

September/2024

# HILALKENT CONTAINER CITY

## OBSERVATION REPORT



yeryüzü  
cocukları  
children of earth

## LOCATION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONTAINER SETTLEMENT



It has been observed that children are forced to play in the mud in a small number of established children's parks.

Refugees and children residing in the container City are exposed to dust and mud throughout the day. The children's play areas are insufficient and not suitable from a health and safety perspective.

Hilalkent Container City is located on the road of Reyhanlı district of Hatay province and was created by bringing Syrians in Temporary Protected Status from various regions of Hatay. Hilalkent was founded on an agricultural land of 310 acres. The city has a capacity of 12,000 people. The settlement consists of two stages: the first stage contains almost 800 containers, while the second stage has 2,400 containers.

The containers are on a non-elevated floor. Unlike other container settlements in the region, there are no paving stones between the containers. During the winter months, due to the weather conditions and the nature of the terrain, the roads connecting the shelters and communal areas are muddy, with puddles and pits.



## POPULATION OF HILALKENT

Some numerical data about Hilalkent container city are approximately as follows. These figures are not yet finalized, so the official numbers have not been disclosed yet.



**CURRENT POPULATION**  
**9400**

**WOMEN** 4500  
**MEN** 4900



**THE POPULATION OF  
CHILDREN AGED 6-14**  
**2300**



**OUT-OF-SCHOOL  
CHILDREN**  
**980**



**NUMBER OF CHILDREN  
ENROLLED IN SCHOOL**  
**800**

## STRUCTURAL CONDITION OF THE CONTAINER CITY

The containers are 13 square meters in size and do not have toilets or bathrooms inside. Each family is allocated one container, with a maximum of six people sharing the same space. Due to water and electricity outages, maintaining hygiene in the communal toilets and bathrooms is not possible. Additionally, the dirt roads between the containers further complicate hygiene conditions.



According to international standards, the containers must be **21 square** meters in size.

According to the **Sphere Standards\***, the minimum living space per person in temporary settlements, such as refugee camps or displacement sites, should be minimum of **3.5 square** meters per person of covered living space (excluding cooking areas, bathing areas, and sanitation facilities).

\*a global framework that sets out principles and minimum standards to ensure that the basic rights and needs of people affected by crises and disasters are met in humanitarian aid efforts.

## WATER AND ELECTRICITY OUTAGES

Frequent and prolonged water and electricity outages occur in the camp. Power outages can last for a full day or sometimes half a day. There have also been days when the electricity didn't come for several days. These outages occur very frequently during the winter season. Long-term power outages could be prevented with a generator, but there is no generator available in the area. Additionally, since the electrical panels are not locked, people try to fix the problems themselves during outages, which creates a dangerous situation.



Although there are several water tanks in the area, they are insufficient to meet the needs of a container city of this size. Installing additional water lines is strictly prohibited. The use of washing machines is also banned; if a family has purchased a washing machine and is found using it, their water supply is cut off. Additionally, residents are not allowed to use individual water tanks, leaving them without water for extended periods during outages until the main supply is restored.

## CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE CONDITIONS

Each toilet is shared by 25 people, and there are no cleaning staff in the settlement. This results in unclean surroundings and unhygienic conditions. Additionally, the toilet and bathroom facilities are largely unusable. For example, faucets and water heaters are broken. It has been reported that some families visit distant relatives every two weeks to bathe.

Hygiene cannot be maintained in the communal toilets and bathrooms due to frequent water outages and the dirt roads leading to these facilities. The high population density, combined with the lack of adequate infrastructure, leads to water and sewage overflows. This situation causes unbearable bad smells, especially during the summer months.

Additionally, the absence of hot water and reliance on heating with boilers poses a burn risk for both children and adults. Consequently the overcrowding, insufficient infrastructure, and lack of cleaning services severely impact the health and living conditions in the area.

Also the collection of garbage in the container city is a significant issue. There are times when the garbage is not collected for long periods, leading to unpleasant smells. Since the trash bins are very close to the living areas, these smells become unbearable, especially during the summer months.



According to Sphere standards,

**1 toilet for every 20 people** in emergencies where the sanitation infrastructure is not sufficient.

In the container city, there are designated kitchen areas for communal use. However, these facilities are currently unusable due to broken faucets, lack of running water, and overall unhygienic conditions. People meet their nutritional needs on their own. They use small gas canisters to cook and prepare meals in their own containers.

# **CLEANLINESS AND HYGIENE CONDITIONS**



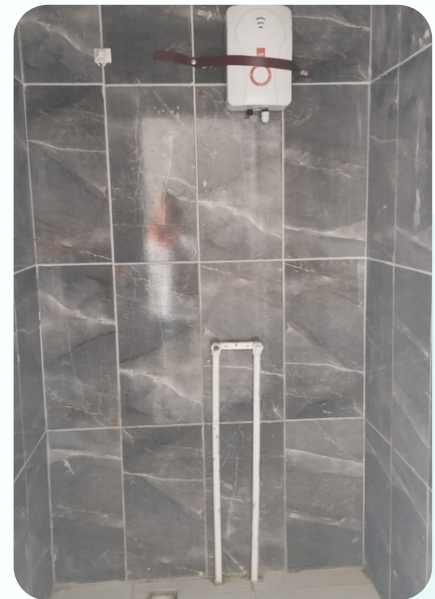
**Comman Toilet Area**



**Comman Kitchen Area**



**School area**



**Comman Bathroom Area**



**A street in container city**

## PROTECTION

In shared spaces, certain sensitive issues arise, particularly for women and children. The distance to the toilets and inadequate security measures (such as broken locks and doors being open to everyone) result in a lack of privacy and safety for women and children. There is a need to regulate the usage hours of shared areas for men and women. It has also been noted that women and children struggle with daily tasks such as washing dishes and laundry in the presence of men, who often make them uncomfortable by watching or verbally harassing them.

Additionally, the areas currently under construction pose a danger to children. Necessary precautions (such as a security strip) should be taken, families should be informed, but progress in this regard is very limited. In addition, the electrical panels are in an accessible location and are not locked. Children are playing around these panels. The fact that children can easily access them poses a significant safety concern.



Additionally, there is camera system in the container city, but they are not functioning. As a result, it is very difficult to prevent theft and vandalism. Also there is a significant security vulnerability at the entrance. With only one checkpoint and the large size of the area, security and control remain weak.

## CHILD PROTECTION

Syrians under Temporary Protection Status live in Hilalkent Container Settlement. These individuals fled the conflicts in Syria in hopes of finding a safer life in Türkiye. Children are the most affected group in this process. They have been out of education for many years. In their efforts to adapt to the host community, children face significant challenges, especially due to the language barrier, making it difficult for them to readjust to education. Furthermore, children who were born and raised in these difficult living conditions are deeply impacted psychologically. Having already experienced the trauma of war in their home country, these children were subjected to a second major trauma with the February 6th earthquake. For children who lost family members and their homes in the earthquake, the adaptation process has become even more challenging.

### ADDICTION

As a result of all these factors, the rate of substance addiction in the container city has significantly increased. Due to the limited availability of social spaces where children can spend time or receive support, they are at risk of being drawn into harmful behaviors.



## EDUCATION

There is a kindergarten, primary school and secondary school in the Hilalkent container area. These schools have started to enroll, but education has not started yet. Despite the large number of students, the number of teachers in the schools does not meet the demand. With approximately 800 children registered at the school and about 980 children outside of school, this number remains relatively small compared to the total number of children (approximately 2300, unofficial figures). This indicates that efforts to increase school enrollment are insufficient. Additionally, the schools' environmental maintenance and cleaning conditions are inadequate.

High school-aged children need to attend nearby schools, but the lack of adequate transportation options poses a significant problem. Children who cannot access school buses are unable to attend school. Additionally, due to financial constraints, children who need to work to support their families often abandon their high school education. Although official figures have not yet been released, it is known that the dropout rates are high.

Additionally, the children's academic levels are not in good condition. According to the evaluations by our specialists who provide education in child-friendly environments, the children struggle significantly with reading comprehension, self-expression, and communication in Turkish. Although they have passed the upper grades, they are far behind in basic mathematics.



## CONCLUSION

The container settlements in the Hilalkent region fall significantly below international humanitarian standards in terms of living and housing conditions. Syrian earthquake survivors face numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, water and hygiene issues, dangerous play areas, and a lack of access to education. Children are particularly vulnerable, as many have been out of school for years and are struggling to adapt due to language barriers and the psychological trauma of war and the earthquake. This has led to increased substance addiction in the container city, exacerbated by the lack of social spaces and support for children. These conditions pose serious health and safety risks and result in violations of basic human rights. The tragic loss of life further highlights the urgent need to address these issues.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Improvement of Living Conditions:** Containers should be expanded and built in line with humanitarian living standards, ensuring that housing areas are safe and away from dangerous zones.
2. **Strengthening Infrastructure:** Immediate infrastructure improvements are needed to prevent floods, power outages, and sewage problems. A sustainable system for water and electricity supply should be established.
3. **Enhancing Hygiene Conditions:** Insufficient water supply and poor hygiene in shared facilities should be addressed. Comprehensive health and sanitation measures must be taken to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
4. **Education and Safe Play Areas:** Syrian children should urgently regain their right to education, and safe play areas should be created. These areas must be free from mud, open pits, and roads, prioritizing children's safety.
5. **Securing Excavation and Construction Areas:** Safety measures must be implemented around excavation and construction sites to prevent further accidents.
6. **Establishing Social Spaces and Support:** Safe, child-friendly social spaces and psychological support programs must be established to reduce the risk of children being drawn into harmful behaviors, including substance addiction. These spaces should facilitate education, play, and rehabilitation to help children adapt and recover from trauma.

# Contact

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