millions more refugees in neighbouring countries also remain at risk.

As one of the largest aid organisations still operating in the north-west, the generosity of our supporters means Islamic Relief remains a lifeline for many. In 2019, we spent to support vulnerable people inside Syria.

### In 2019 our £30.3 million emergency programmes support:

- 2.3 million people with health and nutrition needs, shelter and survival items, water and sanitation, livelihoods, and education, including food for 252,000 people.
- 80 health facilities, including hospitals and their doctors and nurses
- More than 72,413 people with emergency tents, blankets, mattresses and plastic sheets.

- Teachers to continue working through the payment of a monthly stipend
- 1,975 children to remain in education thanks to our school repairs and refurbishment of four schools.

We remain committed to continuing and expanding our work, and providing sustained humanitarian assistance whenever we can. But there is only so much that aid organisations like ours can do without a permanent and enduring end to the crisis. This is why aid efforts must be matched with a political will to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

### We call on the international community to:

- Ensure that the truce agreement in Idlib is maintained.
- Monitor the ceasefire conditions to avoid further displacement of people from Idlib
- Ensure that the those forced to flee their homes since December 2019 have adequate access to food, shelter, healthcare and education.
- Urge all parties to the conflict to end the deliberate targeting of civilians.
- Renew UN Security Council Resolution 2449 – which allows for cross-border aid – and protect its aid provisions.
- Increase humanitarian funding. The UN still needs \$371 million to deal with the growing crisis, with only \$129 million of its requested \$500 million committed to date.

## Um Muhammad

### Idlib, Syria



## “We have nothing but Allah’s mercy”

Since fighting forced them from their home in Deir Al-Zour, Abu and Um Muhammad have been uprooted five times.

“I put some pieces of cardboard on the floor and held my wife,” says Abu Muhammad, 59, describing the days the couple spent sleeping in a basement.

“We used to have a fully equipped four floor house and a sewing workshop,” adds Umm Muhammad. “We spent the best times there. [But] I lost my daughter, and my son was injured when he was working in a bakery in the city. A missile exploded on them.”

The couple now live in a small house in Al-Bab city but their suffering continues. “We are going through a very cold winter. We don't have enough bedding and heating is [too] expensive. I have Parkinson's disease and need medication. I am sad. I have not seen [my children] for years,” says Abu Muhammad.

Their surviving children have fled Syria, explains Umm Muhammad.

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**“We are all alone here. I miss [my children] so much. I hope Allah will reunite me with them before I die.”**

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# OVER 11.6 MILLION SYRIANS HAVE FLED THEIR HOMES

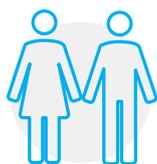


Roads are congested with newly displaced people fleeing from Saraqeb and the eastern and southern Idlib countryside. Intense shelling of the entire region leads to the displacement of more than one million people.

# Key facts from 2019



People are displaced from Saraqeb and the eastern and southern Idlib countryside due to intense shelling of the entire region.



**11.1 MILLION**  
People remain in need of humanitarian assistance



**6.1 MILLION**  
Internally displaced people in Syria



**6.5 MILLION**  
Face food insecurity



**5.5 MILLION**  
Registered Syrian refugees worldwide



**70%**  
of people in need are women or children

## HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

Countless lives have been shattered by the complex, protracted crisis in Syria. And the situation remains unstable, especially in the northwest and northeast.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), since the beginning of December 2019, nearly 1,000,000 people in southern Idlib governorate have fled amid increased airstrikes and a ground offensive. Most have moved north toward urban centers including Idlib, Ariha, and Saraqab cities. Others have headed to camps for internally displaced people (IDPs) near the Turkish border.

Ma'arrat An-Numan city and surrounding areas are said to be nearly empty, and people from Saraqab and nearby areas continue to flee, fearing the conflict may track northward. Harsh winter weather makes conditions even more perilous, with many IDPs in critical need of shelter, food, healthcare, and survival items like blankets and clothing.

Children are bearing the brunt of this protracted war. They continue to be killed, injured and orphaned. Children are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse and are deprived of their right to an education.<sup>1</sup>

Child labour was a pressing concern identified by research initiative REACH in its assessment of hundreds of communities in the northwest governorates of Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa. It also found critical gaps in livelihoods, food, and water. Vital health services such as surgery, diabetes care, and child immunisation were unavailable in many places.

Syrian refugees also face significant hardship. In countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, the needs of refugees have outstripped public resources. Refugees are struggling to earn a living, and experience legal uncertainty and negative perceptions as well as limited mobility.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25465&LangID=E>

2012-2019

SYRIA OPERATION FUNDING

£320 +  
MILLION

# WHAT ARE WE DELIVERING?



HEALTH



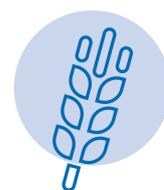
FOOD  
SECURITY



SHELTER  
& NFIs



WATER AND  
SANITATION



LIVELIHOODS



EDUCATION

# ACTUAL BENEFICIARIES

**2019** **2,342,426**



TURKEY

**SYRIA**

**2019** £ 30,300,000

LEBANON

IRAQ

JORDAN

# EMERGENCY PROJECT HEALTH

The Syrian healthcare sector is close to collapse. So this year, health interventions remained a key area of work for Islamic Relief. We supported over 80 health facilities in 2019. These included primary and secondary health centres, women's and gynecology hospitals, children's hospitals, mobile emergency units, thalassemia and dialysis centres.

Our lifesaving 'Supporting Health System in Northern Syria (2018-2019)' project, funded by SIDA, boosted access to primary and secondary healthcare in Idlib, Aleppo, Hama and Lattakia. A full support package, it covered stipends for staff, running costs, and medicines for over 50 primary healthcare centres and a mobile emergency unit. A similar project, also funded by SIDA, ends in 2020.

Funded by German Foreign Ministry, our 'Contribution to the Maintenance of Health Care System in Syria, 2017-2020', project has a total budget of Euro 2,862,115. It provides emergency health services to over 60 health facilities across northwest Syria and supports doctors providing specialised services.

This year we also continued supplying much needed medical disposables to health facilities struggling to treat patients who have been injured in the conflict or in accidents.

**In 2019, with your Support, Islamic Relief reached 1,739,643 people inside Syria under the health sector**



Reem is receiving treatment in one of the Islamic Relief sponsored hospitals in northern Syria. She and her mother fled from the southern countryside of Idlib.

## Muhammad

### Arihah, Syria



Mohamed was paralysed after an explosive missile landed on his house in Jericho in the western Idlib countryside. He is receiving treatment at an Islamic Relief health centre in northern Syria.

### “My nine-year old was covered in blood”

Last Ramadan, Abu Satee was at work in Idlib, when he heard a loud explosion in the neighbourhood. Rushing home, he was horrified to find his house had been hit by a missile and his wife and children were buried beneath the rubble.

**“I heard my wife and neighbours calling us from under the rubble. Ambulance and rescue teams pulled them out and I saw my son on the ground, covered in blood.”**

Rabea, his youngest child, died. His wife and nine-year old son, Satee, were left fighting for their lives.

Satee sustained multiple injuries but after months of treatment in a Turkish hospital his condition began to improve and he was returned to Syria.

Still unable to eat or move parts of his body, Satee began intensive physical therapy at Islamic Relief’s Center for Physical Therapy in Bab Al-Hawa.

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**“Thanks to Allah Almighty, my son [can partially] speak and move his hand and left foot again,” says Abu Satee. “I am grateful to everyone who contributed to his treatment. I hope to Allah that he completely recovers and returns to school.”**

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The Islamic Relief team provides sanitation services, garbage removal, and the cleaning of health facilities in the camps.

## WATER AND SANITATION WASH

Islamic Relief delivered numerous WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) interventions in 2019. We provided clean drinking water and hygiene items, built and repaired sanitation facilities, promoted good hygiene practices and carried out solid waste management and water dislodging.



We are currently implementing a 6 month project, funded by UNOCHA, in Aleppo's Azaz district. It provides water trucking, tests and treats water, manages solid waste and maintains sanitation facilities. The project includes giving hygiene kits to vulnerable people and conducting hygiene awareness sessions. A similar scheme, implemented with the Catholic International Development Charity (CAFOD) and the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF) in 2018, gave nearly 66,200 people emergency WASH services.





The Islamic Relief team serves the displaced people from the eastern and southern countryside of Idlib and provides all the tents, blankets and bedding they need.

## SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

We are carrying out an emergency response intervention in Idlib and Aleppo. Under this sector we supported over 72,413 people with tents, plastic sheets, mattresses, and blankets to newly displaced families in desperate need of shelter and in parallel provided coal and heating fuel to the families for winter.

And with funding from the Humanitarian Emergency Fund (HEF), funded by the Scottish government, Islamic Relief is a lifeline to uprooted families in Idlib and Aleppo. They are receiving vouchers through which they can buy essential winter survival items.



Islamic Relief supports displaced people in the Azaz camp by providing them with classroom containers equipped with desks, chairs and stationery.

## EDUCATION

**We supported formal and informal schools through our extensive work in the education sector this year. We repaired damaged schools and installed gender sensitive and inclusive WASH facilities. Islamic Relief provided pre-fabricated classrooms, mainly in IDP camps, so children could go to school again.**

We gave teachers a monthly stipend to help them continue working and trained them in the latest teaching methods. Schools were given new furniture such as desks. Students received stationery, school bags, and shoes as well as counseling to help them come to terms with all they had experienced. And our remedial and catch up classes helped children get back into formal schooling.

In 2019, Islamic Relief delivered a key scheme to improve the quality of learning environments. Designed to contribute to the short term goals and objectives set by the humanitarian community, the project also included rehabilitation activities to secure longer-term impact. It tackled the negative social aspects of the ongoing crisis, helping children avoid dropping out of school, early forced marriage, child labor, and engaging in armed groups.

Coordinating with the interim government as well as other organisations working to improve access to quality education in Syria, we transformed four schools in Idlib. The schools were repaired, furnished and expanded to accommodate more children. Altogether, 1,975 school-aged children (1053 boys and 922 girls) received an education as a result.



## Abeer Qorqania, Syria



The conflict forced Fatima and her mother to flee their home. They now live in a camp on the Syria-Turkey border.

### “I was very shy but now I feel proud”

Three years ago, Abeer and her family fled their home. But she has flourished academically and socially since going to a school supported by Islamic Relief.

“I live with my parents and younger sister,” she says. “My mother takes me to school and my classmates take me to the classroom. I love them so much and I wish I could walk so I can play with them every day.

“At the beginning, I felt very shy because of my wheelchair. But my mother encouraged me so much and my classmates have inspired me, so I feel there is no difference between us now.

“I appreciate my teacher’s care and help. I really do my best to learn and gain high marks. I got the top marks in my class last year, I am very proud of myself.

“

**I hope to be a pharmacist in the future to provide medication for all sick children. I hope that the war in Syria ends very soon and children’s suffering ends as well.**

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# FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

Some 6.5 million Syrians are severely food insecure, with limited livelihood opportunities and depleted productive assets. A further 2.5 million people are at risk of food insecurity. Islamic Relief was a lifeline for many this year. We gave food to newly displaced families, and more than 252,000 people received nutritious food through our Ramadan and Qurbani distributions.

In Idlib governorate, we provided wheat flour and running cost to three experienced bakeries to provide free bread to vulnerable families. Nearly 3,900 families received freshly baked bread every day for two months. This was more than we hoped to reach, thanks to efficient procurement which meant our budget stretched further.

Islamic Relief also boosted the self-reliance of Syrian IDP and host communities. Small scale farmers – including women and people with disabilities – increased their food production and income thanks to the seeds, tools, fertiliser, and training we gave them. Other families earned a living producing dairy products after receiving livestock as well as fodder and vaccinations for their animals.



**In 2019, with your  
Support, Islamic  
Relief supported  
371,108 people  
with food  
projects**

Islamic Relief provides Syrian farmers with grains, fertilisers and training to ensure they can grow enough food amidst the war.



**Fatima**

**Maarat Al Nouman, Syria**

## **“We have no breadwinner but Allah”**

Less than a year ago, Fatima lived in a comfortable house with her husband and their children. Now she is alone with her children and living in a camp near the Turkish border.

“I lost my husband almost a year ago when a rocket fell on the village,” explains the mother-of-four. “He had gone to tend our land on the outskirts of the village. I was at home with my children when the bombing started. I picked up my young children and we ran, frightened, among the olive trees... fleeing the bombing.”

They hid in a cave until night fell. Then they started walking.

“We did not know where to go. A passing car took us to one of the camps on the Syrian-Turkish border. Now I am here alone with my young children. We sleep in a tent with other widowed women, waiting for a tent of our own.

“I never thought my life would become what it is now. We have nothing. No bed or blankets. We have no breadwinner except Allah, then the good people and humanitarian organisations that help us.”

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**“This war separated our people. I no longer know where my elder brothers and mother are. My dream is to see my family again soon. I hope that Allah will end this war and that we can return to my village and home to live in safety and peace.”**

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