

REGIONAL ANALYSIS SYRIA

28 January 2013

Overview

The Regional Analysis of the Syria Conflict (RAS) seeks to bring together information from all sources in the region and 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 the 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

Since the uprising against the Assad regime began in March 2011, the estimated conflict-related death toll has surpassed 60,000 people. Over 4 million people are estimated to be affected by the crisis. The humanitarian situation varies significantly across the country, with a range of factors influencing the daily life of the population including the varying intensity and uncertainty of the conflict, the divergence between the situation in Government and opposition controlled areas, available supply routes and the coping mechanisms of the civil society.

Conflict: Driven from large areas in the north and east of Syria, the Assad regime is focused on maintaining a grip on the key axis from Damascus to Homs, and on the coastal Alawite governorates. High intensity conflict involving the Syrian Army and a multitude of anti-Government groups continues in strategic places: Aleppo, Ar-Raqqa, Dar'a, Rural Damascus, Homs, Idlib and on the outskirts of Damascus city. Other areas held by anti-Government forces witness frequent air strikes, reportedly targeting medical facilities and bakeries.

Meanwhile, a separate dynamic is seen in the Al-Hasakeh governorate, where the Kurdish Popular Protection Units – who have agreed a truce with the Free Syrian Army – clash with the, mostly foreign-recruited militia of the Al-Nusra Front, highlighting the evolving complexities of the conflict.

A large proportion of the country's infrastructure, such as water facilities, hospitals, schools and houses have been severely damaged or destroyed. The ability of the population to escape violence is restricted by heavy fighting and checkpoints.

Displacement: The fighting, general insecurity and the lack of access to food and livelihoods have led to large-scale displacement. While an estimated 2 million people are displaced within Syria, more than 550,000 people have registered as refugees in neighbouring countries.

Four main types of movement are occurring: movement away from high intensity conflict areas to safer areas either within the same or a neighbouring governorate; movement to a safer location some distance away (such as to low intensity conflict areas such as Quneitra, Lattakia and Tartous); movement out of Syria; and a return to places of origin as they become (relatively) safer.

The fierce battle to control Dar'a governorate, especially the border crossings into Jordan, during January 2013 has precipitated a rapid escalation in the number of refugees into Jordan: average of 3,000 a day from 22-25 January representing a six-fold increase on the average for the previous six months.

Humanitarian concerns: Aside from the direct threat to life from the conflict, the priority needs of the population remaining **within Syria** vary geographically although, throughout the country, food, adequate housing and non-food items to protect people from the harsh winter have been reported as urgent needs. Fuel, for heating and cooking is also a common need as electricity is intermittent at best for much of the country. However, while winterisation items and heating fuel are an urgent need at present they will become less so as winter progresses into spring in March. Hygiene items, blankets and warm clothing, especially for children, are also priority needs in the lower conflict intensity areas. In some areas, such as Aleppo, anti-Government forces have allegedly looted flour warehouses, resulting in a severe lack of the staple food bread and extremely high prices pressurising the resources of the affected population. In addition, protection concerns are high, with reports of widespread violence against women and children.

In many places services such as garbage collection, law and order and health services have completely broken down, although in some anti-Government controlled areas, civil society has been able to substitute Government activities. In Government controlled areas, most services are still functioning, although hampered by the lack of fuel and limited supply routes.

The situation for **refugees in neighbouring countries** also varies widely: 30,000 refugees have arrived in Jordan's overcrowded refugee camp, Za'atari, where aid agencies and the Government were already struggling to meet the basic needs of those residing in the camp. Unregistered refugees in Jordan have great difficulties in accessing services and healthcare has been reported as a major concern. In Lebanon, where no camps have been established, the refugees are staying with host communities or in rented apartments. While the resources of both refugees and host families are being depleted, the situation is of increasing concern. Both Turkey and Iraq appear to have the capacity to cope with the influx, although those individuals that have not registered with UNHCR or the Government face difficulties in obtaining access to healthcare, employment and adequate housing.

Information gaps: Even after over 22 months of conflict, there is only limited information available on the situation of the population with Syria. This is due to Government restrictions, widespread insecurity and the political sensitivities related to working within Syria. Outside of Syria, there is very little information made publicly available on the situation of those refugees not residing in camps.

Government and Anti-government Held Areas as at January 14th 2013

