23 March 2018, Cairo, Egypt – The World Health Organization (WHO) has deployed mobile medical clinics and critical health supplies to areas hosting newly displaced people from the northern Syrian district of Afrin, while supporting partners struggling to maintain health services in Afrin city and surrounding areas.

An estimated 167 000 people have been displaced by the recent hostilities in Afrin District in northern Aleppo Governorate. The majority have fled to Tal Refaat, while others are seeking shelter in Nubul, Zahraa and surrounding villages. The massive influx of displaced people is putting a strain on host communities and already overwhelmed healthfacilities.

“Children, women, and men have undertaken harrowing journeys to flee Afrin and need urgent health assistance. Our staff have met civilians who reported walking for 36 hours to reach safer areas,” said Elizabeth Hoff, WHO Representative in Syria. “WHO calls on all parties to ensure that critically sick and injured civilians are referred to facilities that can provide proper treatment.”

With support from NGO partners and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), WHO deployed four mobile health teams to Tal Refaat, Nubul and Zahraa, and delivered 10 tonnes of medical supplies, sufficient for 55 700 treatment courses. A second shipment of medicines and medical supplies,sufficient for more than 64 000 treatments, is ready to be dispatched from Aleppo to Tal Refaat and Afrin once access is guaranteed.

Earlier this year, WHO delivered five mobile clinics and two ambulances to the Aleppo Directorate of Health, which are now in use to support the response. In addition, the two main public surgical hospitals in Aleppo received several shipments of health items, medicines, and medical devices.

For tens of thousands of civilians who remain in the city of Afrin and surrounding areas, WHO’s cross-border hub in Gaziantep, Turkey is helping health partners to scale-up health services, amid concerning shortages of medical supplies and staff.

Of four hospitals that were functioning in the city prior to recent hostilities, only one continues to operate, run by a WHO-supported partner. WHO will be providing urgently needed supplies, including trauma kits, IV fluids, antibiotics and other essential medicines, in a shipment planned for next week. WHO is also helping more partners to start mobile medical teams to make-up for closed hospitals and primary health care centres. A fast roll-out of vaccination

activities is being organized.

As the situation evolves, WHO continues to work with partners on the ground to monitor health needs and provide a timely response.