

## New arrivals of IDPs from West Mosul, 23 February

Salam village (36°15'24.8"N 43°06'12.3"E), around 2km north of Athbah on the west side of Highway 1, is the location of a TSP staffed by ISOF medics and international volunteer medics from AEM. It is also an IDP muster point and ISOF forward screening site. The ISOF frontline currently lies around 3km north of the village, reportedly on the outskirts of Al Ma'amun neighbourhood.

Between around 3pm and 5pm on 23 February, 295 IDPs from West Mosul arrived at Salam village. They had travelled on foot from the Tel Ruman, Al Ma'amun and Wadi Hajar neighbourhoods in West Mosul (and possibly from other neighbourhoods in this area) to the ISOF line near Al Ma'amun neighbourhood. After being checked for weapons and explosives, they were loaded onto open-top trucks and transported to Salam. Some sheep were also taken onto the trucks by the IDPs.

Casualties were taken immediately in humvees and an open truck from the frontline to the ISOF/AEM TSP in Salam, arriving before the rest of the IDPs. They were treated by medics at the site and then sent in ambulances to Hamam al Alil for further treatment. There were 21 casualties, mostly with shrapnel wounds, including 5 fatalities.

Upon arrival in Salam, the men were separated from the women and children. The women and children boarded empty coaches that had arrived at the village, while the men waited outside in a courtyard area to be screened by an ISOF officer using a laptop. The list on which he checked people's IDs against only included names flagged up by ISOF intelligence and therefore was not comprehensive. At least one IDP was on the list. He was taken into a building for interrogation. There were also 4 men from Ba'aj who were separated from the other men as they did not have their IDs. They had reportedly been forced to go to Mosul by ISIS, but because they were not from the area, no one could vouch for them. Later they were allowed to join the other men on transport to the screening site at Hamam al Alil. Two officers from the ISF military intelligence were coordinating the transport of the IDPs to Hamam al Alil.



*A truckload of IDPs coming from the ISOF frontline to Salam.*



*A large number of elderly people were among the IDPs.*



*After screening, men were loaded back onto open-top trucks. The whole process was coordinated by officers from the ISF military intelligence.*

The men were loaded back onto the open-top trucks. The longest period that any of the IDPs were waiting for at the muster point was about 2 hours (the trucks did not arrive from the frontline all together). When all the IDPs had come through and all the men had been screened, the coaches and trucks (4 coaches carrying women and children 2 trucks carrying men and some animals) were driven directly to the new screening site in Hamam al Alil, which is located adjacent to the new camp. The undamaged road connecting Hamam al Alil and Highway 1 has only recently become accessible. It now only takes around 15 minutes to reach Hamam al Alil from the junction. Driving through the streets of Hamam al Alil, the newly arrived IDPs were greeted with smiles and waves from passers-by.

The screening site next to Hamam al Alil camp opened on 23 February and these were the first arrivals. The camp remains closed. The screening site is a large gravelled area surrounded by an earthen berm with a number of portacabins at one end. There are no latrines and there is no electricity.

Intelligence personnel from the NSS, INIS and ISF military intelligence arrived at the screening site just after the IDPs to carry out the screening using combined lists of ISIS suspects. Because it was dark and to avoid any chance of IDPs leaving the site before screening, they were made to stay in on board the trucks and coaches, although some were allowed off go to the toilet. There were no toilets for women to use. Any residents of Hamam al Alil that came close to the screening site were kept out of the enclosed area.

After screening we were told that the IDPs were free to go wherever they wished, although the coaches and trucks would transport people to Jadaa only. Because of the time of day and the lack of options, it was presumed that most of the IDPs would go to Jadaa.

ISF military intelligence requested humanitarian support at the screening site in Hamam al Alil. They said the three priorities according to IDPs were water, nappies, and milk for babies. Ready-to-eat food, blankets, a rubhall tent(s) for shelter, and toilets will also be important.



*The screening site at Hamam al Alil.*

**Responding to needs at muster points**

Upon their arrival at the muster point/screening site in Salam, the IDPs were covered in dust and seemed to be extremely tired. Some suffered from extreme anguish having lost a family member. There was no food and very little water to give them, although some ISOF soldiers passed around a small number of bottles. The ISF military intelligence officers said it was not necessary to provide emergency support at the muster point, but conceded that water at least would be very beneficial, especially when larger numbers arrive.

Dehydration is a very serious concern for IDPs that have just fled their homes, particularly for the elderly, young children and pregnant women (we have heard of miscarriages in similar scenarios due to dehydration). IDPs will often pass through muster points too quickly for NGOs to respond, and there are challenges associated with prepositioning stocks of water at muster points: they change location frequently; the location is often very close to the frontline; and there is a risk of aid diversion. However, muster points are often located alongside TSPs, a number of which are co-staffed by international volunteer medical organisations. These organisations are able to assist in overcoming some of the challenges regarding the prepositioning of water stocks. The benefits of having water available to IDPs at the point where they are physically the most vulnerable far outweigh the difficulties connected with prepositioning stocks.

**Further displacement out of West Mosul**

The area between Highway 1 and Albu Saif is reportedly heavily contaminated with IEDs – therefore for the moment it’s expected that most displacement will come west of Highway 1 and through Albu Saif. MERMT have moved their TSP to a new FedPol location, west of the airport around 2km from the city. So far IDPs have not come through this area. Reports have been received of civilians escaping across the wreckages of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> bridges from West Mosul to East, although details are unconfirmed.

Ninety-five families are reported to have arrived in Hamam al Alil screening site on 24 February from Tel Ruman and Tall ar Rayyan neighbourhoods via Salam village. Most are expected to go to Jadaa camp. We have also heard that ISIS are now enforcing a curfew in the southern neighbourhoods and that residents in these areas are not allowed outside their houses.

Regarding the displacement through Albu Saif which occurred a few days ago, further details have come to light. Reportedly 421 IDPs arrived on the night of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>, followed by a further 180 in the morning. We were told that there were not any serious casualties. The IDPs were screened by the FedPol in Albu Saif and then taken on buses to Qayyarah Airstrip for further screening as the site in Hamam al Alil was closed. They were returned to Hamam al Alil to stay in the camp, but as the camp is still not ready to receive people, the IDPs dispersed among host families in Hamam al Alil. We have also received a report that some are staying in schools in Arij, although this is unconfirmed. Two families are said to have been killed by ISIS for attempting to escape towards Albu Saif on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, and one family arrived safely on the same day.

*Southern neighbourhoods in West Mosul.*

