



Report to Congress on The al-Hol Displacement Camp in Syria and Associated ISIS-Detention Sites Administered by the Syrian Democratic Forces

Per Section 7019(e) of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024 (Div. F, P.L. 118-47), House Report 118-146 and the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4)

(U) Introduction:

This report provides an update on the al-Hol and Roj displaced persons (DP) camps and associated ISIS detention facilities guarded and administered by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria (NES), including efforts to mitigate current security and humanitarian challenges by increasing and expediting repatriation, to encourage increased partner burden-sharing to NES and Syria as a whole, and to outline what the new Syrian government and SDF integration process means for the future of the DP camps and detention facilities. During his May 14 meeting with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, President Trump urged the Syrian government to help the United States prevent an ISIS resurgence. Responsibly addressing the ISIS-associated challenges in NES is critical to this effort.

(U) Strategic Context:

The volatile security landscape in Syria necessitates continued coordination to address ISIS-associated, intertwined humanitarian and security challenges in NES. Since its territorial defeat in 2019, ISIS has sought resurgence in Syria. Currently, there are approximately 8,400 ISIS-affiliated detainees from over 70 countries of origin (COOs) detained in SDF-run detention facilities—a detainee population that is often referred to as an “ISIS army in waiting” should ISIS succeed at a breakout, as it did during the attack on Ghweiran detention facility in 2022. Many of these detainees’ family members reside among the approximately 35,000 DPs from over 70 COOs, nearly half of whom are children under age 12, in the al-Hol and Roj DP camps. The detainee and DP populations present significant humanitarian concerns and a substantial local, regional, and international security vulnerability. Increasing and expediting repatriations of third country nationals (TCNs) to their COOs, finding a sustainable disposition for Syrian detainees, returning displaced Syrians to their areas of origin, pursuing their rehabilitation and reintegration, and improving humanitarian conditions for the remaining population in the detention facilities and camps are critical to preventing a resurgence of the ISIS “caliphate” in Syria and the greater region. Increased partner burden-sharing, both financially and operationally, is essential to meeting these needs.

(U) With Congress’ support, the United States trains and equips vetted Syrian groups (VSGs) through the Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF). Combined Joint Task Force – Operation INHERENT RESOLVE uses CTEF based on local needs in Syria as part of its advise, assist, and enable mission to

ensure VSGs have access to light arms and small weapons, ammunition, training, stipends, infrastructure, and vehicles, among other provisions, to themselves lead the defeat-ISIS fight. These funds support the SDF security force guarding detention facilities, as well as improvements to the facilities' infrastructure to mitigate the risk of breakouts and ISIS plotting. CTEF funds also finance the SDF and Internal Security Force (ISF) presence at al-Hol and Roj. In addition, the Department of State supports the ISF's work inside al-Hol, improving the efficacy of their security provisions.

(U) Humanitarian Concerns in the DP Camps and SDF Detention:

Poor conditions, overcrowding within the DP camps and detention facilities, a health emergency within SDF-run detention, and challenges associated with ISIS radicalization and recruitment, particularly among vulnerable youth in the camps, present significant humanitarian concerns. The United States supports its local partners, including the SDF, in addressing these challenges by supporting the repatriation or return of these populations to their countries or areas of origin where they may access rehabilitation and reintegration services and other resources, as appropriate.

(U) UNICEF reports services within the DP camps are limited and overstretched and shelters inadequate, with flooding and fires making life dangerous. Save the Children reports displaced youth experience complex, severe trauma and mental health problems and that psychological treatment is inadequate. Many children in the camp have no family, making them particularly vulnerable to ISIS radicalization and recruitment, particularly in al-Hol's foreign annex, where non-Iraqi TCNs reside. Harsh

living conditions in al-Hol, complex trauma, and prolonged exposure to ISIS ideology provide a ripe environment for increased risk of youth radicalization and recruitment—both inside al-Hol, as well as in receiving communities in Syria and Iraq.

(U) Also of serious humanitarian concern is a tuberculosis outbreak in Ghweiran detention facility--the largest of SDF's detention facilities holding approximately 4,500 detainees.

(U) U.S.-led Repatriation Efforts:

Repatriating detained and displaced TCNs to COOs and returning Syrians to their areas of origin is the only durable, long-term solution to mitigating the threat of an ISIS resurgence and the humanitarian challenges that the camps and SDF detention facilities pose. Since 2016, approximately 21,600 individuals –both detained men and displaced women and children–have been repatriated from NES, including 50 U.S. citizens. Demonstrating its commitment to stability and the enduring defeat of ISIS in Syria, the United States has been at the forefront of these repatriation efforts, with U.S.-led diplomatic and logistic efforts contributing to the repatriation of more than 18,000 detained and displaced foreign nationals from NES.

(U) So far in 2025, the United States has supported the repatriation of a record 6,400 Iraqis and TCNs. Building on the success of previous years' repatriations requires continued U.S. leadership to:

- Advocate for increased foreign partner burden-sharing of assistance to Syria and in COOs;

- Encourage local leadership's prioritization and cooperation with the repatriation mission;
- Where possible, support Syrian civil society and local governance partners to help Syrians safely and voluntarily depart the DP camps and successfully reintegrate in their home communities;
- Where appropriate, assist countries of origin with ISIS prosecutions, including by providing battlefield evidence;
- Emphasize the imperative of secure and humane rehabilitation and reintegration;
- And advocate for partners to fund comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration support,
- Including mental health services, case management, legal aid, and other essential and social services.

(U) New Syrian Government, SDF Integration, and the Future of the DP Camps and Detention in NES:

Since Bashar al-Assad's fall in December 2024, the new Syrian government and SDF have notionally agreed to integrate, the United States has announced the consolidation of U.S. forces in Syria, and President Trump has ordered the cessation of sanctions and the normalization bilateral relations with the Syrian government. During his May 14 meeting with President al-Sharaa, President Trump urged the Syrian government to assume responsibility for the detention facilities in NES. The United States is also globally reevaluating its foreign assistance and prioritizing efforts that make America safer, stronger, and more prosperous, with the expectation

that international partners will step in and do their fair share to address the challenges in NES--a burden the United States has carried for years.

(U) The United States has used its leadership within the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, as well as engaging partners bilaterally, to emphasize the urgency for greater burden sharing in Syria. International partners must step up and contribute to the whole of Syria's economic future to ensure it does not become a platform for terrorism. There are nearly 16,000 internally displaced Syrians in al-Hol and Roj, many of whom will likely have no economic prospects in their communities of origin when they return home. This economic disparity makes them vulnerable to ISIS recruitment and radicalization. Recent lapses in services in the DP camps have caused unrest among camp residents, risking the security of the camp administration, NGO personnel, and the camp's most vulnerable residents and lend credence to ISIS' propaganda. To work collectively with the Syrian government and the international community to prevent an ISIS resurgence, we must not allow ISIS to capitalize on these vulnerabilities and risk further instability in Syria.