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REGIONAL ANALYSIS SYRIA

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Overview

This second quarterly Regional Analysis of the Syria Conflict (RAS) replaces the [monthly RAS reports](#). The RAS brings together information from all sources in the region to provide a coherent analysis of the overall situation in the region as well as in each of the affected countries. While Part I focuses on the situation within Syria, Part II covers the impact of the crisis on neighbouring countries. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report.

For additional information, comments or questions please email SNAP@ACAPS.org.

Political and conflict developments: As prospects for peace in Syria continued to dim, the June elections sealed President Bashar Al-Assad's leadership for another 7 years. The UN and Arab League's representative for Syria, seasoned negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, resigned at the end of May. His resignation halted mediation attempts between conflicting parties and allowed them to further escalate the conflict in the absence of political negotiations. Attempts to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court also failed in May, with vetoes from China and Russia. The referral would, however, have been unlikely to restrain parties to the conflict. International efforts to increase humanitarian access, in the form of UN Security Council resolution 2139, were initially ignored by parties to the conflict. These efforts now appear to be actively undermined by new GoS regulations stating that aid convoys must be sealed in the presence of Syrian security authorities and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. In addition, a recent proposal to improve cross-border access through the UN Security Council may have the unintended effect of jeopardising existing assistance provided through neighbouring countries.

Truce negotiations continued, in attempts to access besieged areas, but those concluded in the 2nd quarter had a very limited impact on the humanitarian situation. Opposition fighters in Old Homs city were permitted to evacuate in exchange for the release of hostages and temporary aid access to besieged Shi'a villages. This agreement returned all central areas of Homs city to GoS control for the first time in over 2 years, although the Al Wa'er suburb remains under opposition control and under siege, after negotiations collapsed in May. An agreement between the GoS and opposition groups in Yarmouk camp was signed on 21 June, however, at the time of writing, no further aid was being permitted to enter the area. Meanwhile, other besieged areas in Rural Damascus, particularly Eastern and Western Ghouta, witnessed intensified clashes, after GoS and pro-government forces shifted their attention following the capture of the Qalamoun region.

Humanitarian crisis in Syria: As Syria enters peak summer months, and with drought-like conditions in agricultural producing regions, the humanitarian situation is expected to deteriorate, pushing the population into deeper poverty and increasing vulnerability to disease. Agricultural experts forecast that Syria's wheat harvest will yield a maximum of 2 million metric tons (half of the 10 year pre-crisis average). With the collapse of the formal economy, agriculture constitutes an increasing share of the Syrian economy, so livelihoods, access to and availability of food will be negatively impacted. Furthermore, the lack of adequate drinking water supplies and damage to water infrastructure are aggravating the health situation, with increases in the number of suspected measles cases and of acute diarrhoea, particularly in Ar-Raqqa, Deir-ez-Zor, Idleb and Rural Damascus. Opposition groups are increasingly using access to water as a means for negotiation.

Protection concerns remain very high and widespread, with intense clashes and airstrikes continuing, particularly in eastern Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir-ez-Zor and Rural Damascus, where populations have few avenues to escape to safety. In the north, the mass waves of displacement seen in the first quarter appear to have decreased recently, but more than 150,000 people have been left living in a proliferation of overcrowded IDP (Internally Displaced Person) camps, while many others reside with overstretched host families. In the south, 1 IDP camp was attacked, leaving at least 20 people dead and causing about 3,500 residents to flee in search of new shelter. Additionally, reports of chlorine packed barrel bombs being used in rural Hama, along with other alleged chemical attacks, are a major concern, particularly as the international mission to remove Syria's chemical weapon capacity comes to an end.

Regional crisis: In June, the re-named Islamic State (IS) made major gains throughout Iraq, capitalising on the grievances of Iraq's disaffected Sunni population to capture a number of major cities and border crossings with Syria and Jordan. IS's advance caused significant internal displacement, primarily in central Iraq. Most of the international response has been focused on the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) however, which is relatively easy for aid agencies to access. ISIL's offensive threatens to increase sectarianism across the region, particularly in Jordan and Lebanon, to further fracture the Iraqi state and to strengthen the GoS' anti-terrorism narrative. At the end of June, Kurdish regions appeared to be heading towards secession, as Iraqi security forces began a series of counter-offensives to re-take areas, beginning with Tikrit. These developments are likely to exacerbate the humanitarian situation.

Drought-like conditions in neighbouring countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, will further exacerbate tensions between refugees and host communities. The drought-like conditions will negatively impact both the host country's macroeconomic picture and refugees' access to livelihoods, as many Syrian refugees engage in informal agricultural work.

Key developments Q2

Water shortages: Low levels of winter rain have led to drinking water shortages and poor agricultural production across the region. In Syria, water shortages are increasing the population's vulnerability to major outbreaks of disease, including measles and potentially cholera, as well as the further spread of polio. Al-Hasakeh, Ar-Raqqa, Deir-Ez-Zor and Rural Damascus reported high numbers of acute waterborne diseases and their populations appear particularly vulnerable due to high levels of conflict and limited access. Major decreases in agricultural production will limit livelihoods and reduce access to food in many areas. In host countries, drought-like conditions and water shortages will exacerbate tensions between host communities and refugees, impacting livelihood opportunities for refugees.

Displacement: On average, 9,500 Syrians are displaced each day, while border restrictions and access to safe areas within the country continue to be tightened. In the second quarter, at least 438,000 people were newly displaced. The highest reported number of IDPs came from Deir-ez-Zor, which saw 250,000 IDPs flee fighting between ISIL and Jabhat Al-Nusra, and GoS airstrikes.

Protection: With sieges in place and increasing reports of water access being used as a bargaining tool, access to aid and basic services continues to be used as a war tactic in the Syrian conflict. As a result, thousands of people have died due to the lack of basic medical care and medicine, while the country's basic infrastructure lies in ruins. During the second quarter, the increase in the number of children killed was disproportionately high compared to the overall number of civilians killed.

