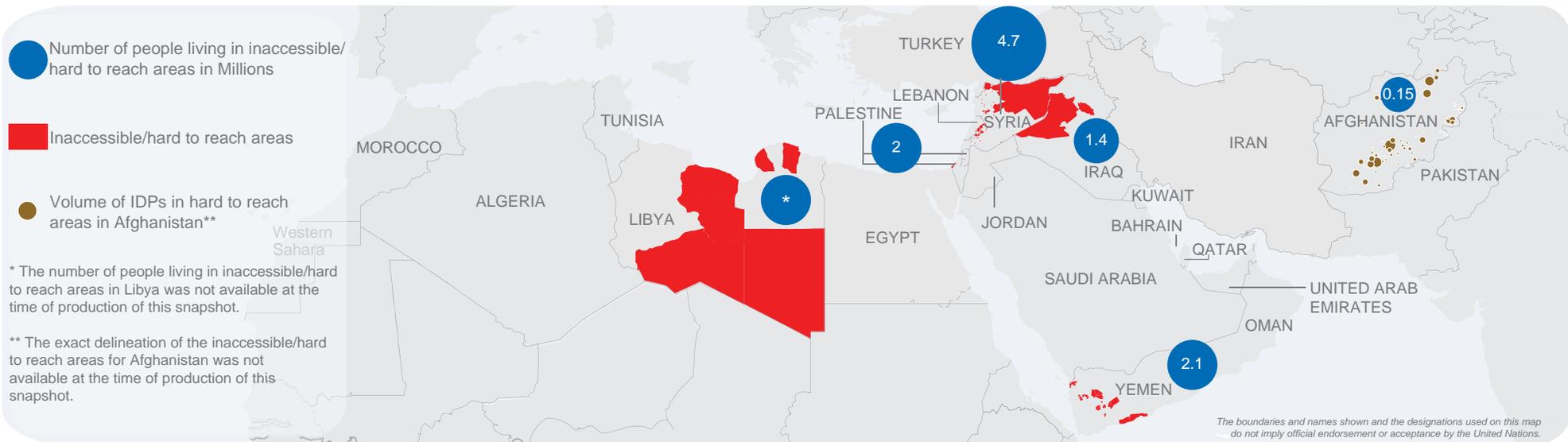


AFGHANISTAN Delivering humanitarian services in hard-to-access areas remains extremely challenging. Humanitarian access is hampered by two major obstacles: a lack of reliable information on humanitarian needs in inaccessible areas and challenges in gaining access to areas beset by insecurity and conflict. Security threats facing aid workers are on the rise. In January 2017, there were 42 incidents related to aid workers compared to 17 in the same period last year. Surveys indicated that there are greater humanitarian needs in hard-to-access areas in the categories of food, WASH, shelter, health and education. Moreover, people living in these areas, particularly IDPs, are more likely to report protecting issues involving gender-based violence, forced marriage, eviction and unequal distribution of aid. In total, 9.3 M people are in need of assistance, 3.9 M of which are living in hard to access areas.

LIBYA Operating in Libya remains hazardous and unpredictable due to multiple factors including presence of mines and explosive devices, threats of abductions and kidnapping of international personnel, proliferation of armed groups with no clear chain of command, and ongoing conflict and violence. Following the Sirt military operation by government forces, ISIS lost control of large areas in Libya, yet it still maintains a few cells in different parts of the country, which poses serious threats to the international presence. Additional factors hindering humanitarian access include such physical constraints, such as destruction of road infrastructure due to the fighting, as well as administrative constraints. These factors, freedom of movement of humanitarian organisations, personnel and/or goods into and within the affected areas is often restricted.

IRAQ Active conflict and safety concerns in areas controlled by non-state armed groups remain key access constraints in Iraq. However, in the second half of 2016 and first quarter of 2017 humanitarian access continued to improve, especially within the Governorate of Ninewa, following the offensive by the Iraqi Security Forces in June 2016. Coordination with military actors and UN-led responses have resulted in a growing willingness by humanitarian actors to deliver assistance outside of the Kurdistan Region. The support of the UN Mine Action Service has been integral to the ability of operational actors on the ground. While eastern Mosul has been accessible since November 2016, an estimated 550,000 civilians remain to be inaccessible in western Mosul. In most of Iraq, other than the areas held by Islamic State, insecurity continues to affect overall humanitarian operations.



OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY Access to healthcare is a concern in Gaza Strip. In 2016 the Israeli authorities rejected 36% of the applications for exit permits by patients referred for medical treatment outside Gaza compared to 23% rejected in 2015. According to the Israeli authorities, in recent months, they have put in place a more restrictive vetting process to address security risks. Israeli restrictions on the entry of national staff of aid organizations to and from Gaza also intensified, with the rate of permit denial for Gaza ID holders increasing, from 4% in 2015 to 34% in 2016. By year's end, at least 47 UN national staff based in Gaza, had been prohibited from obtaining a permit for a further twelve months. Entry of Palestinians holding West bank IDs to East Jerusalem is subject to a permit system including patients and national staff of humanitarian organizations. There was a total of 349 access incidents in oPt in 2016 including 211 in the West Bank.

SYRIA Humanitarian access to people in need in Syria remains constrained by ongoing conflict, shifting frontlines, administrative and bureaucratic hurdles, violence along access routes and general safety and security concerns in contravention of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. While the cessation of hostilities, since 27 February 2016, is a welcomed improvement and has enabled some temporary aid, those in besieged and hard-to-reach areas need regular and sustained assistance. More than 4.7 million people live in hard-to-reach areas mainly controlled by ISIL and/or besieged areas. The number of people living in besieged areas is estimated at 643,000.

YEMEN Most of the 333 districts in Yemen are perceived as accessible to humanitarians. Roughly, 69% of the country's districts are either fully accessible or are subject to relatively few constraints according to humanitarian organizations that have been working in Yemen over the past year. Approximately 18% of districts are rated as having "medium access constraints". In total, 43 districts of Yemen are categorized as hard to reach or inaccessible. These districts gauged to be the most difficult to access have a population of approximately 2.1 million, with 1.3 million estimated to be in acute need of humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian leadership is actively pursuing improved and less cumbersome access procedures with all parties to the conflict to enable more timely response and improved access across Yemen.