**HUMANITARIAN FIGURES**

**180,000**
Teachers are no longer in service, with 40 percent of schools being damaged or destroyed and others being used to shelter displaced people. [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#)

**13.2 million**
People in need of health assistance with 5 million inter-sector people in acute need. 83 percent of Syrians are living below the poverty line. [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#)

**3,913 trucks**
Since January 2018 have provided AID from Turkey to Syria as part of the United Nations cross-border response. Humanitarian supplies covering numerous sectors, such as education, health and shelter, are provided by various UN agencies. [Syrian Arab Republic (OCHA)](#)

**500,000**
Relocation of displaced people from May 1st to July 30th. Many of these people have been displaced multiple times. [Syrian Arab Republic (OCHA)](#)

**NEWS & HEADLINES**

- **July 25th**: President Assad is “deliberately” starving thousands of refugees. This inhumane act is occurring in the Rukban Camp, in the southern part of the country. Major Gernal Alex Grynkewich said “Assad has refused to allow the flow of United Nations-led humanitarian aid to the camp since February”. The US believes that humanitarian assistance is needed for the population at Rukban. ([Foreign Policy](#))

- **July 26th**: More than 100 people were killed in Syria air raids in the past 10 days, UN reports. The targets of attacks were “civilian objects” such as schools, markets and hospitals. The region under attack is home to 3 million people with almost half of them already displaced, covering most of the Idlib province and parts of neighbouring provinces. ([Al Jazeera](#))

- **August 11th**: The Syrian Army captures key strategic Idlib town from rebels. The regime’s three-month campaign has killed more than 2000 people and displaced some 400,000. This has been the most significant advancement the army has made since the start of the offensive. Al-Hobeit acts as a gateway to the southern countryside of Idlib, to the main Damascus-Aleppo highway to the city of Khan Sheikhoun. ([Reuters](#) ([Deutsche Welle](#))

- **August 14th**: The Syrian Army closes in on the jihadist stronghold of Khan Sheikhoun after seizing new sites in Idlib. The town is in the grip of al-Qaeda-linked Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the most powerful group in rebel-held areas. ([AMN](#) ([Washington Post](#))
HARTS Partner in Syria

St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC)

Since 2003, EPDC has worked to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria. Their work stretches across the whole country, with their headquarters based in Damascus. EPDC provides the means for people living in poverty and under oppression to seek to improve their living situation.

EPDC carries out a variety of projects, including; vocational training, psychological support programs, healthcare programs and financial aid for displaced students. All of these programs are conducted in aid of a variety of groups, such as, displaced Syrian families, victims of the crisis, Iraqi refugees, disabled and orphaned civilians across Syria.

In April 2018, HART began a partnership with EPDC to help empower Maaloula women to combat food security in their communities.

Above, an image showing the devastation in Maaloula.

- August 15th: The Syrian rebels counter-attacked after the government made advances towards the town of Khan Sheikhou and a government warplane was shot down. It was also reported that dozens have been killed in the fighting. (Reuters) (BBC)

CONTEXT

Modern Syria gained its independence from France in 1946. It is home to diverse religious and ethnic groups, which includes Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, Christians, Druze, Alawite Shia and Arab Sunnis. Since its independence there have been many periods of political instability driven by the conflicting interests of these various groups.

The Arab Spring in March 2011 arguably sparked the most recent political unrest in Syria. The government led by Assad faced a challenge to its authority when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout the country. Assad had inherited a tightly controlled repressive political structure from his father, whom was president from 1971, until his son took over.

From May 2011, the European refugee crisis began as many Syrian families were forced to flee their country. The first refugee camp opened in Turkey (the first of many) and by December 2012 the number of Syrian refugees entering other countries had reached a staggering 500,000.

Throughout 2011 the army attempted to crush anti-regime protests but to no success. In November 2011 the Arab League voted to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement an Arab peace plan and sanctions were imposed. Throughout 2012, opposition groups were organising means to help the Syrian people, and by December 2012 they had succeeded, as the US, Britain, France, Turkey and Gulf states formally reconised coalition opposition group, National Coalition, as the “legitimate representative” of Syrian people.

2013 saw the rise of Radical Islamists, and their presence would continue for the next 4 years and terror would follow. By 2015 the Russians had intervened, carrying out air strikes in Syria to target the Islamic State group. 2 years later the US intervened by ordering a missile attack on an airbase in April 2017. The end of 2017 saw the Islamic state retreat and in December 2018 President...
Donald Trump announced that the Islamic State was defeated.

Political Map of Syria demonstrating who controls what
Located in West Asia, Syria is surrounded by five countries: Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Latest Developments re. HART’s Work

8 years of civil war has created the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War.

HART’s work with **St. Ephrem Patriarchical Committee (EPDC)** in Syria has initially created 20 jobs for women. The EPDC will enable these women to prepare and preserve seasonal food to be available in the winter months for about 300 of the most vulnerable families in their community (see above left image).

HART continues to seek funds to assist EPDC in their projects to provide food and clothing for about 2,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Eastern Ghouta. This is an area around Damascus which was held by Islamic terrorists and thus the people have endured great suffering.