

REACH Situation Overview: Intentions and Displacement from Aleppo city

11 February 2016

REACH Informing more effective humanitarian action

Since February 1, 2016, approximately 52,000 individuals have fled their homes in northern Aleppo governorate in response to escalating conflict.¹ If conflict spreads south to more urbanized areas, significantly larger displacement is possible as conditions inside the city of Aleppo worsen. OCHA has estimated that one third to one half of the current population of non-Government of Syria controlled eastern Aleppo city may flee if the conflict advances—a figure representing 100,000 to 150,000 individuals.² Moreover, in the event that access to eastern Aleppo city is blocked, approximately 300,000 people could be cut off from humanitarian aid.³

The conflict in the city of Aleppo has been ongoing since the summer of 2012, leaving the city effectively divided into two sections, with a combined population of approximately 1,021,000.⁴ The vast majority of eastern Aleppo's inhabitants left the city early on in the conflict, while the remaining population consists largely of vulnerable households that have seen their resources eroded following years of conflict and multiple displacement. Based on household-level data collected by REACH in March 2015, over half (55%) of eastern Aleppo's population was found to consist of internally displaced persons (IDPs), 62% of whom had been displaced more than once.⁵

In order to inform humanitarian planning, on 10-11 February, REACH conducted a rapid assessment of displacement patterns from the city to date, and on the future intentions of those who remain in eastern Aleppo. Information presented in this document was drawn from qualitative interviews with a total of 32 key informants in the city sectors of Masken Hanano, Kady Asker, Bustan al Qasr, Ansari, and Tarek al Bab (see Map 1).⁶ Key informants included local council members, local relief committee members, activists, journalists, medical staff, and Syrian NGO workers.

Key Findings

While recent displacement in Aleppo governorate has affected rural areas, between 10-20% of households in urban eastern Aleppo are also estimated to have fled in anticipation that an escalation of conflict may soon affect humanitarian conditions inside the city. While conflict and insecurity have been the main push factors for populations fleeing rural Aleppo, most movement from eastern Aleppo City has been in response to fears that entry points and supply lines will be cut off in the near future.

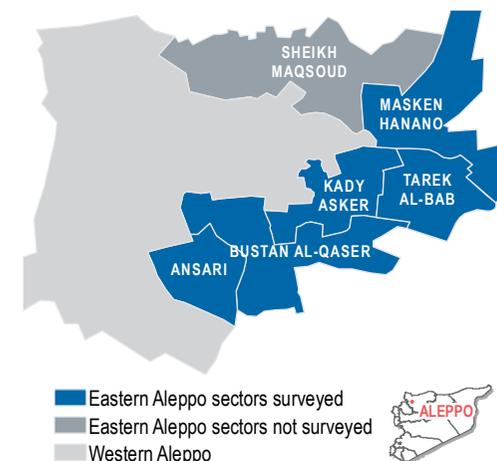
Households fleeing Aleppo have reportedly used the same route to leave the city, before

branching off into several others. Typically, households have travelled to Kfar Hamra, Babis, Hur, and onto Anjara. Once households reach Anjara, an area considered relatively secure, they have tended to go to Daret Azza or Dana before proceeding to villages on the border with Turkey. Less commonly, households are also reported to have travelled south to Atrareb, and on towards Idlib City. For households that have fled, their first priority has been to find an area that is secure, before making longer-term plans.

Departures from Aleppo to date have been organized by individual households and not by groups of families or relief organizations. While in northern parts of rural Aleppo Governorate, some local village councils provided transportation to assist with evacuations, councils and relief committees in eastern Aleppo city anticipate that they will not be able to provide similar forms of assistance. Without assistance, households have generally used their own private transportation, and in some cases, taxis and minibuses. From eastern Aleppo, households are paying approximately 500 Syrian pounds (SYP) (1.20 USD) to reach rural areas, and 2000 SYP (4.75 USD) to reach Bab al-Hawa at the Turkish border. Taxis cost approximately 20,000 SYP (47.60 USD) to leave the city for rural areas, and 30,000 SYP (70.40 USD) to the border.

Individual households have typically left as

Map 1: Assessed areas of eastern Aleppo City



complete family units. However, in some cases, women and children have fled, while male household members stay behind. In most cases took only what they could fit in their own vehicles. So far, those that have left the city are reported to represent a cross-section of households with the means to do so.

Intentions

Key informants reported that if conflict spreads south from current locations in rural Aleppo, fears of a siege will escalate and the risk of large-scale displacement from eastern Aleppo will accelerate significantly. More specifically, if conflict intensifies and shows signs of advancing towards the main

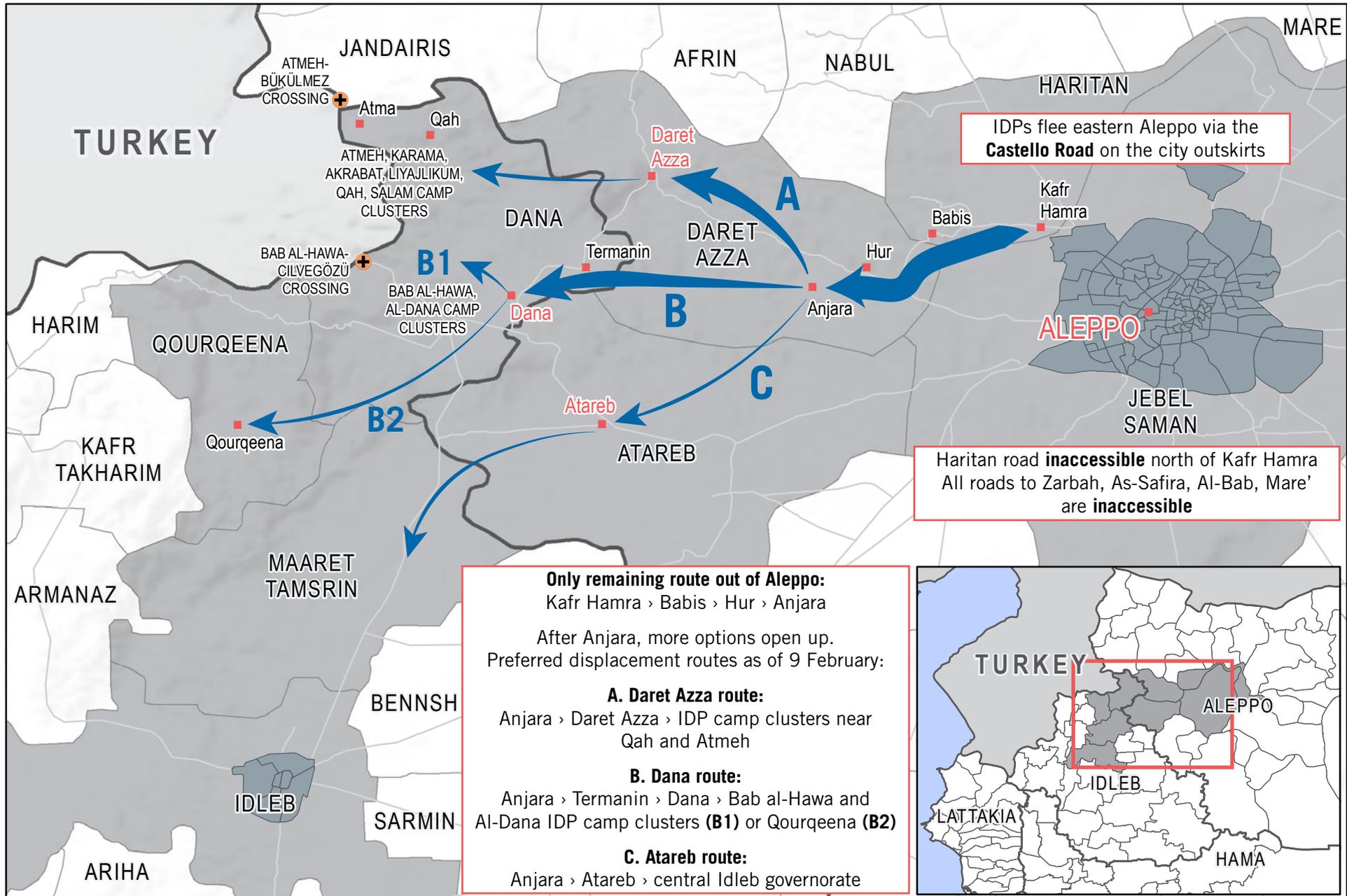
1 CCCM data; 2. Ibid. 3 OCHA. "Turkey/ Syria: Flash Update Developments in Aleppo Governorate" February 8, 2016.

4 Humanitarian Needs Overview Assessment Data. August, 2015.

5 REACH 2015. "Assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo", Syria, June 2015.

6 These sectors are conglomerations of neighbourhoods, defined during the Syria Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA) conducted by OCHA, the Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP) and REACH in October 2014.

Map 2: Reported displacement routes from eastern Aleppo City



road to eastern Aleppo, **key informants report that approximately 50-70% of the current population remaining in eastern Aleppo would be likely to leave.** While conflict activity has not yet spread south, the fear that it will do so in the near future is influencing future intentions.

Most of the households that have already left had incomes and some level of savings. This is also the case for those who would leave in the event that conflict escalates. While these households are able to afford the costs associated with transportation out of the city, diminished resources following years of conflict may have severe effects on their medium and longer-term abilities to cope with displacement.

In the event that the situation in rural Aleppo deteriorates, those that are likely to remain in the city fall into two main groups. The first includes the most vulnerable strata of the city's population, with the most limited access to livelihoods and assistance, and who lack the means to leave. This group was estimated by KIs to make up approximately one third of eastern Aleppo's current population. The second group include those with more resources, who members plan to stay to protect their property against potential damage and looting.

Households fleeing Aleppo in the future will follow the same routes as those that have already left. Subsequent waves of displaced populations are also likely to continue to seek refuge in areas where others have recently fled, particularly in camps along the border

with Turkey. However, for a majority of those fleeing, the first priority would be simply to leave Aleppo and to make it to a safer area. Once in areas considered secure, such as Anjara, IDPs will formulate longer-term plans. IDPs are drawn towards camps by the potential to access food and shelter, as well as the fact that their proximity to the border may allow them to serve as staging points for households that plan to continue on to Turkey.

Needs

Local councils and relief committees reported preparing for increasingly isolated conditions, but only have limited supply stocks at their disposal. In some neighbourhoods, food and medical supplies stockpiled by local councils and relief committees are estimated to last up to 6-8 weeks and in others for only 2-3 weeks. Stockpiles of fuel are smaller and will last only 1-3 weeks in most neighbourhoods. Across eastern Aleppo, reported needs were largely consistent across sectors and geographic areas, with key informants emphasising the need for food and protection above all else.

With supply lines still open at the time of writing, food needs are based largely on expectations of what will happen in the event of the collapse of current supply routes. Although there have been some reports of individual households hoarding goods, key informants reported that such behaviour has not been common. Households may lack the means to make substantial purchases of goods, and may also be waiting to decide whether or not to leave. As a result, **prices for most food and NFI commodities have not increased**

dramatically. However, major price rises (of approximately 50%) have been reported for fuels such as diesel, primarily due to supply-chain disruptions.

In the event that humanitarian access is disrupted and conflict escalates, reduced flows of food aid could have severe consequences for the remaining population of eastern Aleppo. In a household assessment conducted in March 2015, REACH found that 84% of households had received humanitarian aid in the preceding month, and 22% relied on this as their primary livelihood. Similarly, 70% of households depended on humanitarian aid as their primary food source, while only 23% relied on food they purchased themselves at markets.⁷ Efforts to monitor market conditions in eastern Aleppo through the northern Syria Market Monitoring Exercise have shown consistent shortages in key commodities when markets in the city were accessible to assessment.

Conclusion

Residents of eastern Aleppo city have begun to leave in anticipation that the conflict in surrounding rural areas will soon affect the movement of goods and people into and out of Aleppo city. While the deteriorating security situation remains the primary push factor, and relative security is the primary reason for moving elsewhere, once in a safer location, other pull factors are likely to become increasingly important. With few resources after years of conflict, IDPs' own supplies are limited, and will require humanitarian assistance and services. Key sites where

assistance is provided are already attracting the majority of displaced households.

In the event that the situation deteriorates further, key informants are confident that significant new displacement from Aleppo could occur following similar patterns to those outlined above, adding significant burden to existing displacement sites and host communities.

For those left behind, disruption to access and supply routes would further exacerbate the humanitarian situation in eastern Aleppo. **With current stocks predicted to last for little more than one month, the situation of those remaining in the city is likely to be critical.** REACH will continue to monitor the situation in eastern Aleppo and Aleppo Governorate, in order to provide updated information on trends related to displacement and access to humanitarian assistance.

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information, you can write to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

Visit www.reach-initiative.org and follow us @REACH_info.

⁷ REACH 2015. "Assessment of Food Security and Livelihoods in Eastern Aleppo", Syria, June 2015.