On 6 June 2017, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the start of an offensive aiming at taking control of Ar-Raqqa city from the group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This has so far comprised ground advancement on the western and eastern neighbourhoods of the city (see Map 1), supported by airstrikes in and around the area.

This report is the third rapid assessment conducted by REACH to monitor the humanitarian situation in Ar-Raqqa city. Findings are based on primary data collected between 25 and 27 July through qualitative interviews and mapping exercises with 23 Key Informants (KIs) who had left the city since 15 June, reporting on all 24 neighbourhoods in Ar-Raqqa.

Previous assessments can be found here:
- Ar-Raqqa City Situation Overview II – 6 July 2017
- Ar-Raqqa City Situation Overview I – 23 June 2017

Key findings:
- Since the last assessment three weeks ago, when the estimated population was 20,000-50,000, thousands of civilians have continued to flee Ar-Raqqa city. KIs estimate that the population of the city is now between 10,000 and 25,000.
- Fourteen of Raqqa’s 24 neighbourhoods are now abandoned or almost abandoned. These neighbourhoods, predominantly on the western and eastern edges of the city, have seen intense fighting, but they are also the areas from which it is the easiest to leave the city. KIs reported that the SDF have generally facilitated civilians’ movement from the city, while ISIL has reportedly sought to concentrate the civilians remaining under its control in the centre of the city.
- Many of those who have fled the city reportedly hope to return as soon as possible. However, returns will not be possible until conflict has reduced and the authorities grant permission for residents to return to the city. Returns are not expected within the next month, though KIs reported that shelter rehabilitation and mine clearance operations would likely hasten returns.
- For those remaining in the city, the situation is dire. Residents face increasing threats to their safety including airstrikes, indirect fire, improvised explosives, mines, and sniper fire.
- Access to food and markets has reached a critical low, with residents relying heavily on food stored previously to survive. Only a bare minimum of food is sporadically available to purchase from conflict traders and smugglers at inflated prices.
- Access to water is likewise extremely limited, with KIs reporting that no one has sufficient water for their needs. The majority of residents can no longer access water from the Euphrates River due to safety and security concerns, and are instead relying on recently-drilled boreholes.
- Damage to shelters has reportedly increased significantly in recent weeks alongside an increase in airstrikes and indirect fire.
- No electricity is available across Ar-Raqqa’s depopulated neighbourhoods. In areas in which residents remain, generators provide electricity for 2-6 hours per day, though supply is reportedly inconsistent.
- Official functioning health facilities are limited to only one wing of the national hospital. Informal care points exist in other parts of the city, typically clinics established in personal homes, but they are commonly not staffed by medical professionals and have only the most basic of medical supplies.
- Airstrikes and reduction in critical supplies are the greatest threats to the safety and well-being of those remaining in Ar-Raqqa.
INTRODUCTION
At the beginning of November 2016, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the start of operations aiming at expelling the group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from Ar-Raqqa governorate. On 6 June 2017, following SDF advancement in the countryside surrounding the city, the campaign entered its latest phase, aiming at taking control of Ar-Raqqa city. The offensive started in the eastern and western neighbourhoods of the city and has currently reached the walls of the old city (see Map 1), with ground fighting in these neighbourhoods supported by airstrikes in and around the city.

Since ISIL takeover in 2014, humanitarian access as well as information on the humanitarian situation of civilians living in the city has been extremely limited, due to strict movement restrictions and controls on information flows. To fill these information gaps, REACH has been conducting rapid assessments aiming to monitor and highlight developments in the humanitarian situation. This is the third assessment conducted, covering access to food and markets, shelter, non-food items (NFIs), basic WASH and health services, and the protection situation within the city.

Information was collected between 25 and 27 July through direct qualitative interviews and participatory mapping exercises with 23 Key Informants (KIs) reporting on the neighbourhood they previously resided in. KIs included engineers, teachers, medical professionals and shop owners. KIs reported on all 24 neighbourhoods of the city and the information herein should be considered as indicative only.

DISPLACEMENT
Population remaining in the city
- Residents continue to flee Ar-Raqqa city. Three weeks ago, the estimated population was 20,000-50,000, whereas KIs estimate that currently only 10,000-25,000 people remain. Fourteen neighbourhoods, in the outer areas of the city, are completely abandoned (see Map 2). Population estimates are extremely hard to verify due to the dynamic situation on the ground and tight controls on information flows from ISIL-controlled areas.

Movement restrictions
- Freedom of movement for the civilian population differs depending on the armed actor present in respective neighbourhoods. KIs reported that the SDF are facilitating the flow of civilians out of the city from the eastern and western neighbourhoods. In contrast, in parts of the city under ISIL control, civilians are reportedly being forcibly concentrated in specific areas, primarily the most central neighbourhoods.

INTENTS
- Primary routes out of the city are reportedly across conflict lines to the north and the west. Civilians using these routes are reportedly commonly assisted by the SDF and these routes are safer than alternative routes, with fewer mines and lower threat from snipers on main roads. KIs reported additional secondary routes to the east, however these require the assistance of smugglers (taking payments between 25,000 and 50,000 SYP1) and are dangerous, with a high threat of snipers and mines.

Intentions
- KIs estimated that 70% of the remaining population will leave the city over the next two weeks, if possible for them to do so. For residents remaining in the city, the top reported barrier to movement was ISIL not permitting them to leave. Others reportedly either cannot afford movement costs or remain in order to protect assets.
- Among those who had already left the city, KIs reported that most intend to remain in their current location of displacement or inside Ar-Raqqa governorate in the next two weeks. Safety and security was the most commonly reported concern affecting people's intended destination, followed by access to income and employment opportunities.
- Although many displaced persons reportedly want to return to Ar-Raqqa city, this will likely be contingent on permission being granted by the SDF and a de-escalation of fighting in the city. Until then, minimal returns are expected, and KIs indicated that within the next month, it is unlikely that anyone will return.

1. Between 50 and 100 USD. Exchange rate used is UN Operational Exchange Rate of 1 USD = 515 SYP
Top five most commonly reported intentions of persons that had recently departed Ar-Raqqa city (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Remain in current location of displacement: 10
- Travel to new location in Ar-Raqqa governorate: 9
- Remain close, but outside Ar-Raqqa city: 7
- Return to Ar-Raqqa city: 7
- Remain in Syria but leave Ar-Raqqa governorate: 4

Top five most commonly reported reasons for choosing intended destination (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Safety and security situation: 13
- Access to income and employment opportunities: 10
- Family ties or relationship with host community: 7
- Access to humanitarian assistance: 5
- Access to food: 3

**WASH**

**Water sources**

- **The main water network remains non-functioning.** Previously, Ar-Raqqa city residents were filling water containers in the Euphrates River and transporting them to their neighbourhoods. **Now, residents rely almost exclusively on neighbourhood boreholes, many of which have been dug recently.** These produce limited amounts of water due to insufficient electricity to run boring machines and water pumps. The water produced is also reportedly not fit for drinking.

- **All but one KIs reported that almost no one has sufficient water.** All KIs reported that residents are resorting to coping strategies.

Most common reported source of water (for all purposes) in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Neighbourhood boreholes: 11
- Water was not available: 4
- Water trucking: 1

Top reported statements describing access to water in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Almost no one has enough water for their needs: 22
- Less than half of the population has enough water for their needs: 1

Top reported water coping strategies in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Modifying hygiene practices: 13
- Reducing drinking water consumption: 13
- Drinking water normally used for other purposes: 4
- Buying water with money usually spent on other things: 2

**Drinking water quality**

- Those who are able to access water continue to report issues with the water, including that it causes sickness.

Reported problems with water used for drinking in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)²

- People get sick after drinking the water: 11
- Water tastes bad: 11
- Water is a bad colour: 8
- Water smells bad: 7

**Sanitation**

- **In areas in which residents remain,** sanitation is reportedly an issue, with KIs reporting garbage in the streets and the presence of rats and pests.

Reported sanitation issues in inhabited areas in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)²

- Rats and pests contaminating food and people: 8
- Garbage in the streets: 8
- Sewage flowing on the streets: 1

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2. KIs could select more than one option
FOOD AND MARKETS

Access to food and market functionality

- **Access to food in Ar-Raqqa city has reached a critical turning point.** While in previous weeks residents were able to purchase some food at markets, the majority of KIs reported that residents are now relying entirely on food stored from previous weeks.

- **Food markets, which were functioning sporadically three weeks ago, are generally no longer in operation.** In the three neighbourhoods in which some markets are partially functioning, Rashidiyeh, Amin and Nahda, there are insufficient quantities of food. Additionally, these markets remain difficult to access due to ongoing fighting and physical obstructions in roadways.

- **Humanitarian actors have not been able to fill the food gap due to access and security constraints.** No humanitarian actors have reportedly accessed Ar-Raqqa city.

Top five most common means of accessing food (number of KIs reporting each)³

Relying entirely on food stored from previous weeks for emergencies 17
Purchasing from stores and markets 4
Gifts from family and/or friends 3
Borrowing 2
Begging / Bartering 1

Map 3: Market functionality in neighbourhoods of Ar-Raqqa city

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Core food items

- **In the past two weeks, the availability of core food items has continued to drastically decline.** No core food items are reported as generally available throughout the city.

- **Bread is no longer consistently available in the city, in comparison to previous weeks when it was reportedly available in 15 neighbourhoods.** In this assessment, KIs in just seven neighbourhoods reported that bread is generally or sometimes available.

- **Food prices are increasing across the city.** Six out of 10 core food items, where available, were reported to be increasing in price over the past three weeks. Tomatoes and cucumbers nearly tripled in price. The price of flour, cooking oil, sugar, and chicken also reportedly increased.

Reported availability, affordability, estimated price and price trend (last two weeks) of core food items in markets:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Affordable</th>
<th>Price (SYP)</th>
<th>Price change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bread (pack)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentils (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Oil (litre)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>620</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>3000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>525</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread (pack)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>135</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentils (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking Oil (litre)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar (kg)</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>620</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meat (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>3000</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken (kg)</td>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>1700</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✔️</td>
<td>525</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumbers (kg)</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **All KIs reported that residents use strategies to cope with reduced access to food.** As in previous weeks, people are reportedly reducing meal size, skipping meals and purchasing food with money intended for other uses.

Top reported food coping strategies used in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)³

Reducing meal size 16
Skipping meals 14
Buying food with money intended for other things 5
Purchasing food on credit 4

---

3. KIs could select more than one option.
PROTECTION
• Protection issues remain prevalent across Ar-Raqqa city, with threats most commonly directly relating to ongoing conflict. Remaining residents cannot safely leave their homes or neighbourhoods due to the presence of mines and unexploded ordinance and the threat of airstrikes, indirect fire, and gunfire.

Top five most commonly reported general protection issues in inhabited neighbourhoods (number of KIs reporting each)\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of KIs Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threat from mines and/or unexploded ordinance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat from snipers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat from airstrikes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat from indirect fire</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat from improvised explosive devices</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most commonly reported female protection issues in inhabited neighbourhoods (number of KIs reporting each)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of KIs Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions preventing women and girls accessing services</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement restrictions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against women</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most commonly reported child protection issues in inhabited neighbourhoods (number of KIs reporting each)\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Number of KIs Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IEDs / landmines</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted child recruitment by armed groups</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risks from general security situation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological trauma</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HEALTH
• Health services and facilities remain extremely limited. The one functioning wing of the national hospital offers only basic emergency first aid, is nearly impossible to access and is not intended for civilian use. Informal clinics set up by civilians and not staffed by professionals are reportedly operating in a very limited capacity in the central neighbourhoods of Ar-Raqqa.

• Need for health services is high. KIs most commonly reported that residents need treatment for chronic disease and surgery.

Top five most needed health services and items (number of KIs reporting each)\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number of KIs Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment for chronic disease</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency care (accident and injuries)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antibiotics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled care during childbirth</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top five most common barriers to accessing healthcare in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)\(^4\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Number of KIs Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of female doctors</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of medicine / medical items</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of facilities</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of medical personnel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare only available to certain groups</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^4\) KIs could select more than one option.
Map 5: Damaged and vacated areas in Ar-Raqqa city

- **Destroyed or heavily damaged areas**
- **Vacated or few people currently remaining**

Areas marked in red indicate destroyed or heavily damaged areas, while areas in light grey indicate vacated or few people currently remaining. The map shows the extent of damage and vacuation in various neighborhoods within Ar-Raqqa city.
SHELTER

Shelter damage

As fighting continues across the city, shelters are reportedly suffering severe damage due to airstrikes and indirect fire. The level of damage has reportedly increased significantly in recent weeks.

Most commonly reported causes of shelter damage in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)

- Airstrikes: 18
- Indirect fire: 18
- Gunfire: 5

NFIs

Electricity

The level of damage has reportedly increased significantly in recent weeks.

- Ar-Raqqa city remains without main network power. In previous weeks, residents accessed electricity via a dwindling number of generators, which were ceasing operation due to limited fuel supplies as well as car batteries.

- In parts of the city in which there are almost no residents, there are no sources of electricity of any kind. In the central, more populated areas, generators run for 2-6 hours per day. However, this is limited by the high cost and limited availability of fuel.

Top reported source of electricity in the last two weeks (number of KIs reporting each)

- No source of electricity: 11
- Generator: 5
- Car batteries: 3

Core NFI accessibility

- Many core non-food items are increasingly unavailable in stores, with reports of lack of availability of items like cooking fuel and soap increasing significantly in comparison to previous assessments. Prices reportedly continue to rise for items including water containers, diapers, and cooking fuel.

5. KIs could select more than one option.