Disaster Overview
Syria has witnessed an unprecedented wave of anti-government protests since March 2011. A forceful government reaction has created a self-perpetuating cycle of violence and unrest with successive protests met by increased government aggression. The unrest has quickly spread and demonstrators’ demands have increased from an initial request for meaningful political reforms to an end to the Baath party regime (WB 2011).

More than 5,000 people have died since the public uprising began including at least 300 children. This number includes civilians, defecting soldiers and those executed for refusing to shoot civilians, but does not include serving members of the military, security forces or allied armed groups (OHCHR 13/12). Over 350 security personnel have been killed and another 20,000 people arrested since July (IDMC 11/11).

The context for the crisis in Syria is a middle-income, predominantly urban environment with functional basic social services, and affecting a cross-section of the population (including rich, poor, urban, rural, non-displaced, displaced, and refugee alike) (HPN 7/11). Syria’s response to the demonstrations has seen the situation rapidly evolve from a protest movement to a human rights crisis with increasing humanitarian consequences. Though not yet a full scale humanitarian crisis, a protection crisis is unfolding with reports of civilian deaths, widespread arbitrary detentions, and impeded access to basic services, displacement and medical assistance for the injured. (HPN 7/11).

It is feared that continuing unrest will increase vulnerability for the poor and marginalised and result in a ‘creeping crisis’ that begins with generalised poverty and high vulnerability and then deteriorates into a humanitarian emergency (HPN 7/11).
**Key Priorities**

**Most affected areas**
- Persons across Syria are potentially at risk as areas impacted most acutely by ongoing fighting and internal displacement shift and change.
- Urban centres, e.g. Homs, where intense fighting is recurrent.

**Most affected groups**
- Detainees and those subject to human rights violations.
- Persons displaced internally by the violence.
- Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers seeking safety across international borders.
- Iraqi and other refugees dependent on humanitarian assistance.
- Injured protestors, those needing medical care, and medical service providers.
- Children.

**Priority Interventions**
- Negotiate and establish humanitarian corridors and/or buffer/safe zones to reach those in greatest humanitarian need (OCHA 26/11).
- International observers to determine extent of human rights violations.
- Impartial and safe access to medical care.
- Mitigation of protection risks for vulnerable populations.

**Information gaps and needs**
- Impediments of access have prevented humanitarian stakeholders from assessing needs in areas of concern. This lack of accurate information – especially for the most vulnerable groups such as children, older persons, and the sick and disabled and female-headed households – is an issue across the Middle East (HPN 7/11).
- Information is lacking on the effects of the uprising on pre-existing shelter challenges experienced by Iraqi and Palestinian refugees, and persons displaced through drought.
- The shelter needs of Syrians internally displaced as a result of the violence is also unknown.
- Data on the living conditions and priority needs of persons displaced as a result of the current unrest is lacking. It has been dangerous to assess the situations of people displaced as a result of government actions (IDMC 11/11).
- Accurate and current numbers of injured and missing are not available.
- Information from within Syria is limited. Many international humanitarian and news agencies remain unable to get a clear picture of both temporary and long-term displacement in the country (IDMC 11/11).
- As of end November, UN and partners have been unable to comprehensively assess people’s needs (OCHA 26/11).
- As a result there is almost no information on ongoing or planned assessments.

**Operational Constraints**
- Threats to and attacks on members of the humanitarian community. Red Crescent personnel and vehicles have come under fire or been otherwise attacked since the onset of the recent violence. Two volunteers were injured and one killed as their ambulance was caught in heavy fire while they were evacuating an injured person to a hospital in Homs (ICRC 16/09).
- The absence of protection for first aid volunteers.
- Difficulty in getting access to injured persons.
- Insufficient members of trained volunteers.
- Medical physicians are required by law to immediately notify security services of the arrival of a wounded person at a health facility, regardless of the severity of injuries. This leads to the patient’s arrest and causes challenges to the already limited operational space (IFRC 24/10).
- Humanitarian agencies face challenges linked to resource availability, donors’ awareness of the needs and vulnerabilities of urban IDPs and refugees, as well as in keeping the supply chain effective with limited funds (CAP MYR 2011).
- With the onset of unrest, movement has been restricted both by UN security and an intense security deployment by the government. In Lattakia, the only shop providing food for refugee recipients (using the electronic voucher system) was looted during the demonstration’s early days, and WFP ICT equipment was stolen. Without the equipment, the EVS system cannot run, leaving Iraqi refugees unable to buy food (WFP 23/05).
- Due to insecurity, only a limited number of international staff remain in Syria (OCHA 26/11). On August 17th, the UN withdrew about 25 international staff from Syria because of mounting security fears. The withdrawal of UNHCR staff has increased challenges for successful resettlement of Iraqis in Syria (NCCI 11/10).
- Homs has emerged as the most restrictive governorate since anti-government protests erupted in mid-March, with communication cut off and checkpoints restricting movement in and out of neighborhoods (War/Peace 15/11, ICG 24/11).
- During military operations, water, electricity and communications are known to be cut off for days at a time disrupting communication channels and operations in health centers (IRIN 26/09).
- Increased military presence and checkpoints: hundreds of tanks and weapons have been deployed over the past few days, dozens of checkpoints have been set up and numerous trenches have been dug (UN 13/12).
Lessons Learned

Civil Unrest

- Syria’s government has historically dealt harshly with domestic opposition. Tens of thousands were reported killed during the crackdown on the 1982 uprising of the Muslim Brotherhood in Hama (BBC 28/11).
- Sectarian violence between Alawite and Sunni groups has intensified since the beginning of the uprising (Guardian 6/12).
- In Libya, attempts to eradicate the last pockets of loyalists to the regime triggered civilian massacres (ICG 2011).
- To minimise the risk of a military coup, Prime Minister Assad has made sure the army stayed both weak and divided. Moreover, the brutality of the government’s reaction has produced a growing number of military defectors (ICG 2011).
- After a period of chaos, it has proven difficult for new authorities to control the different factions. The new government in Libya still lacks effective control over all armed groups (RI 8/11).

General

- Prolonged civil unrest causes market supply failure, inaccessibility or unavailability of basic subsistence means, decreased staple food and animal product availability, decreased food access from purchase due to increased market food prices, loss of income, decreased sales of own production. This leads to decreased amounts of consumed food and a lower quality of diet (ACAPS 2011).
- Direct consequences of conflict on the health of the population are generally intentional injuries by combatants. Indirect consequences are infectious and non-infectious diseases, unintentional injuries and PTSD (HPN 2007).
- During crises, access to health can be limited, as medical staff are harassed by government officials if they treat protesters (Koser 11/2011).
- In Libya, the good pre-crisis health care situation, the resilience of the sector and the fact that most IDPs were integrated in host families kept the non-conflict related death toll low (IMC 2011). These factors are also present in Syria.

Refugees and IDPs

- During civil unrest, it is important that food aid to refugees and others continues to avoid putting beneficiaries at increased risk (WFP 2011).
- When violence escalated in Libya, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants returned or fled to third countries. However, these movements are not well documented. Since the unrest intensified, resettlement programmes for refugees in Syria have slowed down considerably (UN 2011, Koser 11/2011).
- Humanitarian actors foresee that the economic deterioration induced by the current instability in Syria will represent a major challenge for refugee families both financially and socially (UN 2011).
- Civil unrest causes internal displacement. So far, IDPs are mainly staying with host families, but global evidence indicates that even short periods of displacement are stretching already limited resources of the host families (IDMC 2011).

Population Profile

- Recent projections estimate that Syria’s population is 22,517,750 (US Census Bureau July, 2011). This represents an increase of approximately 4.5 million from the 2004 census (CBS 2004).
- In 2010, annual population growth was estimated to be 2% (WB 2010).
- Over half the population (55%) lives in urban areas (WB 2010).
- 37.5% of the population are children (<15 yrs), 58.6% are 15-64 yrs and 3.9% is 65+ (WB 2010). Nearly 60% of the Syrian population is under the age of 26 (AK 2011).
- Syria is administratively divided into 14 governorates. Each governorate generally divided into 69 districts (mantikas), which are further divided into subdistricts (nahias). Each nahia covers a number of villages, which are the smallest administrative units (CBS 2010).
- Western Syria is the most densely populated part of the country. The 2004 census indicates that after the capital Damascus (13,152 inhabitants/km2), Lattakia (383 inhabitants/km2), Tartous (376 inhabitants/km2), Dera’a (225 inhabitants/km2), Aleppo (218 inhabitants/km2), Idlib (207 inhabitants/km2), Hama (137 inhabitants/km2), and rural Damascus (125 inhabitants/km2) are the most densely populated governates (CBS 2010).
Displacement profile

IDPs displaced during 2011 protests
- Military aggression has led to displacement in and from cities and towns throughout Syria. However, a clear picture of temporary and long term displacement remains elusive (IDMC 11/11).
- Displacement has been reported in Lattakia, Jisr Al-Shughur, Idlib, Maarat al-Numaan, Baniyas, Talkalakh, Dera’a (IDMC 11/11) and (IDMC 9/12).
- About 15,000 families (totalling about 45,000 people) had fled Homs to the port of Tartous over the past two months (IDMC 9/12).
- As of 29 April, hundreds of families reportedly fled Dera’a to Ramtha (UNHCR 6/5, IDMC 6/5).
- In May, up to 2,000 people have fled Talkalakh (Al Jazeera 15/5).
- In June, the entire population of Jisr Al-Shughur (41,000 people) fled their homes in fear of military retaliation (IDMC 11/11); an estimated 70% of the 100,000 population of Maarat al-Numaan have also been displaced (ITN 18/6 and IDMC 11/11).
- On 15 August, between 5,000-10,000 Palestinian refugees in the coastal camp of El-Ramel w ere temporarily displaced by attacks from armed forces around the port of Lattakia. A week later, the vast majority of the camp residents had returned, after seeking refuge in other cities such as Homs, on the beach, or elsewhere in Lattakia (IRIN 17/8, UNHCR 26/8, IDMC 11/11, IDMC 26/8).
- Syrians who have fled to Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have confirmed reports of temporary internal displacements (IDMC 11/11).

Protracted internal displacement
- In 1982, the city of Hama (250,000 persons) was subjected to bombardments by government forces. People were displaced due to destruction of the city, by violence, or were forcibly expelled. Residual IDP numbers remain unverifiable, but are estimated at 10,000-20,000 (IDMC 11/11).
- Syria’s Kurds have been displaced from the north-east. In 1962, the government deprived about 120,000 of Syrian citizenship, and some 300,000 of the estimated 1.7 million Kurds were still stateless in 2011. In 1965, Kurds were expelled from a strip of border land (15 km x 280 km) and replaced with Arab farmers. Estimates are not reliable, but between 60,000 to 140,000 Kurds were subsequently dispossessed (IDMC 11/11).
- After the occupation of the Golan Heights by Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967, nearly all inhabitants were displaced within Syria into the suburbs of Damascus or in Sweida. According to the government, about 130,000 people were displaced. By 2007, they and their descendants numbered 433,000. The Israeli government asserts that only 70,000 people were displaced (IDMC 11/11).

Drought-induced displacement
In 2007/8 and 2008/9, severe droughts in the northeast affected approximately 1.5 million, with 800,000 lost livelihoods, mainly small-scale farmers and herders. The UN estimated that 65,000 families (exact figures are lacking) have been forced out of their villages into the fringes of Damascus, Aleppo and Dera’a. Many live in makeshift tented camps, lacking sanitation, running water and adequate access to food (ODI 12/2011).
Refugees in Syria

Syria hosts one of the largest urban refugee populations in the world (UNHCR 11/2011). Although the refugee population in Syria is primarily Iraqi, a 2009 joint assessment found that Somali, Sudanese and Afghanis seeking asylum in Syria are among the most vulnerable refugees in Syria (CAP 2009-2010).

Iraqis

- By October, 112,771 of refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Syria were Iraqi (93% of the caseload). However, Government estimates state that Syria hosts roughly one million Iraqis. UNHCR also provides protection and assistance to 8,474 refugees and asylum seekers from Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan and other countries (UNHCR 11/2011).
- Almost all persons registered with UNHCR live in urban areas, mainly Damascus and suburbs (UNHCR 11/2011).
- Because legal employment and opportunities for self-reliance are lacking, refugees become more vulnerable to protection risks the longer they retain refugee status. Ensuring access to food, shelter, health and education pose ongoing challenges (AI 2008, UNHCR 11/2011). 37.6% of refugees and asylum seekers have specific needs due to multiple vulnerabilities and requiring targeted support (UNHCR 11/2011).
- Personal savings of refugees have been exhausted due to their prolonged stay in Syria, triggering new protection problems (UNHCR 11/2011).
- Most refugees have become more vulnerable due to the protracted nature of their displacement and the effects of the global economic crisis that has driven up food and fuel prices and reduced remittances. Continued political and security problems in Iraq mean an imminent return is unlikely (CAP 2011).

Palestinians

- Many Palestinian refugees were displaced in 1948 when Israel was established, a small number fled during the Six Day War in 1967, and several thousand more quit war-torn Lebanon for Syria in 1982. Palestinian refugees living in Syria today number over 496,000; 75% live in Damascus (UNRWA 2011, ODI 12/2011).
- Palestinians displaced in 1948 originally lived in seven refugee camps across Damascus. These camps and informal settlements have been gradually replaced with permanent structures erected by the refugees (ODI 12/2011).
- Palestinian families have progressively left the camps, which are no longer solely Palestinian communities. In 2002, UNRWA estimated that 28% only of registered refugees resided in camps. Migrant workers, other refugees, IDPs and low- and middle-class Syrians have taken the place of Palestinian refugees in the camps. (ODI 12/2011).
- Palestinian refugees have integrated into urban communities in Syria where they can afford better housing outside the camps than the new refugee populations are able to (ODI 12/2011).
- UNRWA now provides health, education, and relief and social services to refugees living in nine official and three unofficial camps. However, water and sewage systems need upgrading and poor sanitation increases health risks. In most refugee camps, shelter is basic and many require repair (UNRWA 2011).
- Many Palestinian refugees living in Iraq prior to the 2003 US-led invasion have fled the subsequent violence to Syria and need resettlement. Some 2,700 Palestinians denied entry by Syria are stranded in two makeshift camps at the Syria/Iraq border where conditions are extremely harsh (AI 2008, UNHCR 11/2011).

Refugees from Syria

Most recent figures indicate that there are between 13,000 and 17,000 refugees from Syria; numbering around 8,200 in Turkey, 3,800 in Lebanon and 1,000-5,000 in Jordan (Xinhua 18/11, IDMC 2011, OHCHR 23/11, UNHCR 2/12).

Lebanon

- Since April 2011, 5,000 Syrians refugees have entered northern Lebanon, the vast majority from Tal Kalakh and Homs (UNHCR 2/12).
- Many subsequently returned to Syria. As of December, there are 3,798 registered persons in the North and Akkar, living mostly with host families in difficult circumstances. Over 200 persons live in two (abandoned) schools which were ill equipped to receive so many refugees. Sanitation and hygiene facilities have since been improved (UNHCR 2/12).
- Those who remain are unwilling to return until stability and security is restored in Syria. They express fear and anxiety about returning (UNHCR 2/12).
- In Lebanon, UNHCR and the Human Right Council continue to address refugee needs, including: protection interventions to ensure safety, physical integrity and non-refoulement; assistance to meet basic needs; education; and medical and psycho-social care (UNHCR 18-25/11, UNHCR 18-25/11).

Turkey

- On 21 June 2011, UNHCR noted that between 500-1,000 people had been crossing from Syria into Turkey daily since 7 June. More than 10,000 were sheltered by Turkish authorities in four camps along the Turkey-Syria border. The majority of refugees reported losing most of their assets. In many cases, livestock had been shot, fields torched, and homes and businesses destroyed or confiscated (IRIN 4/7).
- In November 2011, about 8,200 Syrian refugees are registered in five camps in Turkey’s Hatay province. Some are lodging with host families in villages in the area, which share kinship ties with villages in Syria’s Idlib province (AlertNet 24/11).
Affected - 3,000,000
(Aljazeera 26/11)

Non-Displaced
1,987,311 - 1,520,311

Displaced
1,012,689 - 1,479,689

IDPs
368,500 - 826,500

Refugees and
asylum seekers
644,189 - 653,189

2011 protests IDPs
163,500 - 168,500

2011 protests Syrian
refugees and asylum seekers
13,472 - 17,472

Protracted IDPs
205,000 - 658,000

Protracted refugees and
asylum seekers neighbouring countries
630,717 - 634,717

2011 protests IDPs
163,500 - 168,500

Lattakia
5,000 - 10,000
(UNHCR 26/8)

Jisr As-Shoghour
41,000
(UN 21/6)

Idlib
No data

Maarat al-Numaan
70,000
(ITN 18/6)

Baniyas
No data

Talkalakh
2,000
(Al Jazeera 15/5)

Dara’a
100s
(UNHCR 6/5)

Homs
45,000
(IDMC 9/12)

1982 Hama
10,000 - 20,000
(IDMC 11/11)

Kurds 1965-1976
60,000 - 140,000
(IDMC 11/11)

Golan 1967
70,000 - 433,000
(IDMC 11/11)

Drought Induced
2007/8 and 2008/9
65,000
(ODI 12/2011)

Turkey
8,200
(AlertNet 24/11)

Lebanon
4,272
(UNHCR 2/12)

Jordan
1000 - 5000
(Xinhua 18/11, IDMC 2011)

Iraq
112,771
(UNHCR 11/2011)

Somalia 3,018
(UNHCR 11/2011)

Sudan 892
(UNHCR 11/2011)

Others 2,482
(UNHCR 11/2011)

Palestinians
496,000
(UNRWA 2011)

The humanitarian profile attempts to account for the number of people having humanitarian needs arising from a given emergency. It is a count of the number of "affected" people in the emergency. Different groups are identified within the humanitarian profile, such as displaced, non-displaced, IDPs and refugees and asylum seekers. Source: IASC 2011
Country Profile

Key indicators

Main indicators
- Literacy rate: 83%; women 76% / men 90% (WHO EMRO 2010)
- Human Development Index: rank 119/187, medium human development (UNDP 2011)
- Corruption Perceptions Index: rank 129/182 countries, score of 2.6/10 (TI 2011)
- Vulnerability and Crisis Index 2011 scores: 2 on vulnerability, 3 on crisis (1= low risk, 3 = high risk) (DG ECHO 2011)

Health and Sanitation indicators
- Mortality rate < 5 (per 1,000): 16 (WHO 2011)
- Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000): 46 (WHO 2010)
- 89% of the population uses improved water sources (WHO 2009)
- 96% of Syrians use improved sanitation facilities (WHO 2009)

Main characteristics

Country size
- Total size: 185,180 sq km, including 1,295 sq km under Israeli jurisdiction (CIA 2011)
- Country comparison to the world: 89th, slightly larger than Senegal and slightly smaller than Cambodia (CIA 2011)

Geography and climate
- Syria borders Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey and is connected to the Mediterranean Sea (WFP 2011)
- Terrain: primarily semi-arid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west (CIA 2011)
- Arable land: 25.58% (FAO 2011)
- Climate: mostly desert; hot, dry summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus (CIA 2011)
- Natural resources: petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower (CIA 2011)

Hazards
- Four consecutive droughts have affected Syria since 2006; the 2007/08 drought was particularly severe (de Schutter 2010).
- Syria is located on the Dead Sea fault line, that is characterized by relatively high seismic activity (SSA 2005)
- Floods also affect Syria. The peak of flooding is observed mainly after the snow melt from March to June (WFP 2011)

Economy and Markets
- GDP was US $59,102,566,138 in 2010; the GNI per capita was US $2,790 (WB 2010)
- Syria does not suffer from extreme poverty; only 1.7% Syrians live on less than US $1.25 per day (UNDP 2011)
- According to GoS unemployment in Syria is 8.4% (WB 2007)
- 55.6% of Syrians are employed in services, industry involves 26.8% and 17.6% is involved in agriculture. 20.6% is involved in agriculture, forestry and fisheries (CIA 2011, FAO 2011)

Socio-cultural characteristics
- Religion: Sunni 74%, Alawite 11%, Christian 10%, Druze 3% (Minority Groups 2011)
- Ethnicity: Arab 90%, Kurd 9%, small groups of Armenians, Circassians and Turkmen (CIA 2011, Minority Groups 2011)
- Language: Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian (CIA 2011)
- President Assad and much of the nation’s elite belong to the Alawite sect (Lust Okar 2011)
- Out of fear minority groups rally around the regime (ICG 2011)

Education
- Syria has high primary school enrolment with 97% of boys and 92% of girls. Roughly, 2/3 of all Syrian children attend secondary school: 64% of boys and 65% of girls (UNICEF 2009).

Media
- Syria has barred most independent journalists (Reuters 12/12). Syria’s press law provides the government with sweeping control over publications. Internet censorship of political websites is pervasive and includes popular websites such as Blogger, Facebook, and YouTube. All Syrian human rights groups remain unlicensed, as officials consistently deny their requests for registration (HRW 2011).
Disaster Management

- The Ministry of Local Administration and Environment is responsible for disaster management in Syria. UNDP partners with the Syrian government to strengthen the disaster management capacity (UNDP 2010).

Stakeholders

Modern Syria gained its independence from France in 1946, but has lived through periods of political instability driven by the conflicting interests of diverse ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, Christians, Druze, Alawite Shias and Arab Sunnis, the latter make up a majority of the Muslim population (BBC 28/11).

The Baath government is the current ruling regime in Syria. Although officially a parliamentary republic, Syria is de facto an authoritarian single party state with the Baath Party holding power since 1963. The first president, Hafez al-Assad, remained in power until his death in 2000 when he was succeeded by his son, the current president, Bashar al-Assad (HRW 2010).

The Baath government has seen authoritarian rule at home and a strong anti-Israeli policy abroad. In 1967, Syria lost control of the Golan Heights to Israel. Civil war in Lebanon allowed Syria to extend its political and military influence in the region. Syria pulled out of Lebanon in 2005 having come under intense international pressure after the assassination of Lebanese former premier Rafik Hariri. Following the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000, Syria underwent a degree of relaxation. Hundreds of political prisoners were released. But the granting of real political freedoms and a shake-up of the state-dominated economy has not materialized (All BBC 28/11). Lebanon remains supportive of and tied to the Syrian authorities, and Syrian security forces have been backed en force by Lebanon.

The Republican Guard is the elite force that protects the regime from domestic threats. It commands the 4th Armoured Division. Led by the president's youngest brother, Maher al-Assad, the guard is the only military unit permitted to enter Damascus. When mass pro-democracy protests began in the southern city of Dera'a in March 2011, the 4th Armoured Division was sent to crush them. Rumours persist that Maher will challenge his brother's rule, but there is no evidence he has sufficient power to challenge his rule (BBC 18/5).

The Shabiha are armed gangs and militias run by members of the al-Assad family (SyriaRevolts 21/05). Membership of the shabiha is drawn largely from President Assad's minority Alawite sect, which dominates the government, security services and military. The connection to the Assad family appears to have allowed the shabiha to emerge in the 1970s. The gangs operated with few constraints, rule by force, and are seen as being above the law (BBC 17/08). They are known to carry out the regime's dirty work and have a role of terrorizing the population. Should the regime lose power, the work of the Shabiha could result in increasing potential repercussions to the Alawite community as a whole.

The Arab League is a regional organization of 22 Arab states founded in 1945. Article 2 of the Pact states that: the stakeholders will operate with few constraints, rule by force, and have a role of terrorizing the population. Should the regime lose power, the work of the Shabiha could result in increasing potential repercussions to the Alawite community as a whole. The purpose of the League is to draw closer the relations between member States and co-ordinate their political activities with the aim of realizing a close collaboration between them, to safeguard their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries (Yale 2008). Syria's participation in the Arab League was suspended in November 2011 (NYT 12/11). The league has indicated that it may be willing to move from its official position, which is currently to maintain sanctions against Syria, if Syria signs a deal allowing in foreign observers. Syria has said on 5th December that it conditionally accepts observers as part of an Arab plan (AFP 5/12).

Calls for imposing a no-fly zone and foreign intervention appear to be the main points of contention for Syria's opposition both inside and outside the country (BBC 9/11). The Syrian opposition can be divided into four groups (BBC 9/11):

1. Dissidents in exile abroad who recently formed the Syrian National Council (SNC).
2. Elements of the SNC also exist within the country. Syria's Local Coordination Committees (LCC) and the Syrian Revolution General Commission (SRGC) are both SNC grassroots movements involved in organizing protests via multiple social media platforms. LCC and SRGC pro-SNC protests have resulted in more demands from Syrian social media users for foreign intervention.
3. Opposition blocs inside Syria itself which form part of the National Coordination Committee (NCC). The NCC appears reluctant to affiliate itself with the SNC for fear of being associated with the West - a criticism currently used by Syrian state media against the SNC. The SNC and the NCC share a declared commitment to peaceful protest and both stress the non-violent nature of their demands.
4. This contrasts with the Free Syrian Army (FSA) which has mounted sporadic attacks on Syrian security and regular army forces, in and around Homs and Idlib provinces. The FSA poses little challenge to Syrian forces in terms of numbers and military capabilities, however, its emergence has worried various opposition factions who fear it might escalate the crisis and trigger a civil war. The FSA is decentralized and poorly organized. Statements from defected soldiers declaring allegiance to rival militias reflect the numbers of defections within its own ranks. Colonel Al-Asaad, the official FSA leader, has no connection with most operations that take place in the name of the FSA, except those carried out by defectors crossing borders from Turkey and Lebanon into Syria. Otherwise, decision-making is left to local commanders and their units (Guardian 08/12). Colonel Al-Asaad has called for the establishment of a buffer zone on Turkey's border. While Ankara has shown no appetite for such intervention, the option of buffer zones, whether on Turkey or Jordan borders, has been raised among Arab states (FT 29/11).
Scenarios

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<td>Almost certain</td>
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**Severe Impact of Economic Sanctions Scenario**

- Economic sanctions in Syria accelerate an unfolding and severe economic crisis characterised by a sharp drop of consumption, massive cash withdrawals, capital outflow, unpaid loans, falling currency, a tumbling stock market, negative growth, inflation and high unemployment (ICG 7/2011).
- Lack of economic opportunity in Damascus and other urban centres resulting in closed shops and markets limiting the availability of food and other basic needs items (ICG 7/2011).
- Loss of government control over price of key agricultural products (FT 04/2011) causing sky rocketing prices for meat, milk and baby milk powder (80% increase), and cereals.
- Cross-border trade is hard-hit by transport delays caused by security-related road closures and increased costs of petrol and oil (FT 04/2011).
- Sharply increasing prices of heating oil, gas and foodstuffs, and overall imports.

**Assumptions**

- The overall economic crisis severely impacts food security in Syria, which is already affected by high food prices.
- Economic migration to neighbouring countries, overstretched resources in families hosting IDPs and refugees.
- Increased rural to urban migration.

**Impact**

- Limited space for humanitarian operations, including EVS (electronic voucher system).
- Challenges in maintaining food and medicine stocks which may be subject to raids.
- Limited access to affected rural populations and challenges in assessing humanitarian needs of IDPs and refugees in diverse urban environments.

**Operational constraints**

- Limited food distribution to groups most at risk.
- Targeted food assistance to the most vulnerable groups: Iraqi refugees, women and children, and IDPs.
- Livelihoods support, cash for work, and food for work measures.
- Impartial and safe access to medical care.
- Provision of essential emergency medicine and medical care.
- Registration and needs profiling of IDPs and refugees.

**Priority needs**

- Regime forces are unable to suppress the opposition which successfully asserts itself.
- Neighbouring countries and/or allies supply weapons to the Free Syrian Army (FSA).
- The FSA serves as an umbrella for self-directed armed groups, including participation by disorderly militias involved in spreading chaos, sectarian retribution and criminal activity.
- Fundamentalist fighters and proxies report directly to foreign parties. The regime grows weaker and more violent, involving neighbouring countries as diversions.

- Security services and proxies are subject to ever-increasing attacks. Regime forces progressively lose their mobility as well as control over portions of the country, forcing them to retreat.
- There no longer is a permanent loyalist military presence in parts of Idlib, Hama and Homs governorates, enabling the armed opposition to further regroup and organise. Governorates of Dayr Zor and Dera’a follow a similar path.
- As defections mount and the army is under ever greater stress, the regime cannot muster sufficient military resources to reverse the trend.
- Short-term displacement in villages and cities before and during clashes.
- Destruction of houses and property causes longer displacements.
- Large groups of IDPs within the country.
- Cross border movements with Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan increase, with long-term displacement of refugees in camps and with host families.

- Insecurity increases inaccessibility for humanitarian actors.
- Hard to monitor urban areas create lack of awareness of needs.
- Selective procedures at the border restrict most vulnerable migrant groups from entering and accessing essential services.
- Humanitarian actors prone to attacks by armed militia groups.

- Populations trapped in conflict areas with heavy fighting face protection risks, especially women and children.
- Emergency health and surgical care for the injured.
- Emergency assistance to displaced and conflict affected populations, including food assistance.
- Registration and needs profiling of IDPs and refugees.
# Slow decay of regime control

**Scenario**

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<tr>
<th>Probability level</th>
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- Endurance of the regime. Opposition makes slow progress with attacks against the security services. Unleashing of security forces against protesters continues.
- Moderate period of instability, clashes between Alawites and opposition groups. Dividing and shifting alliances between military defectors and militias on-going.
- Increased mutual mistrust and resentment between members of opposing camps. Frequent clashes induce resettlement of groups in like-minded areas, confirming a worrying pattern of sectarian segregation.
- Loyalists are forced to retreat to their villages to defend families and communities. Distinction between regime stalwarts and apolitical Alawites erased. Attempts to eradicate these last loyalists trigger civilian massacres.
- Alawite villages involved in repressing demonstrators (Rabi'a, Hama and Qabu, Homs) and those who have remain uninvolved in the uprising face large-scale retribution.
- Exhaustion, a growing sentiment of futility, and the absence of organized purpose could test the reliability of Alawites and potentially spell the regime’s demise.
- Short term displacement in villages and cities following violent clashes with return after government forces have left. Destruction of houses and property causes longer displacements for the affected. Large groups of IDPs within the country.
- Increased cross border movements to Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan, with long-term displacement of refugees in camps and host families. Up to 1.6 million affected.

## Assumptions

- Regime trying to exercise power by manipulating social fault lines. Continued endangerment of the Alawite community, playing of minorities against Sunni majority to hold on to its power.
- A growing number of military defectors.
- Residents no longer venture into neighbourhoods or towns inhabited by groups from the other communities for fear of kidnapping and/or attack.
- Strong localised identities of Alawite groups allows for their mobilization.
- Regime retains considerable manpower and that support base is radicalised even as it narrows. Reorganised around a hard-core elite composed of ruling family members and loyalists whose determination to fight has only heightened as their involvement in months of repression has grown.

## Impact

- Insecurity increases inaccessibility for humanitarian actors.
- Hard to monitor urban areas create lack of awareness of needs.
- Water, electricity and communications can be cut off, disrupting communication channels and in hospital services.
- Border restrictions keep the most vulnerable migrant groups from entering and accessing essential services.
- Humanitarian actors, ambulances and hospitals attacked by militia groups.

## Operational constraints

- Population trapped in conflict areas and cities with violent clashes face major food shortages and gaps in medical service provision.
- Protection for affected population.
- Emergency health care and secondary surgical care for the injured.
- WASH and food assistance.
- Emergency assistance to displaced population in the border regions.
- Registration and needs profiling of IDPs and refugees.
Key characteristics

- Syria has five agricultural zones with varying major crops dependent on rainfall. There are two annual harvests: winter (Mar-Apr) and summer (Aug) (WFP 2011).
- Agriculture contributes to 24% of the GDP (FAO 2011) and 20% of employment (WB 2010).
- The main agricultural products are: wheat, sheep meat, and cow's milk; primary food commodities are wheat flour, sugar and olive oil (FAO 2011).
- An estimated 14% of the work force is migrants, either within Syria or abroad, especially to neighbouring Lebanon (Aita 2009).
- Women’s participation in the work force is under the 20% average in Arab countries (Aita 2009).
- Considerable losses in the labour force occurred in 2003 and 2004 resulting from a massive privatisation of agriculture which led to significant rural-urban migration. Women were most hit by these losses, as agriculture constituted an important share (65%) of their employment (Aita 2009).
- There is no unemployment compensation scheme in Syria. 2009 ILO figures cite unemployment rates at 22%-30%. It is the highest in rural areas, especially in the Eastern region, feeding rural-urban migration. 78% of unemployed men and 92% of women had never worked (Aita 2009).
- The North-eastern governates, the bread basket of Syria, have experienced three consecutive years of drought since 2006. The 2007/2008 drought was the worst in 40 years. Most affected areas were Al-Hassakeh, Dayr az Zawr and Al-Raqqa (CAP 2009-2010). Even before the drought, the region was home to 58.1% of Syria’s poor population, a figure far exceeding its 44.8% share of the total population (GoS, UNDP 2007).
- In the rural northeast, 17.9% of people live below the lower poverty line vs. 4.47% of persons living in Damascus; in the urban Northeast, the figure is 11.2% - the second poorest in Syria (GoS, UNDP 2007).
- Erratic rainfall, droughts, high number of refugees, subsistence farming and herding are the most important threats to food security in Syria (WFP 2011).

Poverty

- Poverty and food insecurity is most prevalent among agriculturalists, and nomads, in arid and semi-arid areas. The urban unemployed, landless labourers, and rural families in rain-fed areas with no land or with small holdings are also at risk and susceptible to food insecurity, especially during drought (UNDP 2005).

Food Import

- Syria is an oil-exporter: 90% of oil exports to the EU, mainly to Germany, Italy and France. Reserves are declining and expensive food-subsidy programs contribute to a deteriorating fiscal balance. Food subsidies in Syria comprise 2.1% of the GDP (WB 2010).
- After decades of a centrally controlled economy, the 10th Five Year Plan (2006-2010) focussed on transition to a social market economy model (GoS 2011, FT 04/2011).
- In arid and semi-arid areas, food shortages result from insufficient purchasing power caused by isolation, lack of transportation, and limited economic means (UNCT 2005).
- During the 2008 drought, the national wheat production was 47.1% of the 2007 season contributing to increased food prices. To bridge the gap, Syria had to import wheat for the first time (GEWS 02/11).
- Syria’s food import dependency ratio - the percent of food consumed, in calories, coming from imported products - was 14% in February 2011 within the average for the Middle East and North Africa region (GEWS 02/11).
- Syria is less dependent on cereal imports than other Arab countries but is fiscally strained and therefore has a low quantity risk but a higher price risk. Measures were taken to respond in the recent years with Syria imposing export restrictions and reducing taxes on food grains (WB 2010).
Crisis impact

Key challenges include:

- Dry weather conditions, especially at planting time, reduced 2011 winter cereals yields.
- High cereal import requirements forecast for 2011/12.
- Since May, the cost of food has been increasing. Consequently, there is a growing concern over the impact of prolonged civil unrest on food security situation of most vulnerable groups (GIEWS 14/10).

Impact of Economic Sanctions

- On November 27th, the Arab League imposed economic sanctions on Syria. It voted to stop trading with Syria in all but essential goods, to ban Arab investments in Syria, to freeze assets held by senior members of the regime abroad, and to end dealings with Syria’s central bank. Sanctions were introduced as Syria missed a deadline to allow League observers to investigate the current conflict. Lebanon and Iraq, two of three league members that voted against the sanctions, have suggested that they may not apply them. Iran, China, Russia and the BRIC countries remain willing traders (Economist 3/12).
- A ban on oil imports applied by the US in August and the EU in September costs Syria $400m a month. Shrinking foreign-currency reserves, estimated at US$18 billion in March, are making trade increasingly difficult. The Banque Saudi Fransi is selling its 27% interest in one of Syria’s private banks. Foreign investment has halted, and the EU has placed an embargo on arms (Economist 3/12).
- A bigger impact on Syria’s economy may come from the EU’s oil import ban. Oil revenues account for 20% of Syrian GDP (BBC 27/11).
- The Syrian pound has fallen on the black market to its lowest point. To prevent further unrest, Syria has resumed subsidies on staples (Economist 3/12).
- In September, the government sought to shore up foreign reserves by banning imports. Prices immediately rocketed. Ten days later it reversed its position upon pressure from businesses (Economist 3/12).
- Tourism, which accounted for more than 10% of GDP in 2010, has all but collapsed (Economist 3/12).
- Many daily financial dealings are now through exchanges of goods (BBC 27/11).
- The sanctions allow a continued flow of remittances from Syrian workers abroad, and imports of basic commodities are exempted (BBC 27/11). In 2010, remittances were estimated at US $1.4 billion (3% GDP) (WB 2011).
- Jordan has supported sanctions, but has also expressed concern over the key land route that carries goods from Turkey and further afield through Syria to Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. The League’s sanctions resolution made a provision for such interests to be taken into account. A Technical Executive Committee is in charge of implementing the measures. One of its tasks is to look into exceptions relating to humanitarian issues directly affecting the lives of the Syrian people and Syria’s Arab neighbors (BBC 27/11).
- Turkey also imposed sanctions on Syria by freezing assets of those involved in the government crackdown, suspending ties with Syria’s central bank and banning all military sales (Guardian 30/11).

Food Prices

- The annual consumer price inflation rose to 6.9% in 2010 from 3% in 2009. The main reason for this inflationary surge is a sharp increase in the food and beverage price index (GIEWS 14/10).
- Between 2009-2010, prices of vegetables and legumes increased by almost 80%, substantially more than the normal seasonal increase of 35-45 % amongst other factors due to the severe drought in 2009-2010 (GIEWS 14/10).
- Since end 2010, prices of bread and cereals have steadily risen following the increase of wheat prices on international markets (GIEWS 14/10).
- Food price inflation reached its peak in December 2010, and in January 2011 it was nearly twice (13%) the January 2010 level (7%) (WFP 09/2011).
- After December 2010, the food price inflation rate has declined and a downward trend followed until May 2011 when it started to climb again. By August 2011, the food price inflation rate rose by about 4.5%. The change in trend is mainly driven by prices of meat that increased by about 22% between May and August, while prices of bread and cereals were stable and prices of vegetables dropped by almost 13% (FEWS 11/2011).
- The IMF predicted that Syria’s GDP would shrink by 2% this year and consumer prices increase by 6%. Local analysts think sanctions may push that figure into double digits, as inflation is steadily rising (IMF 09/11).
- Suffering from oil and gas sanctions, heating oil and cooking gas shortages exist; prices of basic foodstuffs are rising to a dangerous level (ICG 24/11).
Food Production

- Production of the 2011 winter cereal crops is estimated at 3.95 million tonnes, about 11% less than the last five years’ average. Despite a 10% increase in wheat planted compared to 2010, yields have been severely affected by late and erratic rainfall at the beginning of the season that led to poor crop establishment, especially in major rainfed-producing areas Al Hassakeh and Al Raqqa in the north and northeast (GIEWS 14/10).
- The recent European ban on oil imports from Syria is expected to further contract local economies with negative effects on Syria’s financial capacity to buy imported goods, including food (GIEWS 14/10).
- Prolonged unrest is causing disruptions in food distribution channels leading to localized shortages in several markets (GIEWS 14/10).
- A revised Emergency Operation was jointly approved by FAO and WFP in May 2011 for assistance to 115,000 Iraqi refugees in Syria, worth US$ 45.3 million for 8 months, ending by 31 December 2011 (GIEWS 14/10).
- WFP extended emergency food assistance to 22,000 affected people in all governorates across the country, with the exception of Aleppo (OCHA 10/2011).
- The UNHCHR reports existing pockets of need among groups of people who were already vulnerable before the current crisis began, including farmers affected by drought since 2007 and Palestinian refugees, 60,000 of whom live below the poverty line (IRIN 26/09).

Livelihoods

- Syrians were grappling with high food prices from early 2011, but the situation has deteriorated for households who have lost assets as a result of the ongoing conflict and from drought (UN 11/11).
- Even before the protests began, the Syrian economy faced major challenges linked to poverty, which affects 14% of Syrians, and unemployment which hit more than 20% of the workforce. The Syrian Economy Minister noted in November that government subsidies on basic necessities like oil by-products, electricity and certain food products are not going to last, the Syrian economy is passing through an emergency period (AFP 10/11).
- Thousands of subsistence farmers, working in cities like Dera’a, have returned home because of the insecurity, leaving jobs behind. Others are unable to harvest crops because of social unrest. Livestock feed is hard to come by, and food prices increasing (IRIN 26/11).
- Economic deterioration induced by the current instability will create major challenges for refugees both financially and socially. With the national economy affected by a forecasted slump of GDP, less investment in the country and a severe decline of its tourist industry, refugees will likely find it more difficult to secure a financial income, as many have been working in the informal labour market, tourism industry and domestic services sector (CAP 2011).
- For the first time businesses have closed in multiple districts in Damascus and spread to most of the suburbs and provinces. According to the Syrian National Council the aim is to reach civil disobedience that encompasses all sectors and forces the regime down (Reuters 12/12).

Food Vouchers (EVS)

- The electronic food voucher project was launched in the fall of 2009 as a pilot program. Beneficiaries receive a text message on their phones providing them with a code to use as a voucher at selected government shops. The mobile voucher allows families to purchase perishable items, such as eggs and cheese, which are usually not included in food assistance packages. In 2009 each family member received a voucher, worth $22, every two months. Following each transaction, the families received a text message of their updated balance. EVS requires the shopkeeper to have special WFP equipment in order to accept the food vouchers via mobile phone. If that equipment is damaged or stolen, as it was in May 2011 in Lattakia, then people who depend on vouchers for assistance cannot purchase food until the system is restored or a new shop is set up.
- The EVS reduces the costs of transporting and storing food, benefitting the local economy, including local markets and regional farmers. The system has proven itself to work well in a unique and prolonged refugee situation in an urban setting. EVS has made it easier to continue delivering remotely amid volatile situations without putting WFP’s safety at risk. The traditional in-kind food distribution system, given the current circumstances, would have placed the well-being of WFP’s staff and beneficiaries at serious risk, or worse, impeded WFP from reaching the beneficiaries.
- Since the beginning of the unrest, the EVS was able to supply 92% of beneficiaries in Lattakia with food assistance. WFP was able to re-adapt in Douma (a suburb of Damascus), Homs and Dera’a and 98% of targeted beneficiaries were helped during a moment of great upheaval and uncertainty (WFP 19/05).
Key priorities

Most affected areas
• Northern governorates Hassakeh, Raqqa and Aleppo
• Conflict affected areas
• Rural agricultural areas, arid-semi arid areas

Most affected groups
• Farmers
• Urban poor
• The unemployed, especially women
• Refugees on food assistance

Recommendations for intervention
• Continued support through EVS
• Cash for work or food for work

Map of Livelihood Zones

(Source: UNOCHA, Syria Drought response Plan 2009)
Key characteristics

Despite a good health care system which has made impressive gains over the last two decades, not all Syrian experience the same access to health care. In the context of the current crisis, injured protestors do not have access to assistance and care. At the same time, medical staffs serving protestors are themselves at risk of targeting by security forces.

Health service coverage

- Syria’s Constitution gives the right of comprehensive health coverage to all (EMRO 2004).
- The MoH is the prime health service provider, operating in 67 hospitals with 11,155 beds. The MoH also runs 1,534 health centres as medical points for primary and preventive care. Private providers also exist and offer a range of ambulatory and secondary health care services in 376 small hospitals and over 12,000 pharmacies and clinics (EMRO 2004).
- Health care, goods, services and facilities are delivered, free of charge, at three levels: village, district and provincial. Coverage rates are extremely high – upwards of 90% (SK 2010).
- In 2006, there were nearly 15 doctors and 19 nurses/midwives per 10,000 Syrians; hospital beds were available at 14.7 per 10,000 persons (WHO 2007).

Morbidity and Mortality

- The improved high vaccination coverage, improved living standards, increased citizen awareness, decreased illiteracy, and improved infrastructure (water, electricity and sewage systems) contribute to strong health indicators. Other important factors are the widespread coverage of primary healthcare services, therapeutic services and available emergency and relief system, plus the increased number of health workers (WHO 2007).
- In 2009, the <5 mortality was 16 per 1,000 (WHO 2011).
- Communicable diseases are not a major cause of death for <5s in Syria; deaths by cholera, malaria, polio, diphtheria and tetanus affect 0% of the <5 population (WHO 2007). Diarrheal diseases still contribute to mortality, particularly rurally where access to health services, clean water and adequate sanitation is more limited (FAO 2005). In 2004, 19% of <5 deaths were due to diarrhoea (ChildInfo 2005).

Causes of death: children <5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distribution of causes of deaths in children under-5 (2008)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prematurity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congenital abnormalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth asphyxia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diarrhoea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neonatal sepsis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Measles</td>
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</table>

(Source: WHO 2011)

- Syria has seen a reduction in maternal mortality over the last two decades, from 120 per 10,000 live births in 1990 to 46 per 10,000 in 2008 (WHO 2010).
- Nearly ¾ of all pregnant women and 93% of all deliveries are attended to by trained personnel (WHO 2007).
- Over half (58.3%) of women of reproductive age report using (or a partner using) a contraceptive method (HPAch 2011).
- Tuberculosis prevalence is at less than 40 per 100,000 (HPAch 2011).
Sectoral Pages – Health

- National immunization rates are high covering between 91-99% of children (BGC, DPT, OP, measles, hepatitis B, and tetanus neonatal) (WHO 2007).
- Syria is certified polio-free with no polio cases reported since 1995 (UNICEF 2011).

Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
- NCDs account for 77% of all deaths, the majority of which are cardiovascular (44%) (WHO NCD 2011).
- Cancers account for 8% of deaths, respiratory diseases 4%, diabetes 3% and other NCDs 18% (WHO NCD 2011).
- Communicable disease, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions account for 13% of deaths. Injuries make up 10% of deaths (WHO NCD 2011).
- Nearly half of all Syrians aged 15+ smoke tobacco (42.9%) (WHO 2009); 36.8% of men smoke daily (WHO NCD 2011).
- Fewer than a third of children <5 years are affected by stunting and less than 10% of children are either underweight or wasted (MICS 2006).

Nutrition
- 79% of Syrian households consume iodized salt (MoH 2006).
- Anaemia affects 41% of preschool aged children (Childinfo 2005).
- High malnutrition levels are evident in rural Syria. The traditional practice of tea drinking among children leads to anaemia in small children. This combined with poor rainfall and limited food supply in north eastern areas has historically created pockets of high malnutrition (UNICEF 2010).
- In 2006, only a third of newborns are breastfed within an hour of birth. Exclusive breastfeeding for infants <5 months only impacts 29% of infants, a decrease from 2000 when 81% of infants <5 months were exclusively breastfed (Childinfo 2005).
- According to UNICEF MICS III 2006, the main nutrition indicators for children <5 in the north-eastern governorates were worse than the national average (CAP 2009-2010).

Current situation
- Wounded patients in at least four government-run hospitals (national hospitals in Banias, Homs and Tell Kalakh and the military hospital in Homs) have been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, including by medical workers. Hospital workers suspected of treating protesters and others injured in unrest related incidents have themselves faced arrest and torture (AI 24/10).
- UNCHR, HRC and WHO have established a referral system so that registered displaced Syrians in Lebanon can access health care. A few NGO-run health care centres in the region provide primary health care and medication to the displaced (UNCHR 18-25/11).
- Around 20 soldiers and security forces raided a government hospital in Homs governorate, arresting seven hospital workers on August 7th (ICRC 2/12).
- Ambulance drivers have been recurrently gunned down (IFRC 2/12).
- Medical workers have been targeted by security forces, some for treating injured people, others on suspicion of attending demonstrations or filming protesters. (AI 24/10, ICRC 2/12, BRC 28/11).

Key priorities

**Most affected areas**
- Areas impacted by ongoing fighting and displacement

**Most affected groups**
- Injured protestors
- Medical service providers
- Displaced populations in Lebanon
- Kurdish refugees in Syria

**Recommendations for intervention**
- Impartial and safe access to medical care.

Gaps in Health Care
- Syria’s public health policies do not consider gender-based violence, which has grave consequences in respect of women’s health (SK 2010).
- Over 100,000 persons of Kurdish origin were rendered stateless by decree in 1962, and as a result, have been deprived of the enjoyment of many rights, including the right to health. While stateless Kurds with red identification cards (the ajanib) have access to health care, but not to treatments for chronic diseases. Stateless Kurds, those without any identification cards (the maktoumeen) have limited, or no, access to healthcare. Access to justice for the purposes of accessing health services for this group is also hindered (SK 2010).

Key characteristics

- Informal communities are integrated across many urban locations in Syria, especially in Damascus. In these locations, dwellings have access to electricity, water and telecommunications (ODI 1/12).
- In Damascus, around 95% of the governorate has electricity; 88% are connected to the sewerage system (ODI 1/12).
- According to UN HABITAT, some houses in these informal communities are poorly built and unsafe (ODI 1/12).
- As tenancy agreements in informal settings are not officially recognised, dwellers are vulnerable to sudden price hikes and/or termination of contracts (ODI 1/12).
- Large tracts of land in the most fertile areas of the country were confiscated and transferred to urban merchants, politicians and entrepreneurs for large-scale cotton and wheat cultivation (ODI 1/12).

Several displaced groups are highly vulnerable to shelter issues and include Iraqi refugees, Palestinian refugees and persons displaced through drought:

- Iraqi refugees in Syria are vulnerable to price hikes in heating fuel and rents. Many Iraqis say that paying rent is their most significant difficulty (ODI 1/12, RI 2011).
- Palestinian refugees live in nine official and three unofficial camps where shelter is basic and much requires repair (UNHCR 2011).
- Priority issues of the Palestinian refugees are: overcrowding in households, lack of ventilation, rehabilitation needs, deplorable and hazardous shelters (UNRWA 2011).
- Syrians displaced through drought have settled in the outskirts of big cities, many living in makeshift camps where they face water, sanitation and food security issues (ODI 1/12).
- While the IDPs have difficulties in accessing adequate housing, they also face forced evictions due to government urban development activities (ODI 1/12).

Current Situation

Since the beginning of the violence in March, many Syrians have fled the country seeking shelter in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

- Syrian refugees in Lebanon found shelter with relatives, placing a burden on host communities and making it difficult to support the refugees (AFP 23/09, IRIN 26/09).
- Some refugees in Lebanon are seen sheltered in unfinished houses (AlertNet 26/09).
- UNHCR and partner NGOs are distributing heaters, heating fuel, kitchen tools, and winterization items to refugees in Lebanon where most of the refugees reside with host communities. Around 200 refugees are accommodated in two abandoned schools which humanitarian agencies are renovating (UNHCR 29/10, UNHCR 21/10, and UNHCR 18/11).
- Syrian refugees in Jordan are also reported as being hosted by local communities (Xinhua 18/11).
- Activist groups claim households lack heating fuel because it is used for Syrian military needs (AFP 10/11), however, other sources indicate shortages due to economic hardship, observing that heating fuel prices have increased by 65% (IRIN 27/10).
- There is reported destruction of homes and farmland in Dera’a, Tel Kalakh and Jisr Al-Shughur (IDMC 11/11).
- Syrian refugees in Turkey are sheltered in six camps where the Turkish Red Crescent is meeting their basic needs (TRC 14/11).
- The Turkish Red Crescent reports that the makeshift camps on the Syrian side of the Turkish-Syrian border were emptied and the agency has stopped delivering services to the displaced sheltered there. However, there is no further information on these groups (TRC 14/11).

Key priorities

Most affected areas:
- Conflict affected areas of Syria
- Sections of neighbouring countries hosting Syrian refugees

Most affected groups:
- Internally displaced Syrians
- Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries
- Iraqi and Palestinian refugees in Syria

Recommendation for intervention:
- Increased information on shelter needs and coping strategies of impacted populations.
Key characteristics

**Women**

- Syria's constitution guarantees gender equality, but personal status laws and the penal code discriminate against women and girls. In January 2011, Syria issued a comprehensive anti-trafficking law, Legislative Decree #3, which provides new grounds for prosecuting trafficking and protecting victims, and outlines a minimum punishment of seven years (HRW 2011). Syria amended its penal code in 2009 to require a minimum two-year sentence for honour crimes; at least 10 of which were documented by Syrian women's rights groups in 2010 (HRW 2011).
- Decree 121 specifically bans organisations working for women's rights (Open Democracy 2008).
- Migrant domestic workers, whose numbers have increased in Syria, face exploitation and abuse by employers. The government enacted two decrees regulating the work of recruiting agencies to better protect the workers, but enforcement mechanisms are still lacking (HRW 2011).

**Iraqi Refugees**

- 93% of UNHCR’s registered refugees and asylum-seekers are from Iraq. Apart from a few hundred individuals, all persons registered with UNHCR live in urban areas, mainly Damascus and its suburbs (UNHCR 1/11).
- Syria gives Iraqi refugees, registered or not, access to public hospitals and schools, but prohibits them from working (HRW 2011).
- A 2010 survey of Iraqi refugees living in Syria found that most are reluctant to return to Iraq permanently: 46% cited political uncertainty, 15% blamed unstable security conditions, a further 13% said they are holding back because of poor educational opportunities, and 6% cited housing shortages. Approximately 40% of all registered Iraqis in Syria are considered vulnerable and in need of assistance (UNHCR 2010).

**Kurds**

- Kurds, Syria's largest non-Arab ethnic minority, are subject to systematic discrimination, including arbitrary denial of citizenship to an estimated 300,000 Syria-born Kurds. Authorities suppress expressions of Kurdish identity and prohibit the teaching of Kurdish in schools. In March 2010, security forces shot at Kurds celebrating the Kurdish New Year in the northern town of Raqqa to disperse them, killing at least one. In July a military court sentenced nine Kurds alleged to have participated in the Ragga celebrations to four months for inciting sectarian strife (HRW 2011).

**Human Rights**

- Syria ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2004 (IRIN 6/10).
- However, the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights said that the Fact-Finding Mission on Syria had found a pattern of widespread/systematic human rights violations by Syrian security and military forces that are crimes against humanity (HRC 30/09).
- Six months into pro-democracy protests in Syria, allegations of human rights abuses perpetrated by supporters of President Bashar al-Assad's regime proliferate (IRIN 6/10).
- Syria's multiple security services continue to detain people without arrest warrants and frequently refuse to disclose their whereabouts for weeks and sometimes months, in effect forcibly disappearing them (HRW 2011).
- Reports exist of security and military forces using live fire against, and sometimes killing, individuals trying to flee the country. Individuals felt compelled to cross the border because their names appeared on lists of people wanted by the security services because of their mere participation in peaceful protests. State forces targeted these individuals while still on the territory of the neighbouring State. There are also reports of Syrian armed forces laying mines near the border with Lebanon (OHCHR 23/11).

**Current Situation**

- Over 5,000 people have died since the start of the Syrian uprising, including: at least 300 children; civilians; defecting soldiers; and those executed for refusing to shoot civilians. It excludes serving military, security forces or allied armed groups, hundreds from that category are also thought killed. (OHCHR 13/12).
- Documented cases of torture since the beginning of the current crisis include children: 15 boys, aged 10-15, from the southern city of Dera’a. Since then, Amnesty International has documented 10 cases of children dying in custody, some mutilated either before or after death. 16 children have been reported as dying in detention after suffering severe torture (IRIN 6/10).
- In August, the UN Commission for Human Rights drew attention to credible allegations of crimes against humanity, encouraging the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court (UN 14/11).
- Family members are targeted for harassment, intimidation, and beatings. From March 2011 to 2nd December, tens of thousands had been arrested and more than 14,000 were reported to be in detention. Over 12,400 have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and tens of thousands are now IDPs (UNHCR 2/12).
- As more members of the military refuse to attack civilians and change sides, the crisis is already showing signs of descending into armed struggle. The Government has failed to protect its population and has ignored the international community’s calls to cooperate with international investigations (UN 14/11).
- The UN's independent international commission found patterns of summary execution, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance and torture, including sexual violence and abuse, some of it directed against children (Guardian 28/11).
On 2 December, the Independent Commission of Inquiry presented its report on Syria to the UN Human Rights Council stating that Syrian authorities have unequivocally committed systematic human rights violations resulting in over 4,000 deaths, disappearances and widespread torture (EU 27/10).

Brussels (MEPs) condemn the brutal use of force by Syrian authorities against protesters, pro-democracy activists, human rights defenders, journalists, and medical personnel (EU 27/10).

A long-apathehetic youth has become politicised and is now actively engaged in the struggle, seeking to push back against some of the more thuggish and sectarian trends among protesters (ICG 24/11).

The vast majority of Syrians who have arrived in Lebanon in the past many weeks have come from Tal Kalakh and Homs. They express fear and anxiety about returning, and most do not feel that the situation is safe enough for them to do so (UNHCR 18-25/11).

Refugees and asylum seekers in Syria have limited access to social services. Consequently, many depend on humanitarian assistance (CAP 2009-2010).

Security on the Syria/Lebanon border

Reports continue of enhanced security along the Syria/Lebanon border. An additional two unofficial border crossings were reportedly closed by Lebanese and Syrian joint security forces in Wadi Khaled. The week also saw several reports of efforts to prevent illegal traffic of goods and to apprehend suspected smuggling. Displaced and local communities have expressed concerns over their own security in border regions (UNHCR 22-28/10).

Gunfire continues to be heard on the Syrian side of the border. In late November, the Lebanese Armed Forces intensified their presence in Wadi Khaled where they established a number of mobile checkpoints (UNHCR 18-25/11).

Landmines

The presence of landmines reported on the Syrian side of the border and heightened security are concerns for displaced Syrians and local communities (UNHCR 11-18/11). Reports from Lebanese civilians indicate that Syrian government forces may have laid anti-personnel mines along the Lebanese border near the villages of Knaysseh and Al-Hnayder, near Homs (HI 7/11).

In a region bordering northern Lebanon, Syrian troops were seen planting mines in the early morning of 27/10 in an apparent bid to stop weapons smuggling along the porous border in an area facing two Lebanese villages- Knaysseh and Al-Hnayder. Syrian soldiers were also seen deploying near the villages of Heet and Buwayt (AFP 27/10).

Violence

Syrian troops continue to use tanks and heavy weaponry to attack residential areas in the city of Homs. According to information received by OHCHR, the neighbourhood of Baba Amr was under siege for seven days in November, with residents deprived of food, water and medical supplies (UN 8/11).

Government sources say more than 1,100 members of the army, police, security and intelligence services have been killed (Reuters 12/12).

On 11th December, Syrian troops mainly from the 12th Armoured Brigade based in Isra, 40 km from the southern border with Jordan, stormed the nearby town of Busra al-Harir. Opposition activists said they had shut down much of the capital and other towns with a strike, the biggest walkout by workers since the protest movement demanding Assad's removal erupted in March (Reuters 12/12).

Detention

Arrests of protesters and perceived supporters of the protests remain ongoing (AI 14/11). According to UN figures issued in November, at least 3,500 people have been killed in Syria since March (Guardian 28/11).

Protests calling for greater rights and freedom and the replacement of authoritarian regimes have been largely peaceful, yet Syrian authorities have responded brutally to suppress them. Security forces have repeatedly used grossly excessive force, using snipers to shoot into crowds of peaceful protesters and deploying army tanks to shell residential areas while seeking to justify such force on the pretext that the government is under attack by armed gangs (AI 14/11, Guardian 28/11).

There has been a sharp rise in the number of reported deaths in custody, 88 such deaths have been reported as occurring from 1 April to 15 August 2011. This figure for four and a half months is many times higher than the yearly average over recent years. Out of the 88 cases, only two are reported as being the subject of official investigation (AI 14/11).

Syria announced the release of 553 detainees on 5 November, but tens of thousands remain in detention and dozens are arbitrarily arrested daily (UN 8/11).

Key priorities / challenges

Ongoing violence and unrest is causing increased numbers of displaced and refugees and is characterised by continued human rights violations.

Most affected areas

- Conflict affected areas of Syria, especially urban centres
- Communities in neighbouring countries hosting displaced Syrians.

Most affected groups

- Detainees and those subject to human rights violations
- Persons displaced internally by the violence.
- Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers seeking safety across international borders.
- Iraqi and other refugees dependent on humanitarian assistance.
- Children.
Syria: Displaced people and refugees before 2011

- **Golan 1967**
  - 70,000 – 433,000

- **Hama 1982**
  - 10,000 – 20,000

- **Kurds 1965-76**
  - 60,000 – 140,000

- **Drought-induced displacement in North-east 2007-8 and 2008-9**
  - 65,000 families to Damascus, Aleppo and Dara’a

- **Palestinians refugees**
  - Over 496,000
  - 75% in Damascus

- **112,771 registered Iraqi refugees and asylum-seekers**
  - Mainly Damascus and suburbs
  - (Government estimates 1 million)

- **12,000 Palestinians in Al-Hol and Al-Waleed camps**

The depiction and use of boundaries, names, and associated data shown here do not imply endorsement or acceptance by MapAction or ACAPS.
<table>
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<th>Key background documents</th>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights Watch (HRW), 11 November 2011. <a href="http://www.hrw.org/fr/node/102845">We live as in War. Crackdown on Protesters in the Governorate of Homs. Syria</a></td>
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<td>Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN), July 2011. <a href="http://unocha.romenaca.org/Portals/0/Documents/humanitarianexchange051.pdf">Humanitarian Exchange Number 51</a></td>
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<td>Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), 11 November 2011. <a href="http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1%28httpInfoFiles%29/85D4C57B52517548C1257945004A6235/$file/syria-overview-nov2011.pdf">Syria. State Policies and Military Actions continue to threaten further Displacement</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 30 September 2011. <a href="http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4e92a86d2.html">Statistical Report on UNHCR Registered Iraqis and Non-Iraqis</a></td>
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