

Siege Watch

Third Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas
in Syria May - July 2016



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Photo cover: A UN aid convoy reaches Kafr Batna on 20 July

About PAX

PAX works with committed citizens and partners to protect civilians against acts of war, to end armed violence, and to build just peace. PAX operates independently of political interests.

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About TSI

The Syria Institute (TSI) is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan think tank based in Washington, DC. TSI was founded in 2015 in response to a recognition that today, almost six years into the Syrian conflict, information and understanding gaps continue to hinder effective policymaking and drive public reaction to the unfolding crisis. Our aim is to address these gaps by empowering decision-makers and advancing the public's understanding of the situation in Syria by producing timely, high quality, accessible, data-driven research, analysis, and policy options. To learn more visit www.syriainstitute.org or contact TSI at info@syriainstitute.org.

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Third Quarterly Report on Besieged Areas in Syria May - July 2016

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Acronyms

AOG	Armed opposition group
CoH	Cessation of Hostilities
HTF	Humanitarian Task Force
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (aka Daesh, ISIL, IS)
ISSG	International Syria Support Group
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SAMS	Syrian American Medical Society
SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
SYP	Syrian Pound
UN	United Nations
UN OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSG	UN Secretary-General
WFP	World Food Program

Executive Summary

This report is the third in a series of quarterly reports by Siege Watch – a joint initiative of PAX and The Syria Institute that aims to provide the international community with timely and accurate information on conditions in Syria’s besieged communities. This report focuses on developments from May to July 2016.

Key Findings

Data collected during the past quarter from an extensive network of contacts on the ground shows that:

- ◆ An estimated 1,005,275 people remain trapped in at least 40 besieged communities across the country.
- ◆ The Syrian government and its allies remain responsible for the majority of existing sieges, as well as all “Watchlist” areas, **where more than 1.4 million** additional people face the threat of complete siege.
- ◆ In contrast to the previous reporting period, the May-July period was characterized by **high levels of violence and reduced humanitarian access**, after the Geneva negotiation process and “Cessation of Hostilities” both collapsed.
- ◆ Six besieged communities were captured in military offensives, and their populations were displaced into other besieged communities. So, **while the**

number of besieged areas in the current report has fallen from the previous quarter, it has not led to a corresponding decrease in the besieged population.

- ◆ Conditions in many besieged deteriorated, and civilians will face greater food insecurity moving forward as a result of the **intentional destruction of agricultural land**.
- ◆ The medical situation in besieged areas is alarming, as life-saving medical supplies continue to be excluded from most aid convoys and hospitals continue to be targeted.
- ◆ **Only a handful of communities** – namely Deir Ezzor, Moadamiya, and part of the southern suburbs of Damascus – **saw static conditions or even slight improvements** over the quarter.
- ◆ Two communities – Darayya in Rural Damascus and al-Waer in Homs – require immediate and unfettered international assistance to prevent looming humanitarian catastrophes. *[Note: Since the end of July the critically-besieged community of Darayya surrendered to Syrian government forces in the face of complete collapse. All remaining citizens were evacuated in late August, and Darayya is now empty. Al-Waer requires immediate assistance to avoid a similar fate.]*

At the beginning of the Siege Watch May-July reporting period, UN OCHA recognized 517,700 Syrians living under siege. This total rose to 590,200 with the addition of al-Waer in late May. The official UN figures for besieged areas have nearly doubled since Siege Watch began monitoring and reporting began in late 2015, but are still far short of the more than 1,000,000 people trapped in besieged areas documented in this project.

There were at least 22 besieged communities in Homs, Damascus, and Rural Damascus governorates that were not recognized in official UN reporting by the end of the third Siege Watch reporting period despite meeting UN OCHA's criteria for the besieged designation. All of the unacknowledged besieged communities are located in Homs and Rural Damascus governorates and all are besieged by the Syrian military and its allies.

Several "Watchlist" communities including Eastern Aleppo and Khan al-Sheih are at high risk of becoming completely besieged as violence levels increase. The Wadi Barada area of Rural Damascus was added to the "Watchlist" in July following an access cut by Hezbollah forces.

The steady pace of WFP airdrops to Deir Ezzor has continued to provide stability and food security for besieged civilians, although the siege remains in place. Moadamiya and several communities to the south of Damascus saw minor but incremental improvements resulting from partial implementation of local ceasefire agreements with the Syrian government. It is unclear whether these conditions can be replicated in other besieged areas: the UN has not moved forward with humanitarian air airdrops to other besieged communities despite a self-imposed 1 June deadline, and local ceasefire negotiations in other areas like al-Waer have fallen apart.

In addition to violating UNSC Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2254 (2015), and 2258 (2015), the deliberate starvation of civilians is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and therefore a war crime. The sieges of civilians in Syria inflame sectarian tensions, destroy communities, and undermine UN-led negotiation efforts.

In his June report to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the following:

“While I welcome the recent progress in reaching some besieged locations, I wish to make clear that a complete lifting of all sieges is required. That dozens of barrel bombs were reportedly dropped in Darayya on 10 June, the day after the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered the first food aid to the town since November 2012, shows that the situation for people in besieged areas will not be resolved by delivering humanitarian aid... Besiegement is not a natural or necessary consequence of conflict; it is a deliberate policy of parties, and one that can be undone if the political will to do so can be mustered.”¹

Despite this knowledge, the scourge of besieging civilians as a tactic of war continues to spread in Syria, and few changes have been made in the UN approach.

Recommendations

A successful approach to addressing the besieged area crisis must be based in an accurate understanding of the situation on the ground. Accordingly:

- ◆ The international community, particularly the ISSG and the United Nations Security Council, must act now to prevent the critically besieged community of Al-Waer from becoming the next Darayya, as it is on the brink of complete collapse with nearly 100,000 people at risk.
- ◆ UN agencies and their donors should undertake a review of current reporting efforts and apply an independent and transparent designation process to ensure that data is not politicized.
- ◆ Strong, principled, and consistent UN leadership is required to guide local ceasefire negotiations and ensure that they are implemented and in compliance with international humanitarian law.
- ◆ Parties who continue to violate UN Security Council Resolutions and hinder access should be named and held accountable for their actions.
- ◆ Ultimately, it is clear that humanitarian aid shipments will not solve this problem. The UN and ISSG must shift focus away from convoy counting and invest more time, energy, and political will into lifting the sieges, and ending this

¹ UN Security Council S/2016/546, “Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015),” 17 June 2016, <http://undocs.org/S/2016/546>.

festering scourge on humanity.

NOTE

Data collection efforts for this Siege Watch reporting period were from May-July 2016. There have been developments impacting many of the besieged areas in the intervening period. Please check www.siegewatch.org for the most recent available updates.

1. Introduction

This report is the third in a series of quarterly reports by Siege Watch – a joint initiative of PAX and The Syria Institute that aims to provide the international community with timely and accurate information on conditions in Syria’s besieged communities. It covers the May-July 2016 time period. Data collected during the past quarter indicates that there are approximately 1,005,275 Syrians suffering under siege in locations in Damascus, Rural Damascus, Homs, Deir Ezzor, and Idlib governorates. More than 1,400,000 additional people live in areas on the Siege Watch “Watchlist,” which face siege-like conditions and are at risk of becoming completely besieged. Conditions in many besieged and “Watchlist” areas deteriorated over the reporting period as a result of increasing violence and decreased access. Two communities – Darayya in Rural Damascus and al-Waer in Homs – require immediate and unfettered international assistance to prevent looming humanitarian catastrophes. *[Note: Since the end of the reporting period the critically-besieged community of Darayya surrendered to Syrian government forces in the face of complete collapse. All remaining citizens were evacuated in late August, and Darayya is now empty.]*

Despite numerous United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions calling for unobstructed humanitarian access,² and the creation of the International Syria Support Group’s (ISSG) Humanitarian Task Force (HTF) in February 2016,³ the Syrian government – and in a few cases Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) and armed opposition groups (AOGs) – continue to besiege communities across Syria. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

2 UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2254 (2015), and 2258 (2015).

3 UN, “Note to Correspondents: Statement of the International Syria Support Group,” 11 February 2016, <http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=4369>.

(UN OCHA), and by extension the UNSG and UNSC, still has not recognized a significant percentage of the besieged population. This failure to acknowledge the reality on the ground is problematic, because their reporting plays an important role in framing the international community's understanding of the situation, which shapes the urgency and nature of its response. Without international action to break, de-escalate, or seek criminal accountability for the sieges being waged against civilians in Syria, these numbers will continue to grow.

Siege Watch monitors Syria's besieged areas using data collected on an ongoing basis from an extensive network of reporting contacts on the ground. Information on besieged communities is published in the interactive map on the Siege Watch website (www.siegewatch.org), on the Twitter feed (@siegewatch), and through in-depth quarterly reports.⁴

This report focuses on developments from May to July 2016. Additional updates since then will be included when available. For a more detailed background of the project and additional background information on the specific besieged areas, refer to the first Siege Watch report published in February 2016.

Project Outline

UN OCHA defines a besieged area as follows: "For the purposes of the Syrian conflict, a 'besieged area' is an area surrounded by armed actors with the sustained effect that humanitarian assistance cannot regularly enter, and civilians, the sick and wounded cannot regularly exit the area."⁵ This same definition is used by the Siege Watch project and all of the communities described in this report meet or exceed this standard.

The Siege Watch project designates three tiers of siege intensity, using a classification scheme proposed by SAMS in its March 2015 'Slow Death' report.⁶ While all three tiers meet the UN OCHA criteria for besieged, and the tiers help further describe the variations in conditions in different area, drawing attention to the besieged communities where civilians are in the most immediate need. The designations range from Tier 1 (highest intensity) to Tier 3 (lowest intensity):

- ◆ Tier 1 – This is the highest level of siege, where very little is able to enter through smuggling or bribery, the UN can negotiate few if any aid deliveries, and supplies that do enter are insufficient for the population. Residents are at high risk of malnutrition/dehydration and denial of medical care. The area is frequently attacked by besieging forces.
- ◆ Tier 2 – This is the moderate level of siege, where small amounts of supplies can usually be smuggled in through bribery and purchased on the black market for inflated prices. Vehicle deliveries cannot enter but residents may have access to alternative food sources such as local agriculture. The UN is able

4 Note: the situation in several of the besieged areas of Syria was changing quickly as of time of writing. Visit www.siegewatch.org for the most up-to-date data on specific communities.

5 UN OCHA, "2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic," November 2014.

6 Syrian American Medical Society, "Slow Death: Life and Death in Syrian Communities Under Siege," March 2015, <https://www.sams-usa.net/>.

to negotiate few if any aid deliveries and assistance that does enter is insufficient for the population. Residents in these areas are at some risk of malnutrition/dehydration and at high risk of denial of medical care. The areas are regularly attacked by besieging forces.

- ◆ Tier 3 – This is the lowest level of siege, where supplies still must be smuggled in but are done so with regularity and the population has consistent access to alternative food sources such as local agriculture. The UN is able to negotiate some aid deliveries, but assistance that does enter is insufficient for the population. Residents in these areas are at low risk of malnutrition/dehydration and at moderate risk of denial of medical care. The areas are occasionally attacked by besieging forces.

The primary condition that demonstrates that an area is besieged is when it is surrounded by armed actors who restrict the movement of goods and people into and out of the area. A siege is an intentional tactic meant to deprive a populated area of the essentials needed for life. Other factors such as the level of violence, the delivery of aid convoys, and the availability of smuggling routes can change the intensity of the siege (the Tier level) but do not impact whether an area is designated besieged under the Siege Watch system. For example, in Deir Ezzor, aid delivery has become frequent and regular as a result of the WFP airdrops, but the neighborhoods are still surrounded by ISIS forces that prevent the delivery of supplies by ground routes, and civilian movement is still restricted by both ISIS and the Syrian military. Accordingly Deir Ezzor is still considered besieged, but has been classified as Tier 3 to reflect the improved humanitarian conditions.

Siege Watch identifies an additional category of “Watchlist” locations that are at high risk of becoming under long-term siege. This category includes: communities that are under partial siege, where many of the conditions of a siege are met but a limited number of access points may be usable at least part of the time; newly besieged communities that have been blockaded for three months or less; and communities where a siege has recently ended. Communities newly under siege are first added to the Siege Watch “Watchlist,” and in most cases will be considered for inclusion on the besieged list after they have been blockaded for a period of three months. Similarly, communities where a truce has brought an end to the siege will remain on the “Watchlist” for a probationary period of three months to ensure that the situation does not regress back to complete siege.

For the current period and moving forward, the Siege Watch project shortened the length of this probationary period from six months to three months. A determination was made that this shorter three-month time period more accurately reflects the amount of time a community can resist an intensive siege before the lack of supplies may lead to a humanitarian emergency. Still, each siege situation is unique, and discretion may be used in waiving this three-month requirement should developments on the ground require it. For more details on the data collection process, please see the first quarterly Siege Watch report from February 2016.

Challenges

The difficult, dangerous, and fluid circumstances on the ground in the besieged areas of Syria continued to present challenges for the Siege Watch project during the reporting period. Poor internet access, lack of electricity, bombings and other safety-related issues, and shifting priorities among reporting contacts all impacted the type and amount of information gathered. Large population displacements between besieged populations in Eastern Ghouta during the reporting period hampered efforts to make accurate estimates. Rapid developments in some areas often outpaced data collection efforts. Where updated information was unavailable, it is noted in the report.

While the Siege Watch tier system can be a useful tool to help stakeholders better understand the conditions in besieged communities and the variations between them, the circumstances in each area are unique, and do not always fit neatly into a classification. A number of areas currently on the Siege Watch “Watchlist” face siege-like conditions, and the decision to leave them on the “Watchlist” is not clear-cut. For example, in Khan al-Sheih, which is surrounded by pro-government forces and has had only one passable access road for years, humanitarian aid cannot be delivered directly to the community. Instead residents must make a dangerous trip to a nearby town to collect UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) assistance. Men between the ages of 16 and 45 generally do not attempt this journey for fear of being arrested by Syrian government forces, and the women, children, and elderly civilians who travel on the road are sometimes killed by snipers. Facing some movement restrictions and some supply restrictions, the situation in Khan al-Sheih and several other “Watchlist” areas often blur the distinction between besieged and not besieged. In these cases of uncertainty, the Siege Watch project has opted to take a conservative approach and keep areas on the “Watchlist,” if any doubts exist. All such cases are frequently monitored and reevaluated on an ongoing basis.

General Developments

Conditions in many besieged areas deteriorated significantly during the May-July reporting period. In contrast to the previous reporting period, the current period was characterized by high levels of violence and reduced humanitarian access, after the Geneva negotiation process and CoH both collapsed. Violent attacks against many besieged communities returned to or even exceeded pre-CoH levels. Several besieged communities have been pushed to the brink of complete collapse as advancing government forces and pro-government militias displace villages and capture agricultural land. Although the number of communities on the besieged list has decreased, not a single siege was lifted during the reporting period. Every reclassified community was removed from the Siege Watch besieged list as a result of military capture by pro-government forces and displacement of the population. Wadi Barada in rural Damascus was added to the Siege Watch “Watchlist,” after Hezbollah forces cut access to the area in July. Deteriorating conditions in several locations already on the “Watchlist” including Eastern Aleppo and Khan al-Sheih may lead to an upgrade of status in the coming quarter.

Only a handful of communities – namely Deir Ezzor, Moadamiya, and part of the southern suburbs of Damascus – saw static conditions or even slight improvements over the quarter.

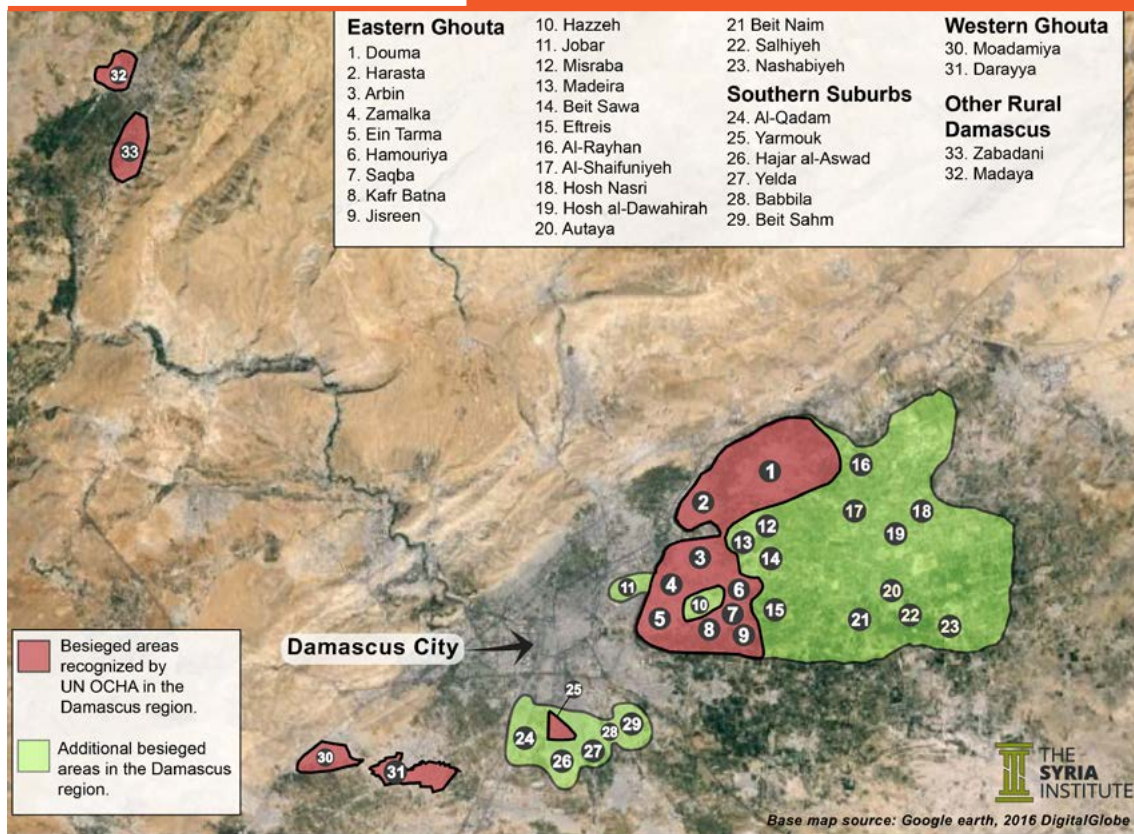
At the beginning of the Siege Watch reporting period, UN OCHA recognized 517,700 Syrians living under siege. This total rose to 590,200 with the addition of al-Waer in late May, but is still far short of the more than 1,000,000 actually living in besieged areas. According to Siege Watch data, there are approximately 22 besieged communities in Homs, Damascus, and Rural Damascus governorates that are still not recognized by UN OCHA.

2. Besieged Community Overview

Damascus

Map 1:

Besieged areas in Damascus and Rural Damascus, 31 July 2016



EASTERN GHOUTA

Table 1:

Eastern Ghouta Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Eastern Ghouta (23 communities)	Mainly 2	Syrian Govt.	Over 435,975

Snapshot:

Six besieged communities in Eastern Ghouta were captured by pro-government forces during the reporting period, and their entire populations were displaced. Accordingly, they were reclassified from besieged to “Watchlist”.

There were no changes in tier level or classification for the remaining communities. The total population of Eastern Ghouta remained relatively stable, but there was significant movement

between communities as a result of large-scale displacements due to the fighting.

Details:

The Eastern Ghouta area of Rural Damascus governorate remained besieged by government forces and pro-government militias during the reporting period, along with the adjacent neighborhood of Jobar, which is part of Damascus proper. There are at least 23 communities within this besieged area.⁷ Despite the fact that all of these communities are encircled within one large military cordon, only nine of these communities are designated as besieged by UN OCHA.

Conditions declined in all areas of Eastern Ghouta during the May-July reporting period without exception, although some communities such as Douma and the Al Marj area fared worse than others. Military offensive by government forces and affiliated pro-government militias made major advances into Eastern Ghouta from the south and west. Tens of thousands of people were displaced as a result of this fighting, fleeing into more central communities in Eastern Ghouta, away from the front lines. This internal displacement between the besieged communities demonstrates that the entire opposition-controlled area of Eastern Ghouta is under a single large siege cordon, calling into question the UN OCHA decision to classify just nine of these towns as besieged. Six communities formerly classified as besieged by Siege Watch were removed from the list during the reporting period after they were captured and their entire populations were displaced: Nouleh, Bzeina, Deir Assafir, Harasta al-Qantara, Zebdine, and Hosh al-Fara.

The overall population of Eastern Ghouta remained relatively stable during the reporting period. Due to the displacement, populations of many communities within Eastern Ghouta changed considerably during the same time period. The ongoing population shifts made it difficult to determine revised population figures with high confidence, and stakeholders should use caution if attempting to use these current estimates for operational purposes. In Ein Tarma, Saqba, and Beit Sawa, three of the communities known to receive significant numbers of these newly displaced IDPs, revised population figures could not be determined. Instead, a conservatively low estimate was made for the increased populations in each area: +2,000 people for Beit Sawa, +3,000 people for Ein Tarma, and +4,000 people for Saqba. In other locations, such as Kafr Batna, high confidence revised population estimates were obtained from Local Councils during the reporting period, but due to continued population movement beyond the end of the reporting period, actual populations may have changed.

Military Developments:

Violence increased across Eastern Ghouta and intensified throughout the reporting period, largely as a result of the pro-government offensives and accompanying aerial campaign. Airstrikes hit a number of civilian targets including residential housing, markets, medical centers, and food warehouses, causing a significant number of civilian casualties. By mid to late July, contacts reported as many as 30 airstrikes a day targeting central communities in Eastern Ghouta, away from active frontlines. This is a marked change from the February-April reporting period, when these same communities reported only light and infrequent attacks. During the July escalation a medical center in Hamouriya was targeted twice by airstrikes and damaged,

⁷ See Annex I for a full list of besieged communities. Communities included are based on the administrative areas listed in UN OCHA's 2013 "Syria P-code and Place Name Gazetteer," which can be found at: <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/syrian-arab-republic-administrative-boundaries>. There are a number of small rural villages not captured in this schema, so the actual number of populated areas in besieged Eastern Ghouta is likely higher than recorded.



A child injured by government shelling on Douma in June

along with several ambulances. Another airstrike on a residential area of Arbin killed six civilians and injured at least 45. Among the dead were a mother and her three children. Sources reported that airstrikes were conducted by both Syrian and Russian jets. While Siege Watch cannot independently confirm the Russian participation in these airstrikes, the fact that airstrikes were conducted at night does suggest that more advanced Russian aircraft were used.

The neighborhood of Douma was subjected to extremely high levels of attack from government forces during the reporting period, leading to a deterioration of the already dire humanitarian situation. The communities of Jobar, Zamalka, and Jisreen experienced clashes between local opposition groups and pro-government forces. Fields bordering Jisreen to the south were reportedly set on fire as a result of shelling by government forces.

As many as half of the residents of the embattled southern sector of Eastern Ghouta had already fled to other besieged towns before the start of the current reporting period. By the end of May, pro-government forces had succeeded in capturing the entire southern sector of Eastern Ghouta, displacing the 12,000 remaining residents from the towns of Deir Assafir, Zebdine, Bzeina, Nouleh, and Harasta al-Qantara. These communities were subsequently moved from the Siege Watch besieged list to the "Watchlist," as fighting continues between pro-government and rebel forces.

During this southern offensive, airstrikes targeted Al Marj hospital on several occasions, repeatedly taking it out of service. This hospital serves most of the rural areas of Eastern Ghouta and the repeated targeting has had a negative impact on the remaining families in the region, who generally lack the resources to flee. The local Civil Defense center was also taken out of service by several airstrikes in July, and a number of the remaining ambulances were damaged or destroyed.⁸

⁸ Abd al-Rahim al-Hourani, "Airstrike Knocks Civil Defence Station Out Of Commission In East Ghouta," *Syrian Voice*, 21 July 2016, <http://syrianvoice.org/>.



Displaced families live in abandoned vehicles in the Hosh area of Eastern Ghouta.

Pro-government ground forces launched a second major offensive during the reporting period, this one attacking Eastern Ghouta from the eastern side and capturing the town of Maydaa. As Maydaa was already a heavily militarized town hosting rebel fighters there was no civilian population displacement reported, but its capture made nearby villages in the rural countryside much more vulnerable to attack. Following the fall of Maydaa, pro-government forces captured Hosh al-Farah in late July. Hosh al-Farah's population was displaced to other besieged communities in Eastern Ghouta and it was subsequently removed from the besieged list. Neighboring communities have been targeted with airstrikes in shelling, presumably in preparation for further pro-government advances. As a result, the town of Hosh al-Dawahirah was reportedly entirely abandoned by civilians during the reporting period, and the population of al-Shaifuniyeh declined significantly. Fighting for control of the town of Hosh Nasri was underway at the end of the reporting period.

Tensions between armed opposition groups boiled over into violence in central communities of Eastern Ghouta including Madeira, Misraba, and Hazzeh during the reporting period. This infighting between Jaysh al-Islam and an alliance of the groups Faylaq al Rahman and al Fustat Army, peaked in late May, when a reconciliation agreement was reached. Despite this agreement tensions continued to flare up sporadically throughout the quarter. The rebel infighting exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the besieged communities by causing additional civilian displacement and hindering mobility for civilians between neighboring besieged communities. Movement for people from Douma and Harasta into other parts of Eastern Ghouta was especially difficult. Citizens of Eastern Ghouta held protests to condemn the infighting and to call on the armed groups to turn their attention back towards fighting

government forces.⁹ A number of civilians were killed and injured during this fighting, including Dr. Nabil Daas, the last gynecologist in all of Eastern Ghouta. Dr. Daas was reportedly struck by a stray bullet in the Douma area in early May and later died in the hospital.

Population Displacement:

The capture of besieged towns on the south and eastern sides of Eastern Ghouta had a negative impact on conditions throughout the entire besieged region. IDPs from the frontline areas fled into host communities that have also been subjected to the same long-term siege and lack the infrastructure and resources to support the newly displaced families. There is now a higher concentration of people living in temporary shelters or sleeping on the streets. Additionally, the southern sector towns that were captured by pro-government forces were the most fertile agricultural areas in Eastern Ghouta. Sometimes referred to as the “breadbasket of Ghouta,” produce from this region had been a key component of Eastern Ghouta’s survival strategy, helping support approximately 400,000 people over the three years of siege by government forces. The loss of this area, particularly near the start of the harvest season, threatens the food security of the region moving forward.

The population of Douma also fell as the intensity of attacks by pro-government forces drove civilians to flee into other besieged communities. The towns of Kafr Batna, Hamouriya, Hazzeh, Misraba, Arbin, Saqba, Beit Sawa and Madeira appear to be the primary host communities for the large numbers of people uprooted between May-June.

Other Humanitarian Developments:

Smuggling, bribery, and local production remain the primary methods used by besieged civilians to attain the basics needed to survive, and all three methods are vulnerable to shifting circumstances. A single merchant named Al-Manfoush appears to monopolize the government-approved trade at Al-Wafideen checkpoint. Smuggling is largely dependent on tunnels into Barzeh and Qaboun neighborhoods, which maintain tenuous ceasefires with the government. And agricultural production in the region has been significantly undermined, as described in the previous section.

Prices in Eastern Ghouta continue to fluctuate and are still significantly higher than prices in government-controlled parts of Damascus. Factors such as the volatile value of the Syrian pound, attacks that hinder movement between towns, and the capture of agricultural land in the southern part of Eastern Ghouta all impacted the cost of goods during the reporting period. Fuel prices reportedly rose significantly due to shortages.

The lack of electricity has made food storage difficult during the summer months. During Ramadan there was a wave of poisonings in the rural countryside, traced to the distribution of spoiled food by local aid groups. More than 700 people were reportedly treated at two medical centers.¹⁰ The medical sector in Eastern Ghouta as a whole is still in poor condition, with insufficient staff, facilities, and supplies. Contacts in Eastern Ghouta indicated that there is only one trained physician living in the area full time. As a result of the destruction of schools, the targeting of teachers, and need for children to work, many children out of school.

9 Omar Al-Hassan, “People of Al-Ghouta Protest against Infighting among Rebels,” *Baladi News*, 22 May 2016, <http://baladi-news.com/en/>.

10 Tarek Khawwam, “Amid Calls for Punishment, New Poisonings in the Eastern Ghouta,” *Baladi News*, 26 June 2016, <http://baladi-news.com/en/>.



Syrian Arab Red Crescent ambulance hit by a sniper

Several besieged communities in Eastern Ghouta received UN interagency aid convoys during the reporting period:

- ◆ 18 May - Harasta received first aid shipment since the siege began in 2013. It received another convoy on 2 July.
- ◆ 10 June - Douma was reached once during the reporting period with a notable quantity of humanitarian assistance. As with many other deliveries to besieged areas, the quantity of aid delivered was insufficient to reach the entire population and critical medical supplies were removed from the convoy by government forces. A minor delivery consisting primarily of school supplies was also made by SARC in late May.
- ◆ 19 June - Five besieged communities - Hazzeh, Hamouriya, Ein Tarma, Beit Sawa and Efreis - were reached with humanitarian aid, although only two of them, Hamouriya and Ein Tarma, are recognized as besieged by the UN. The total amount delivered was supposed to support 25,000 beneficiaries, but fell far short of reaching the actual population in need. As a result, residents in Hazzeh reported issues with the Local Council's distribution of humanitarian aid, particularly the sanitation supplies. Reports also indicated that some of the food aid was not fit for consumption.
- ◆ 29 June - The towns of Zamalka and Arbin received an interagency UN aid shipment for the first time in four years, since before the siege began. This aid was reportedly aimed at supporting 20,000 beneficiaries, less than half of the population of these two areas. While the Local Councils attempted to distribute the aid in such a way that it reached as many people as possible, many residents still saw the distribution as inequitable. Most medical supplies including desperately needed surgical kits were removed from the convoy.

While the convoy was returning back to Damascus a sniper targeted the truck, injuring a SARC-affiliated driver. Ground sources report that the sniping came from the government-controlled vehicle administration building south of Harasta.

None of the other communities in Eastern Ghouta received international assistance during the past quarter. The amount of food in the convoys that were sent to the towns listed above was insufficient to meet the needs of just the targeted communities for a month, and had no impact on humanitarian conditions in Eastern Ghouta as a whole. Medical supplies continued to be removed from convoys.

If the situation in Eastern Ghouta continues to deteriorate, several of the besieged communities may merit upgrading to Tier 1 for the first time since the project began. Siege Watch will continue to monitor developments closely.

SOUTHERN DAMASCUS SUBURBS

Table 2:

Southern Damascus Suburbs Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Al-Qadam	3	Syrian Govt.	3,500
Babbila	3	Syrian Govt.	11,000
Beit Sahm	3	Syrian Govt.	15,000
Hajar al-Aswad	2	Syrian Govt. + armed groups	11,000
Yarmouk	1	Syrian Govt. + armed groups	8,000
Yelda	3	Syrian Govt.	16,500
SUM:			65,500

Note: Orange text indicate besieged locations not recognized by UN OCHA as of 31 July 2016.

Snapshot:

No notable changes during the past quarter. Small increase in estimated population.

Details:

Conditions in the southern suburbs of Damascus have remained stable throughout the reporting period, with no notable changes since the Second Quarterly Report published in May. The area remains surrounded by Syrian military forces and sectarian pro-government militias, and the besieged neighborhoods themselves are still controlled by a patchwork of armed groups including ISIS and the group formerly known as Jabhat al-Nusra (now known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham).

As described in the previous quarterly report, Damascus' southern suburbs enjoy some entry of basic goods into the area through the government-controlled checkpoints. The amount

and type of supplies that enter this way are limited and incur a tariff that inflates prices, but this situation is better than that of many other besieged areas where the restrictions are more severe. Prices continued to fluctuate significantly. Humanitarian aid access to the southern suburbs is still inconsistent, which highlights the area's continued vulnerability. UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for Palestinians, is responsible for aid shipments to the area. While it was able to make several humanitarian deliveries in May, operations were disrupted due to ongoing violence since 25 May and did not resume during the reporting period.¹¹

As a result of several local ceasefires, some people in the besieged southern suburbs are able to gain permission to cross the government checkpoints into and out of the besieged area, but this movement remains limited even for citizens in the neighborhoods with ceasefires in place. For example, in al-Qadam neighborhood, approximately 15% of the residents (500 out of 3,500) are able to take advantage of the eased access restrictions and move in and out of the neighborhood through the government-controlled checkpoints.

The southern suburb communities have not been attacked by pro-government forces over the past quarter, a sign that the government ceasefires with four of the six communities under siege blockade are continuing to hold. As with the previous period, there were intermittent violent clashes between ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra (now known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham), centering on the Yarmouk Camp.

Yarmouk and Hajar al-Aswad do not have ceasefires in place with the Syrian government and both are dominated by extremist groups. As a result, residents in these areas are more isolated and face poorer humanitarian conditions than the rest of the southern suburbs. Civilian movement from ISIS-controlled Hajar al-Aswad into other nearby besieged communities is rare and restricted to women. There have been no international aid deliveries targeting the population of Hajar al-Aswad, and it has never been designated as besieged by UN OCHA. Yarmouk remains inaccessible to UNRWA, which distributes aid to the adjacent suburb of Yelda for displaced Yarmouk residents and for those inside the camp who are able to make the risky journey. Though only a short distance, the journey to exit and reenter Yarmouk is a dangerous one due to violence and militant checkpoints, and many are unable or unwilling to attempt it. There were reports of ISIS persecuting civilians throughout the reporting period, meting out public punishments for perceived violations as in other ISIS-controlled parts of the country. UNRWA humanitarian aid has not been distributed inside of Yarmouk since March 2015.¹²

Several Siege Watch population estimates in the southern suburbs were revised this reporting period. These updated estimates help account for a slight population rise that occurred during the previous reporting period when access restrictions were loosened and some previously displaced families returned. At the same time, contacts noted that due to the more frequent civilian movement, solid estimates were more difficult to make than before the access restrictions improved.

11 UNRWA "Syria: Humanitarian Snapshot, April – June 2016," <http://www.unrwa.org/>.

12 UNRWA, "Syria: Humanitarian Snapshot, July – September, 2015," <http://www.unrwa.org/>.

WESTERN GHOUTA

Table 3:

Western Ghouta Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Darayya	1	Syrian Govt.	8,300
Moadamiyet al-Sham	1	Syrian Govt.	45,000
SUM:			53,300

Snapshot:

No change in besieged designation, tier level, or population estimates. Significant decline of conditions in Darayya.

Details:

Darayya and Moadamiya in the Western Ghouta countryside of Rural Damascus remained besieged by pro-government forces during the reporting period. While conditions remained unchanged in Moadamiya, they worsened significantly in Darayya, which is now at the brink of disaster.

Darayya – During the past quarter, the situation has become critical in the long-besieged city of Darayya. The city has faced increasing attacks by government forces since May, when the nationwide cessation of hostilities (CoH) that was first implemented in February essentially collapsed. Darayya has two armed opposition groups composed entirely of local fighters: Ajnad al-Sham and Shuhada al-Islam. There are no ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra (now known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) forces present in the area. *[Note: Since the end of the reporting period the critically-besieged community of Darayya surrendered to Syrian government forces in the face of complete collapse. All remaining citizens were evacuated in late August, and Darayya is now empty.]*

As a result of the intensive diplomatic efforts accompanying the CoH and Geneva negotiations earlier in 2016, during the reporting period Darayya received its first humanitarian aid shipment since the siege began in 2012. Unfortunately this effort was fraught with peril and may have triggered a military offensive that has placed the remaining population at extreme risk. On 12 May 2016, a UN interagency aid convoy was dispatched to Darayya in its first delivery attempt after receiving permission from the government. The convoy – which contained medical assistance and school supplies but no food – was stopped at a government checkpoint outside of the city where Syrian military forces attempted to remove the medical supplies. The accompanying humanitarian personnel refused to move forward without the approved medical aid. After approximately six hours of negotiations with checkpoint officials they turned back to Damascus without reaching Darayya. Immediately afterwards, the Syrian military launched a mortar attack on Darayya, targeting the area where civilians had gathered to await the aid



The first trucks to reach the town in four years were half empty and boxes were all disturbed. Source: Daraya Local Council



Agricultural crops burning after a night raid by government forces in early June. Source: Daraya Local Council

delivery, killing two and wounding five.¹³ After weeks of further negotiation with the government, a two-part UN interagency aid convoy finally reached Darayya for the first time in early June. The first part of the aid convoy arrived on 1 June and contained medical assistance and baby formula, but no food, to the dismay of the local citizens. The second part of the aid convoy entered on 9 June, and contained desperately needed food, although the amount was sufficient to support less than one third of the population for a month.

Darayya has not received any humanitarian assistance since the 9 June delivery. Basic goods are in short supply and very expensive when available. The small amount of locally produced agricultural products has been further reduced by the government force's burning of agricultural land, and people are largely confined to underground shelters due to the constant attacks. The medical sector has been devastated and medical care is largely unavailable.

The Syrian government and its allies have placed tremendous value on Darayya due to its strategic location adjacent to the Mezzeh military airbase and its proximity to a number of Iranian assets. The Syrian government put up tremendous resistance to allowing food aid

¹³ Facebook post by The Syria Institute, 12 May 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/syriainstitute/posts/1183684138342695>.

into Darayya even after most other besieged areas had received international assistance at least once since the CoH began. Following the failed 12 May delivery effort, contacts reported surveillance drone flights and a repositioning of government forces around Darayya, suggesting a coming offensive. On 14 May the Syrian military resumed daily shelling of Darayya, indicating that the CoH was no longer being respected. On 8 June –between the two June aid shipments – the Syrian government resumed dropped barrel bombs on Darayya for the first time since February. The barrel bombing paused for the international aid delivery to take place on 9 June, but began again the next day. In the five days after the 9 June aid delivery, approximately 207 barrel bombs were dropped on Darayya, forcing people to shelter underground and preventing distribution of any of the aid. In a twenty-day period lasting from 8-26 June the Darayya Local Council recorded a record 650 barrel bombs hitting the city. Contacts noted that the barrel bombs were reportedly dropped at random times and on unpredictable locations, a shift from previous patterns that have made it more dangerous than ever for civilians to move around the besieged community. Since the end of the reporting period there have been at least three attacks with missiles containing a napalm-like incendiary substance.



Barrel bombs hit Darayya in June

The offensive by government forces against Darayya has continued without pause since 10 June. Shelling, missiles, airstrikes, and barrel bombs strike the area on a daily basis. Government forces have captured and burned arable fields surrounding Darayya, and advanced into the city from the west and southwest, forcing the remaining civilian population to move towards the center of the city. These parcels of agricultural land were a critical resource for the remaining 8,300 people in Darayya, helping them withstand nearly four years of continuous siege.

By the end of the reporting period, Darayya faced the prospect of being completely overrun by government forces. The remaining civilians have expressed fears of sectarian massacres if this happens. Although the Siege Watch survey does not specifically address this topic, there appears to be a notable decline in mental health as residents struggle to cope with their situation.

Moadamiya remained besieged by government forces and pro-government militias during the reporting period. Unlike neighboring Darayya, a local negotiating committee from Moadamiya has been engaged in contentious but ongoing ceasefire negotiations directly with the Syrian

government for months. As a result, Moadamiya experienced incremental humanitarian improvements during the reporting period. The berm physically blocking the only supply route into Moadamiya has been removed, and students and government employees have been allowed limited permission to move in and out of the city. Those who return are prevented from bringing supplies back in with them. Movement of other civilians is still highly restricted, although at times entry and exit is possible through bribery at the checkpoints.

Decreased tensions with the Syrian government made it possible for some traders to bring limited amounts of vegetables and bread into the city to sell to residents. The Local Council has attempted to ease the burden for citizens, many of whom cannot afford the high prices of available goods, by making several bulk purchases of bread and distributing them for free. Many goods remain unavailable and prices for available items are still higher than areas not under siege. Moadamiya still lacks access to electricity and faces challenges in procuring clean drinking water. Contaminated water caused several cases of diarrhea during the reporting period.

Several UN interagency humanitarian aid convoys were permitted to reach Moadamiya between May-July: a two-part shipment delivered food and limited medical supplies on 1 and 3 June. The quantity was sufficient for the entire population for approximately one month. Another aid delivery reached Moadamiya on 24 July, containing supplies were sufficient for approximately half of the population for one month.

Violence has been minimal, but not entirely absent. On 19 and 20 June, bombings by pro-government forces targeted the southern and eastern portions of the city, coinciding with an attempt by armed opposition groups from Darayya to reopen the road connecting the two cities.

OTHER RURAL DAMASCUS

Map 2:

Watchlist areas in Rural Damascus, 31 July 2016

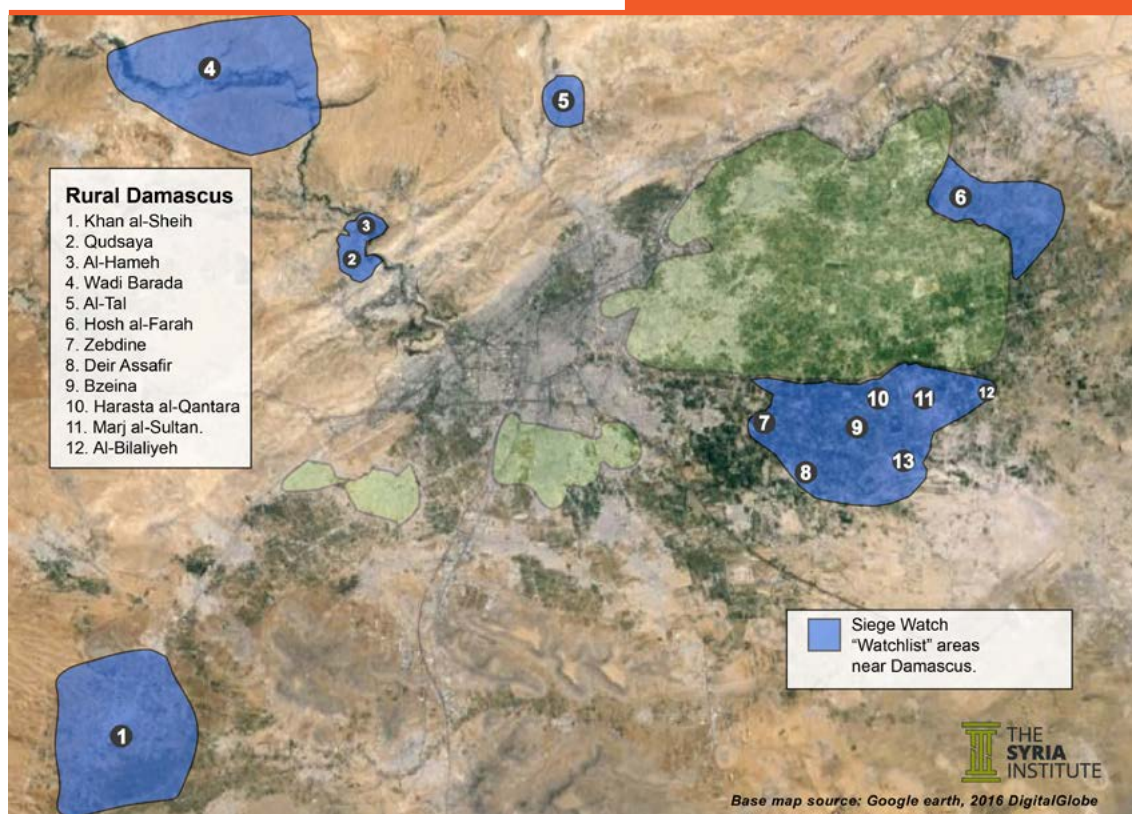


Table 4:

Other Rural Damascus Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Madaya/Baqeen	1	Syrian Govt.	40,000
Zabadani	1	Syrian Govt.	1,000
SUM:			41,000

Snapshot:

No change in population, tier, or classification status for besieged areas during the reporting period, although conditions worsened in Madaya and Zabadani. Wadi Barada was added to the Siege Watch "Watchlist."

Details:

Madaya and Zabadani remained critically besieged by Hezbollah and Syrian forces with

humanitarian conditions deteriorating over the reporting period. Neither area received any international humanitarian assistance and violent attacks increased. Both the lack of aid and the increased violence were results of the breakdown of the “Four Towns Agreement” that allowed for aid deliveries and medical evacuations in exchange for reciprocal measures in the government-controlled towns of Fuaa and Kefraya in Idlib during the prior quarter. The Baqeen area, which is an outlying suburb of Madaya, is considered as part of Madaya for reporting purposes.

Humanitarian conditions declined during the reporting period due to the intensified siege conditions, with malnutrition-related illnesses once again rising after several humanitarian aid convoys during the previous quarter helped alleviate the acute hunger. The medical sectors in Madaya and Zabadani have been devastated, lacking supplies, equipment, and trained staff. A number of civilians in need of urgent medical care died during the reporting period, as medical evacuations could not be negotiated. In May a 12-year old girl named Ola Murad died of acute malnutrition. There were also a number of suicides reported. Residents lack access to clean water and electricity. Smuggling, bribery, and access to agricultural land are much more limited than in many other besieged areas, and many basic goods are unavailable.

Violent attacks were reported throughout the quarter, including several attempts by Hezbollah forces to take control of natural springs that feed water into the besieged towns. Although local armed groups have been able to fend these attacks off thus far, access to potable water remains a serious vulnerability for the area. There were also periodic forced displacements of families around Madaya living near the checkpoints by besieging Hezbollah forces. These periodic evictions are believed by many to be part of a demographic engineering strategy to change the ethnic makeup of the area.

Al-Tal, Al-Hameh, and Qudsaya – The communities of Al-Tal, Al-Hameh, and Qudsaya are located in the Rural Damascus countryside, in the mountainous areas to the north and west of Damascus city. The combined estimated population of all three communities is upwards of 1 million people, many of whom are internally displaced persons (IDPs) previously uprooted from other besieged communities in the Damascus area. They became encircled by pro-government forces in July 2015, and continue to face siege-like conditions, although all appear to have more regular entry of basic food supplies. In Qudsaya for example, government employees and students are allowed to enter and exit the area they are allowed to bring certain supplies in upon their return, a contrast to other besieged communities. The town has a truce in place with government forces but there are intermittent violations. Water is available at least one day a week from the government, and electricity for approximately two hours each day.

All three of these “Watchlist” areas will continue to be monitored for changes in the situation that would necessitate a shift in classification.

Wadi Barada – Wadi Barada was added to the Siege Watch “Watchlist” during the reporting period, after access points were completely closed by Hezbollah and Syrian government forces on 24 July 2016. The Wadi Barada area encompasses a string of small towns along the Barada River in the Ein Elfijeh, Az-Zabadani, and Qudsaya subdistricts of Rural Damascus governorate, to the northwest of Damascus city. The area - which effectively controls the water supply to Damascus, which comes from the Ein el Fijeh spring - had previously been under a longstanding local truce with the Syrian government. The current access cutoff comes amidst intensified fighting between pro-government and opposition forces in area, and appears to be

part of a Hezbollah-led effort to capture strategic territory in the Qalamoun mountains. Just days before Wadi Barada was besieged, Hezbollah forces reportedly captured the town of Hurayra to its north, burning nearby farmland and forcibly displacing the citizens. Tens of thousands of people live in the impacted Wadi Barada area, although no current Siege Watch contact is available. Siege Watch will work to expand the reporting network in the Wadi Barada area and will monitor the situation closely moving forward.

Khan al-Sheih – Khan al-Sheih is a Palestinian refugee “camp” in southwest Rural Damascus governorate. The town has been partially besieged by Syrian government forces for more than two years, with a dangerous rural farm road to the nearby town of Al-Zakiya serving as the sole lifeline for thousands of remaining residents. Conditions in Khan al-Sheih deteriorated over the reporting period as a result of intensified Russian and Syrian airstrikes and bombardments by pro-government forces. Starting in May, the intensified attacks intermittently made the Zakiya road impassable, effectively besieging the area although the road has not been physically blocked by ground forces. As was the case in prior periods, the camp did not receive any direct UNRWA assistance. At the current time Khan al-Sheih remains on the Siege Watch “Watchlist” pending further information about access conditions. Siege Watch will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Homs

Map 3:

Besieged areas in Hom, 31 July 2016

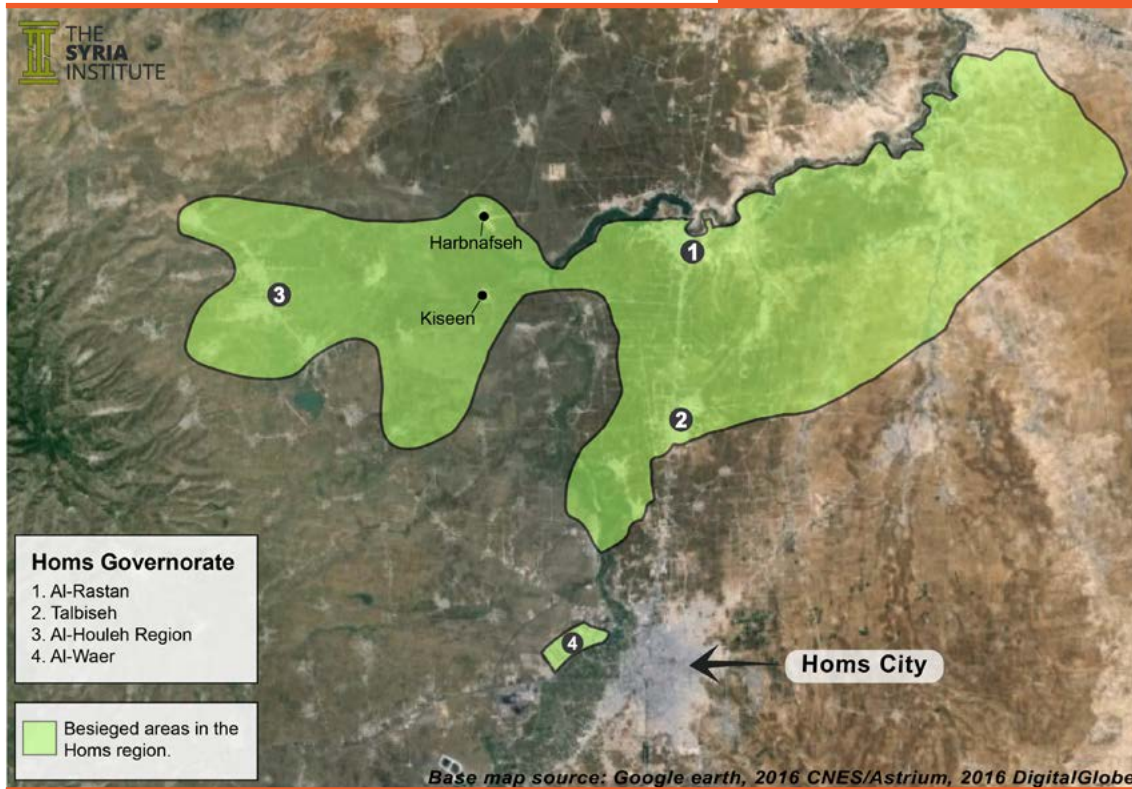


Table 5:

Homs Governorate Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Al-Waer	1	Syrian Govt.	95,000
Al-Houle Region	3	Syrian Govt.	83,000
Al-Rastan	3	Syrian Govt.	105,000
Talbiseh	3	Syrian Govt.	64,000
SUM:			347,000

*Note: Orange text indicate besieged locations not recognized by UN OCHA as of 31 July 2016.

Snapshot:

Deteriorating conditions led to the upgrading of Al-Waer's siege tier for the second quarter in a row. No changes to classification or tier level for the other besieged communities. Slight changes to population estimates due to displacement and estimate refinement.

Details:

All of the sieges in Homs governorate remained in place during the reporting period. These sieges are enforced by the Syrian armed forces and significant numbers of pro-government forces including Afghan militias, Iraqi militias, Hezbollah, Iranian IRGC forces, and Syrian NDF militias. Conditions in al-Waer neighborhood deteriorated significantly, and UN OCHA officially recognized the siege of al-Waer neighborhood for the first time in late May.¹⁴

As with the prior reporting period, conditions in the besieged communities of northern Homs fluctuated through the quarter but no changes to tier level were deemed necessary. As many as six UN interagency convoys reached the northern Homs besieged area between May and July, although the amount of aid was insufficient to support the approximately 350,000 people in these areas. Talbiseh, al-Rastan, and al-Houleh are all relatively large areas with agricultural land, they are able to rely on local food production and smuggling routes, and are more difficult for the pro-forces to besiege at a high level of intensity. At the same time, pro-government forces continue to attempt to control smuggling routes and roads between besieged communities, cut off water access, and destroy arable land, so conditions in northern Homs may change moving forward. None of the besieged communities in the northern countryside of Homs are designated as besieged by UN OCHA.

NORTHERN HOMS GOVERNORATE

Al-Rastan and Talbiseh – Conditions in the al-Rastan and Talbiseh areas deteriorated between May and July, with violence returning to pre-CoH levels. Airstrikes from both Syrian and Russian jets were reported, leading to civilian casualties. In one high casualty incident, more than 20 civilians were killed and more than 50 injured in an airstrike on a crowded market in al-Rastan in July.

In response to opposition groups' detention of civilians from pro-government villages, pro-government militias reportedly detained around 150 civilians from the al-Rastan area in June. Reporting contacts believe that government security forces were unable to secure the release of these detainees during negotiations, indicating that they do not have complete control over the militias in the area. The lack of government control over militias – some of which are believed to answer to Iranian forces and Hezbollah – presents a challenge to ceasefire negotiations in the area.

Bread shortages were reported in northern Homs areas despite the fact that wheat is still produced in the agricultural areas under siege. A number of factors seem to contribute to this problem including: a decrease in support from humanitarian organizations and the opposition interim government, the falling value of the Syrian pound which incentivized farmers to sell their wheat to pro-government traders and/or store it for winter, and the targeted destruction of bakeries. There is also a gradual decrease in production in due to challenges with irrigation.

Two UN interagency aid convoys reached Talbiseh during the reporting period and a large aid convoy reached al-Rastan at the end of June. Baby milk remains in particularly short supply in both areas, as do medical supplies.

14 UN Security Council S/2016/546, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," 17 June 2016, <http://undocs.org/S/2016/546>.

An agreement with the government led to the opening of a passage between Tier Malleh – a town south of Talbiseh - and Homs city for limited civilian movement in return for government use of another route previously off limits to its forces. The passage allowed for the evacuation of some civilians in need of urgent medical care. Due to the fear of arrest by government forces many civilians are unable or unwilling to use the crossing, and limited food has been allowed to enter through it. Any population decline due to civilians exiting through this crossing was offset with the arrival of approximately 800 families who were forcibly displaced from the villages of Kazhal and Um al-Qasab to the west of Homs city.

Al-Houleh – The al-Houleh region in northwestern Homs governorate remains besieged by the Syrian armed forces and pro-government militias situated in surrounding villages. Fuel and electricity shortages have exacerbated humanitarian concerns, particularly the difficulty in pumping well water. The military situation continued to be volatile as fighting between government and opposition forces continued along the northern border of the besieged area near the towns of Harbnafseh and Zara. The fighting displaced more than 100 families and impacted smuggling routes.

Airstrikes by Syrian and Russian jets and shelling by pro-government militias caused civilian casualties throughout the quarter. Pro-government forces repeatedly targeted the route that connects al-Houleh to the other besieged portions of northern Homs, which made movement difficult and caused prices of basic goods to rise. As of the end of the reporting period, local armed groups managed to reverse or fend off all attempts to capture the route, but it remains dangerous to use and civilians are regularly killed attempts to do so.

Al-Houleh received two UN interagency humanitarian aid shipments during the reporting period: one on 25 May and another on 11 June.

AL-WAER

Conditions in al-Waer deteriorated dramatically as a result of reduced access and increased attacks following the breakdown of local ceasefire negotiations in March. As a result, it has been up-graded from Tier 2 to Tier 1 – the highest intensity of siege recognized by the Siege Watch project.

After several years under siege, al-Waer was finally added to the UN besieged list in late May. UN aid convoys reached al-Waer twice during the reporting period: once in mid-June and once in mid-July. Although the amount of aid delivered to al-Waer in these convoys was insufficient to meet the needs of the population, it is notable that a number of full surgical kits were permitted in the mid-June convoy for the first time. Prior to these successful UN convoys, the Syrian military reportedly allowed several trucks in carrying a small amount of vegetables in early June and used video of the delivery to issue inaccurate news reports that the siege of al-Waer was lifted.

The medical sector has been severely impacted by the intensified siege of al-Waer, with a lack of fuel and medical supplies hampering effective treatment for all conditions. Civilians continue to die due to lack of care for conditions like kidney disease, and medical evacuations out of the besieged area are generally denied. The most critical items needed in the community are baby milk and medical supplies. Malnutrition is reportedly widespread. In late July, several cases of Tuberculosis were reported.



A severely malnourished boy in Al-Waer in late May

Violence against Al-Waer has increased dramatically, with reports of pro-government forces attacking civilian targets such as the offices of a local charity organization, and an IDP shelter, people approaching the bakery (located near the government checkpoint). All these attacks led to dozens of civilian deaths.

On 28 May the local negotiation committee of al-Waer accepted an invitation by the Syrian government to attend an emergency meeting aimed at renewing the local ceasefire negotiations. When they left the besieged area, the entire committee was reportedly detained and used as leverage to negotiate the release of several soldiers that were being held by local groups. Then, on 18 June the government allowed dozens of people to exit the besiege area to buy bread at a nearby government-controlled bakery. Once the civilians had exited al-Waer they were attacked by pro-government forces. One man was killed and several others were injured. A woman and three elderly men were arrested.

At the end of May, government employees and students – the two subsets of people who had been allowed partial movement in and out of the neighborhood – were informed that they could not return to al-Waer and should evacuate their families due to an impending government raid. Dozens of families fled and approximately 50 of the fleeing civilians were arrested by

government forces. On 04 June additional civilians were told to evacuate with their families under threat of a looming government offensive. Despite intensive pressure by pro-government forces for all militants and civilians to evacuate the neighborhood, only a few hundred families left thus far. Citizens fear being detained at the checkpoints and many believe that attempts to clear the neighborhood are part of a state-directed policy of demographic change, and they will never be allowed to return. Al-Waer hosts a large number of IDPs who were forcibly evacuated from the Old City of Homs earlier in the conflict.

As a result of these and other incidents during the reporting period, there is little trust among locals that government forces can negotiate in good faith. It is unlikely that local negotiations can resume without strong UN stewardship. Unfortunately there also appears to be decreased local trust in UN officials as well after a 29 June meeting with a UN team represented by Yacoub al Hillo and Khawla Matar. During the meeting, local negotiation committee members felt that they were being pressured to concede to government demands that they felt were unreasonable, including forced evacuation. Some locals also blame the UN officials for the breakdown of the local ceasefire negotiations, which were initiated with UN assistance in December 2015.

As a result of developments between May and July, al-Waer has become one of the most urgent siege crises in the entire country. Siege Watch will continue to monitor the situation closely.

Deir Ezzor

Map 4:

Besieged neighborhoods of Deir Ezzor, 31 July 2016

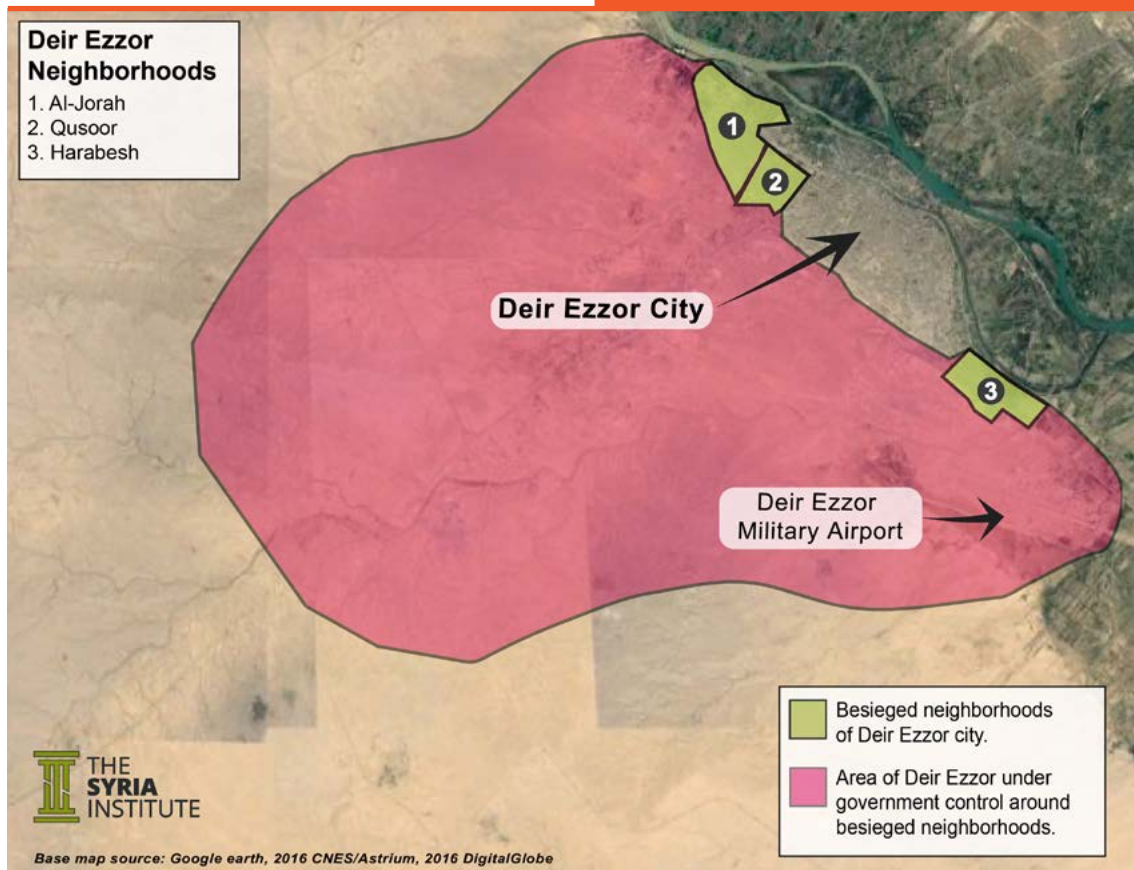


Table 6:

Deir Ezzor Besieged Neighborhoods

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Deir Ezzor (besieged neighborhoods)	3	Syrian Govt. + ISIS	80,000

Snapshot:

No significant changes during the May-July reporting period.

Details:

Over the past quarter, there have been no notable changes in the situation in the besieged neighborhoods of Deir Ezzor city.

As previously reported, humanitarian conditions in Deir Ezzor improved significantly with the start of regular World Food Program (WFP) aid airdrops in April 2016. The airdrops continued to take place every 3-4 days throughout the current reporting period. Once the supplies are retrieved they are distributed on the ground by the local SARC branch in Deir Ezzor city. By the end of July, 80-90 such airlifts had been completed.¹⁵ The supplies delivered generally include basic food aid such as rice, salt, and lentils, as well as nutritional supplements.

Reports of ongoing issues with the deliveries first noted in the last Siege Watch report persisted during the current reporting period. Medical supplies and fuel are desperately needed by the civilian population, but are not included in airdrops. The lack of fuel has led to further problems in the besieged neighborhoods area, including challenges pumping and filtering potable water. As a result, besieged neighborhoods of Deir Ezzor experienced multi-day disruptions in the water supply and a rise in water-borne illnesses during the reporting period. There are also problems with the aid distribution, as some of the WFP food baskets intended for civilian beneficiaries are confiscated by Syrian military forces and affiliated NDF militias, and some of it sold in local markets.

In addition to the WFP airdrops, Russia and Syria also airdropped supplies to the besieged neighborhoods of Deir Ezzor during the reporting period.¹⁶ Although Russian and Syrian media reported that these airdrops contained humanitarian aid, there is no indication that any of these supplies were distributed to civilian beneficiaries in need. Instead contacts report that these supplies are sold by government-affiliated traders, who monopolize the local markets and inflate prices. There is limited smuggling in which government-affiliated merchants coordinate with Syrian military officers to bring in goods from ISIS-controlled areas through the checkpoints, but the amounts of goods smuggling in this way are limited. The status of the medical sector remains poor, but has not changed significantly during the reporting period.

As previously reported, many locals in Deir Ezzor consider themselves besieged by both ISIS – which surrounds the government-controlled neighborhoods – and the Syrian government – which controls supplies and humanitarian aid distribution, and restricts civilians from fleeing the neighborhoods. The besieged neighborhoods continue to endure intermittent shelling during ISIS attacks on the government-controlled neighborhoods, and several civilian casualties were reported.

The military continues its aggressive conscription tactics, which prevent many families from even attempting to bribe their way out of the besieged area for fear that any men over the age of 14 will be forced into the army. Some women and children have paid the significant fee demanded by the government for helicopter evacuation to Qamishli, but the number of people who have escaped in this manner has not led to a significant change in the total population.

Despite these challenges, the humanitarian conditions in Deir Ezzor are markedly better than in many other besieged communities as a result of the sustained WFP-led aid efforts, and it remains classified at Tevel 3 – the lowest intensity of siege.

15 UN OCHA, "Syrian Arab Republic - 2016 UN Inter-Agency Humanitarian Operations (as of 27 July 2016)," 27 July 2016, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/node/129864>; UN OCHA, "Syrian Arab Republic - 2016 UN Inter-Agency Humanitarian Operations (as of 3 August 2016)," 3 August 2016, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/node/130397>.

16 Sputnik News, "Russian Airline Delivers 18 tonnes of UN Aid to Syrian Deir Ez-Zor," 8 June 2016, <http://sputniknews.com/>; Chris Tomson, "Video: Tons of food reaches Deir Ezzor by parachute from massive Syrian airdrop," *Al-Masdar News*, 27 May 2016, <https://www.almasdarnews.com/>.

idlib

Map 5:

Besieged areas of Idlib, 31 July 2016

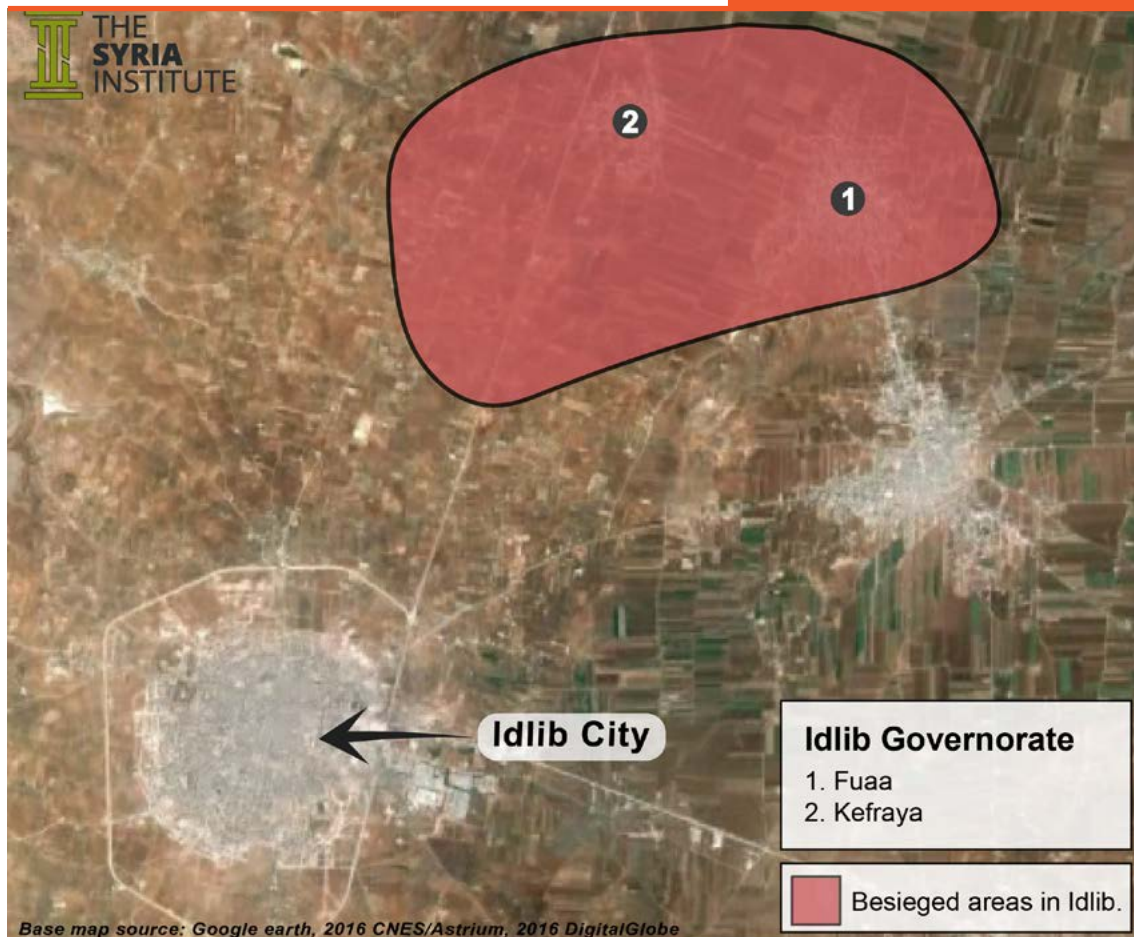


Table 7:

Idlib Besieged Communities

Community Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Fuua and Kefraya	3	Armed groups	20,000

Snapshot:

No change in besieged designation or tier level. Population estimated revised upward to match UN OCHA estimate.

Details:

Fuua and Kefraya – The pro-government towns of Fuua and Kefraya remain besieged by Syrian

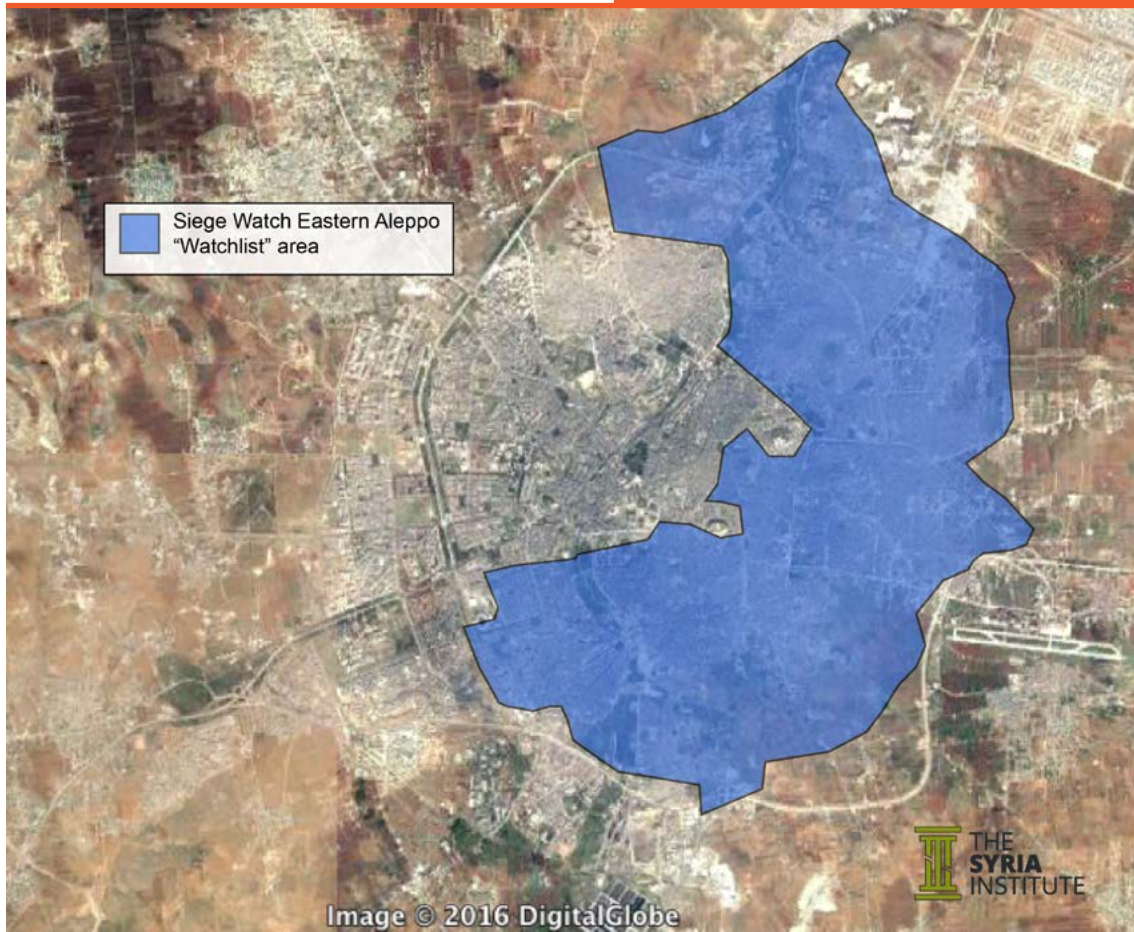
opposition groups and Jabhat al-Nusra (now known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham) throughout the past quarter. Siege Watch was unable to expand its network of reporting contacts into these communities during the reporting period, and therefore unable to gather independent data or population estimates. Fuaa and Kefraya were part of the “Four Towns Agreement,” in which they received reciprocal aid deliveries and evacuations along with opposition-controlled Madaya and Zabadani. In May 2016 this agreement began to break down amidst increasing levels of violence,¹⁷ and as a result the towns did not receive any international assistance during the reporting period. Humanitarian conditions are believed to have deteriorated during the reporting period, although no direct Siege Watch data was available.

¹⁷ Waleed Khaled a-Noufal and Maria Nelson, “Bombings, recriminations in a series of towns tied by one ceasefire: ‘People are afraid the agreement will break down’,” *SYRIA:Direct*, 11 May 2016, <http://syriadirect.org/>.

Aleppo

Map 6:

Watchlist area of Eastern Aleppo City, 31 July 2016



Snapshot:

Conditions deteriorated in Eastern Aleppo during the reporting period as the area became completely besieged by pro-government forces. The area remains on the Siege Watch "Watchlist" as the situation is fluid and fighting is ongoing.

Eastern Aleppo City – The opposition-controlled eastern side of Aleppo city has been on the Siege Watch "Watchlist" since February 2016, when fears began to rise that the Castello Road – the only remaining supply route into the area – could be severed by pro-government forces. Fears escalated in early May with the Syrian air force bombing of Al Quds hospital in Eastern Aleppo, which killed at least 50 people including the area's last pediatrician and several other medical staff.¹⁸

¹⁸ Médecins Sans Frontières, "Aleppo hospital death toll mounts to 55, people trapped have to 'stay and die'," 03 May 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/>.

In mid-July, access to Eastern Aleppo was finally severed after weeks of fighting for control of the Castello Road and surrounding areas, bringing the opposition-controlled portion the under full siege by pro-government forces with approximately 326,000 people trapped inside. The siege was completed with heavy air support from Russia, and pro-government forces on the ground including the Iranian IRGC. YPG forces in the Kurdish Sheikh Maqsoud enclave bordering the Castello Road reportedly played a role in the advance that finally cut the Castello Road access, but have not played a significant role in maintaining the siege. According to contacts, local armed opposition groups were negotiating with the YPG to use Sheikh Maqsoud as an alternative supply route into Eastern Aleppo when pro-government forces captured the Castello Road. The negotiations fell apart and fighting between the armed groups and Kurdish forces promptly broke out on the ground, during which the YPG took control of the portion of the Castello Road passing by Sheikh Maqsoud. This move allowed pro-government forces to finally complete the siege by capturing the Layramoun portion of the road.

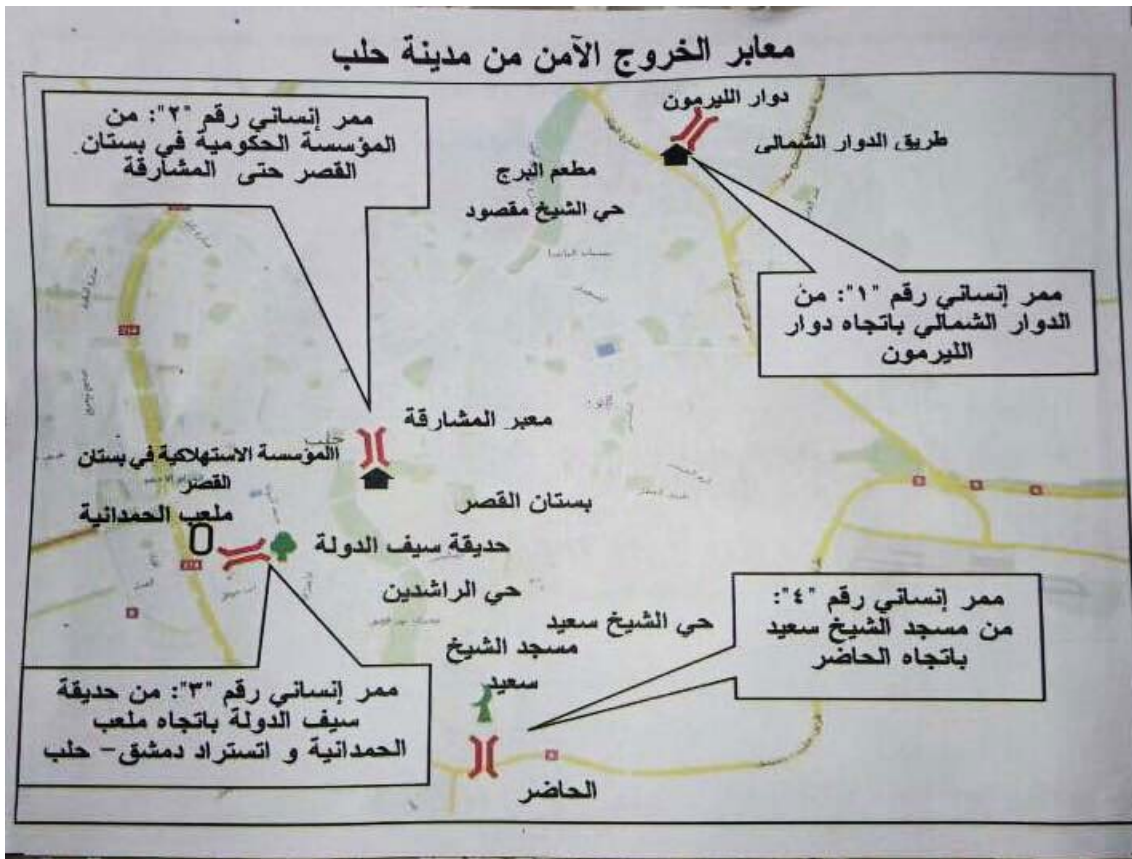
By the end of the reporting period, the quickly deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Eastern Aleppo had prompted an international outcry and condemnation from the UN. This pressure led Russia and Syria to announce that they would open 3-4 “humanitarian corridors” to allow people to be evacuated from the besieged portion of the city. On 28 July, Government helicopters dropped leaflets on the besieged area with a map showing where these supposed corridors would be, along with leaflets encouraging fighters to give up, and small aid packets containing Russian branded supplies such as diapers and food. Ultimately these corridors failed to materialize, and few families were able to exit the city. Contacts reported that at least two people who attempted to use the “corridors” on the day that they were announced were shot and killed by pro-government snipers, and their bodies remained laying in the open because others were afraid to retrieve them. The local opposition medical office warned people not to eat the food that had been dropped for fear that it may be poisoned.

Prices for basic goods rose significantly by the end of the reporting period as supplies began to be used up. There were stockpiled supplies sufficient for an estimated 2-3 months should the siege persist. Intensive attacks from pro-government forces, including Russian airstrikes, continued throughout the reporting period, leading to significant loss of life.

Siege Watch will continue to monitor the situation closely as it develops. *[Note: After the end of the reporting period, armed opposition groups launched a coordinated offensive from both inside the besieged area and the southern countryside aimed at breaking the siege by taking control of the Ramouseh Road to the southwest. By August 6th, the rebels reportedly succeeded in seizing control of the Ramouseh Road, and managed to hold and even expand this control over the following days. While the route is not fully operational due to the ongoing fighting in the area as pro-government forces attempt to reverse their loss, several opposition-sponsored trucks of goods had managed to enter the eastern portion of the city by mid-August, causing a drop in the price of goods.]*



Map and aid items dropped by Syrian government helicopters on besieged Eastern Aleppo



3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this Siege Watch report – the third in a quarterly series compiling the information gathered from an extensive network of contacts across the besieged areas of Syria – indicate that despite increased international efforts to reach besieged areas in Syria, the situation remains bleak for the estimated 1,005,275 people trapped in at least 40 communities.

Of these more than one million people:

- ◆ 88% of the besieged Syrians in approximately 35 communities are besieged entirely by the Syrian government and its allies in Damascus, Rural Damascus, and Homs governorates.
- ◆ 10% of the besieged Syrians in approximately three communities are besieged by a mixture of the Syrian government and armed groups. In Deir Ezzor the siege is primarily enforced by ISIS, while the Syrian government imposes further access restrictions from the inside. In the southern Damascus suburbs, the primary siege is imposed by the Syrian government but ISIS and other armed groups impose further access restrictions to Yarmouk and Hajar al-Aswad inside the siege.
- ◆ 2% of the besieged Syrians in two communities are besieged entirely by armed opposition groups in Idlib governorate.

More than 1.4 million people on the Siege Watch “Watchlist” areas face harsh conditions and are at high risk of becoming completely besieged. No population estimates were available for Wadi Barada, which was added to the “Watchlist” during the reporting period, so the actual population of people at risk of siege is likely much higher. All of these “Watchlist” communities are threatened with complete siege by the Syrian government and its allies. In addition to violating UNSC Resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2254 (2015), and 2258 (2015), the deliberate starvation of civilians is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and therefore a war crime.

The situation for besieged Syrians appears grim. Six Siege Watch besieged communities were captured by force during the reporting period, displacing tens of thousands of people. Not a single siege was lifted through diplomatic means. A new area was added to the “Watchlist” and conditions in other “Watchlist” areas like Eastern Aleppo approached complete siege. Several besieged communities including al-Waer and Darayya are on the brink of complete humanitarian disaster and require urgent international intervention. *[Note: Since the end of the reporting period the critically-besieged community of Darayya surrendered to Syrian government forces in the face of complete collapse. All remaining citizens were evacuated in late August, and Darayya is now empty.]*

Following the intense pressure put on the Syrian government to approve aid convoys to besieged areas or face the possibility of airdrops to areas in Damascus, a new strategy appears to have developed wherein the government approves all convoys in writing, but then blocks most of them in practice by intensively attacking the besieged communities in question. In the July convoy plan all 18 UN-recognized besieged areas were approved by Syrian authorities for the first time.¹⁹ Despite the increased number of written approvals for UN convoys to besieged areas, aid access actually decreased as compared to the prior reporting period. Since the UN humanitarian agencies rarely assign blame to the aggressors in their reporting, this strategy has helped the Syrian government alleviate some of the diplomatic pressure it faces when refusing to approve aid requests, while allowing it to achieve the same results.

The entire siege strategy of the Syrian government, which has crystallized over the past 3-4 years, is aimed at forcing the population – not just fighters – into submission. This objective is clearly demonstrated by the government’s widespread and systematic use of tactics that impact only or primarily the civilians such as: denial of requests for medical evacuation for civilians, removal of supplies with no military value such as baby milk from aid convoys, clauses in local ceasefire negotiation agreements aimed at neutralizing civilian actors such as media activists, the intentional destruction of farmland, the targeting of civilian infrastructure including schools, hospitals, and markets. In this context the government’s resistance to allowing aid convoys into besieged areas is logical, as these convoys undermine the sieges themselves.

While UN humanitarian assistance continues to reach some besieged areas, it has had a negligible impact on living conditions. The sole exception is Deir Ezzor, which has received regular WFP aid airdrops since April, a condition that cannot be achieved in most other besieged areas. It is clear that convoy counting cannot solve the crisis of Syria’s sieges.

19 UN Security Council, S/2016/631, “Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015),” <http://undocs.org/S/2016/631>.

The most recent UNSG monthly report to the Security Council, covering the period from July 1-31, 2016, recognized only 18 besieged areas in Syria with a combined population almost 600,000.²⁰ In stark contrast to these figures, the Siege Watch project has identified at least 40 communities with over one million residents that are currently under siege in Syria. Besieged communities that are not listed in UN Secretary-General's monthly reports and not included in ISSG's efforts to increase access to trapped civilians may not receive the level of attention that they require. As Madaya demonstrated in the winter of 2015-2016 when dozens of people starved to death, if besieged areas are not designated and prioritized, the alarm bells may not go off in time to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. Since the UN besieged designation has led to prioritization for aid deliveries in 2016, it is critical that UN OCHA make every effort to accurately reflect the situation on the ground, independent of political considerations.

Jan Egeland, Senior Adviser to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, summarized the three criteria they use to determine that an area is besieged as follows: "full military encirclement, no humanitarian access, and no movement for the civilian population, in or out of the area."²¹ Many of the 18 communities officially recognized as besieged do not reflect these three criteria, nor are they consistent with the reality on the ground. PAX and TSI, through the Siege Watch project, were unable to determine why many communities in rural Damascus and in the Homs governorate have not been recognized in the UNSG's monthly reports on the UNSC. In besieged Eastern Ghouta, there is not a clear physical factor distinguishing the 9 designated communities from their neighbors, which all fall under one large siege cordon. Accordingly, it does not appear that any alarm bells have been raised regarding the deteriorating situation in besieged Eastern Ghouta, where 400,000 people are at increased risk from the rising violence and declining access to agriculture. The UN and international mediators should prioritize addressing this situation now before the situation becomes any worse.

In a 17 May 2016 statement the ISSG made the unprecedented announcement that: "Starting June 1, if the UN is denied humanitarian access to any of the designated besieged areas, the ISSG calls on the World Food Program to immediately carry out a program for air bridges and air drops for all areas in need. The ISSG pledges to support such a program, and also calls on all parties to the cessation of hostilities to provide a secure environment for that program."²² June 1 came and went, as did a delayed deadline of June 10. The UN continues to be denied access to critically besieged communities as civilians suffer and conditions worsen. There have been no consequences for the besiegers, and no sign of airdrops.

Superficial and obstructed visits like the one granted to Darayya cannot be allowed to substitute for genuine and unrestricted access. Partial aid convoys without medical supplies cannot be allowed to replace sufficient and appropriate humanitarian assistance. Government aid convoy approvals granted when it is their barrel bombs that prevent delivery should not be recognized and applauded. Local ceasefires cannot be encouraged and then left up to the parties to implement and monitor themselves when one side is struggling to survive under siege. When

20 UN Security Council, S/2016/714, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," 16 August 2016, <http://undocs.org/S/2016/714>.

21 UN "Transcript of remarks by UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura and UN Senior Adviser, Jan Egeland," 12 May 2016, <http://www.un.org/sg/offthecuff/index.asp?nid=4521>.

22 U.S. Department of State, "Statement of the International Syria Support Group," May 17, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2016/05/257295.htm>.

the UN and ISSG make concessions like these, they embolden the siege perpetrators. Thus far, the only party that has ever faced any consequences for besieging civilians in Syria is the 1,000,000+ victims still trapped in besieged areas.

All of these conclusions are already known to the international parties attempting to manage the crisis and provide for the victims of Syria's sieges. In his June report to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the following:

" While I welcome the recent progress in reaching some besieged locations, I wish to make clear that a complete lifting of all sieges is required. That dozens of barrel bombs were reportedly dropped in Darayya on 10 June, the day after the United Nations and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent delivered the first food aid to the town since November 2012, shows that the situation for people in besieged areas will not be resolved by delivering humanitarian aid... Besiegement is not a natural or necessary consequence of conflict; it is a deliberate policy of parties, and one that can be undone if the political will to do so can be mustered." ²³

Despite this knowledge, the scourge of besieging civilians as a tactic of war continues to spread in Syria, and few changes have been made in the UN approach.

PAX and TSI therefore recommend the following measures be taken:

- ◆ The international community, particularly the ISSG and the United Nations Security Council, must act now to prevent the critically besieged community of Al-Waer from becoming the next Darayya, as it is on the brink of complete collapse with nearly 100,000 people at risk.
- ◆ The goal of UNSC and the ISSG member states should be to lift the sieges and allow the free movement of civilians in and out of besieged areas, and to place political pressure on all parties in the conflict, but in particular the Government of Syria which is responsible for the vast majority of the sieges, should be focused towards this end instead of on one-off aid convoys.
- ◆ UN OCHA and other relevant agencies should reassess the situation in the areas it currently designates as "hard to reach" when there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that many of these areas are in fact besieged. Areas should be designated as besieged when the situation on the ground meets objective criteria based on needs assessments and data collection efforts, and determinations should be made independently of political considerations of ISSG and UNSC members or of parties to the conflict.
- ◆ Prioritization of areas for humanitarian aid convoys should be based on transparent and data-driven needs assessments. A tiered system such as the

23 UN Security Council S/2016/546, "Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014) and 2258 (2015)," 17 June 2016, <http://undocs.org/S/2016/546>.

one used by the Siege Watch project, can help identify the areas of greatest need.

- ◆ Donors who support the aid efforts of UN agencies in Syria should demand transparency in the designation process of the besieged areas by OCHA. It is essential that UN OCHA's assessment, which informs the Security Council and the ISSG, be led by the facts on the ground and the needs of the people in besieged communities. Explanations should be provided when areas are moved to or from the list of besieged communities. Such transparency will help ensure that reporting mandated by the Security Council to verify implementation of four separate UNSC Resolutions is not being manipulated towards political or military ends.
- ◆ The UN and ISSG must commit to and follow through on monitoring the implementation of any local ceasefire agreements that it helps to initiate. It is increasingly clear that local negotiations cannot be successful without strong and principled UN stewardship.
- ◆ The UN must take a stronger approach to aid convoys and immediately cease the practice of allowing besieging forces to block certain amounts and types of aid to be delivered. Convoy approvals should not be considered as "access" so long as it is the approving party's bombs that hinder delivery. A cessation of attacks must be considered an integral part of the granting of aid access.
- ◆ UN agencies must monitor the distribution of their aid deliveries through third party local monitors, to ensure that aid reaches the intended beneficiaries. Continuing reports of abnormalities in aid distribution should be investigated by the WFP and international donors to ensure that humanitarian supplies are reaching the intended beneficiaries. ◆

Annex I – Community List & Population Data

**Table of Siege Watch
Besieged Locations**

Governorate (Admin 1)	Community/ Neighborhood (Admin 4/5)	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Damascus	Jobar	1	Syrian Govt.	225
	Al-Qadam	3	Syrian Govt.	3,500
	Yarmouk	1	Syrian Govt. + armed groups	8,000
Rural Damascus	Arbin	2	Syrian Govt.	55,000
	Zamalka	2	Syrian Govt.	13,000
	Beit Sawa	2	Syrian Govt.	11,250
	Eftreis	2	Syrian Govt.	5,000
	Ein Tarma	2	Syrian Govt.	9,500
	Hamouriya	2	Syrian Govt.	24,000
	Hazzeh	2	Syrian Govt.	15,000
	Jisreen	2	Syrian Govt.	11,000
	Kafr Batna	2	Syrian Govt.	24,000
	Saqba	2	Syrian Govt.	19,000
	Babbila	3	Syrian Govt.	11,000
	Beit Sahm	3	Syrian Govt.	15,000
	Yelda	3	Syrian Govt.	16,500
	Douma	1	Syrian Govt.	140,000
	Hosh al-Dawahirah	2	Syrian Govt.	0
	Hosh Nasri	2	Syrian Govt.	?
	Al-Rayhan	2	Syrian Govt.	?
	Al-Shaifuniya	2	Syrian Govt.	?
	Harasta	2	Syrian Govt.	20,000
	Madeira	2	Syrian Govt.	8,000
	Misraba	2	Syrian Govt.	40,000
	Autaya	2	Syrian Govt.	1,000
	Beit Naim	2	Syrian Govt.	?
	Nashabiyeh	2	Syrian Govt.	3,000
	Al-Salhiyeh	2	Syrian Govt.	?
	Darayya	1	Syrian Govt.	8,300
	Moadamiya al-Sham	1	Syrian Govt.	45,000
	Hajar al-Aswad	2	Syrian Govt. + armed groups	11,000
	Zabadani	1	Syrian Govt.	1,000
	Madaya + Baqeen	1	Syrian Govt.	40,000
Deir ez-Zor	Deir ez-Zor	3	Syrian Govt. + ISIS	80,000
Homs	Al-Waer	1	Syrian Govt.	95,000
	Al-Houleh Region	3	Syrian Govt.	83,000

**Table of Siege Watch
Besieged Locations**

Governorate (Admin 1)	Community/ Neighborhood (Admin 4/5)	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
	Al-Rastan	3	Syrian Govt.	105,000
	Talbiseh	3	Syrian Govt.	64,000
Idlib	Fuaa	3	Armed groups	} 20,000
	Kafraya	3	Armed groups	
Total				1,005,275

Note: Orange names indicate besieged locations not recognized by UN OCHA as of August 2016 report.

**Table of Current Siege Watch
"Watchlist" Locations**

Governorate	Community/ Neighborhood	Siege Tier	Besieged by	Est. Current Population
Aleppo	Eastern Aleppo	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	326,000
Damascus	Barzeh	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	?
Rural Damascus	Al-Bilaliyeh	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Harasta al-Qantara	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Marj al-Sultan	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Nouleh	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Bzeina	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Hosh al-Farah	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Deir Assafir	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Zebdine	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	0
	Qudsaya	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	200,000
	Al-Hameh	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	35,000
	Wadi Barada	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	?
	Khan al-Sheih	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	12,000
	Al-Tal	Watchlist	Syrian Govt.	850,000
Total				1,423,000



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