

Syria Update

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Islamic State Claims Responsibility for Damascus Bombings

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW

Government of Syria Hosts Conference for Investment in Electricity and Renewables

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Government of Syria Increases Unsubsidised Fuel Prices

Price increases of up to 47 percent will hit consumers' pockets. [Pg 5](#)

Russian Air Defences in Syria Alleged to Have Fired at Israeli Warplanes

This marks a first amid tense relations between Israel and Russia over Ukraine. [Pg 6](#)

Opposition Factions Kill 12 Government-affiliated Soldiers in Western Aleppo

Heaviest death toll in pro-Government ranks from a rebel attack since March 2020. [Pg 6](#)

Northeast Syria Censuses Underway

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Syrians In Lebanon Placed Under Curfew During Elections

A two-day curfew was imposed on Syrian refugees living in the Nabatieh Governorate in Lebanon for fear of instability during local elections. [Pg 7](#)

Turkey Apprehends Thousands of Refugees in Istanbul in Preparation for Deportations

Increased deportations reflect an attempt by the Turkish authorities to outrun opposition parties amid rising anti-refugee sentiment. [Pg 8](#)

Head of Doctors' Syndicate Expresses Concern Over Lack of Medical Personnel

Poor salaries and living conditions are driving doctors away, leaving ordinary Syrians without the medical care they need. [Pg 8](#)

Government Announces Wheat Prices Amid Global Shortages and Domestic Competition

With prices slightly higher than market, the Government hopes to increase its competitiveness over domestic wheat. [Pg 9](#)

The image shows the result of a previous attack on a Government of Syria military bus in Damascus in 2021. Recent IS activity highlights the group's continued threat, with its ability to target Rural Damascus raising questions over its geographical scope and the strategies to counter it. Image courtesy of Euronews.



WEEKLY SYRIA UPDATE DIGEST



Crisis in Ukraine: Impacts for Syria

Russia's invasion of Ukraine risks upending the delicate status quo in Syria, another site of proxy conflict involving many of the same parties now at odds in Eastern Europe. This report explores the impacts that have already been felt in Syria, and it looks ahead to others that are still to come.

[READ MORE](#)



The Future of LGBTQ+ Syria and the Aid Response

LGBTQ+ Syrians face specific challenges, including healthcare disparities, legal discrimination, social prejudice, and the aid sector's unpreparedness to meet resulting needs. This report explores regional case studies to identify programming opportunities and entry points to meet these needs and empower and support LGBTQ+ Syrians.

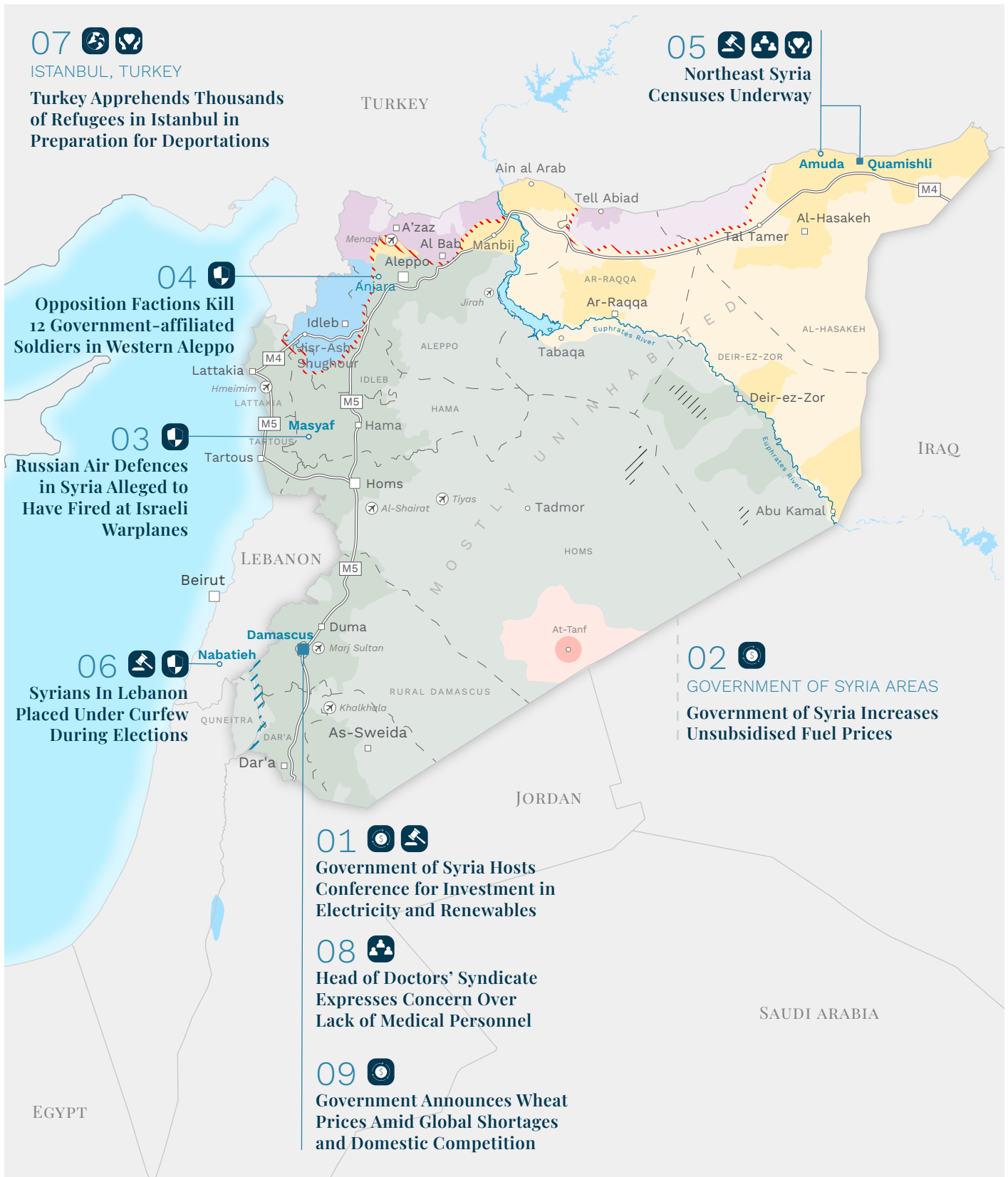
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The following is a brief synopsis of the *In-Depth Analysis* section:

On 16 May, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for two deadly bombings in the Deir Khabiye area of the Al-Kiswah countryside, south of Damascus. With IS long relegated to obscure desert outposts and hideaways in the badiya since its territorial defeat in 2019, the apparent threat of IS near Damascus raises questions over the group's geographical reach, its purported resurgence, and the commitment of the international community to counter-IS efforts. Navigating the twin aims of pressuring the Syrian Government and preventing an IS resurgence will require tough political decisions, particularly if IS follows through on its vow to escalate operations in Government of Syria territory.

The following is a brief synopsis of the *Whole-of-Syria Review*:

- 01 On 16 May, the Government of Syria hosted its first conference for investment in the electricity and renewable energies sector, with the Minister of Electricity hinting at the lifting of subsidies in the near future. Any removal of subsidies from electricity is likely to have widespread impacts across the Syrian economy.
- 02 On 17 May, the Syrian Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection announced increases in the price of fuel, citing the global increase in oil prices. Increased fuel costs run the risk of increasing social tensions, sparking protest, and will also increase aid sector operational costs.
- 03 On 16 May, Israeli media reported that Russian-controlled S-300 systems fired at Israeli warplanes during the 13 May Israeli strike near Masyaf. The engagement was likely intended as a signal of displeasure rather than an indicator of any serious threat or policy change.
- 04 On 13 May, 12 members of Syrian Government-affiliated forces were killed when their bus was targeted with a rocket by opposition factions in the western countryside of Aleppo. Aid actors should be aware of the risk of violence as local armed actors in Syria remain on high alert.
- 05 On 17 May, the Autonomous Administration launched a census in Al-Amouda and Quamishli. Though undoubtedly important, it risks entrenching disparities, particularly if suspicious communities fail to embrace the process.
- 06 On 11 May, Governor Hasan Fakhri of Nabatieh, Lebanon implemented a two-day curfew for Syrian refugees during the country's elections. Donors should therefore closely monitor political developments in Lebanon, as Syrians may face increasing pressure to return to Syria.
- 07 Security forces in Istanbul arrested over 17,000 'illegal' refugees during one week. The crackdown is a grim reflection of the increase in anti-refugee sentiment in the country, itself both a product and driver of politicking in advance of next year's election.
- 08 On 17 May, the Head of the Syrian Doctors' Syndicate Khalid Mousa stated that some medical specialties will face "extinction" in the country. Low wages and poor economic and living conditions continue to push many abroad, leaving ordinary Syrians without access to the medical care they need.
- 09 On 14 May, the Government of Syria announced the prices it will pay for wheat in 2022, which are slightly higher than global market rates. Damascus's options for importing wheat have narrowed due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, raising the stakes in competition over domestic wheat.



07

ISTANBUL, TURKEY
Turkey Apprehends Thousands of Refugees in Istanbul in Preparation for Deportations

05

Northeast Syria Censuses Underway

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Opposition Factions Kill 12 Government-affiliated Soldiers in Western Aleppo

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Russian Air Defences in Syria Alleged to Have Fired at Israeli Warplanes

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Syrians in Lebanon Placed Under Curfew During Elections

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**GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA AREAS
 Government of Syria Increases Unsubsidised Fuel Prices**

01

Government of Syria Hosts Conference for Investment in Electricity and Renewables

08

Head of Doctors' Syndicate Expresses Concern Over Lack of Medical Personnel

09

Government Announces Wheat Prices Amid Global Shortages and Domestic Competition

Population Density

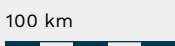
- Major city (750,000+)
- City (100,000+)
- Town (25,000+)
- 🏠 IDP Camp
- Governorate
- 🛩 Military airbase

Territorial Control

- Government of Syria
- Syrian Democratic Forces
- Syrian National Army
- US-Backed Opposition Groups
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
- ▨ Islamic State presence
- ▨ Contested area
- ▨ UN Disengagement Observer Force

Type Of Incident

- 👤 Humanitarian Issues
- 👥 Social
- 🌐 Regional Intervention
- 🛡 Security
- 💰 Economy
- ⚖ Governance



IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

On 16 May, the Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for two deadly [bombings](#) in the Deir Khabiyeh area of the Al-Kiswah countryside, south of Damascus. The explosions killed two members of local militia committees affiliated with the Fourth Division and wounded one. The attack followed the committees' [request](#) that the Fourth Division protect them after it withdrew its checkpoints from the town at the end of 2021. Syrian official media did not state that the attack targeted military vehicles – the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) [reported](#) that three civilians were wounded at dawn by an explosive device “planted by terrorists while a car was passing in the village of Deir Khabiyeh.” Deir Khabiyeh’s mayor Ayman Najjar [told](#) local media that one of the explosive devices was attached to a vehicle, and that the second exploded shortly after the first. With IS long relegated to obscure desert outposts and hideaways in the badiya since its territorial defeat in 2019, an attack so close to the capital in Rural Damascus raises new questions about its geographical reach, its purported resurgence, and the safety and stability of core areas of Government of Syria-held territory, as well as international counter-IS strategies.

Will it ever be safe?

The planting of the two explosive devices marks an unprecedented infiltration of the local Deir Khabiyeh committees. The previous IS attack near Damascus occurred in September 2021, and targeted a gas pipeline feeding the Deir Ali power plant, causing widespread power outages (see: [Syria Update 20 September 2021](#)). Although not claimed by IS, other explosions inside Damascus and its vicinity over the past year cast serious doubt over the Government of Syria’s ability to maintain long-term stability within the Syrian capital. In February this year, explosions occurred inside Damascus City allegedly targeting Government of Syria military personnel (see: [Syria Update 21 February 2022](#)), while [another](#) targeted the Al-Kiswah District Manager in April. In the latter half of 2021, explosions targeted Government of Syria military forces inside Damascus

City, killing and injuring dozens (see: [Syria Update 9 August 2021](#) and [Syria Update 25 October 2021](#)). Certain Western politicians and the Syrian Government alike have propagated the notion of a relatively secure Damascus in order to push for the return of refugees, the latter hoping that refugee return would grant it access to much-needed funds. Ongoing attacks undermine such claims, harming the prospects of long-term stability and security in Syria.

IS pledges further attacks: another aid conundrum?

IS’s ability to reach territories in various zones of control highlights the group’s far-reaching threat. Following its recent attack in Deir Khabiyeh, the IS-linked Amaq News Agency stated, “the soldiers of the Caliphate were able to plant two explosive devices in two cars belonging to the Alawite militias in the town of Deir Khabiyeh in the southwestern countryside of Damascus,” and vowed to launch further operations against the Fourth Division in the coming days. While hard to verify, such threats might nudge actors looking to undermine the possibility of an IS resurgence to expand their thinking.

The apparent threat of IS near Damascus raises questions over the commitment of the international community to counter-IS efforts. The recent US sanctions waiver for opposition-controlled areas in northeast Syria (see: [Syria Update 16 May 2022](#)) was announced with the explicit aim of providing investment in areas of former IS control to prevent the group’s resurgence. Excluded from the waiver, and by extension from this part of the strategy for preventing an IS resurgence, are the vast swathes of territory the group once controlled across central and eastern Syria, as well as pockets of the south, which are now under the control of the Government of Syria. Navigating the twin aims of pressuring the Government of Syria and preventing an IS resurgence will require tough political decisions, particularly if IS follows through on its vow to escalate operations in Government of Syria territory.

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW



01 DAMASCUS

Government of Syria Hosts Conference for Investment in Electricity and Renewables

On 16 May, the Government of Syria hosted its first conference for investment in the electricity and renewable energies sector, concluding with a list of recommendations that include the reform and rationalisation of tariffs, encouraging private sector involvement in electricity production, and prioritising renewable energy projects and equipment in terms of securing foreign currency. In addition, Minister of Economy Samer al-Khalil announced a draft law to exempt all goods used in the renewable energy sector from customs duties. Nevertheless, in a recent speech, Minister of Electricity Ghassan al-Zamil hinted at lifting subsidies in the near future: “as long as the electricity subsidy remains this large, the ability to raise energy efficiency will be compromised.”

Alternating currents

Electricity rationing and frequent outages have plagued Syria since the outbreak of the conflict, as production has collapsed amid a lack of inputs and widespread destruction of infrastructure. Syria has gone from being a net exporter of electricity to suffering from severe shortages, with estimated production of 1,500–2,000 megawatts per day against a need of 5,000. Recent fuel shortages may be somewhat allayed by the new credit line from Tehran (see: [Syria Update 16 May 2022](#)), but sanctions continue to prevent outside investment in restoring Syria’s electricity network and productive capacity. While a new fund was established in October 2021 to support the use of renewable energies and raise energy efficiency, few investments have been announced. Any removal of subsidies from electricity is likely to have widespread impacts across the Syrian economy, with the cost-of-living crisis already exacerbated by energy price increases late last year (see: [Syria Update 8 November 2021](#)). Food and industrial production will likely be hit hard, with businesses closing or passing on costs to consumers.



02 GOVERNMENT OF SYRIA AREAS

Government of Syria Increases Unsubsidised Fuel Prices

On 17 May, the Syrian Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection announced increases in the price of fuel of up to 47 percent, citing the global hike in oil prices. While the price of subsidised fuel was not increased, its allocation period was raised to 25 litres per 10 days for private cars (from 7 days) and per 6 days for public cars (from 4 days). Director of Operations and Maintenance Issa Issa of Mahrukat, the state-owned distributor of petroleum products, portended the increase, stating, “oil today has turned from a supporter of the Treasury to a drain on it,” and suggesting the cost of producing a litre of gasoline or diesel is around 4,000–4,500 Syrian pounds (SYP).

Fuel Type	Old Price (SYP)	New Price (SYP)	Subsidised Price (SYP)
Octane 85	2500	3500	1100
Octane 90	3000	4000	2500
Industrial and Commercial Diesel	1700	2500	500

Not the first, and likely not the last

Fuel price increases have been a recurring event in Syria throughout the conflict, and are likely to continue with subsidies firmly in the crosshairs for budgetary cuts (see: [Syria in 2022: New Approaches for an Evolving Crisis](#)). Queues and overcrowded forecourts have become commonplace as Syria has grappled with fuel shortages amid global oil price instability. The increase in fuel prices impacts consumer pockets both directly (by raising taxi fares) and indirectly (by increasing market prices for goods transported across the country), exacerbating the dire living conditions and cost-of-living crisis borne by the Syrian population. While the Government of Syria has few options but to cut subsidies and raise prices amid its poor fiscal outlook, it runs the risk of increasing social tensions and sparking protest (see: [Syria Update 14 February 2022](#)). Increased fuel costs will also impact aid sector operational costs, which will further squeeze already limited budgets.



03 MASYAF

Russian Air Defences in Syria Alleged to Have Fired at Israeli Warplanes

On 16 May, Israel's Channel 13 News alleged that Russian S-300 air defence systems stationed in Syria had [fired](#) at Israeli warplanes during a 13 May Israeli Air Force (IAF) airstrike against likely Iran-affiliated targets near Masyaf, Syria (see: [Syria Update 16 May 2022](#)). The engagement allegedly occurred as the IAF warplanes were departing the vicinity, and the Russian systems reportedly never achieved target lock; no IAF aircraft were hit. This would constitute the first time the system – which is controlled and operated by Russia – has been activated against Israeli attacks. Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister, Mikhail Bogdanov, [denied](#) the allegations.

A shot across the nose cone

Given the lack of target lock, it is almost certain that the engagement was not intended to hit. It should not be seen as indicating any serious change in Russian policy, but rather as a (very expensive) signal of displeasure directed at Israel as well as a feeble signal of support to Syria and Iran. While Israel has maintained warmer relations with Russia than has the West in recent years, tensions have been ever-present over Russia's unwillingness – and inability – to seriously curb Iranian influence in Syria, as well as over Russia's transfer of the S-300 system to Syria in the first place in 2018. Those tensions have [escalated](#) in [recent months](#) over the Russian invasion of Ukraine. With Russia increasingly embattled geopolitically, humiliated militarily, and struggling to maintain relevance in Syria as a mediator between pugnacious local partners on multiple sides of the conflict, the S-300 engagement in Syria last week was likely an attempt to reassert Russian relevance. However, given the weakness of Russia's position, the action will not be seen as indicating a credible threat or policy shift by any party, and is unlikely to change the calculus in either Tel Aviv or Tehran. Anyone believing this represents Russia's ability, or will, to take forceful action against any party in Syria should take note that Russian President Vladimir Putin and his armed forces have bigger problems [elsewhere](#).

04 ANJARA, WESTERN ALEPPO
COUNTRYSIDE

Opposition Factions Kill 12 Government-affiliated Soldiers in Western Aleppo

On 13 May, media sources [reported](#) that 12 members of Syrian Government-affiliated forces were killed and 14 others injured when their bus was targeted with a rocket by opposition factions near Anjara in the western countryside of Aleppo. The news was confirmed by [SANA](#) and the pro-Government radio station Sham FM, which [claimed](#) that the soldiers were targeted by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) operatives. However, the Syrian National Army (SNA) [confirmed](#) that its forces were responsible for the attack. Syrian Government and Russian forces [retaliated](#) by launching intensive airstrikes against HTS positions in the western countryside of Aleppo.

A thinly stretched truce

The death toll is the heaviest reported in pro-Government ranks from a rebel attack since a truce agreement brokered by Russia and Turkey in March 2020 which has largely held despite sporadic attacks by both sides, including continued Russian air raids. The attack took place a day after Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Government of Syria [shelling](#) of Al-Bab and Jarabulus cities in the eastern countryside of Aleppo. It also comes a week after media [reported](#) that six members of Jaysh al-Nasr, a faction affiliated with the opposition's National Front, were killed and five others injured after they were targeted by Government forces near the village of Qahira, northwest of Hama. The areas around Aleppo remain a hotspot of instability split across several zones of control (see: [Syria Update 7 March 2022](#)). While the situation is unlikely to escalate into a large-scale military operation, aid actors should be aware of the risk of violence as local armed actors in Syria remain on high alert.

■ *The areas around Aleppo remain a hotspot of instability split across several zones of control*



05 AMUDA AND QUAMISHLI

Northeast Syria Censuses Underway

On 17 May, Syrian media [reported](#) that the Office of Planning, Development and Statistics in northeast Syria had begun collecting census data in Quamishli and Amuda through the local Comin officers. Census takers were reportedly tasked with identifying household residents, recording current addresses, employment and marital status, and living conditions. Autonomous Administration offices reportedly suspended operations to facilitate the census, which was conducted in Al-Malikeyeh (Derik) earlier this month.

Down for the count?

Carrying out the census further formalises the Autonomous Administration’s regional authority and may shape outcomes as diverse as local elections, service and aid provision, and resource allocation. Census data are undoubtedly important to efficient governance, particularly in a Syrian context in which no formal nationwide census has been conducted since 2004. Nonetheless, there are causes for concern. Draft versions of the “social contract” for northeast Syria specify that political representation and a specific region’s “share of resources” are to be determined based on population data, presumably collected through such a census. There is a distinct risk that many communities that are already reluctant to participate in political and administrative processes linked to the Autonomous Administration may be further marginalised if they fail to embrace the process.

There is a distinct risk that many communities that are already reluctant to participate in political and administrative processes linked to the Autonomous Administration may be further marginalised if they fail to embrace the process.



06 NABATIEH GOVERNORATE, LEBANON

Syrians In Lebanon Placed Under Curfew During Elections

On 11 May, the governor of the Nabatieh Governorate in Lebanon, Hasan Fakhri, [issued](#) a circular to municipalities to enforce a two-day curfew on Syrian refugees. Syrians were advised to stock up on food and essentials and to stay home from 06:00 on 14 May to 08:00 on 16 May, with exceptions for emergencies such as urgent medical care. The decision came ahead of the general elections that took place on 15 May, in which allies of [Hezbollah and Syrian Government](#), including Talal Arsalan, Faisal Karamani, and Asaad Hardan, were replaced by independents, who won 13 seats in total. The circular faced a backlash from [human rights activists](#) who perceived it as an illegal and racist measure with no legitimate basis. Fakhri responded to these accusations by claiming that this was a security procedure, and that his governorate had carried out similar measures without facing backlash, including instating a 10-day curfew last summer during the Islamic holiday of Ashura. There are reports of other governorates, including Beqaa, imposing the same curfew.

Democracy for some

The Lebanese government has issued various discriminatory policies against Syrian refugees, and Lebanese President Michel Aoun has [called](#) for Syrians to return to Syria, regardless of the consequences they may face. The new government will likely perpetuate this discourse, adding pressure for Syrians to return. Over [330 municipalities](#) have imposed curfews on Syrians since January 2020. Despite parliamentary changes triggered by Lebanese elections, it is likely that the new government will remain close to the Government of Syria. Although donors may welcome independent parliamentarians as a possible check against the Lebanese government, policies regarding refugee return and rapprochement will likely remain, if not intensify. Modest political developments in Lebanon will not change the reality that Syrians in Lebanon face widespread hostility. Donors should closely monitor political developments in Lebanon, as Syrians may face increasing pressure to return to Syria.



07 ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Turkey Apprehends Thousands of Refugees in Istanbul in Preparation for Deportations

On 17 May, Syrian media [reported](#) that security forces in Istanbul during the previous week had arrested over 17,000 ‘illegal’ refugees, who were handed over to the Immigration Department in preparation for their deportation. Large numbers of Syrians in Istanbul are being deported to Syria for minor reasons. The scale of the crackdown led to a notable incident in which an Egyptian man was sent to Idleb by mistake. Hundreds of Afghans and Iranians without papers have also been deported. The Turkish security services have launched a large-scale campaign against “irregular immigrants” in major provinces, including Istanbul, against the backdrop of escalating political and popular anti-refugee sentiment. Such is the apparent commitment to a policy of return that visitors to the Istanbul Governorate’s [website](#) are immediately greeted by a 10-minute video from the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, explaining the country’s strategy for returns.

Potential rights violations

The crackdown on refugees who have committed minor violations and on procedural pretexts is a grim reflection of the increase in anti-refugee sentiment in the country, itself both a product and driver of politicking in advance of next year’s election. While they have recently spiked in number, such deportations are not new; every month, hundreds of Syrians are [returned](#) to Idleb. Amid this escalation, Turkish authorities have [deported four Afghans](#) to Idleb, who were arrested by HTS in March. On 22 April, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that as soon as “we create a safe and secure environment, refugees will return voluntarily” (see: [Syria Update 3 May 2022](#)), speaking to domestic political pressures and providing a justification for Turkish policies in Syria. Earlier in April, the Director General of Combating Unorganised Migration and Deportation Affairs at the Turkish Migration Administration [revealed](#) the absorptive capacity of the deportation centres, indicating that they would have the capacity to host 20,000 by May. Areas considered safe for return by Turkey are anything but, with regu-

lar clashes between the various armed forces in northern Syria. With the potential for rights violations high amid seemingly arbitrary arrests and deportations, aid actors should monitor the situation closely, with legal advocacy and support needed.



08 DAMASCUS, SYRIA

Head of Doctors’ Syndicate Expresses Concern Over Lack of Medical Personnel

On 17 May, the Head of the Syrian Doctors’ Syndicate Khalid Mousa [stated](#) that some medical specialties face “extinction” in Syria, including forensic medicine, vascular surgery, nephrology, and anaesthesia, unless the Government intervenes to halt the emigration of Syrian doctors. In Rural Damascus Governorate, for example, there is only one vascular surgeon and no thoracic surgeons, while only six doctors in Syria took the board exam in anaesthesia this year. If the situation continues to worsen, Mousa stated that the Government may have to attract specialised physicians from abroad.

Doctors crossing borders

Although the Syrian Government is offering financial incentives for doctors to remain in the country, low wages and poor economic and living conditions continue to push many abroad. In Government-controlled areas, the average salary for a doctor in the public sector is [124,000 SYP](#) (around 31 USD at black market rates). Government incentives to motivate medical specialists to remain in the country have included disbursing a monthly bonus of 200,000 SYP (around 50 USD) to anaesthesiologists (instated [February 2022](#)) and increasing their salary to 100,000 SYP (around 25 USD). However, this falls short of addressing other factors that caused this phenomenon. Political factors, ignored by Mousa, have played a significant role in reducing the number of medical personnel in Syria, which include arbitrary arrest or membership revocation from the Doctors’ Syndicate for allegations such as treating wounded anti-Government fighters, ‘illegally’ emigrating from Syria, or failing to pay required fees. The targeting of medical cadres was also in some cases a delib-

erate aspect of reconciliation agreements of opposition areas (see: [What Remains?: A Postmortem Analysis of the Cross-Border Response in Dar'a](#)). Unless financial and political factors are addressed, Syrian doctors will continue to leave the country in search of safer and more financially beneficial opportunities — leaving ordinary Syrians without the medical care they need.



09 DAMASCUS, SYRIA

Government Announces Wheat Prices Amid Global Shortages and Domestic Competition

On 14 May, the Government of Syria announced the prices it will pay wheat farmers for their produce in 2022, showing a significant increase compared to last year. [Reportedly](#) based on instructions from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, The Annual Conference for Grains, headed by Prime Minister Hussein Arnous, relayed that it would pay 2,000 SYP per kilogramme of wheat produced in territories under its control, and 2,100 SYP per kilogramme produced in northern territories outside its control (approximately 0.51 USD and 0.53 USD as of the 20 May black market rate). In a rare occurrence, this would result in Government purchase prices slightly surpassing global prices, set at approximately 0.45 USD per kilogramme. However, the high production costs of wheat in Syria may not make the Government's offer sufficiently attractive to farmers.

Stalking wheat

Damascus's options to import wheat have become considerably restricted as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, raising the stakes in competition over domestic wheat. The invasion's impact on global wheat prices and supply chains cannot be understated, significantly increasing global competition over the valuable grain (see: [Syria Update 7 March 2022](#)). Fearing global shortages' impact on domestic wheat supplies, some governments, such as India most recently, restricted exports of various products affected by the Ukraine crisis to prioritise domestic demand. With most wheat-producing lands in Syria outside

Government control (see: [Syria Update 21 March 2022](#)), Damascus has no control over how wheat there is sold, to whom, and at what price, and will thus have to compete over access. The Autonomous Administration in northeast Syria, the Salvation Government in Idleb, and the Interim Government in northern Syria, the three major actors competing over Syria wheat supply, have yet to announce their purchase prices. The head of the General Union of Peasants [stated](#) that up to 1.25 million tonnes of wheat will be produced across Syria this season, warning that it will be insufficient as Syria “needs more than 2 million tonnes [of wheat] for bread [production] alone.” Aid actors will likely face unprecedented livelihoods needs and food insecurity over the next year. With funds to Syria stretched thin, aid actors might have to be more creative than ever.

OPEN SOURCE ANNEX

Open Source Annex

The Open Source Annex highlights key media reports, research, and primary documents that are not examined in the Syria Update. For a continuously updated collection of such records, searchable by geography, theme, and conflict actor – and curated to meet the needs of decision-makers – please see COAR’s comprehensive online search platform [Alexandrina](#).

Note: These records are solely the responsibility of their creators. COAR does not necessarily endorse – or confirm – the viewpoints expressed by these sources.

Syria Brief – Political Update – 16 May 2022

What does it say? Etana’s digest covers the recent Government amnesty; Syrian Democratic Council (SDC)-led dialogue in Stockholm; intra-opposition politics within the Syrian Opposition Council; and stagnation within the constitutional committee process.

Reading between the lines: The report notes, accurately, that political affairs in Syria have ground largely to a halt, and neither slow progress toward a political solution to the conflict nor a major change is foreseen in the near-term.

Source: Etana
Language: English
Date: 16 May 2022

Al-Assad Issues Decree to Reform Supreme Constitutional Court

What does it say? On Sunday 15 May, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued decree no. 127, which retained 7 existing members of the 11-member Supreme Constitutional Court and added 4 others.

Reading between the lines: While the reasoning behind the reform is unclear, one possibility is that it represents a shift on the part of the Government of Syria away from wartime governance models, with an eye toward adapting to a de facto post conflict environment.

Source: Syria TV
Language: Arabic
Date: 17 May 2022

Panic in northern Syria as leishmaniasis, TB and measles return

What does it say? A number of diseases have begun to spread in northern Syria, particularly in displaced persons camps, as a result of poor sanitary conditions.

Reading between the lines: Population density, unsanitary conditions, and limited access to medical care are all contributing to the spread of diseases and unnecessary illnesses and deaths. Sanitation and healthcare needs are particularly stark in northern Syria.

Source: The New Arab
Language: English
Date: 17 May 2022

EU external borders in April: Detections on the rise

What does it say? The first four months of 2022 saw 57,800 irregular border crossings into the EU, according to Frontex, the European border control agency. Syrians were reportedly among the major migrant groups in the three crossing points that witnessed the largest year-over-year increase in activity: the Western Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the English Channel.

Reading between the lines: While the number of crossings is dwarfed by the millions of Ukrainians (not counted in these numbers) who have entered the EU since the Russian invasion in February, the data are a reminder that the conflict in Syria continues to generate fallout for Europe, and therefore should be set on the backburner.

Source: Frontex
Language: English
Date: 16 May 2022

“The Most Dangerous Border”: Jordan accuses the Syrian Regime of Supporting Drug Smugglers

What does it say? Jordanian Government officials have accused Government of Syria forces of abetting the activity of well-armed gangs smuggling drugs across the Jordan-Syria border, resulting in repeated clashes that have turned it into the Kingdom’s deadliest frontier.

Reading between the lines: Despite stepped-up security at the border and diplomatic efforts to compel the Syrian Government to action, the lucrative drug trade across the border is unlikely to abate any time soon – cementing drug trafficking, especially of Captagon, as a major issue in Syrian affairs for the foreseeable future.

Source: Syria TV
Language: Arabic
Date: 18 May 2022

The Wartime and Post-Conflict Syria project (WPCS) is funded by the European Union and implemented through a partnership between the European University Institute (Middle East Directions Programme) and the Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). WPCS will provide operational and strategic analysis to policymakers and programmers concerning prospects, challenges, trends, and policy options with respect to a mid-conflict and post-conflict Syria. WPCS also aims to stimulate new approaches and policy responses to the Syrian conflict through a regular dialogue between researchers, policymakers and donors, and implementers, as well as to build a new network of Syrian researchers who will contribute to research informing international policy and practice related to their country.

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