



A Special Report

on the Internally Displaced
and the Camps in Idlib Governorate



Violations Documentation Center in Syria

Violation Documentation Center in Syria is an independent civilian non-profit, non-governmental organization started its work of monitoring and documenting violations of human rights in Syria in April 2011

Index

Introduction	1
Methodology	1
The Distribution of Camps in the Countryside of Idlib	
First: Official Camps.....	2
1– Atama-Dana Road	2
2–Atama Camps	4
A. Al-Jazeera Camp	5
B. Al-Bayan Camp	7
C. Al-Khalil Camp	8
D. Al-Farouq Camp (Omer Ibn al-Khatib Camp):	10
Second: Non-official (Random) Camps in the Vicinity of Idlib:.....	10
A. Jabal al-Zawia Camps	10
a- Serjela Camp	10
b- Al-Kherba or Shinshrah Camp:	13
c- Talmins Camp:	15
d- The Displaced of Kansafra:	17
Conclusion	18
A map showing the locations of camps in Idlib	19

Introduction:

Idlib governorate is located in northern Syria. Together with Aleppo, it forms the northern gate to Turkey and Europe. Covering an area of 6100m², it borders ‘Liwa al-Iskandaron’ or Hatay to the north, Aleppo to the east, Latakia to the west and Hama to the south. It is the eighth biggest governorate in Syria.

According to the latest statistics, Idlib has a population of one and a half million. This figure changed a lot after the revolution; hundreds of thousands of people were displaced from it, while hundreds of thousands of displaced people came to it from many governorates. The northern countryside of Idlib is now particularly crowded with official and random camps near the Turkish Borders.

Idlib governorate has been attacked savagely by the regime; up until the date of this report, [VDC](#) could document [more than 10,200 people](#) martyred by the regime, [more than 7000](#) of whom were civilians. As a result, hundreds of thousands of its citizens were displaced to the Turkish camps or to the camps on the Syrian territory, along with those who were displaced from other governorates like Hama and Homs.

This report is one of a series of reports issued by VDC to highlight the conditions of internally displaced Syrians. The Center has already published a detailed [report about the conditions of the internally displaced Syrians in the vicinity of Aleppo](#) in March 2014. Their numbers have increased due to the systematic procedures of the regime to change the demographics of specific areas and cities. This report covers the situation to the end of April 2014.

Methodology:

In its methodology this report depends on a number of visits by Mousab Shbib, one of the center’s observers, to most of the camps in the countryside of Idlib. Mousab Shbib conducted dozens of interviews with those who run these camps, in addition to interviews with the displaced people and the relief and medical cadres. It also depends on relevant reports in the news and Skype interviews with the supervisors of many other camps like the Village of Kansafra.

The Distribution of Camps in the Countryside of Idlib:



First: Official Camps:

1-Atama-Dana Road (or ‘Qah’) Camps in the Northern Part of Idlib Governorate:

There is a very big group of camps on the road between Atama and al-Dana; about 64 camps are distributed on the sides of the road contain more than 68,000 displaced people. Most of these people were displaced from the northern countryside near Hama, the northern and southern parts of the countryside of Idlib, Jabal al-Zawia and Khan Shikhoun.

These camps include:

1. Elderly-care Camp.
2. Al-Mahaba Camp.
3. Al-Ithar Camp.
4. Al-Shabab al-khairiy Camp.
5. Al-Madina al-monawara Camp.
6. Al-Ibaa Camp.
7. Al-walid Camp.
8. The Camp of Afflicted Villages.
9. The Orphanage Camp
10. The Camp of the Inflicted Countryside of Hama.

Many of these camps are constructed from thin metal boards, which do not insulate the camps’ inhabitants against the cold winters or hot summers. Most of them, however, are made up of tents. According to the supervisor of one, there are more than 20 camps without medical services; there are no medical points or dispensaries in them; only seven camps provide first aids, vaccines and medical services. Such services are provided for free. Regarding the supplies, they are rare and irregular; some camps receive supplies only every three months. There are no job opportunities in these camps, except for those who work selling vegetables and some who engage in smuggling activities.

Mousab Shbib met the supervisor of the Orphanage Camp Omer Shaaban al-Ibrahim, and checked the camp thoroughly. This camp receives only the orphans or families whose providers were martyred during and before the revolution. In this camp, there are 121 tents and 137 families. Most of its inhabitants had come from the northern countryside of Hama. Aside from 106 infants, the total number of children there is 412 (201 males and 211 females).

Regarding the education in this camp, there is an elementary school that contains grades from one to six. In the school there are 251 pupils and nine teachers. The curricula are the ones approved by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The Society of Attaa al-Khair provides the stationary, books, teachers' salaries and other education expenses for six months. Beside the school, there is a tent for teaching Holy Koran and it is run by some women volunteers.

Regarding the medical conditions in the camp, Mr. Ibrahim confirmed that there are no Leishmania cases or any other skin diseases in the camp. There are, however, 5 physical disabilities and one mental disability case. Moreover, there are 4 diabetes cases and 7 hypertension cases, but the medicine for these cases is not available in the camp's dispensary which is run by two nurses who depend on a few first aid resources. Regarding the other cases, they are sent to Orient Hospital in Atama. Chronic cases, however, are sent to the Turkish hospitals. Plus, there is an ambulance in the camp.

Drinking water is available through the services provided by the 'Save the Children' Organization, yet we do not have a central reservoir in the camp; water is distributed by a 'Cistern Truck'. Regarding the electricity, we have a generator but only 60 tents are powered because it costs 1500 sp to power one tent for a month.

Many other organizations provide other supplies; for example, IHH Organization provide 50 bags of bread every day of the week except Fridays. Every five persons get 3 loaves of bread a day; the rest of the families get their needs from the village of Atama near the Turkish border.

For the sewage system, there are six bathrooms, each of which is installed with a hole for wastes. Still, most of the water is thrown in the open-air and that brings a lot of problems. Rats are just one of the problems. At least the ground of the camps is paved with sands and gravels, and the whole camp is sprayed with insecticides every three months.



Photos from Orphanage camp

For more pictures please follow the link:

<http://en.calameo.com/books/003596936b042e94dc92c>

2-Atama Camps:

This assembly contains a great number of camps that are scattered along the Syrian-Turkish borders near the village of Atama. Among them, there are 23 official camps like al-Jazeera, al-Arabia, Orient, al-Zohour, Abu al-Laith, al-Zaitoun, al-Mohagerin, al-Wasim, al-Ihsan, al-Fidaa, al-Bayan, and al-Khalil. These camps contain about 6000 tents, two main dispensaries and five schools. These schools are: al-Hikma, Bunat al-Mustakbal, Om al-Qura, al-Jazeera, and al-Tawheed and they are mostly sponsored by ARC Organization and they teach the curricula approved by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

There is only one furnace in al-Jazeera Camp with which to bake bread, and it covers the needs of this camp only. Most of the inhabitants of Atama Camps have come from the rural areas of Hama and Idlib like al-Sahin, Qaston, Kafer Zita, Kafer Nbouza, Has, Kafer Owaid, al-Hubait, Dir Sunbol, Khan Sheikhon, and many other areas. Most of the camps' grounds are unpaved and there are many contagious diseases like Leishmania and measles.



The Center's observer went to many of the Atama Camps, conducting dozens of interviews. Among the camps he visited:

A.Al-Jazeera Camp:

Unlike the other camps, this one was mostly built with stones and metallic boards. It contains 470 rooms, 75 tents and 555 families. When it was first built, this camp was only ten rooms. Later, some volunteers started building more and more rooms. Each room is supposed to take six people; when the family is too big, the administration of the camp gives them two rooms. The total population of the camp is 3250, sixty percent of whom are women and children. There are 240 infants of less than a year old. The administration of the camp established a furnace to meet the needs of the camp with help from some Relief Bodies that provide the flour. Most of the displaced in this camp came from Jabal al-Zawia and northern and southern parts of the countryside of Hama.

Education:

There is a primary school in the camp, for students in grades one to seven, with 16 teachers, one janitor and two guards. The curricula taught in the school are the ones approved by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The costs of books and salaries are paid by ARCS Organization. The school also includes a specific section for 21 children with special needs. There are

also literacy courses in a building called ‘Education Center’; the number of registered women in these courses is 26 and it’s run under the supervision of two teachers. The students total 500 in number, 75 of whom are in the first grade.

The Security Situation inside the Camp:

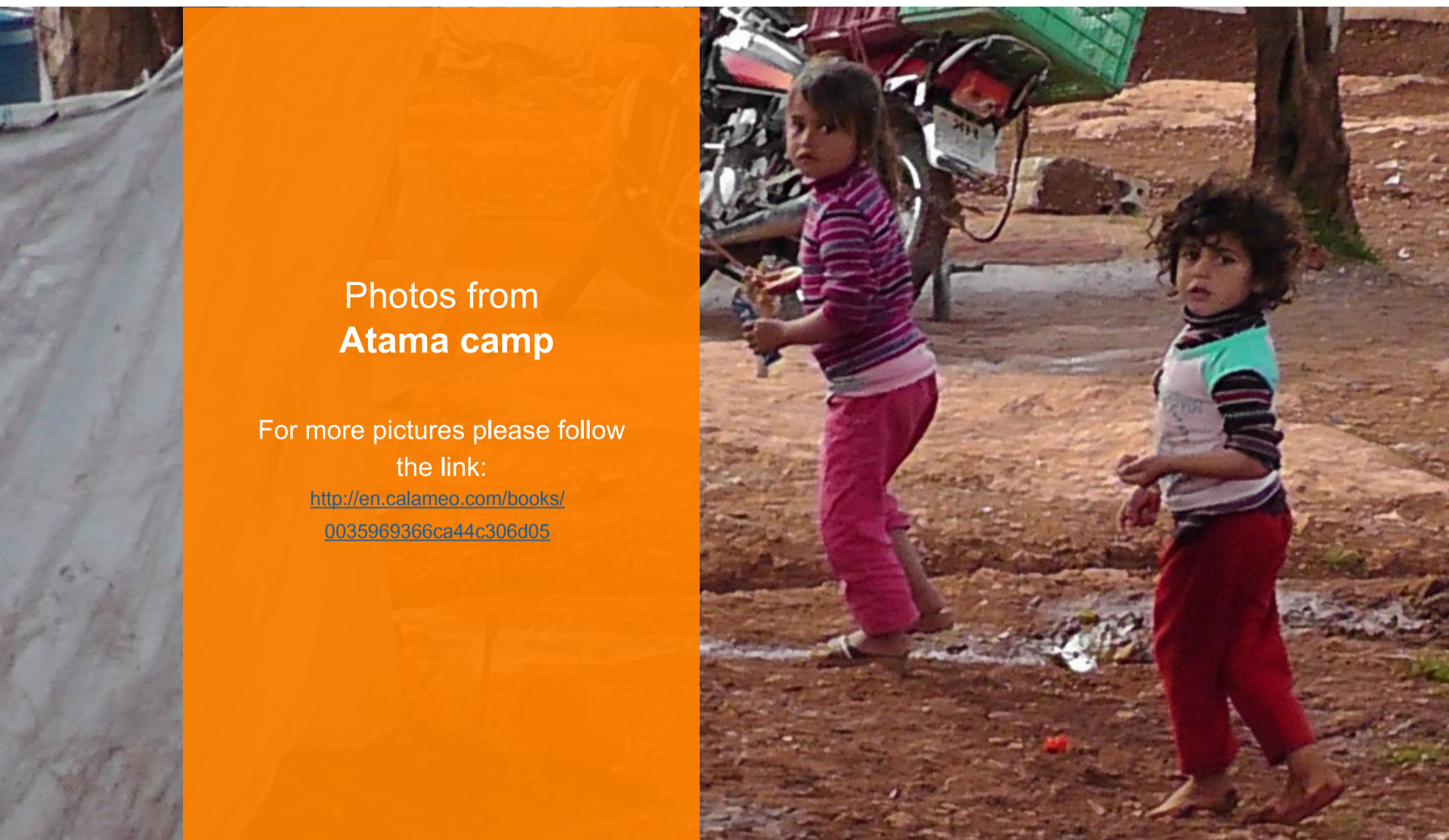
The camp includes a police station which is run by 10 members of the Free Army Military Council and it’s headed by the dissident officer Khalid al-Issa. According to Mr. al-Issa, the station consists of two rooms, one for the administration and the other for interrogation. On top of their camp-guarding duties, he said, they are responsible for organizing the distribution of the food and water. In the event of conflicts among the residents of the camps, they are reconciled in the presence of the notables of the camp.

Services in Al-Jazeera Camp:

Medical Organization provides drinking water for the camp; each group of 40 families gets 24 barrels of drinking water. There is a project to build a big reservoir for the whole camp but the reservoir hasn’t yet been built. For the sewage system, there is one toilet for each 20 residents and the wastes end up in a hole that dug for that purpose. The water that comes out of the rooms, however, floats in the streets of the camp. There are also ten generators that provide electricity every day from 5:00 pm till 2:00 am, except for two days, when they also provide electricity during the daytime for the purpose of washing the laundry. The cost of the electricity is 2000 sp a month for every tent. Most of the young men in the camp work with non-governmental medical and relief bodies and organizations. Many others work in transporting materials through the Crossing of Atama.

Medical and Health Situation:

According to Mr. Ibrahim Hijazi, who works with Doctors without Borders and serves as the Medical Supervisor of Atama and al-Khalil Camps, Al-Jazeera Camp includes a dispensary which consists of four general rooms, one room for women, and one out-of-service pharmacy. There is also the Doctors without Borders room, where they vaccinate children and collect statistics about epidemical diseases. For two days every week, some volunteer doctors perform physical examinations of the inhabitants. Some other employees are assigned to patrol in the camp and check on the patients. Critical cases are transferred to Orient Hospital while simple ones are treated inside the dispensary. In general, Al-Jazeera Camp and other camps suffer measles; in 2013, 30 percent of the inhabitants were diagnosed with this disease. Leishmania is also one of the contagious diseases among the displaced people, with a rate of incidence that is similar to that of measles.



Photos from Atama camp

For more pictures please follow
the link:

[http://en.calameo.com/books/
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B.Al-Bayan Camp:

The total population of this camp is 3190, sixty percent of which is women and children. There are 280 infants under the age of one year. Most of the inhabitants of this camp have no income at all. They mostly came from the southern countryside of Idlib and the Northern Countryside of Hama. They live in 445 tents - 7 people per tent.

The fact that the camp is located on olive groves makes it difficult to live in it; the owners of the olive farms concerned interfere in the residents' affairs; they don't allow them to dig holes for the sewage system or build reservoirs for water. There are many problems in the camp; every five tents share a toilet, the ground of the camp is still unpaved so heavy rains turn it into a mire. Furthermore, the residents of the camp suffer from the cold weather in winter as only ten percent of them could get heaters and there is no fuel anyway. There is no education at all in the camp and there is no dispensary for treating the patients; thirty cases of measles were registered and all of them were treated on their own expenses. Most of the men in the camp are unemployed, except for some who work in transferring materials through Bab al-Hawa Crossing. According to a resident, the camp is full of snakes and scorpions and there is no action taken to get rid of them.

According to Mr. Abd al-Karim Khalil, the supervisor of the camp, there is no kitchen in the camp. Bread is provided by IHH Organization. Still it's not enough as only 7 loaves are distributed to every 10 people. Bread is available from street sellers, but it's expensive as one bag of bread costs 150 sp. The camp lacks all kind of services and does not meet the lowest living levels.

C.Al-Khalil Camp:

The total population of the camp is 1900. Residents live in 295 tents at the rate of six people per tent. Just like al-Bayan Camp, the ground of this camp is not paved so it's mired and muddy in winter, especially as it's located at the foot of the slope. In summer, the residents suffer huge numbers of mosquitoes, as well as the unpleasant smell of the sewage system.

Mr. Ibrahim Hijazi, the Supervisor of Al-Khalil Camp said:

“Beside the bad conditions of the camp, it lacks a school and a dispensary. We currently have 4 measles cases and 4 leishmania cases, but we are forced to send them to Orient Hospital by the borders. Plus, we don't have any fire extinguishers in the camp and every 5 tents share a toilet. There is no electricity or generators available and most of the residents are unemployed.”

D.Al-Farouq Camp (Omer Ibn al-Khatib Camp):

This is one of the Camps of Atama and consists of 450 tents for 510 families. The total population of the camps is 3925, seven people in each tent. Most of the people in this camp have come from Jabal al-Zawia in Idlib. Sixty percent of the residents are children, among them 410 infants. This camp is the one of the oldest of the Atama Camps.

Leishmania disease is widely spread among the residents of the camp, with a 25 percent infection rate. Most of these cases are treated inside the camp. There are also 25 chronic cases, who are all sent to Turkey for the treatment. Doctors without Borders provide the vaccine against poliomyelitis. Due to the fact that there is no dispensary or medical point in the camp, three nurses visit the camp daily to examine the patients.

The educational situation is very bad inside the camp; only 50 percent of the 500 students of different grades are attending schools in the camps nearby, as there is no school in this camp. These schools teach the curricula approved by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces.

Other services:

Medical Organization provides one ‘cistern truck’ of drinking water for every 50 families per day; each family gets almost half a barrel of water. Electricity is available for ten hours a day but it costs 2500 sp a month. IHH Organization provides bread daily at the rate of 7 loaves for every ten residents; the rest of the bread requirement is bought from street sellers at a price of 75 sp per bag.

The sewage system is just as bad; every 50 tents share 3 toilets that are installed with holes under the ground; the owner of the land didn’t allow any more holes and the water floats all over the camp due to the disorganized nature of the sewage system.

Abu Sharif Beor, an old man who was displaced from Kafer Ruma, described his daily suffering as follows:

“I’m a refugee from Kafer Ruma in Jabal al-Zawia, and I live in al-Farouq Camp. This camp lacks in almost all the necessary services. We sell our share of relief supply to buy bread for ourselves and our children. In the morning, we have to wait in front of the WCs for a long time in order to wash or to get some water, which is cut off since morning during the days of laundry. Aside from favoritism in food distribution, the lunch provision is inadequate. I had to pay 10,000 sp for my tent and our children receive no education as there is no school. At least we don’t have any problem in terms of the security situation; we weren’t exposed to any kind of shelling. There is differentiation in providing services; despite the fact that our camp is among the biggest camps in Atama, we don’t have a school, mosque or any kind of services. That’s why we appeal to the bodies and organizations to be more concerned about this camp.”



A picture of a toilet in one of Atama Camps

Second: Non-official (Random) Camps in the Vicinity of Idlib:

In addition to dozens of official camps in the governorate of Idlib, there are hundreds of random assembly points called the ‘Random Camps’. These include hundreds of thousands of people displaced from different cities, primarily Homs and Hama, and the Idlib area. Due to a survey carried out in the Countryside of Idlib, it turns out that the majority of the displaced in these camps came from Mu’sran, Jarjanaz, al-Hiraki, Afis, Sarakip, Toam, Taftanaz, Abyan, Salqin, Kafer Takharim, Harim, Sarmada, al-Dana, Dir Sunbol, al-Rowaiha, Shonan, al-Bara, Bilyon, and Kansafra. The residents of these camps depend on different housing methods; some of them live in tents, others chose public buildings like schools. Surprisingly, hundreds of the displaced people chose to live in antique places and remains; hundreds of families live in thousand years old caves or in caves that were recently built for fear of the shelling with which the regime has pursued them even to their temporary shelters.

1) Jabal al-Zawia Camps:

Due to the ceaseless and direct shelling on the village of Kafer Ruma, which is located near al-Hammedia Military Base, as well as the systematic destruction that has effected 40 percent of its houses, thousands of families were displaced towards the village of al-Bara. Here they established two camps on the ruins that belong to the Roman era – Serjela Camp and al-Kherba Camp.

A-Serjela Camp:

This is located in Serjela Area, to the north of the Roman era al-Bara Village. Just like other camps, this camp suffers poor conditions; it lacks essential services and it is filled with diseases, insects and dangerous animals like snakes and rodents.

The center’s observer met Mr. Muhammad al-Bader, the Relief Supervisor in the camp, who stated:

“We have 42 families in the camp. The total enumeration is 250 residents, 50 percent of whom are children under the age of fifteen. We also have 50 infants. Surprisingly, more than sixty percent of these residents are females. They live in the ruins of the historic Roman palaces and in the caves or the clay houses nearby. Those who live in the caves suffer high humidity, which causes them many diseases, especially ones that affect the chest and breathing”

End of testimony.

After his visit to the camp, our observer came out with the following:

The Health Conditions in the Camp

The camp lacks any medical services; there are no medical points, no ambulances, no doctors nor even a nurse. The nearest medical point is 5 km away in al-Bara village. 30 cases of leishmania were registered and they are being treated in the dispensary of al-Bara village. Many other cases of skin disease were registered too. The residents suffer diarrhea and breathing-related diseases due to the high humidity in the caves. There are many mental patients and one case of paralysis, but there is no medical care available for these cases. There are also 4 cases of heart disease, 3 cases of diabetes and 3 cases of hypertension, and just like the rest these receive no medical care.

Education:

Among the 100 children who are supposed to attend school, only 10 of them go to the school of Kafar Ruma, which is almost 7 km away. They are transported by motorcycles, but sometimes, they have to go there on foot. The educational courses taught in this school are similar to those taught in regime-dominant areas.

Relief and Services:

According to the residents, no relief society has entered the camp since December 2013. There were many international societies and bodies, like the Polish Organization ABD which provides many services like water, and Goal which is a relief organization concerned with supporting and relieving the internally displaced people. Many other Syrian relief bodies, like Basmat Amal (“a Smile of Hope”), also used to visit the camp.

24 barrels of water are provided every day; they are put in 5 iron non-isolated reservoirs, so the water gets very hot in summer. There is no electricity at all in the camp and bread is not available either; it's provided only from the furnace of the village of Has which is 10 km away. One bread bag costs 45 sp and they bring it by motorcycles. The residents of the camps suffer huge numbers of snakes that live among the rocks, especially in summer.

Jobs in the Camp:

Some of the displaced people work in collecting herbs like thyme, Zolova and Aslaj and selling them at good prices. These herbs are used for alimentary and medical purposes. A few others grow and sell their products. The majority of the residents, however, have no jobs.

Security Situation in the Camp:

Unlike the Camps of Atama, this camp is not at all secure. It is occasionally exposed to shelling from regime forces and was once attacked by a fighter jet. Fortunately, the jet's missile fell near the camp and only one woman was injured. It was also shelled by rocket launchers located in Maarat al-Noman, but there were no damages. Personal disputes among the residents of the camp are reconciled with the presence of the notables and the elderly. Some cases, however, are transferred to the police station in Kafer Ruma.

The observer of VDC, Mousab Shbib says:

The camp suffers poor living conditions and the suffering of its residents will be greater come summer as the electricity will not be available. They are also facing danger from reptiles that are everywhere in the camp. There are no WCs in the camp, except for one built out of clay and used by both men and women; most children 'do it' in the open air. This camp is neglected by relief bodies and organizations as it is far from the Turkish borders and they can't get to it for security reasons - it needs immediate relief assistance.

Photos from Serjela camp

For more pictures please follow
the link:

<http://en.calameo.com/books/003596936887Fc990d286>



b-Al-Kherba or Shinshrah Camp:

Just like Serjela Camp, this is located among Roman ruins to the east of the village of Has. Most of its houses are built out of clay and some out of bricks. Some of the displaced live in the ancient rooms. The resident population is 750 in total and mostly female. There are also 200 children under the age of 15, including 50 infants. Most of the residents have come from the villages of Kafer Ruma and Kaf-ranbel. This camp was first established in October 2012 and some of its houses are roofed with nylon.

One of the supervisors of the camp said that this camp, just like the other camps, suffers poor living conditions. The 24 barrels per 40 families that is provided by Goal Organization is inadequate, and the contract with Goal expired on 5 April 2014. From that date until the writing this report, no other organization replaced Goal to providing this camp with water. Furthermore, there is no organization that provides the camp with bread, and there are no toilets. There is, however, one mosque set up with a small generator and a few copies of the Holy Koran. The rest of the camp has no electricity; the inhabitants survive by burning wood in winter – the few heaters presented by al-Sham al-Sharif Body are not enough to cover the need. There are no job opportunities in the camp, except for some trading in hardware and herbs.

The Medical Situation:

In this camp, there is no medical point or even a place for first aid treatment. Still, a medical van with few doctors from al-Bara dispensary visits the camp. These doctors provide the available medicine for contagious diseases like Leishmania, of which 40 cases were registered, all of them children. There are also 4 children with critical bone injuries and they need immediate medical care.

Education:

The school of the camp consists of 2 rooms roofed with iron boards; it has 3 unpaid teachers and 140 pupils with different grades. The subjects taught in the school are English, Arabic, science, Holy Koran, and Mathematics.

As there are no salaries for the teachers, the school opens only 3 days a week to give the teachers a chance to work on the other days to earn their own income. All the stationery and books are provided by the Islamic Movement of Ahrar al-Cham. There is no specific educational course followed in the camp school.

The observer Mousab Shbib asserts that this camp requires immediate help, as it is one of the forgotten and desperate camps in the Countryside of Idlib.



Photos from
Shinsharah camp

For more pictures please follow
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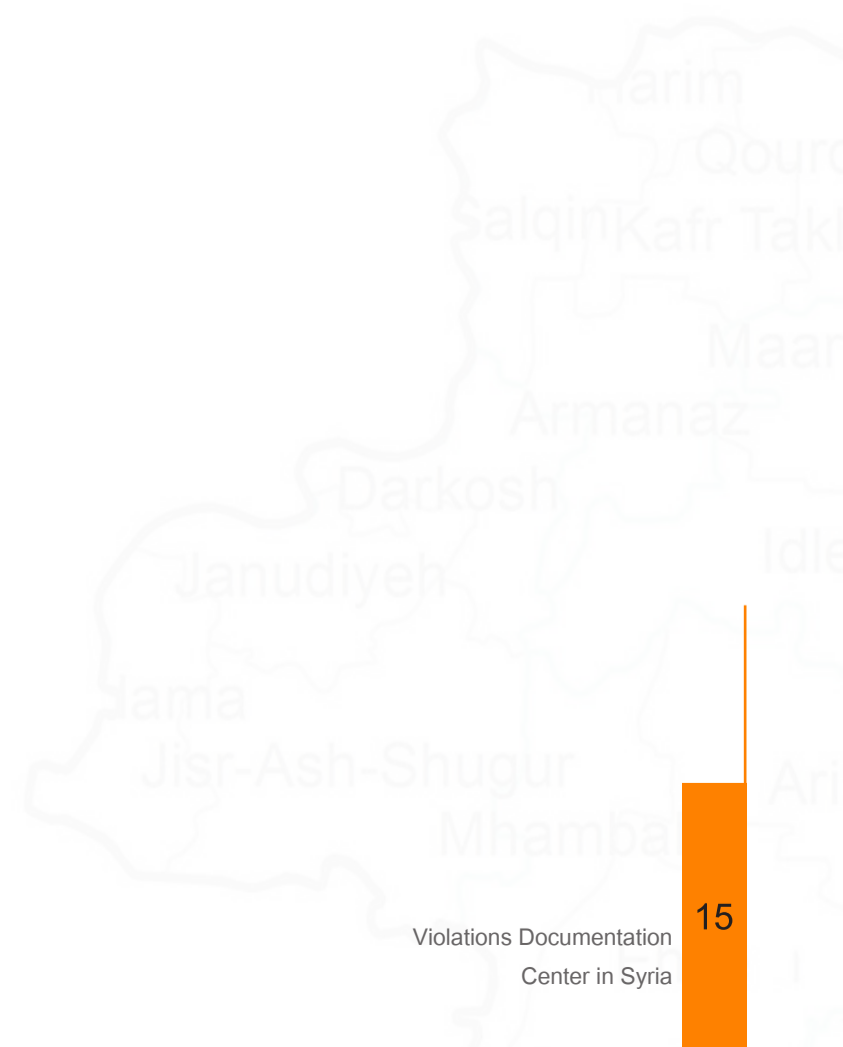
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C-Talmins Camp:

This camp is located 8km to the east of the village of Talmins and it was first established in mid 2012. Most of its residents were displaced from Talmins itself due to ceaseless clashes and shelling of the village by the regime forces. It includes 200 families and they live in cement houses roofed with iron boards, canvas or nylon. The total population of this camp is 1200, more than 50 percent of who are females, and among whom there are 70 infants and 800 children at the age of education. Most of the rooms were established at the expense of the residents themselves, as only few relief bodies like Ahil al-Athar and Liwaa al-Oma Society visit the camp occasionally to provide some services.

The residents have to buy drinking water; one 'cistern truck' containing 24 barrels of water costs them 1200 sp. They are also forced to buy bread at the price of 100 sp for the bag. There is only one generator in the camp and it provides power for 10 tents at a cost of 3000 sp a month for each tent. The residents must depend on burning wood, available in the nearby forests, to protect themselves from the cold weather of winter as no other means are available.

As for the medical situation, there are 20 cases of limb injury and 10 heart diseases. There were many cases of miscarriage due to mothers' fear of the shelling sounds. 50 cases of leishmania were reported, most of which are sent to al-Sideeq Charity Hospital as there is no medical point or ambulance in the camp. Just like other camps, this one suffers from huge numbers of snakes, mosquitoes and scorpions especially in summer. There is no education in the camp except for volunteers who teach children reading and writing. A committee of 3 people was formed to settle personal disputes among the residents. The residents also complained that the owners of the farms nearby throw their rubbish in the camp.



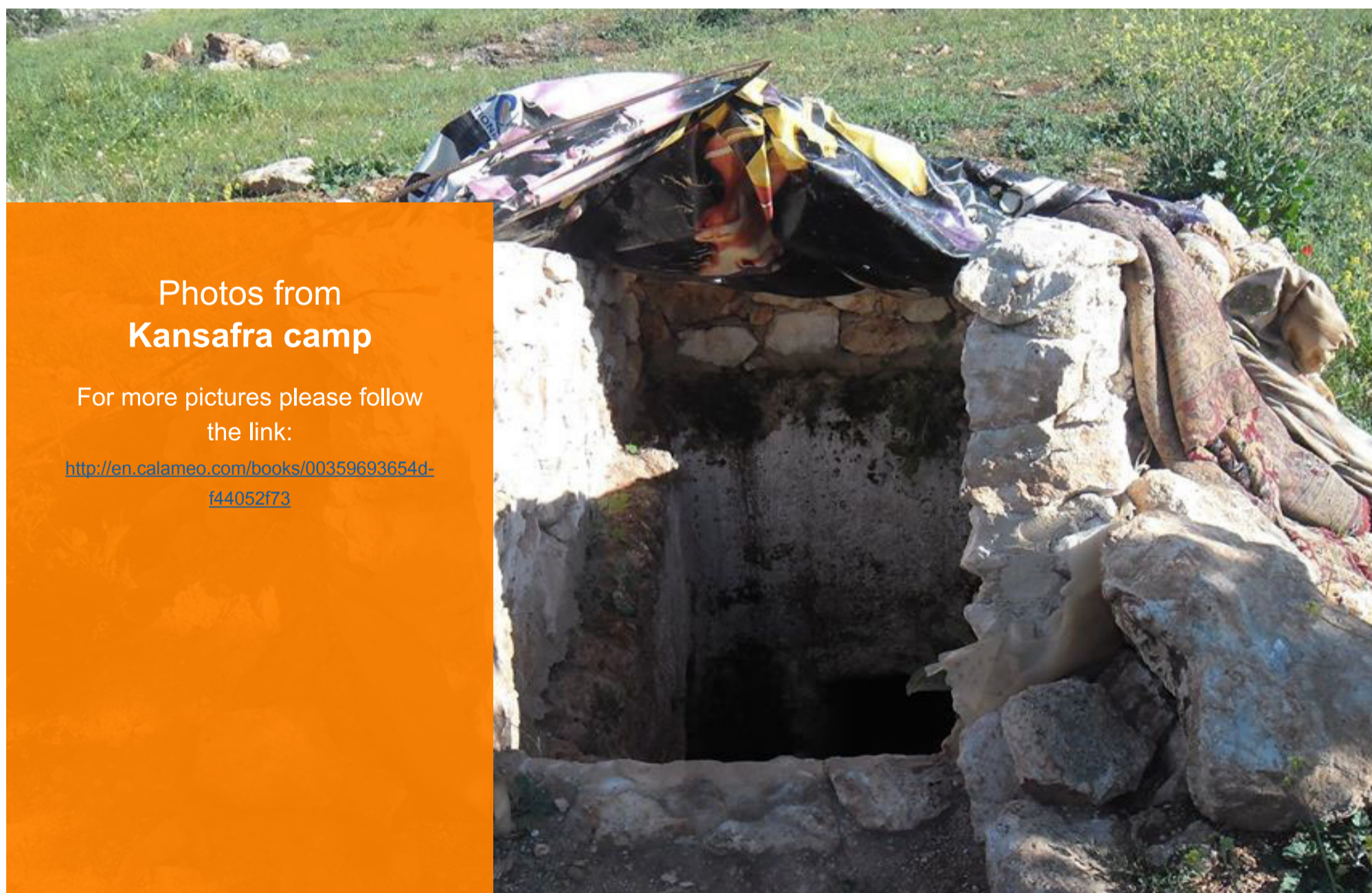


For more pictures please follow
the link:
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Photos from
Talmis camp

D-The Displaced of Kansafra:

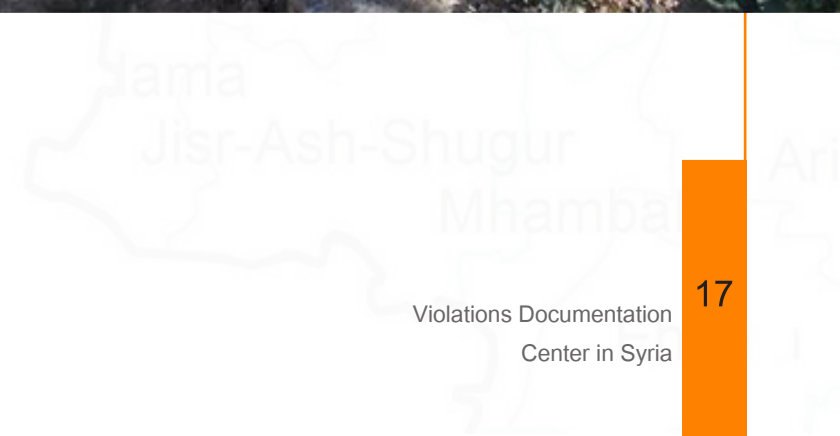
The town of Kansafra is famous for its caves, to which the displaced people run during shelling. There are more than 500 grottoes inside the town. Most of the displaced people in Kansafra have come from Khan Sheikhon, Maarat al-Noman and other cities like Aleppo, Homs and Hama. Some of the residents of Kansafra were displaced to refugee camps in Turkey. The town holds more than 500 displaced people, 300 of whom came from Khan Sheikhon. Most of the displaced in the town depend on relief supplies presented by Free Idlib's Health Directorate and some other relief bodies. The numbers of displaced people in Kansafra are low because of the ceaseless shelling on the town. Many have sought refuge in it all the same, living in the houses of those who were displaced to refugee camps in Turkey. The 300 students in the town receive no education. However, relief organizations are working on this problem. According to activist Abd al-Razaq al-Khalil, many cases of poliomyelitis were reported before the Vaccine Campaign Against poliomyelitis.



Photos from Kansafra camp

For more pictures please follow
the link:

<http://en.calameo.com/books/00359693654d-f44052f73>



Conclusion:

International focus on the refugees in the countries has been growing, especially after the [UN High Commissioner for Refugees Affairs](#) announced that they'd grown in number to 3 million. In the meantime, however, further millions of internally displaced people in many Syrian cities are neglected for many reasons, not least the security challenges that the relief bodies and organizations face while operating inside Syria. This had a bad influence on the internally displaced, especially after many sources reported that the Syrian regime is stealing their relief supplies just as happened in al-Hasaka recently.

In this report, VDC has sought to summarize conditions of Syria's internally displaced people in the camps in the Countryside of Idlib. A great resemblance was noticed between the camps in terms of their lack of food, bread and water, in addition to the suffering and spread of diseases there - especially skin diseases.

The center appeals to all international relief bodies, societies and charities in the neighboring countries, especially Turkey, to increase their support to these camps. Especially, please, the 'random' and most impoverished ones, which lack essentials like medicine, food and education.



Violations Documentation Center in Syria

For any questions and comments:

editor@vdc-sy.org

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Image shows places of camps in Idlib