

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	477
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	ACAPS
Titel:	Regional Analysis Syria – Brief
Udgivet:	4. september 2014
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	19. september 2014

Regional Analysis Syria

BRIEF

6 August – 3 September 2014

This RAS Brief supplements the quarterly RAS reports and seeks to highlight key developments in Syria and the region in the past month. The quarterly RAS provides a more comprehensive, coherent analysis of the overall situation in the region as well as in each of the affected countries. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement these reports. For additional information, comments or questions please email SNAP@ACAPS.org.

For a comprehensive overview of the humanitarian needs and possible developments, please see the latest quarterly RAS (July).

The Islamic State in Iraq and Syria

The Islamic State (IS) has continued to reinforce its position as an international force with territories in Syria's governorates (Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh and Deir-ez-Zor) and in Iraq's Anbar, Salah Al-Din, and, more recently, Ninewa. In Iraq, IS has drawn global attention by continuing its aggressive push for territory along the borders of the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KR-I). In Syria, the group appears to have focused more on consolidating its power, though it continues to press on key areas along the Turkish-Syrian and Iraqi-Syrian borders.

For details on IS advance in Iraq, see ACAPS briefing note: *Humanitarian Implications of Violence in Iraq*, 21 August 2014. Since that report came out, estimates of the number of IDPs have risen sharply, as shown by ongoing data collection by IOM, and by a registration exercise conducted by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). It is estimated that some 620,000 people were displaced by the Sinjar crisis in August, the majority of them residing in Dohuk governorate. In 2014, more than 1.66 million people have been displaced across Iraq; that number is likely to be conservative, and the UN planning figure is 1.8 million displaced. (IOM 2014/08/20, OCHA 2014/08/28, USAID 2014/08/28)

Conflict Developments

In late August, IS took over the Syrian airbase in Tabqa, removing the Syrian Armed Forces' (SAF) last stronghold in Ar-Raqqa governorate. Analysts say this degrades or eliminates SAF's ability to carry out airstrikes on targets in and around Ar-Raqqa city, gives IS essentially complete control of Ar-Raqqa province, and frees up IS fighters for other fronts. (AP 2014/08/25, WorldBulletin 2014/08/26, NYT 2014/08/24, ABC 2014/08/24, Reuters 2014/08/24, Yahoo 2014/08/24)

IS continues to put pressure on Syria's Kurdish and border areas. In the northeast, the "Kurdish capital" of Qamishli is almost entirely cut off by IS forces. (REACH 2014/08/27-3) IS has taken the town of Jazaa, perhaps in an attempt to cut off Kurdish access to the Yaroubiyeh border, although there are reports that the Syrian Kurdish YPG is still contesting the town. (ISW 2014/08/23, ARANews 2014/08/25, Assafir 2014/08/04)

In the northwest, IS continues to besiege the Kobani/Ain-al-Arab border crossing (Amnesty 2014/08/24), and is fighting for control of surrounding areas like Atmeh, Marea and Aazaz, which would enable it to cut supply lines to other Syrian opposition groups. (AFP 2014/08/13, AFP 2014/08/16, Syria Deeply 2014/08/06)

Access Constraints

Humanitarian access is highly limited across IS-held territory. Access to the northeast continues to be especially difficult; in August, a WFP convoy was attacked in Deir-ez-Zor on its way to Ar-Raqqa. (WFP 2014/08/28) The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that IS prohibited the WFP convoy from entering Deir-ez-Zor city, and redirected the aid toward IS-held areas. The convoy was later targeted by a Syrian airstrike. (SOHR 2014/08/08) Despite increases in the amount of food aid delivered across Syria, in July and August WFP reported that no food reached Ar-Raqqa, which had 284,000 targeted recipients, while dispatches for Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh were sufficient for only 20% of those in need. (WFP 2014/08/05)

On the borders of IS-held areas, many locations are besieged or isolated by conflict. Recent rapid assessments highlighted the situation in Deir-ez-Zor, which has been besieged for two months, Qamishli, which is primarily accessible via humanitarian airlift due to IS control of roads in the surrounding Al-Hasakeh governorate, and eastern Al-Hasakeh city, which is isolated by heavy fighting. All 3 cities host large numbers of IDPs, many of which are staying in collective shelters and are highly vulnerable. Lack of food and electricity, deterioration of markets and livelihoods, and severe limitations to health facilities are priority concerns. (REACH 2014/08/27-1, REACH 2014/08/27-2, REACH 2014/08/27-3, WFP 2014/08/05)

Displacement

Though the primary driver of displacement seems to be the ongoing armed conflict in Syria and consequent deterioration of infrastructure, services and livelihoods, significant new displacement due to IS activism and expansion is being recorded. WFP has reported that fierce fighting between IS and the SAF in early August displaced up to 10,000 more people from a town in Al-Hasakeh and the area of the Yaroubieh border crossing (WFP 2014/08/28). Early reports suggest that in late August, more than 60,000 civilians were displaced from the Ghurian district of Al-Hasakeh City due to raids by the SAF hunting IS infiltrators in the divided city. (AFP 2014/09/01)

An estimated 130,000 Iraqis, primarily members of the Yezidi minority, passed through eastern Al-Hasakeh after fleeing IS's August advance in the Iraqi Ninewa province. Most have crossed back into KR-I, but 12,000-15,000 remain as refugees in the Newroz camp near Qamishli, and more are reportedly living in surrounding towns and villages. (Haaretz 2014/08/25, UNICEF 2014/08/28, UNHCR 2014/08/14, DFID 2014/08/14, REACH 2014/08/18)

Humanitarian Needs

Protection: IS's efforts to consolidate power in the territory it holds, typically through violence, are raising protection concerns. A recent report by the UN Human Rights Council noted that public executions, including beheadings and post-mortem crucifixions have been reported in IS-held areas of Syria. Targets include those who have fought against IS and refuse to publicly repent, or who are accused of working with the Syrian authorities or other armed groups. (UN 2014/08/27, NYT 2014/08/28, SOHR 2014/08/20) In Deir-ez-Zor, an advocacy group and other media sources reported that 700 members of the Sheitaat tribe were executed by IS over two weeks, while another 1,800 were kidnapped. IS declared the entire tribe an "apostate sect". (ISW 2014/08/23, NYT 2014/08/22, AFP 2014/08/26, Reuters 2014/08/2014) The killings are believed to be in retaliation for an uprising in the area that temporarily drove IS out of the towns of Kishkiyeh, Abu Hamam and Granij. (SNAP 2014/08/02) IS is also reported to have expelled the entire population of some towns as a punishment, or in order to search and control the area, although this is hard to verify. (Reuters 2014/08/27)

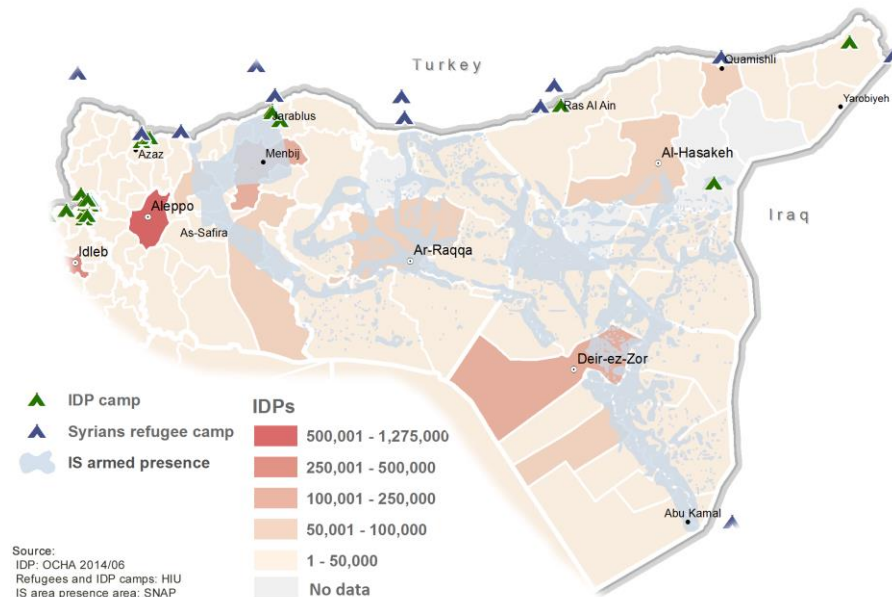
All populations under IS rule are considered at risk of violence. The group dispenses extreme punishments such as amputations, lashings or executions for common crimes, and has been documented engaging in the arbitrary detention and torture of people that the group sees as failing to abide by religious scriptures. (ISW 2014/07, Amnesty 2013/12/19) Activists recently claimed the group holds more than 1,000 prisoners in secret prisons in Ar-Raqqa

alone. (Daily Star 2014/04/28) SOHR also reported that IS has recently started trafficking some 300 women from the Yezidi sect who were kidnapped earlier from Iraq, selling the female abductees for USD 1,000 each. SOHR reportedly documented 27 cases of Yezidi abductees being sold and forcefully married to IS fighters in northern rural Aleppo, rural Ar-Raqqa and rural Al-Hasakeh. (SOHR 2014/08/30)

Interviews by UN human rights monitors in Iraq indicate IS is forcibly recruiting boys aged 15 and above, and may be deliberately positioning them at the front-line in battle situations. There is limited information on this in Syria. However, given the documented recruitment of children by multiple armed groups in Syria, the overall increase in the use of child soldiers in combat and the known indoctrination component of IS's educational strategy, it urgently requires further investigation. Media outlets have quoted UN officials saying that IS runs large camps training boys around the age of 14, but sometimes as young as 10, for combat. (UN HRC 2014/08/14, UNSC 2014/08/21, NYT 2014/08/28, ISW 2014/07)

Also, a human rights organisation recently reported that IS is using cluster munitions that cause indiscriminate damage and endanger civilians in Syria. (HRW 2014/09/01)

Northern Syria: IS Presence and IDPs concentration



Basic services: IS's strategies for consolidating its territory include the provision of humanitarian aid such as food, clothing, fuel, and medical services, and restoration of services including roads, power plants, sewer networks and bakeries. Information is limited, but the provision of these services is likely to be haphazard and not always effective. (REACH 2014/08/26) IS infrastructure projects are also concentrated in core areas like Ar-Raqqa, while the periphery in Deir-ez-Zor and Al-Hasakeh may still be under-serviced. There are unconfirmed suggestions that IS is threatening and forcing Syrian civil servants into labour to rebuild infrastructure. In Ar-Raqqa, IS now runs the major industrial bakeries, and it has been suggested that control over food is another method for coercing the local population. (ISW 2014/07, NYT 2014/07/24)

Aggravating Factors

Previous displacement: The areas that IS controls had already seen major displacement before the armed group took power. UN agencies estimate that some 2.6 million Syrians are displaced within the governorates IS controls, and in Deir-ez-Zor and Aleppo. These IDP numbers are estimated to be equivalent to 35% of the pre-war population. (OCHA dataset 2014/06/18) Much of the pre-crisis population may also have fled to other areas, or outside of Syria: there are 137,000 Syrians from Al-Hasakeh alone now living as refugees in Iraq. Again, most of this displacement occurred before IS consolidated its control of the governorate. (UNHCR 2014/08/15)

Pre-existing vulnerabilities: Much of IS-held areas in the northeast, particularly in Al-Hasakeh, are locations which have long suffered from high poverty rates, and the effects of many years of drought, which decreased the resilience of the local population and accentuated the problems caused by armed conflict and mass displacement. Syria has faced drought conditions since 2006, and in the northeast, the drought in 2007 was considered the worst in 40 years. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent reports that farmers in northeast Syria saw their income drop by 90% from 2007-2009, and many small herders lost more than 80% of their flocks due to a lack of pasture and fodder. These communities have long suffered from lack of assistance by humanitarian agencies or the central government, and their resilience was further compromised by an influx of Iraq refugees over 2003-2010. (WFP 2014/08/28, SARC 2014/08/19)

UN Security Council Resolution 2165

On 21 August, the UN circulated a report on the implementation of the Security Council resolutions 2139 and 2165 related to access across borders and lines, stating that there was an overall improvement of access between 22 July and 18 August. (UN 2014/07/16, UNSC 2014/07/14, UN 2014/08/21)

The report provided relatively detailed information about the implementation of SC resolution 2139 – focused on improving humanitarian access throughout the country: number of areas and people reached, progress compared to the previous reporting period, and main challenges faced by humanitarian partners.

Information related to the implementation of SC resolution 2165 – authorising the UN and its implementing parties to use 4 crossings in Jordan and Turkey without acquiring prior approval from the Government of Syria (GoS), remained however very limited. The report indicates that 5 shipments carried assistance for up to 110,000 people in the northwest (Lattakia, Idleb and Aleppo) and southwest (Dar'a and Rural Damascus) between 22 July and 18 August.

The report only provided information regarding the shipments until they crossed the borders, their content, and planned destination. No information is given on potential constraints faced by the convoys. Additional information on the results of UN agencies' post-distribution monitoring would have helped to further assess the impact of the resolution, although monitoring and evaluation is extremely challenging through all delivery modalities used in Syria.

Protection concerns in Lebanon

With increased worry over the economic, political and security situation, restrictions affecting refugees in Lebanon are expanding, which raises additional protection concerns. Already in June, Lebanese authorities started to enforce new measures to limit the number of Syrians entering the country, and announced a plan to strip refugees of their status if they return to Syria, which in many cases can be necessary to renew important Syrian identity documents or access healthcare. Due to historical migration patterns, regular movements between the two countries are relatively common among Syrian refugees residing in Lebanon. Over the last month, several additional restrictions have emerged impacting refugees already residing in Lebanon. These restrictions relate to access to shelter and livelihoods, and freedom of movement. However, information is scarce and these issues are considered underreported, which does not allow for a proper estimation of the scope of the restrictions and the number of people affected by them.

Restrictions affecting access to shelter

Due to the authorities' no-camp policy, increased pressure on the shelter/rental market, and limited employment opportunities for Syrian refugees, Lebanon has witnessed an increase in the number of informal settlements, which increasingly affect already impoverished municipalities. Recently, letters by the Ministry of Interior have restricted the establishment of such settlements. Circulars issued in May and June 2014 in the Bekaa and North Lebanon state that no new informal settlements are to be set up without the permission of the relevant Governor, and consultation with the provincial Sub-Security Council and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Reports indicate that these circulars have been interpreted differently by local authorities. In some instances, the circulars were reportedly used as the basis for mass evictions, notably in Rahbe, Akkar, during the month of August. (PI 2014/08/25)

Also in Rahbe as of mid-August, the municipality reportedly started requesting Lebanese residents to pay a fine/tax of LBP 1 million (USD 600) if they host Syrians. (PI 2014/08/25)

Other municipalities in the area of Beirut and Mount Lebanon set a number of restrictions in mid-August including the need for Syrian workers to be sponsored by a known employer in order to access shelter, the prohibition for Lebanese residents to host newly displaced, and the obligation for landowners to report displaced Syrians living in their premises or within their

private properties within 3 days after the restriction was announced. (PI 2014/08/25)

In the southern municipality of Jezzine, an announcement made in early August forbid Lebanese citizens to provide shelter for Syrian refugees because of unspecified security and safety concerns, and put restrictions on Syrian refugees already living in the area. This included restricting accommodation to more than one refugee family composed of 5 members in any one housing unit. (PI 2014/08/25)

Restrictions affecting employment and livelihood opportunities

The continuous arrival of refugees has increased the number of low-paid workers, pushing down wages and causing a sharp increase in the unemployment rate of Lebanese nationals. This has led to several municipalities across the country imposing restrictions on livelihood opportunities for refugees in Lebanon. In July in the Bekaa valley, the authorities reportedly shut down hundreds of stores owned by Syrian refugees on the grounds that they lacked the necessary permits and were therefore illegal. Some commercial lawyers however indicated that these permits can be very difficult to secure for Syrian nationals. (Voice of America, 2014/07/30)

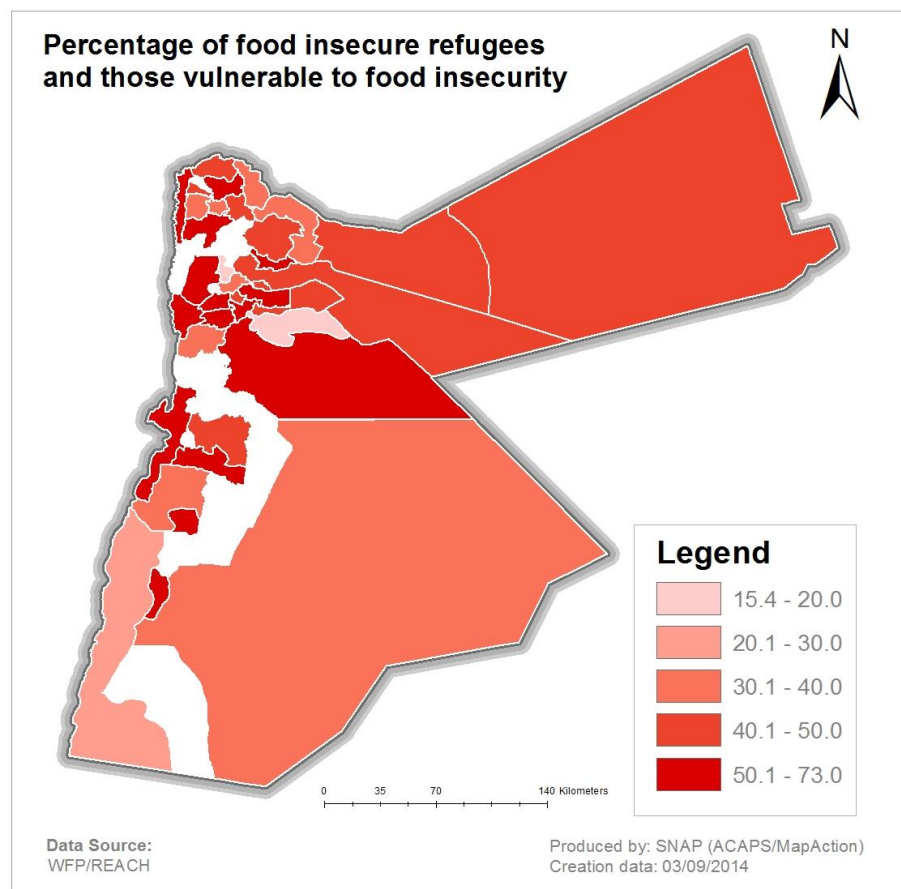
The southern municipalities of Bintjbeil and Tibnine have allegedly restricted access to the souks for Syrian men, and prohibited them from establishing small shops without asking for official permission. In Shouwaifet, Mount Lebanon, the municipality has announced that Syrian workers cannot have access to shelter unless a known employer identifies them and takes responsibility for their presence. (PI 2014/08/25)

Restrictions impacting freedom of movement

In areas recording a high concentration of refugees, an increasing number of municipalities have been addressing security concerns by imposing restrictions on movements in the form of curfews which can apply to motorcycles and/or foreigners. In Akkar, a recent assessment indicated that 15% of assessed villages reported such restrictions. (REACH 2014/07/31)

In Bsharri, Mount Lebanon, authorities implemented a curfew on the movement of refugees on motorcycles after 7pm. In Shouwaifet, a similar measure applying to motorcycles and non-Lebanese nationals between 7pm and 6am was announced in mid-August, with sanctions including confiscation and detention. (DailyStar 2014/08/18, PI 2014/08/25)

Targeting of food assistance in Jordan



In July, WFP and REACH finalised a national food security assessment of 8,000 registered Syrian refugee households located in urban areas and Za'atari camp. The assessment was undertaken to inform WFP Jordan's efforts to target food assistance to the most vulnerable refugees, particularly in light of expected budget cuts. WFP has been providing blanket food assistance to all registered Syrian refugees and as a result, there is a relatively low prevalence of food insecurity. Of those assessed, 6% were rated as food insecure, 42% as vulnerable to food insecurity and 52% as food secure. 74% of Syrian refugee households cited WFP vouchers as their main source of income. (WFP/REACH 2014/07)

As an initial step in the targeting of food assistance, WFP launched a mass communication campaign requesting registered Syrian refugees to voluntarily remove themselves from the WFP beneficiary lists in August. In September, WFP will then remove about 10% of registered refugees who are categorised as not being vulnerable from its beneficiary lists. Groups excluded from food assistance will include the following:

- Households where the head of household has attained a post-secondary education level (excluding cases where the head of household is a widow);
- Households where the head of household has attained at least a secondary education and has a low dependency ratio (proportion of dependents compared to potentially economically productive household members). (WFP 2014/08)

In August, WFP began a communication campaign on the planned exclusion of the above groups from food assistance programmes. While the targeting of assistance is not as drastic as those carried out in Lebanon last year and the criteria for exclusion in Jordan is relatively transparent, there is concern that there will be a negative reaction from refugees.

Social Tensions in Turkey

As of 25 August, UNHCR reported that Turkey hosts more than 832,000 registered Syrian refugees, 73% of whom live outside the refugee camps. (UNHCR 2014/07/31) According to local Turkish sources, the total number of Syrians in Turkey is estimated at about 1.2 million with some 900,000 refugees living outside of camps. Although most of them are living in host communities or have rented apartments, many are exhausting their resources while struggling to make ends meet. (UNHCR 2014/07) Social tensions between refugees and the host community have been more frequently reported over the past months, especially in cities hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees such as Gaziantep, where about 200,000-300,000 refugees are residing.

Social tensions have also been reported in large urban centres such as Istanbul, Izmir, Kahraman Mara'ash, Iskenderun and Hatay. Individual incidents occasionally trigger aggressive reactions against refugees, including attacks on Syrian shops and cars, popular protests and violent attacks against Syrians.

After the violence, particularly in Gaziantep, the authorities have begun to move refugees out of the city and into tent cities in an attempt to diffuse tensions. In mid-August, it was reported that some 7,800 Syrians will be moved to camps near the city, or to other camps in the neighbouring regions of Mardin and Sanliurfa. (BBC 2014/08/25, AFP 2014/08/25) Local media reported that some Syrians had already begun to move to other cities across Turkey including Konya, Kayseri, Izmir and Istanbul. (AFP 2014/08/15)

Refugee policy was a topic for debate in the presidential elections during the month of August. Pressure on the house rental markets and on the labour market has put a strain on the host community in Turkey and has resulted in tensions between Syrians and Turks. As the number of Syrian refugees residing in Turkey is expected to increase due to the instability of the security conditions in the northern areas of Syria bordering Turkey, social tensions are expected to continue if no sustainable solutions are established to support both refugees and the host community.