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SEE THE CRISIS **CHANGE THE OUTCOME**

SYRIA

Type of crisis: **CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT** SEVERE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

CRISIS ANALYSIS

POLITICS AND SECURITY

OVERVIEW Latest update: 18/09/2018

The governmental Syrian Arab Army (SAA), the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Kurdish armed groups that are part of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – including the People's Protection Unit (YPG), Islamic opposition groups, and the Islamic State (IS) are fighting for control of territory throughout Syria. The war, which started in March 2011 with political demonstrations against the government and Bashar al-Assad, is now a protracted sectarian conflict affecting the whole region and influenced by international interventions. International stakeholders in the conflict include Russia and Iran supporting the Syrian government, Turkey-backed FSA factions, as well as the international coalition against IS, led by the US. The US also supports ground troops such as the SDF with airstrikes.¹

The conflict has killed more than 500,000 people, including over 200,000 civilians. Civilians have been subject to direct and indiscriminate attacks, including the use of barrel bombs, cluster bombs, and other explosives in populated areas, as well as besiegement and forced displacement.² About 391 civilians were killed in the conflict in August, bringing the toll of civilian casualties to almost 4,800 civilians in first six months of 2018. This is slightly below the outcome from 2017, when almost 5,400 civilians were killed in the first six months. The decreasing trend in civilian casualties has been reported since 2015, which is consistent with the SAA advancing and retaking most of the territories³

POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS

Attempts to find a political solution to the conflict have not been successful. Two parallel negotiation processes have been conducted: UN-negotiated Geneva talks, and Astana talks guaranteed by Russia, Turkey, and Iran.

Geneva process: Multiple attempts of de-escalation in the framework of the UN-led political process were hampered by the use of veto in the Security Council. The eighth round of UN-mediated Geneva talks finished in December. Very little progress has been made in any round.⁴

Astana process: Negotiations between the government and the opposition groups were renewed in mid-May 2018 during a meeting convened by Iran, Russia, and Turkey. Little progress has been reported so far.⁵ De-escalation zones reached through Astana negotiations between Russia, Iran, and Turkey in 2017 led to a momentary decrease in fighting in some areas. However, violent clashes continued in the territories covered by this agreement, such as Eastern Ghouta and Idlib.⁶

Other ceasefires

Northern Homs ceasefire was agreed at the end of July 2017, and renewed in October 2017.⁷

Southern Syria ceasefire (covering large parts of As-Sweida, Quneitra, and Dara) began on 9 July 2017, brokered by the United States, Russia, and Jordan. The ceasefire was broken by the military offensive in June-July.

ECONOMY

Total annual GDP has fallen by two-thirds since 2011, foreign currency reserves have been depleted, and international financial and other assets remain frozen due to international sanctions. Inflation has increased dramatically since 2010, surpassing 82% in 2013. Up to 70% of Syrians are living in extreme poverty.⁸

Sanctions currently in place against Syria include an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank held in the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression, as well as on equipment and technology for the monitoring/interception of internet or telephone communications. EU-imposed sanctions were extended until 1 June 2019. The impact of the sanctions is often criticised due to deepening of the humanitarian crisis and complications for aid delivery.⁹

STAKEHOLDERS Latest update: 24/09/2018

For a more in-depth analysis of stakeholders, please check the [Country Profile section \(https://www.acaps.org/country/syria/country-profile#datacard-3416\)](https://www.acaps.org/country/syria/country-profile#datacard-3416)

The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) aims to regain territory taken by various armed groups and to strengthen President Assad's position. Several offensives and advances were made in 2017 and 2018. SAA controls more than half of the country, including Damascus, Rural Damascus, and parts of Aleppo, Homs, and Hama governorates among others. Government strongholds include Tartous and most of Latakia, in addition to government-controlled areas in Al Hasakeh, Sweida, Dara, Deir-ez-Zor, and Idleb governorates. ¹The Lebanese Hezbollah is fighting alongside the SAA. ²

Free Syrian Army (FSA) is a coalition of dozens of armed groups, with the common objective to oust Assad. This is not a homogeneous group. Some factions seek a secular state, while others are rooted in Sunni Islam. Their differences have caused infighting.³Turkey supports the FSA, which controls some areas of Turkish influence in the north (Aleppo governorate) and pockets of territories across the country.⁴ Turkey says its primary reason for backing the FSA as an attempt to combat the YPG.⁵

Ahrar al-Sham (also known as the Islamic Movement of the Free Men of the Levant) is a coalition of Salafist armed groups. It is ideologically close the Muslim Brotherhood.⁶ Its main objective is to create an Islamist government in Syria, to replace Assad's government. Ahrar al-Sham often fights alongside the FSA.⁷ In 2018, it merged with Nour al-Din al-Zinki in the northwest to challenge HTS.⁸

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) is a Salafist Jihadi coalition including Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, formerly known as Jabhat al Nusra. HTS is estimated to control 60% of Idleb. It formally split from al Qaeda in 2016, though reports of the group maintaining an allegiance to al Qaeda were raised in 2017. HTS has had operations in Idleb, Aleppo, Quneitra, and Dara. It counts around 31,000 fighters.⁹ In August 2018, the group refused to integrate into the National Liberation Front (an umbrella organisation established by Turkey) ahead of any offensive on Idleb, claiming to be the sole legitimate defender of Sunni Syrians.¹⁰

Islamic State (IS) has lost control of the geographical areas it established as a Islamic 'caliphate' in Syria. IS has lost most of the territory in al Deir-ez-Zor and Homs governorates in 2017, but remains in control of pockets of territory in Deir-ez-Zor and al-Hasakeh.¹¹ IS is not part of any international negotiation. Despite the group's loss of territory, 20,000-30,000 IS fighters are believed to remain across Syria and Iraq.¹²

People's Protection Units (YPG) is a Kurdish armed group and the main force in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). YPG seeks to create an autonomous region in northern Syria that would include parts of Aleppo, ar Raqqa and al-Hasakeh governorates, and possibly reach the Mediterranean Sea in the west.¹³It is excluded from the de-escalation agreement. Kurdish groups have been in de facto control of Kurdish zones in large areas of the northern parts of northern governorates since mid-2012. In mid-March 2016, YPG declared a federal region in northern Syria, reuniting three Kurdish zones in the area. In 2018, it was challenged by Turkish intervention and ousted from Afrin (Aleppo).¹⁴

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is a multiethnic coalition of armed groups, led by the YPG.¹⁵ The SDF has about 50,000 fighters.¹⁶ With the support of the US-led coalition, it has taken control of large parts of territory in northern and eastern Syria from IS. SDF controls large parts of Al Hasakeh, ar Raqqa, Aleppo, and Deir-ez-Zor governorates and Raqqa city.¹⁷

The National Liberation Front (NLF) is in Idleb governorate and was established with the support of Turkey. The NLF consists of 11 FSA groups and several other loose oppositions factions. It reportedly has 70,000 fighters. HTS refused to join the NLF.¹⁸

INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

Russia and Iran are the main countries backing the Syrian government. Russia, which launched an air campaign on 30 September 2015, has voiced concern about the presence of what it deems terrorist organisations in the last remaining opposition stronghold of Idleb governorate.¹⁹ Iran has deployed ground troops since 2016. More than 1,000 Iranian fighters, including some with senior positions in Iran's revolutionary guard, have been killed in Syria since 2012.²⁰Iran's involvement in the conflict causes considerable tension with Israel, with provocations between the two countries increasing in 2018 and leading to airstrikes and casualties.²¹

Turkey supports the FSA against the SDF and IS, mainly in Idleb and Aleppo governorates in northern Syria. Turkey has expanded its presence in Aleppo and Idleb governorates since 2016, when the Turkish army captured Jarabulus and nearby villages from the IS. In 2017, the Turkish army entered Idleb following the de-escalation agreement and has since been expanding its deployment into the governorate. Turkish military advanced in northern Aleppo in 2018 and gained control over Afrin district, ousting the SDF and Kurdish forces. ²² In anticipation of an offensive in Idleb, Turkey has reinforced its observation posts there and tried to bring together rebel factions under the banner of the NLF. While many have merged, HTS remains a notable exception and has vowed to fight any SAA attempt to retake Idleb.²³

The US leads an international coalition to combat IS that was set up in 2014. Despite saying earlier that it would withdraw from Syria, the US announced in September that American troops would remain in the country indefinitely.²⁴

Israel: Syria has been a stage for the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah since Hezbollah intervened in the Syrian conflict. Israel has conducted multiple airstrikes against Syrian government and Hezbollah positions across the country, particularly in the Golan Heights, Quneitra governorate and in the south of Damascus.²⁵ Israel has repeatedly struck suspected Iranian or Iran-affiliated bases in Syria and refused to allow Iranian-linked groups anywhere near its border. Syrian jets entering Israeli airspace have been shot down and Israel has retaliated against stray projectiles and rockets that have entered Israel (including the de-militarised zone) following hostilities on the Syrian side of the border. The SAA reportedly shot down Israeli drones.²⁶Syrian state media reported on 15 September that Israeli missile strikes had targeted Damascus airport. On 17 September, according to media reports, more strikes targeted a ammunition depot in Latakia as Israel has vowed not to let advance weapons systems fall into Iranian hands. Russian officials blamed Israel after Syria shot down a Russian military plane off the coast of Syria, straining diplomatic ties.²⁷

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS Latest update: 02/10/2018

On 16 September the government of Syria held local elections in all SAA controlled areas. These are the first elections since 2011; however, no voting took place in areas outside of government control.¹

Clashes continue in Aleppo, Idlib, Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh governorates, despite many internationally supported attempts to de-escalate.² Targeted assassinations in northwest Syria, particularly Idlib, have increased since April 2018. HTS, IS, other opposition factions, and SAA forces have carried out targeted assassinations. The increase in frequency of assassinations raises protection concerns for civilians potentially caught in the crossfire.³

As-Sweida: SAA forces retook control over a large portion of Al Badia district in August. Military operations of SAA against opposition and the IS have been ongoing since June.⁴

Idlib: On 17 September, Russia and Turkey reached an agreement to create a de-militarised zone in Idlib province, which will come into effect by 15 October. Although the ceasefire deal has reportedly been broken several times. The agreement puts the expected offensive on hold while bi-lateral talks continue. An escalation of airstrikes and shelling have targeted the countryside of southern Idlib and northern Hama since 9 September, causing extensive damage to infrastructure, including four hospitals⁵ Renewed shelling since 3 September has caused more than 38,300 people to displace within Idlib, though up to 4,500 of these spontaneously returned by 12 September. Meanwhile, Turkish armed forces have continued to fortify their observation posts in Idlib.⁶

Lattakia: Though Lattakia is now mostly under SAA control, clashes continue in northern countryside, near the border with Idlib. Airstrikes targeted northern Lattakia in August and September and increased in the first two weeks of September, despite previous de-escalation agreements. The SAA is targeting opposition groups, including HTS in the northern Lattakia mountainous area.⁷

Hama: Shelling and airstrikes intensified in the first two weeks of September in northern and northeastern Hama, near Idlib.⁸

Aleppo: Despite truce agreements reached in August, Russian shelling continues in September. Heavy airstrikes continue to injure and kill civilians. Clashes in Afrin are reportedly creating strong barriers to IDPs trying to access services, while conflict-affected communities in the area still depend on humanitarian aid for survival.⁹ Clashes continue across Aleppo, while the territory is split among the SAA, opposition groups, and Turkish military forces. The YPG withdrew its forces from Manbij following the agreement between Turkey and the US. Manbij is to remain under the control of an SDF-led military council.¹⁰

Al-Hasakeh: Clashes between Asayish forces and SAA forces left a number of dead in September. The international coalition has heavily reinforced its military bases in SDF controlled territory in Al-Hasakeh.¹¹

Deir-ez-Zor: An Iranian missile struck the town of Al Bukamal, early on 1 October, in response to a recent attack on a military parade in Iran. The town has been subject to frequent clashes between the SAA and IS.¹² Airstrikes and clashes continue in Deir-ez-Zor and the SDF continues to push back against IS forces, targeting the last remaining IS stronghold along the East part of the Euphrates river. In September the SDF campaign to purge IS from the area slowed due to the prevalence of IS tunnels in the eastern countryside of Deir-ez-Zor and the associated risks of ambush and counter-attacks with heavy artillery.¹³

Map

Map of geographical lines of control as of 04/09/2018



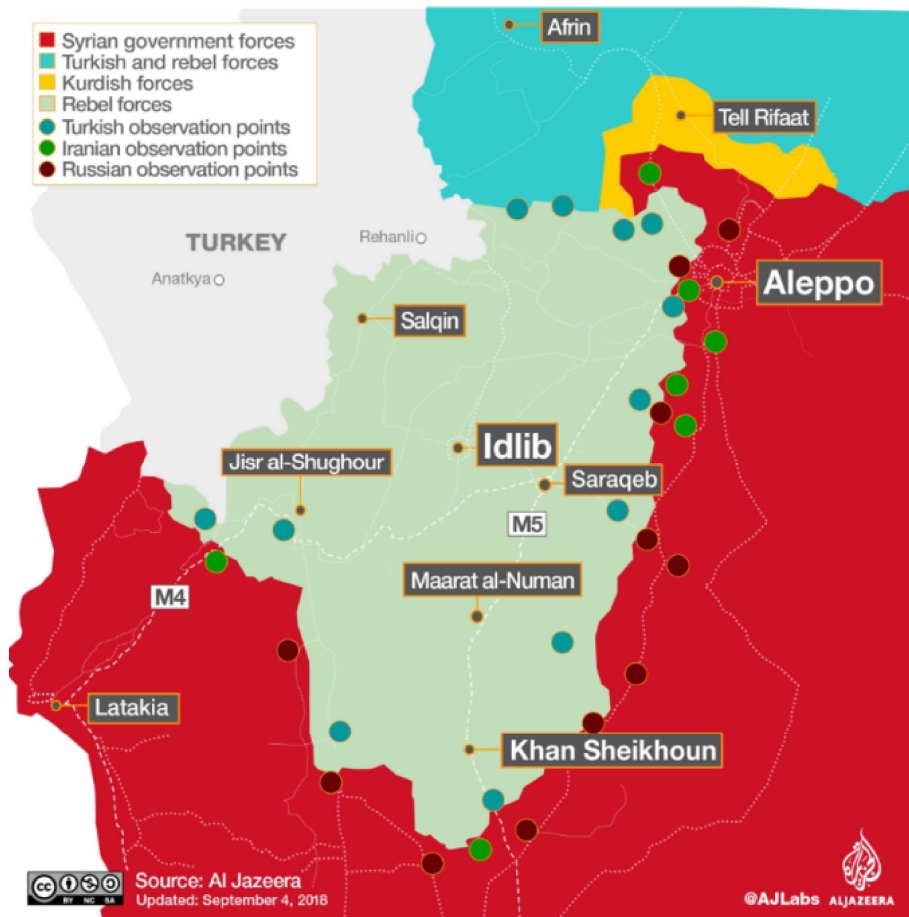
(https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/datacards/maps/who_controls_what_05092018.png)

Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html>

Map

Map of geographical lines of control in Idlib as of 04/09/2018

Idlib: Who controls what



(https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/datacards/maps/idlib_who_controls_what_05092018.png)

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

OVERVIEW Latest update: 02/10/2018

Humanitarian access continues to be hampered by insecurity, as well as physical and bureaucratic constraints. 1.5 million people live in hard-to-reach areas as of June 2018. Only 20% of those in hard to reach areas were provided with relief in the first 6 months of 2018.¹ The number of people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas has decreased in 2017 and 2018, primarily due to advances of the government forces and evacuation agreements.²

The restraints that limit access of relief actors to the affected population also limit the affected populations' ability to access relief.

Areas of recent or ongoing concern:

Idlib/Aleppo: The current security situation in Idlib is preventing humanitarian actors from entering the governorate (see conflict developments). Insecurity in Idlib, particularly fighting between opposition groups and targeted assassinations, makes humanitarian access extremely difficult. Recent arrivals of evacuees from the southwest into Idlib have overburdened the very limited functioning health

and humanitarian infrastructure. IDPs living in desolate and hard-to-reach areas face severe restrictions in accessing aid and services. Over one million IDPs face regular restrictions when trying to access to basic services³

Quneitra/Dara: Although the SAA fully controls the areas, severe access restrictions continue to prevent the delivery of aid to populations inside Dara and Quneitra governorate, particularly along the Golan Heights, where local shelter and NFI stocks have been depleted and humanitarian actors in Damascus have been unable to obtain approvals to enter.⁴

Deir-ez-Zor/Ar-Raqqa: High explosive contamination in both Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor has prevented many people from leaving to access humanitarian assistance elsewhere in Syria as well as preventing humanitarian actors from accessing civilians in the areas. Civilians fled in July and August to many makeshift camps that are inaccessible to humanitarian agencies.⁵ Many IDP camps in Ar-Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor are limiting the movement of people in and out of camps.⁶

Rural Damascus: Access to Eastern Ghouta remains limited despite the end of the March siege⁷

The Berm: Access to Rukban camp is severely limited and conditions deteriorated since January, when the last aid delivery reached the camp. The UN required approvals from SAA and Russian authorities to access the camp, which is in dire need of assistance. Rukban is situated near the Berm, a demilitarised zone on the border between Syria and Jordan. The unexplained closure of a UN health clinic that serviced the camp from the Jordanian side of the border has further impeded humanitarian access.⁸

Map

This table of access indicators was originally published as part of the Humanitarian Access Overview report in August 2018

(https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/datacards/maps/table_of_indicators_uploaded_on_website.png)

Source: <http://humanitarianaccess.acaps.org/>

(https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/datacards/images/people_not_reached_jan-may_2018.jpg)

People reached and not reached in the first half of 2018 (Humanitarian Response Plan Monitoring Report 30/06/2018)

ACCESS OF RELIEF ACTORS TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS Latest update: 24/09/2018

Bureaucratic constraints frequently hamper local and international humanitarian responses in SAA held and opposition held territories. Convoys that have reached opposition-controlled areas in 2018 often could not deliver critical health, WASH, education, and NFI equipment due to limitations imposed by local authorities. Aid organisations operating in SAA controlled territory and registered in Damascus are largely unable to operate in opposition held territory. Those operating in opposition held territory where different towns or cities are controlled by different opposition groups, may require several sets of registrations and permissions.¹

Explosive contamination: Many areas, and particularly those previously held by IS, are contaminated with explosives. In Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa governorates such contamination limits the ability to safely operate services in the area. Reports of casualties and injuries from explosive contamination continue to be reported across Syria.²

Ongoing hostilities and violence against humanitarians: Lines of control and negotiating partners for access may change quickly. Ongoing hostilities frequently prevent aid convoys from reaching those most in need.³ Aid workers have been targeted by a range of parties to the conflict, and these attacks disproportionately affect healthcare workers (see healthcare availability and access). At least forty aid workers have been killed in Syria in 2018 Syria has for the second consecutive year been the most dangerous place to deliver aid.⁴ In Ar-Raqqa in August an NGO was targeted by a remote controlled IED.⁵

ACCESS OF AFFECTED POPULATIONS TO ASSISTANCE Latest update: 24/09/2018

Restrictions on the freedom of movement as well as fear of detention at checkpoints prevents many civilians from moving through areas to access relief services. [1](#) 1.5 million people live in hard to reach areas where services are limited. [2](#)

Map

Hard-to-reach areas in Syria as of 27 July

(https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/datacards/maps/hard_to_reach_areas_as_of_27_july.png)

Source: OCHA 27/07/2018

BORDER CROSSINGS

Numerous families are stranded on the Turkish-Syrian border, waiting for the opportunity to cross. They often sleep in the open air, and facing harsh weather conditions, increasing health risks. Harassment, robberies, and arbitrary detention are reportedly committed by the Turkish guards on a daily basis. [\[2\]](#)

In addition, Turkey has constructed a 764km long wall along its border with Syria, which limits access to safety and assistance in Turkey for civilians trying to flee Syria. [\[2\]](#)

Most border crossings between Turkey and Syria, as well as between Iraq and Syria, are closed. A large part of the Syria–Jordan border is closed. [\[2\]](#) Up to 50,000 Syrians are stranded in makeshift settlements in Rukban camp at the *berm*, a sand mound marking the border between Jordan and Syria. Access to the berm is severely limited, as the government of Jordan has sealed off a large part of the border on security grounds. [\[2\]](#)

SECURITY AND PHYSICAL CONSTRAINTS Latest update: 24/09/2018

Insecurity is affecting access across most of Syria. Insecurity in As-Sweida, Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, al Hasakeh, and Deir-ez-Zor hinders humanitarian transportation and has resulted in a number of agencies and NGOs withdrawing from the areas. [\[2\]](#)

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other explosive hazards are present in many areas previously held by IS, such as Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates, and areas that witnessed recent military offensives, such as Afrin district in Aleppo. IDPs from Afrin who settled in areas previously held by IS in Aleppo are exposed to a high level of contamination. [\[2\]](#) Access is severely restricted in these areas. Mines in Ar Raqqa city hamper early recovery efforts and restoration of basic infrastructure. Returnees are exposed to a particularly high risk of explosive remnants of war (ERW). [\[2\]](#)

Bombing heavily damaged roads in Idlib, preventing the delivery of assistance to IDP sites. [\[2\]](#)

DISPLACEMENT

OVERVIEW Latest update: 18/09/2018

There are 6.6 million IDPs in Syria: around 80% live in urban areas and the remaining 20% in rural areas. More than 5.6 million Syrians are registered as refugees in neighbouring countries, an increase of over 800,000 since the beginning of 2017. [\[2\]](#)

Idlib governorate has registered the highest displacement in 2018. Forced displacement has been reported many times since the beginning of the crisis. [\[2\]](#)

IDPS Latest update: 24/09/2018

Some 6.2 million people are internally displaced, including at least 2.8 million children. Rural Damascus, Idlib, and Aleppo governorates host the largest IDP populations. 2.8 million people were displaced in 2017, compared with 2.2 million in 2016. Many of those were displaced multiple times due to shifting conflict dynamics. [\[2\]](#)

SOUTHWEST SYRIA (DARA, QUNEITRA, AS-SWEIDA, RURAL DAMASCUS)

Most of the up to 325,000 people who were believed displaced during the July SAA offensive are thought to have returned to their areas of origin as of September. Despite return movements, an unknown number of people, thought to be in the thousands, remain displaced. High levels of need still exist among returnees and the displaced. [\[2\]](#) Although activities in some IDP sites in As-Sweida have ceased, reports suggest that a sizeable population with severe needs exists in rural areas that are underserved. More information is required to understand the needs of IDPs in rural areas of the southwest, such as the estimated 6,580 IDPs from eastern Ghouta who remain spread across Rural Damascus. [\[2\]](#) Around 5,000 people left Rukban camp along the Jordanian border in July and August because of deteriorating living conditions. No aid has reached Rukban since January. [\[2\]](#)

NORTHWEST SYRIA (IDLEB, ALEPPO, HAMA, LATTAKIA):

About 1.4 million IDPs reside in Idlib and areas of western Aleppo still held by opposition groups. [\[2\]](#) The influx of IDPs into Idlib continues and reports that camps are unable to absorb newcomers are becoming common. With the closure of the Qalaat al-Madiq crossing into Idlib, an offensive that will displace even more people within Idlib is likely and will put 3 million civilians across the northwest at risk. [\[2\]](#)

Idleb: Since the resumption of heavy airstrikes on 4 September, up to 38,300 people have fled southern Idleb towards the north, with 4,500 spontaneous returns as of 12 September. ^[1] Half of the population of 2.9 million in Idleb and its border areas are IDPs. They live in poor, overcrowded conditions with high unmet needs, particularly WASH, health, food, and shelter. Idleb is experiencing very high levels of incoming and outgoing IDPs, particularly due to evacuations of opposition groups and civilians as a result of the SAA offensive in the southwest. ^[2] Idleb has reported higher displacement numbers (357,000) than other governorates in 2018. ^[3]

Aleppo: At least 35,000 people have been displaced to opposition-held areas of Aleppo governorate from Rural Damascus and Homs since March, most to northern rural Aleppo, and at least 10,000 in southern Aleppo, mostly to Atareb. ^[1] At least 134,000 people who fled from Afrin between January and March remain displaced across the governorate. Limited returns (up to 5,000 people) to Afrin were reported in May. ^[2] More than 350,000 people have been displaced into Aleppo in 2018 from Idleb, Rural Damascus, Hama, and within the governorate. Atareb, Atma, Mezanaz, Zarbah, and Daret Azza district have been the affected the most by the influx. ^[3]

NORTHEAST SYRIA (DEIR-EZ-ZOR, AR-RAQQA, AL HASAKEH)

Displacements from Deir-ez-Zor have continued as people try to flee IS-held areas. In July, conflict between the SDF and IS displaced 20,000 people in Deir-ez-Zor to makeshift camps. ^[1] Shelter and WASH needs are acute in all informal IDP sites across the governorate. ^[2] In Ar-Raqqa, returns continue despite high risks from explosives contamination. Roughly 200,000 people have returned to Deir-ez-Zor since November 2017. Thousands of displaced people in the governorate face dire conditions in overcrowded IDP camps. Returning to Raqqa city is unsafe considering the level of destruction, mines, and ERW. ^[3]

REFUGEES Latest update: 24/09/2018

Around 500,000 refugees are located in Syria, including 438,000 long-term Palestinian refugees and 60,000 non-Palestinian refugees and asylum seekers. ^[1]

Palestinian refugees in Syria (PRS): 438,000 Palestinian refugees are living in Syria, of which the vast majority (95%) are affected by the conflict and in need of humanitarian assistance. Approximately 60% of Palestinian refugees are displaced within Syria. ^[1] A further 110,000 Palestinian refugees displaced outside of Syria due to the conflict. ^[2] Many Palestinian camps were in contested areas in Damascus and Dara governorates, leaving them exposed to violence. ^[3] The Palestinian refugees remaining in Syria suffer a lack of livelihoods or assets and rely on humanitarian aid for covering their basic needs. ^[4]

Iraqi refugees: Over 35,000 Iraqi refugees are in need of humanitarian assistance in Syria. There are over 11,000 Iraqis in camps in al Hasakeh governorate, and 24,000 other Iraqis across the country. ^[1]

SYRIAN REFUGEES IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES Latest update: 24/09/2018

Over 5.6 million Syrians are registered as refugees in neighbouring countries. ^[1] Children make up almost 48% of the refugee population, with an estimated 2.6 million refugee children living in the region. Over 90% of the Syrian refugee population live in host communities, leaving less than 10% (460,000) to live in camps. Increased restriction of movement – both within Syria and in neighbouring countries – has prevented many Syrians from leaving the country since the beginning of 2016. ^[2]

Turkey: More than 3.58 million registered Syrian refugees, including at least 123,000 arrivals in 2018 and around 600,000 in 2017. ^[1] Despite increased security measures along the border, Syrian refugees continue to be granted asylum in Turkey. ^[2]

Lebanon: Over 985,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Lebanon, though an estimated 1.5 million Syrians reside in the country. ^[1] Registered Syrian refugees make up about 20% of the total population in Lebanon.

Jordan: 666,000 Syrian refugees are officially registered; though up to 1.4 million Syrian refugees total are estimated to live in Jordan. ^[1] The number has been relatively stable since June 2016, with few new arrivals due to the restriction of borders. ^[2]

Iraq: 250,000 Syrian refugees, a decrease of around 10,000 since the beginning of 2016. They are mostly located in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). ^[1]

Northern Africa: Over 162,000 Syrian refugees in Northern Africa (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), with the number stable since the beginning of 2016. Of those, 128,000 are in Egypt. ^[1]

RETURNEES Latest update: 24/09/2018

An estimated 15,714 refugee returns were recorded in Syria from January to August 2018. More than 840,000 returnees were reported in Syria in 2017, up from 560,000 in 2016. Most returnees were IDPs. ^[1]

Refugee returnees: Some 200 Syrians returned from Lebanon on 4 September, and 1,000 have been registered with Hezbollah to return. On 13 August, more than 100 Syrian refugees returned home from Lebanon via official Lebanese and Syrian channels. Several groups of spontaneous returnees from Lebanon have been recorded in 2018. In June, up to 400 people returned from Arsal, out of 3,000 who registered to leave. ^[1]

AR RAQQA

153,000 people have returned to Raqqa city and surrounding areas since October 2017. High levels of explosive contamination and destruction of shelter make the returns unsafe. [\[2\]](#)

FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

OVERVIEW Latest update: 24/09/2018

The number of food-insecure people is 6.7 million in 2018, up from 6.5 million in 2017. An additional 4.5 million people are estimated at risk of becoming food insecure because of asset depletion. [\[2\]](#)

Food security is a major concern in hard-to-reach areas as food delivery restrictions limit availability, prices continue to rise, and livelihoods have broken down. [\[2\]](#) IDPs and returnees are particularly exposed to food insecurity. The recently displaced population in Dara and Quneitra governorates have reported urgent food needs particularly in areas near the Golan Heights and the Jordanian border. Many of the territories where IDPs have arrived are deserts, where both availability and access to food is very limited. [\[2\]](#)

FOOD AVAILABILITY Latest update: 24/09/2018

Insecurity has limited food availability. The agricultural sector has been heavily affected by a decline in crop production, reduced livestock numbers, destruction of infrastructure and services, land degradation, contamination by explosive hazards, and loss of human resources for production. [\[2\]](#) Production has been affected by the lack or high price of agricultural inputs (such as seeds, fertiliser, and fuel), damage to agricultural machinery, irrigation systems, and storage facilities from conflict, disruptions in electricity supply, and destruction of standing crops. [\[2\]](#) Cereal production improved in 2017 compared to a record low production in 2016, although wheat production was less than half of pre-crisis ten-year average. In 2018, the May-July cereal harvest in northern Syria was below average, attributed to below-average rainfall as well as conflict-related constraints. [\[2\]](#)

Food availability is often limited in hard-to-reach areas, which report the highest percentage of households with inadequate food consumption. Residents of areas affected by conflict often report that food is unavailable. [\[2\]](#)

FOOD ACCESS Latest update: 05/09/2018

A lack of income and low purchasing power, fragmented markets, and high prices severely affect food access. Insecurity limits access to markets, which are often targeted by airstrikes. 90% of Syrian households spend more than half of their income on food. [\[2\]](#)

Food prices have increased in southern governorates because of insecurity and a large wave of displacement that occurred in June and July 2018. [\[2\]](#)

Access to food is limited in hard-to-reach areas. More than half of returnees to Ar-Raqqa are considered food insecure. The absence of basic services in Ar-Raqqa heavily impacts access for people with disabilities. 82% of people assessed in May in Afrin district, Aleppo governorate reported food markets to be inaccessible and 77% reported non-functional bakeries in their area. Major price increases for basic commodities have been reported. [\[2\]](#)

LIVELIHOODS Latest update: 16/07/2018

More than half of the Syrian population prior to the conflict worked in agriculture. Insecurity, destruction of infrastructure, multiple displacements, lack of fuel, and lack of access to lands have left more than half of the population unemployed. 69% of Syrians inside the country live in extreme poverty. Insecurity combined with lack of rain and adverse weather conditions has had a devastating impact on the country's economy and the agricultural sector. The governorates with the largest agriculture losses were Al-Hasakeh, ar Raqqa, Rural Damascus, Deir-ez-Zor, Dara, and Idlib. [\[2\]](#)

Livelihood activities are particularly limited in existing and former besieged and hard-to-reach areas. [\[2\]](#)

HEALTH

OVERVIEW Latest update: 10/08/2018

12 million people are in need of health assistance across Syria, up from 11.3 million in the beginning of 2018. Needs are most pronounced in the areas of ongoing hostilities, hard-to-reach areas, and among IDPs. Medical facilities are often targeted by airstrikes and health workers have fled. ^[1] Vaccination has decreased significantly and the lack of medicines is acute. ^[2]

HEALTHCARE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS Latest update: 20/09/2018

Healthcare access is particularly poor in areas with ongoing offensives and hard-to-reach areas. The June-July SAA offensive in southwest Syria, for example, resulted in the addition of 700,000 people in need of health assistance, bringing the overall total to 12 million. ^[1] Medicine has frequently been entirely unavailable or too expensive for people to afford.

At the end of May, 50% of the total 111 public hospitals are fully functioning, 24% are partially functioning and 26% are not functioning. Healthcare facilities in the northwest have been severely overstretched in the first half of 2018. ^[2] Health facilities are frequently attacked. 124 health facilities were attacked in the first seven months of 2018. ^[2]

Trauma and burns care are acutely needed across Syria. The capacity of burns stabilisation points in the northern governorates is severely overstretched as unexploded ordnance is causing new injuries for returnees. Treatment and medicines for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are needed countrywide. ^[2] Half of the key informants interviewed across Syria in 2018 indicated that pregnant women do not have access to prenatal care. ^[2]

Dara/Quneitra: All national NGOs operating in the area were dissolved after the SAA took control of the governorates at the end of July, reducing the number of doctors from about 130 to 25. Of the 94 health facilities previously operating under the control of opposition groups, 56 are partially functioning and 38 are not functioning at all. ^[2] Access to Rukban camp for humanitarian actors is severely restricted. ^[2] Access to the UN-run medical facility on the Jordanian side has been suspended without explanation since 16 September. Around 50,000 – 60,000 people remaining in the camp already face dire conditions as aid, including medical supplies, has not been delivered since January. For those living in makeshift shelters in squalid conditions, the health centre was the only available source of medical treatment. Diarrhoea outbreaks and contaminated water have plagued the health of Rukban residents and unconfirmed reports indicate three people may have died because access to the UN-run facility was cut off. ^[2]

Aleppo: There are hardly any functioning public health facilities in Afrin district and the majority of medical staff fled due to the fighting. 153 out of 180 communities assessed in May reported no access to health services in Aleppo. IDPs from Afrin in other areas of Aleppo have urgent health needs but local capacities are very limited. ^[2]

Rural Damascus: IDPs from Eastern Ghouta present acute health needs related to trauma management, immunisation, non-communicable diseases, and reproductive health. Several suspected measles and acute flaccid paralysis cases have been reported. ^[2] The government siege of Eastern Ghouta, which ended in March 2018, heavily affected the health sector in the area. Medical staff were forced to flee and health facilities were destroyed. There is little information on the current state of medical facilities and healthcare in Eastern Ghouta. Healthcare facilities in the rest of Rural Damascus are overstretched from the IDP influx occurring after the end of the siege in Eastern Ghouta. Many healthcare centres have seen patient loads double. ^[2]

Idleb: Should a full scale military offensive take place in Idleb, healthcare staff are expected to be affected and possibly displaced, which will severely impact healthcare in the northwest. ^[2] IDP camps in Idleb are running at an average of 400% beyond capacity, while health partners have been unable to cover all IDP sites and needs. Healthcare needs have increased while funding has decreased. ^[2] IDPs in the governorate, particularly in remote rural areas, lack access to healthcare. IDP influx in 2018 has doubled patient loads for doctors and left hospitals overwhelmed. ^[2] Across northwest Syria the demand for burns care, prosthetic services and medicines for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension significantly outstrip supply. ^[2]

Raqqa: Extensive weapons contamination is an ongoing barrier to healthcare access. ^[2] The situation is slowly improving. A government health centre, five private hospitals and a primary healthcare clinic managed by MSF are now operational in the city. ^[2]

Deir-ez-Zor: There are no fully functioning healthcare facilities reported in the governorate. ^[2]

OUTBREAKS Latest update: 04/09/2018

In Rukban camp along the Jordanian border, up to 4,000 cases of diarrhoea among children were reported in July, as well as an estimated 500 cases of Hepatitis A. The age disaggregation of cases is not available. An estimated 80% of camp inhabitants are women and children. Lack of healthcare access may aggravate the diarrhoea outbreak, which can be deadly if untreated. Up to 50,000 people live in Rukban camp, where summer temperatures reach 100 degrees Fahrenheit. People have resorted to drinking unsafe water, which is understood to be a possible source of hepatitis. ^[2] There have been no updates on the situation in Rukban throughout August, however an increasing number of families are leaving the camp due to a severe lack of services and conditions are unlikely to have improved. ^[2]

Significant recent outbreaks reported in Syria:

Influenza-like sickness: Influenza-like illnesses continue to account for 46% of reported morbidities from over 5's in WHO sentinel sites. Some 28,000 cases, with most reported from Rural Damascus, Latakia and Aleppo. [\[2\]](#)

Acute diarrhoea: Reporting continues to highlight concerns about the increasing caseload of diarrhoeal diseases countrywide. Acute bloody diarrhoea is frequently linked to contaminated water sources. In Deir-ez-Zor, there were 699 cases of acute diarrhoea and acute bloody diarrhoea between March and 17 August because of drinking contaminated water. Twelve deaths were reported, 90% of whom were children. Untreated water is being piped straight from the river and laboratory tests conducted in Beirut confirmed the presence of E-coli in all five samples sent for evaluation. [\[2\]](#)

Leishmaniasis: Also known as 'the Aleppo boil', leishmaniasis has made a resurgence across northern Syria due to factors such as poor sanitation and vector control. Deir-ez-Zor is particularly affected by leishmaniasis.

Other reported illnesses include acute jaundice syndrome, respiratory infections, measles, typhoid, mumps, and tuberculosis. New typhoid, bloody diarrhoea and measles have been reported across the northeast. [\[2\]](#)

MENTAL HEALTH Latest update: 18/09/2018

Access to mental health services remains scarce. The Syrian population has been heavily affected by depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental illnesses. Conflict and torture from authorities are cited as the most common causes for PTSD. [\[2\]](#) With the escalation of fighting and airstrikes, a growing number of children present extreme panic and fright during classes. Overall, children have been deeply affected by the conflict. They exhibit symptoms of mental distress, such as bed wetting or the inability to speak, and fearful behaviour is commonly noted. Adults report that children regularly have feelings of grief and extreme sadness. Increased aggression and use of drugs by children as a coping mechanism is also reported. [\[2\]](#) [\[2\]](#)

IDPs in Rural Damascus, Aleppo, and Idlib are in urgent need of psychological support. [\[2\]](#)

NUTRITION**OVERVIEW** Latest update: 18/09/2018

Malnutrition rates increased in Aleppo, ar-Raqqa, Dara, Idlib, and Quneitra governorates in the first six months of 2018. [\[2\]](#) Though access to markets is increasing and the price of an average food basket nationwide is slowly decreasing, a lack of healthcare and unavailability of affordable food aggravate the poor nutrition situation in northern Syria. Idlib and Aleppo have a high prevalence of chronic malnutrition (information on the nutrition situation in across the northwest is lacking because of access limitations). [\[2\]](#)

Some 8% of children displaced from Eastern Ghouta screened in IDP sites in Rural Damascus were acutely malnourished. [\[2\]](#)

A survey conducted in Ein Issa, Suluk and Tell Abyad sub-districts of Raqqa governorate found that the prevalence of stunting was 32.4%. This surpasses the WHO threshold of 30% and indicates a situation of serious, chronic nutrition. [\[2\]](#)

Some 4.6 million children and pregnant and lactating women are in need of nutrition support, compared to 4.4 million as of the end of 2016. [\[2\]](#)

WASH**OVERVIEW** Latest update: 13/02/2018

14.6 million people are in need of WASH, as access to water remains limited for much of the population. [\[2\]](#) Up to 35% of the population is relying on unsafe water sources to meet daily water supply needs. Negative coping mechanisms include relying on unsafe water from wells and rivers, which results in the spread of waterborne diseases. [\[2\]](#) Many communities face sanitation issues due to a lack of sufficient and consistent waste management. [\[2\]](#)

Water has been used systematically as a weapon of war by almost all parties. [\[2\]](#)

WATER Latest update: 13/08/2018

Access to piped water remains limited across the country, particularly in the opposition-held areas. 35% of all Syrians have no access to safe drinking water. Up to 30% of water systems are not operational. Alternate water supply services are usually available, but expensive, pushing families to adopt unsafe coping strategies. Many households - 70% in opposition-held areas and 30% in government-held areas - rely on alternative and often unsafe water sources. Some households spend up to 20% of their income to secure access to water. Damage to water infrastructure such as irrigation systems exacerbates agricultural losses. [\[2\]](#)

Negative coping mechanisms such as modifying hygiene practices and reducing drinking water consumption have been reported. People are resorting to untreated water from unsafe sources, such as rivers, makeshift wells, and boreholes. Fetching water from rivers can expose civilians to cross-fire and IED/UXOs. [\[2\]](#) Scabies, diarrhoea, and other waterborne diseases have been reported across Syria. [\[2\]](#)

A July assesment in Dara indicated an urgent need to rehabilitate boreholes and implement water trucking in the governorate in order to ensure the provision of safe drinking water. [\[2\]](#) The displaced population in Dara and Quneitra governorates report urgent need of drinking water, particularly in the areas near Golan Heights and Jordanian border. Several children are reported to have died in July from dehydration and heat exposure. [\[2\]](#)

IDPs are particularly exposed to drinking water shortages. Some camps in Idleb, which received many of the displaced people in 2018, are reported to lack sources of clean potable water, and the tanking services often remain too expensive for the displaced population. Access to clean drinking water remains a serious concern across IDP hosting sites in Idleb, Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Deir-ez-Zor, and ar-Raqqa governorates as well. In northwestern Syria, more than 400,000 people had access to less than five litres of water per day prior to the influx of more than 55,000 new IDPs from Eastern Ghouta. [\[2\]](#)

Access to water remains challenging in hard-to-reach areas. Trucking remains the main source of water in most areas where fighting has damaged water infrastructure including Afrin, Idleb and Eastern Ghouta. [\[2\]](#) Water supply networks in Eastern Ghouta were destroyed by airstrikes and chemical attacks. Restricted access and considerable damage inflicted on WASH infrastructure are likely to hamper the access to water for the remaining or returning population. [\[2\]](#) Returnees in Dara city rely on expensive water delivered by trucks. [\[2\]](#) The price of water is often too high for poor people to afford. [\[2\]](#)

SANITATION Latest update: 27/08/2018

Poor sanitation is a concern across the country. Overstretched water and sanitation infrastructure combined with a lack of hygiene awareness in affected areas poses several health risks. [\[2\]](#) Inadequate sanitation facilities and waste management are likely to increase health problems and insect-transmitted diseases.

In hard-to-reach areas, sanitation and lack of solid waste disposal are of concern. In Afrin district, 88% of responders assessed in May reported accumulation of solid waste in their areas. [\[2\]](#)

IDP hosting sites are particularly vulnerable, especially in Idleb, Hama, Aleppo, and rural Damascus. [\[2\]](#) WASH needs, especially vis-a-vis the maintenance of latrines and showers, have been reported in sites hosting IDPs from Eastern Ghouta and IDP hosting sites and communities in northern Hama. [\[2\]](#) The lack of opportunities for personal hygiene particularly affects women and children, exacerbating protection and health issues. [\[2\]](#) IDPs from Afrin displaced to Nabul, Zahraa, and Tel Rifaat report lack of hygiene facilities and hygiene-related items. [\[2\]](#)

Sanitation is of concern in Raqqa and Deir-ez-Zor governorates, as sewage and waste management systems were destroyed. In some IDP camps, open defecation is a concern. It is most frequently practiced at overcrowded tent sites and collective shelters with limited numbers of functioning latrines. [\[2\]](#)

SHELTER AND NFIS

OVERVIEW Latest update: 13/08/2018

4.2 million people are in need of shelter assistance throughout Syria. Of these, at least 1.9 million people are in acute and immediate need of life-sustaining shelter assistance. [\[2\]](#) 4.7 million people are in need of NFIs. [\[2\]](#) Shelter and NFI needs are most pronounced in the hard-to-reach areas as well as IDP camps and informal settlements across Syria, especially during the winter months. [\[2\]](#)

SHELTER Latest update: 18/09/2018

Over 800,000 houses have been partially or severely damaged in the conflict, and 400,000 destroyed. 5.3 million people live in shelters that lack cooking and sanitation facilities, privacy, heating, and insulation. [\[2\]](#) Almost 20% of IDPs in Idleb, western Aleppo and Northern Hama live in overcrowded or unsuitable shelters. [\[2\]](#)

Lack of access, limited funding, reduced coping strategies among IDPs, and the limited financial capacity of the Syrian government to provide compensation for destroyed housing, are resulting in increasing response gaps in providing IDPs and other groups affected with adequate shelter. These issues are becoming particularly prominent in Idlib. ^[2]

Dara: The military offensive that occurred in June-July resulted in increased rental fees, which significantly impacted access to safe shelter for over 270,000 IDPs in southern Syria. IDPs report urgent shelter needs, particularly near the border with Jordan, and in Quneitra, near Golan Heights. In Quneitra, shelter supplies have been fully depleted among humanitarian responders in the area, while many IDPs continue to be exposed to harsh desert conditions. ^[2] Some IDPs were sleeping in the open. ^[2] 85% of buildings in opposition-held neighbourhoods are partially or fully destroyed. ^[2]

Idlib: IDP sites in the governorate are running on average at 400% beyond their absorption capacity and shelter needs remain. ^[2] Many people evacuated from the southwest in June and July are without shelter. It is unlikely the shelter cluster will be able to respond to the huge shelter needs an offensive will bring. ^[2]

Aleppo: IDPs displaced from Afrin and Eastern Ghouta to Aleppo face dire shelter conditions and stay in overcrowded collective shelters and abandoned houses. ^[2]

Rural Damascus: Many IDPs from Eastern Ghouta have been sheltering in overcrowded shelters or in the open, though this trend began decreasing at the end of June. ^[2] Residential areas in Eastern Ghouta have been severely impacted by airstrikes since November 2017, with up to 70% of buildings destroyed and damaged in some neighbourhoods. ^[2]

NFIS Latest update: 27/08/2018

4.7 million people are in need of NFIs, including at least 3.3 million with acute needs. ^[2] Poverty, reduced or non-availability of goods and basic services, and repeated displacement caused by the conflict are the main drivers of need. ^[2] Electricity is unavailable in several areas of the country. Looting of cables and transformers has also affected access to electricity. ^[2]

Newly displaced populations in Dara and Quneitra governorates have reported urgent NFI needs since mid-June. The escalation of violence in Dara has caused fuel, diesel, and gas prices in southern Syria to increase up to 420%, and they are expected to rise further. Limited availability and access to fuel restricts access to safety and assistance as well as deliveries of humanitarian aid, and increases prices of other commodities. ^[2]

NFIs remain one of the most pressing needs of the IDP population in Rural Damascus, Idlib, and Aleppo. IDPs and the population remaining in Eastern Ghouta have faced serious fuel shortages in 2018. ^[2] Fuel costs have climbed since May 2018 after falling over the last 12 months of reporting. Prices of diesel and butane gas are highest in opposition-held areas. ^[2]

High NFI needs are reported in hard-to-reach areas. Most people in Afrin sub-districts have reported NFI needs since May: clothing, mattresses, and cans for water have been reported as largely inaccessible. Electricity networks in the district were destroyed. ^[2]

Most communities in Deir-ez-Zor and ar Raqqa governorates have no or limited access to electricity. ^[2]

EDUCATION

OVERVIEW Latest update: 18/09/2018

6.1 million people, including 5.8 million children and 300,000 teachers and education personnel, need education assistance. Education services continue to be disrupted by violence, displacement, persecution, and lack of access. Needs are most severe in northern and western Syria. ^[2] The departure of professional teachers since the beginning of the conflict has severely reduced education services. ^[2]

2.1 million children have been forced out of school due to the conflict, and 1.35 million are at risk of dropping out. Some 180,000 education staff, including teachers, stopped working due to conflict. Remaining staff are overwhelmed, which affects the quality of teaching. ^[2]

ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT Latest update: 18/09/2018

ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Violence, recurring displacement, lack of resources, and attempts at indoctrination disrupt the educational system and delivery of services. Access to education is most limited in the areas of ongoing clashes and in hard-to-reach areas. 40% of schools have been damaged, destroyed, or used for temporary shelters. ^[2]

Violence against educational facilities has been perpetrated by all conflict parties. Schools and education personnel are often targeted by airstrikes and shelling. ^[2] In 2018 alone, some 45 schools have been targeted in Eastern Ghouta, and 11 were completely destroyed. ^[2] There have been 347 verified attacks against schools and education personnel between 2011 and 2017 – meaning at least one in four schools has been damaged or destroyed since 2011. ^[2]

Displaced children have the highest chance of dropping out of school. ^[2] Across Syria, nearly two million school-aged children are displaced. Education in the IDP camps and settlements is often overlooked. ^[2]

Children who had no civil documentation struggle to register for schools in most government-controlled areas and some opposition group-controlled areas. Civil documentation remains a substantial barrier to education and livelihoods, as Syrian children may not be able to register for their high school examinations or receive official diplomas. ^[2]

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Lack of fuel, textbooks, and stationery hamper the delivery of educational services across the country. Staff shortages and persecution have been reported. In Aleppo, the number of school teachers for the academic year 2015/16 had dropped by 68% compared to 2010/11. Idleb witnessed a decrease of 57% since 2011, which is impacting the teacher-pupil ratio in schools. Schools in ar Raqqa report shortages of materials, supplies, and teachers. ^[2]

PROTECTION

OVERVIEW Latest update: 25/09/2018

13.3 million people are in need of protection assistance. Vulnerable groups include women, girls, boys, and elderly people. Common protection concerns include exposure to active hostilities, explosive hazards, deliberate targeting of civilians, and gender-based violence (GBV). More than 50% of communities assessed in 2017 reported protection concerns including lack of civil documentation, child labour, early marriage, housing/land issues, family separation, and domestic violence. Almost 100% of all assessed communities reported the occurrence at least one protection concern. ^[2] The protection cluster reported large geographical gaps in protection services in June, with some governorates such as Homs, Deir-ez-Zor, Rural Damascus and as-Sweida having no ongoing protection interventions at all. ^[2]

The use of incendiary weapons, cluster munitions, and barrel bombs is common. Indiscriminate targeting of civilian areas and facilities by airstrikes was widely reported in 2018. In 2017, over 15,000 deaths and injuries were reported from explosive violence. 85% of those were among civilians. ^[2] The use of chemical weapons has been reported. ^[2]

Executions by different parties to the conflict have been reported. Reports indicate that IS has executed over 5,100 people within Syria since 2014, with last cases reported in March 2018. ^[2] Amnesty International has documented over 13,000 executions by the Syrian government in Saydnaya military prison, near Damascus. ^[2]

Kidnapping and arbitrary detention is an ongoing protection concern across Syria. In the north east, the Democratic Union-led Kurdish administration (which is de facto autonomous) forced many of its political rivals to disappear in the north east, and denied access to family members. ^[2]

GENDER Latest update: 18/09/2018

GIRLS AND BOYS

5.3 million children are in need of protection assistance. Children and youth are in danger of forced recruitment (particularly adolescent boys), forced marriage (particularly adolescent girls), and forced labour. At least 910 children were killed and 360 children injured due to the conflict in 2017. Detention and maiming of children was widely reported, with at least 78 children detained in 2017. ^[2] Child labour was reported in 82% of communities assessed in 2017, child recruitment in 47%, and early marriage of girls as young as 10, in 57% of communities. Adolescent boys are more likely to be killed, injured, detained, and forcibly recruited. ^[2] Research suggests an increase in 2018 of the recruitment of children (both boys and girls) from IDP camps in territory controlled by YPG. ^[2]

Children are exposed to violence including active hostilities, explosive weapons, torture, abduction, sexual violence, attacks on schools, and domestic violence. This results in psychosocial consequences, including chronic stress. Children are exposed to exploitative employment practices. Multiple and protracted displacement results in lack of civil status, which puts children at a risk of statelessness. ^[2]

Family separations are common and compound vulnerability. Separation from caregivers as a result of their death, divorce, child marriage or recruitment, was reported in 52% of assessed communities in 2017. ^[2]

WOMEN

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to GBV, early marriages, and restrictions of freedom of movement. Lack of livelihoods and increased poverty rates particularly affect women and can lead to harmful coping mechanisms, involving survival sex. Sexual violence and harassment while accessing aid have been reported. [\[2\]](#)

Some armed groups impose obligatory dress codes and restrictions on movement without chaperones, heightening the protection risks for women. Divorced women and widows are exposed to stigmatisation, discrimination, and forced marriages. [\[2\]](#)

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) has been systematically committed by all parties to the conflict. [\[2\]](#)

Sexual violence, domestic violence and other kinds of violence within the family affect women and girls disproportionately. Social stigma and fear of reprisal make it difficult for survivors to report violations and results in underreporting of SGBV incidents. [\[2\]](#) Similarly, SGBV against children is rarely reported to authorities due to fear of stigmatisation. [\[2\]](#)

Conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys is widespread but underreported. Up to 30% of male refugees in neighbouring countries confirmed having experienced sexual harassment or unwanted sexual contact as boys. Displaced boys are reported to suffer sexual violence by older boys and men either from their community or host communities. [\[2\]](#)

LGBTI persons are particularly vulnerable and heavily discriminated against in Syria and hosting countries. [\[2\]](#)

VULNERABLE GROUPS Latest update: 18/09/2018

INTERNALLY DISPLACED POPULATION

Protection concerns are regularly reported from IDP camps in Al-Hasakah, Idleb, Aleppo, and Rural Damascus. IDP sites report serious protection concerns related to risks of gender-based violence, unaccompanied and separated children, and restrictions on movement. [\[2\]](#)

Turkish troops are reported to have fired at displaced population attempting to cross the border. Multiple families are stranded on the Turkish-Syrian border, waiting for the opportunity to cross. They often sleep in the open with harsh weather conditions posing health risks. Harassment and robberies are reportedly regularly committed by Turkish guards. [\[2\]](#)

POST-SURRENDER COMMUNITIES

Residents in post-surrender communities face a range of abusive treatment after pro-government forces reassert control. Humanitarian aid access to many post-surrender communities is restricted, and information flow is challenging. Freedom of speech is limited and civilians face repercussions if they raise or publicise protection issues. [\[2\]](#) In newly retaken governorates of the southwest, such as Dara, journalists and aid workers continue to be detained by SAA forces for their perceived role in helping opposition forces. [\[2\]](#)

MINES AND ERW Latest update: 25/09/2018

8.2 million people across Syria live in areas heavily contaminated with explosive hazards, including mines, explosive remnants of war (ERWs) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The presence of these dangers reduces humanitarian access to key services such as schools, hospitals, markets, agricultural lands, wells, and roads. Populations most affected by mines and ERWs are farmers and herders, children, rubble removers, and displaced population, who are exposed to high danger areas. [\[2\]](#)

The risk posed by explosive hazard contamination across Syria remains significant, and in governorates such as Deir-ez-Zor, it has reduced the ability of civilians to flee areas with hostilities. [\[2\]](#) Explosive contamination is also creating serious protection concerns for returnees to Deir-ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa. [\[2\]](#) Injuries and casualties from explosive hazard contamination continue to be reported. Some 25 incidents have been reported in Dara since 5 August. [\[2\]](#)

HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY, AND CIVIL DOCUMENTATION Latest update: 18/09/2018

Civil Documentation:

Lack of documentation creates difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance, education, healthcare, employment, and dispute resolution; movement restrictions (particularly through checkpoints); housing, land and property issues. Many children born during the conflict could not be registered for birth certificates, creating particular issues when those children need to enrol in school.

Barriers to obtaining new or replacement documentation include unaffordable fees or fees for late renewal, or expensive bribes to receive documentation. When individuals have to cross lines of control to get new documentation issued, people are deterred by fears of forced military conscription, arbitrary arrest and detention at checkpoints.

Confiscation of civil documentation has been reported sporadically across Syria. Most recently a civilian authority (the Syrian Democratic Council) confiscated the civil documentation of IDPs from displacement camps in northeast Syria, in an area recently retaken from IS. Confiscation of documentation is repeatedly reported at checkpoints. In camps in the northeast, documentation has reportedly been stored in a disorganised manner, decreasing the likelihood of documentation being easily found and returned to the rightful owner. ^[2]

Housing, Land and Property (HLP):

A new law passed by the Syrian government in April 2018 has created redevelopment zones where local authorities can seize property unless residents can prove ownership within 30 days of notification, at local offices in Syria. This law creates serious obstacles for IDPs, those missing documentation, and refugees. ^[2]

Property destruction and looting has been widespread. In 2018 HLP issues have been frequently reported in the areas affected by Turkey's Operation Euphrates Shield (parts of northern Idlib and northeastern Aleppo), where armed opposition groups reportedly have occupied, looted or confiscated properties and even detained individuals seeking to reclaim their property from these groups. ^[2]

CHEMICAL ATTACKS Latest update: 18/09/2018

Suspected chemical attacks have been reported regularly since November 2017, with an escalation in 2018. At least nine suspected chemical attacks have been registered in 2018 so far. ^[2] Eastern Ghouta is particularly affected, with at least seven chemical attacks reported since January. Idlib was affected by a suspected chemical attack in February, which resulted in suffocation injuries reported by local responders. ^[2] 34 documented incidents of the use of chemical weapons have been recorded since 2011. ^[2]

Since 2012, the Syrian government has been accused of employing chemical weapons over 200 times. ^[2]