

Logistics Procedures for Cross-Border Operations from Jordan to Syria through Ramtha border-crossing

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

June 2018

The purpose of this document is to give an overview of the Logistics procedures to be followed by UN agencies and NGOs participating in cross-border operations from Jordan to southern Syria through the UN Security Council Resolutions 2165/2191/2258/2332/2393. For a more extensive explanation of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in this operation, the general SoPs agreed upon by all stakeholders involved are available upon request.

The transshipment of humanitarian supplies is conducted at Ramtha border, located inside Jordan. An organisation designated by the Logistics Cluster (currently IOM) provides Syrian trucks for transportation inside Syria, as well as handling services for the transshipment of humanitarian supplies from Jordanian to Syrian trucks.

The process below is subject to modifications and should remain flexible to allow for new or modified circumstances that may arise during the course of the operation. Changes will be made when needed and updated versions of the SOPs will be published and circulated via the mailing list and published on the Logistics Cluster website on the page dedicated to the Syria operation (www.logcluster.org/ops/syr12a).

Actors involved in this operation:

- **Logistics Cluster:** ensures information sharing and logistical coordination for cross-border operations.
- **Organisation designated by the Logistics Cluster to provide transportation (currently IOM):** provides free to user labour to cross load the Jordanian/Syrian trucks at Ramtha. Arranges Syrian trucks and drivers that transport humanitarian supplies from Ramtha to final destination in Syria.
- **UN Monitoring team:** mandated by the UN Security Council to control/observe the transshipment operations at the hubs. It is obligatory that at least one UN monitor is present at the opening and closing of trucks and during the loading process. They also accompany the convoy of Syrian trucks to the border when the loading is completed.
- **OCHA:** The overall coordination of the cross-border operation under UNSCR 2165/2393.
- **UNDSS:** monitors the security situation.
- **UN agencies:** make use of the transshipment services as following:
 - Submit the Service Request Form (SRF) to the Logistics Cluster.
 - Submit a notification form and a packing list in Arabic and English to OCHA.
 - Are responsible to arrange Jordanian trucks to deliver their commodities at the border.
 - Ensure that custom clearance is arranged for their own supplies.

- On the day of transshipment, representatives from each UN agency involved in the operation should be on site to observe the cross loading of their cargo.
- All agencies are responsible for making adequate arrangements for the insurance of their respective cargo. The agency providing the transport service is not liable for any losses or damages to the cargo.
- **NGOs :**
 - Sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a UN agency belonging to the sector for which they intend to send cargo through the cross-border operation into Syria.
 - Liaise with the partner UN agency when they want to send cargo through the cross-border operation, as the SRF and the additional documentation needs to be submitted by the UN agency.

Prior to the shipment of humanitarian supplies to Syria

- In consultation with OCHA that provides insights on the security situation around Ramtha and in southern Syria, the Logistics Cluster sends out an invitation to the UN agencies informing them of the planned dates for the convoys throughout the upcoming week. Invitations are usually sent out on Sundays, to ensure that the load plan is ready and shared with OCHA within the required timeframe.
- No later than **24 hours** after the invitation has been shared by the Logistics Cluster, UN agencies submit a Service Request Form (SRF) to jordan.clustercargo@wfp.org with the below information on the cargo that they intend to move as part of the upcoming convoy:
 - type of cargo;
 - quantity (mt and m³);
 - destination (governorate, district, sub-district and coordinates);
 - consignee contact information (name/phone number);
 - value of the cargo
- Agencies are also requested to provide OCHA with additional information, including number of beneficiaries and location of distribution at village level within the same time frame;
- All agencies must share with the Logistics Cluster updated information on focal points/implementing partners inside Syria and on drop-off point location. The Logistics Cluster communicates the information, through IOM, to the head of the truck drivers.
- The Logistic Cluster prepares a load plan including participating agencies, number of required trucks and drop-off locations and shares it with OCHA and the agency providing transportation no less than **72 hours** before dispatch day.
- All concerned agencies prepare waybills for counter-signature for proof of delivery to the transshipment hub, as well as waybills for the Syrian trucks for proof of delivery to off-loading point in Syria.

- Waybills duly signed and stamped should be returned to the Logistics Cluster by the organisation providing transportation.
- The Logistics Cluster will send copies of signed and stamped waybills to concerned agencies once received.
- Agencies should ensure that adequate warehouse capacity is available at receiving point. All Syrian trucks have to return to Ramtha border no later than 3 pm on the day of the dispatch. Agencies expecting a lengthy offloading process at destination point should split their cargo on multiple days.

On the day of Transshipment

- UN agencies and their INGO partners sending cargo to Syria (in the name of a UN agency) should be present at Ramtha during the entire transshipment process. UN agencies partnering with NGOs should ensure that cargo dispatched from Ramtha into Syria crosses under the name of the UN agency.
- Representatives of participating organizations will be allowed to attend the transshipment operation in Ramtha.
- All concerned agencies must ensure that a licensed customs clearance agent is present at Ramtha at the time of transshipment to submit all requested documents (commercial invoice, certificate of origin and packing list) to the Jordanian Customs Authorities and obtain customs clearance on their behalf; agencies are responsible for the customs clearance of their cargo; thus, all concerned UN agencies should authorise a licensed clearing agent at Ramtha custom office to perform customs clearance procedures on their behalf. UN agencies must contact the licensed clearing agent bilaterally, at least a week before the transshipment date.

NOTE: The only agent currently licensed to provide customs clearance services at Ramtha is Jordan Company – a fixed rate of JOD 100 per truck is charged.

- Transshipments take place at Ramtha border crossing, in Jordan, one day before the dispatch day. Concerned UN agencies are responsible for Jordanian trucks to arrive at the time communicated by the Logistics Cluster. No civilian vehicles are allowed to carry cargo to Ramtha border crossing.
- Syrian trucks and drivers arranged by the agency providing transportation inside Syria arrive at Ramtha border crossing at around 7 am and go through the security checks by the Jordanian Authorities. This procedure takes maximum one hour.
- Jordanian and Syrian trucks enter the transshipment space at Ramtha and proceed with the cross-loading of the humanitarian relief items from Jordanian to Syrian trucks.
- Once the transshipment is completed, Jordanian trucks leave Ramtha border crossing while the Logistics Cluster makes sure that loaded Syrian trucks are lined up in the designated area near the transshipment hangar. United Nations Monitoring Mechanism (UNMM) will apply tamper evident tape and seals.
- The Jordanian Custom authorities add a second seal (with a registered number) beside the UNMM seal to guarantee that trucks remain closed while staying overnight at Ramtha border crossing.
- Drivers of Syrian trucks spend the night in the vicinity of Ramtha border (on the Jordanian side). No driver will be allowed to sleep in the truck inside Ramtha bordercrossing.

Dispatch

- On the planned crossing day, UNMM and Logistics Cluster representatives arrive at Ramtha border crossing at around 6:45 am. The UNMM team checks that the seals on the trucks are still in place, they may also re-open the trucks on ad-hoc basis to rule out any alteration of the loaded cargo that may have occurred overnight.
- The Logistics Cluster ensures that all participating drivers are present and ready. Trucks then leave Ramtha in convoy and cross into Syria.
- Each truck then proceeds to its designated destination.

Return and Security Checks

- After offloading cargo in the respective drop-off location in Syria, Syrian trucks return individually and line up at the Syrian side of the borders.
- OCHA updates on the movement of the trucks via WhatsApp group, until the trucks are back at the Jordanian border. In the event of any emergency situations experienced by the trucks inside Syria, OCHA follows up with relevant partners.

Prioritisation when available convoy space is exceeded

- The Logistics Cluster will contact OCHA to advise that available space has been exceeded;
- OCHA, in turn, will contact relevant sector coordinators (via phone or email – an in-person Inter-Sector Working Group will be called only in exceptional circumstances) and determine, on the basis of need, whether an additional (third) convoy should be organized in the coming week or whether deliveries should be prioritized into two convoys, with remaining cargo to be incorporated into the following week's load plan;
- OCHA will communicate the decision taken to the Logistics Cluster and all concerned partners, noting the underpinning rationale.

Suspension of convoy

In the event of insecurity at the border or related administrative challenges necessitating the possible postponement of the convoy:

- OCHA dispatches a team to Ramtha;
- UNMM has to be informed of any changes including delays, suspensions and changes in the distribution locations at district level as indicated in the notification sent to the Government of Syria;
- OCHA convenes a meeting with the concerned agencies to agree on a way forward based on the advice from the Jordanian authorities and UNDSS recommendations in the event of the three scenarios below:
 - If it is expected that the crossing will take place within the next 24/48 hours, the following procedure applies:

- If requested, OCHA will liaise with the authorities to permit the Syrian trucks to remain within the vicinity of the Ramtha Border in consultation with UNMM;
 - OCHA to issue a new notification to the Government of Syria with respect to the 48 hours deadline;
 - If the decision is made to cancel or postpone the convoy, UNMM will inform the Government of Syria of the cancellation of the convoy.
- If a convoy is postponed, but it is unclear when the situation will allow operations to resume, the following procedure applies:
 - Agencies will be responsible to return their cargo to their warehouses until resumption of movements (offloading and internal transportation).
 - If requested, OCHA can liaise with the authorities to allow the Syrian trucks to transport their load to agencies' warehouses outside Ramtha. Each agency will be responsible to cover the cost of the transportation as per the price on the contract of the service provider.
 - If security situation is expected to last more than 48 hours with no identified date on the resumption of activities:
 - Agencies will be responsible to return their cargo to their warehouses until resumption of movement (offloading and internal transportation).

Demurrage

- IOM will cover the demurrage cost of the initial 48 hours and up to 72 hours if trucks were permitted by the Jordanian authorities to stay within Ramtha vicinity.