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THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

Syria crisis: humanitarian situation, needs and response



Abdul Kareem Fawzy / SAARC

The conflict in Syria has created the largest humanitarian crisis in decades. As the fifth year of the Syria crisis begins, the humanitarian needs across the region stretch beyond description. Constant, deadly conflict is destroying lives, families and communities. Today, hardly a family remains in Syria unaffected by the catastrophe. Well over one third of Syria's pre-conflict population of 22 million is living in hard to reach and besieged areas or has sought refuge elsewhere in Syria. The extreme hardship endured

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by millions of people inside the country, and by refugees who have fled the country and are now scattered throughout the region, will only grow more acute in 2015.

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The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has mobilized enormous resources across the region to respond to the vast humanitarian needs inside Syria as well as to the largest refugee crisis the Middle East has seen in decades. The Movement has also mobilized to assist Syrian refugees in Europe. In Syria alone, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) operations depend on the thousands of volunteers as its backbone to provide assistance to those most in need. For the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, it will take at least **389 million Swiss francs** (402 million US dollars) to continue meeting the most critical needs of those affected by the crisis in Syria and in the neighbouring countries in the coming months.

Over 7.8 million people displaced inside Syria (some of them multiple times)

Nearly 4 million have fled to neighbouring countries or further afield

Movement response: budget required to address immediate needs

SYRIA:

221 million Swiss francs (228 million US dollars)

NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES – IRAQ, JORDAN, LEBANON, TURKEY:

168.2 million Swiss francs (174 million US dollars)

TOTAL:

389 million Swiss francs (402 million US dollars)

In the wake of unprecedented levels of humanitarian suffering in Syria and its neighbouring countries and with no political solution in sight, **the Movement is determined and ready, with support from donors, to double its current level of response** to meet the critical needs in Syria and provide assistance to strengthen the resilience of refugees and host communities in neighbouring countries.

The Syrian crisis has now become a protracted regional crisis while still requiring an emergency response. The financial, logistical and security burdens being shouldered by governments, host communities and humanitarian organizations in response to the needs of

the most vulnerable are becoming ever more severe. The number of people in distress is rising, conditions are dire, and services are crippled; the needs are increasing dramatically, and donors' generosity is being stretched to the limit. Without adequate funds for what is now a protracted, region-wide humanitarian disaster, people's suffering will only get worse.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is committed to working for the people of Syria and the region. **We are thinking long-term and predict at least another five years of large scale support. We also plan for the long-term and call for long-lasting partnerships in expanding our Movement humanitarian response.**

KEY CHALLENGES

- **Safe access** to those in need inside Syria must be guaranteed by all sides for SARC staff and volunteers who frequently put their lives at risk while on duty, as well as for ICRC and IFRC staff and humanitarian workers in general.
- **The ability to respond** to the increasing needs of the most vulnerable in both urban and rural areas – whether they are internally displaced population, residents, host families or refugees, or people who have simply become poverty stricken during four years of conflict and suffering.
- **Ensuring that all the parties to the conflict** fulfil their obligations to respect the principles of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).
- **Ensuring protection for medical personnel** and health facilities and transport. The wounded and sick must be allowed safe access to health care without any distinction.
- **All sides need to allow humanitarian aid** to be delivered impartially and with neutrality across front lines, and in particular into besieged areas.
- **Around the region, tension over access to jobs and social services** are rising for refugees and host communities who are facing immense pressure.
- **Greater support to host communities** is needed to mitigate the risk of reaching a breaking point in the regions and communities bordering Syria.

SYRIA

An estimated 12.2 million people inside Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance. Current figures suggest that more than 200,000 people, a third of them civilians, have died since the conflict began four years ago, and an estimate of over one million have been injured. Tens of thousands are reportedly missing or detained

With large areas of the country either under siege or under armed opposition control, gaining safe access to communities who are in desperate need will remain an extraordinary challenge for the foreseeable future.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, made up of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), were able to provide assistance to more people in need during 2014 than at any time since the start of the crisis in 2011. Nevertheless, so huge is the scale of Syria's tragedy that people's needs far outstrip the Movement's ability to respond.



Over the last four years the pillars of normal life have crumbled across Syria. Medical services have collapsed, the economy has shrunk and water systems have dried up, with grave consequences for health. Enormous pressure is being put on both the social services and the local economy in many parts of Syria, even in areas considered safe. Infrastructural damage, brain drain, and shortages of equipment and supplies have left schools and other social facilities and essential services operating at a reduced capacity or closed altogether while the conflict has impeded access to those still operating. The Movement has stepped in to provide the basics of human existence, where possible. Even now electricity networks are collapsing, and the generators we have provided are keeping the lights on above the operating tables in dozens of hospitals and health facilities across the country.

Poor security, shifting frontlines, violence and difficult access to besieged and hard-to-reach areas for aid workers, including staff and volunteers of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, is another major concern. Such insecurity seriously obstructs and often prevents the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and puts aid worker' lives at risk. Tragically, 40 Syrian Arab Red Crescent and 7 Palestine Red Crescent aid workers have lost their lives while on duty - and many more were injured, kidnapped or detained. The Movement calls on states with influence to urge respect for the rules that protect the vulnerable, to support efforts to deliver assistance safely and not to allow humanitarian activity to be politicized.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, being one of the few humanitarian agencies to maintain a permanent national and expatriate staff, and volunteer presence inside Syria since the start of the crisis, is able to cross front lines in full transparency with authorities and other parties to the conflict.

With the support of the Movement and other international partners, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent is providing assistance to an average of 3.5 million people every month. Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers risk their lives for others every day, showing enormous generosity of spirit, solidarity and courage, including the thousands of volunteers in Syria alone.

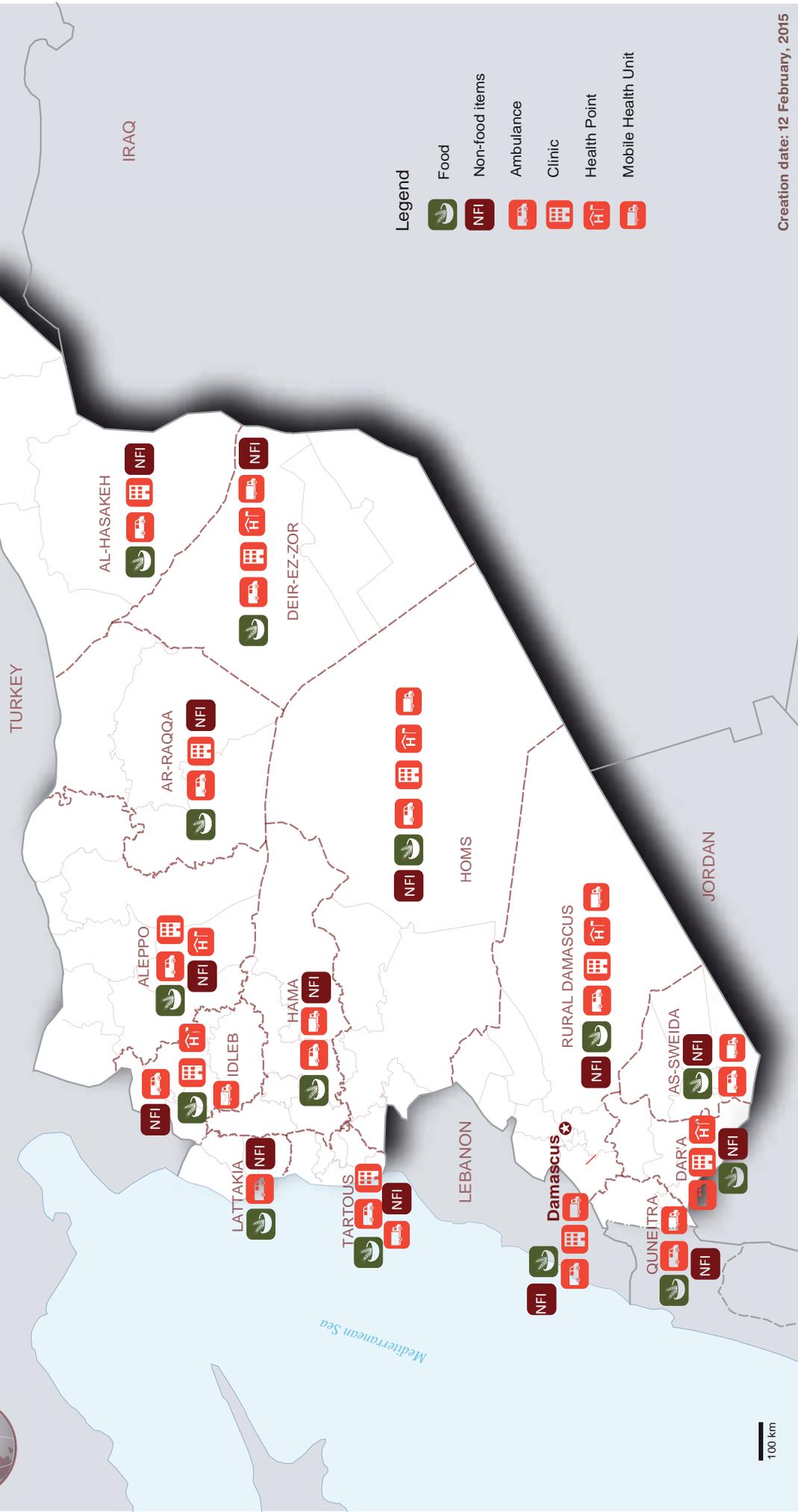
The ICRC and Syrian Arab Red Crescent have maintained contact with all parties to the conflict and a transparent dialogue with the authorities and the armed opposition, emphasizing the Movement's neutral, impartial and independent mandate. This enables the SARC, together with the ICRC, and with the support of the IFRC, to cross front lines and reach tens of thousands of people, including those living under siege and difficult-to-reach places, to deliver much needed assistance.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED IN SYRIA

- 3.5 million people reached on a monthly average with relief by SARC, including up to 60 per cent of the relief from UN.
- Food distribution for 2.1 million people
- Health services for 0.9 million people
- Essential household items for 2 million
- Water and sanitation for 2.5 million
- 10,000 SARC volunteers across the country
- More than 15 million people benefitted from clean water and sanitation projects, in both government and armed opposition controlled areas
- 100,000 people benefitted from a solid waste management programme
- Over 3.7 million people benefitted from a pesticides programme
- Delivery of food and household items reached an average of 500,000 people per month
- Mobile health units were set up ensuring curative and preventive care for up to 7,000 internally displaced people and residents
- Consultations monthly
- 382 tracing requests for relatives in Syria through the Movement's tracing service
- The ICRC was also granted access to four central prisons run by the Ministry of Interior. Two visits were carried out in the first quarter of 2015 to Aleppo prison and to Adraa Women's prison in Damascus
- Surgical assistance for the treatment of 3,000 weapon wounded including across front-lines, and also delivery of chronic disease medicines for 100,000 patients
- In January 2015 alone, 50 emergency responses were carried out in different parts of the country, 33 of them across front lines



Support provided by SARC per sector and type of activity in Syria, 2014



Lebanon

“When winter is here, water and mud are everywhere and there is nowhere to play. My dream is to return in Syria, see my friends and go back to school, without wounded and dead people everywhere, I would like to have winter clothes to stay warm”. Warda, 9 years old, living in Katermaya camp in Lebanon, said.



Lebanese Red Cross winterization distribution for Syrians in “Abu Latif camp” in Zahle. Credit: Tommaso Della Longa/IFRC

Jordan

Cash Transfer Programme



“If the cash transfer program stops, I don’t know what would happen to my family’s situation. It’s very bad. Now we are barely surviving, it’s very hard”, a Syrian lady living with her child in Amman said. Cash transfer programme

provides a degree of stability and comfort as they prepare and dream of returning home to Syria (Photo: Ibrahim Malla/IFRC)

Community-based health and first aid

Amani Naser Abu Nasser, 30, is a community health volunteer in the Jordan National Red Crescent Society. Amani’s parents are Jordanian but she was born in Syria and lived there her whole life until 2013. She moved to Jordan with her two children for safety reasons, leaving her Palestinian husband in Syria (Photo: Ibrahim Malla/IFRC)



Iraq

Zina, 25 years old, is a Iraqi Red Crescent volunteer in Erbil branch. *“I started volunteering 2 years ago because I want to help the other and do something for the refugees. There is a lot to do here for Syrians and Iraqis. We need a greater support to reach all of them”.* (Photo: Tommaso Della Longa/IFRC)



Syria



February 2015, SARC first aid teams in Douma Emergency Response providing first aid and health care services after shelling on the city that day (Photo: SARC)

Turkey



“This is a highly populated area. There were a lot of children without much to do in the streets. It is very important for children that were exposed to war and displacement to have the opportunity for expressing their feelings”. Meryem explains that *“the people coming from Syria speak Arab. Some of them know other languages, such as English, but there is a lot of people not speaking Turkish. That is why we have our activities in Arab. This lets children express themselves more”.* (Photo: Javier Ormeno/IFRC)

SYRIAN REFUGEES

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 3.9 million refugees have fled to Syria's immediate neighbours Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

The generosity of host communities who initially welcomed the refugees has not been matched by support to their socio-economic resilience, and we are witnessing increasing poverty and community tensions. Schools and social facilities are overloaded, and many refugees, often scattered and supported by a fragile web of solidarity, do not even have access to these facilities.

The failure to provide a safe and dignified environment to those who left their home and the violence in Syria, is also in itself a factor of risk for the region and must be tackled as a humanitarian priority. Another important priority is to support host communities who are struggling to cope.

TURKEY

Turkey has received the largest number of Syrian refugees: over **1.7 million are hosted in Turkey** under a temporary protections programme. Some **240,000 people are in camps**, while the remaining refugees are living in both urban and rural areas.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement operates in Turkey through the Turkish Red Crescent, supported by IFRC. **Assistance provided to refugees includes food support and complementary distribution of non-food relief and hygiene items, as well as psychosocial support for refugee and host communities, and remedial education programmes.** In 2014, a mobile kitchen was set up as part of the emergency food programme in Suruc, which reaches some 10,000 Syrian people every day and has distributed over one million rations so far to the Syrian population who fled the northern Syrian town of Kobane (Ain-al-Arab).

Other food activities are carried out in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP), while International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners and UNICEF support the National Society's psychological support programmes.

In 2013, the Turkish Red Crescent designed and pioneered, with support from WFP and Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency of Turkey (AFAD), an innovative strategy to transition from in-kind food assistance to a market based approach with the provision of vouchers: the Electronic Food (e-Food) Card Programme. The successful experiment was rapidly scaled up and by June, 2014, had been implemented in 21 camps, providing food security to over 217,000 beneficiaries in 45,000 households.

LEBANON

Over 1.1 million Syrian refugees escaped to Lebanon where they now make up **over a quarter of the population**. The vast majority of refugees is dispersed throughout Lebanon rather than in camps, although the Palestinian diaspora in Lebanon is also host to over **40,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria**, creating further stress to their limited resources in the twelve Palestinian camps in the country. The Syrian refugees who live in host communities, see their support system become increasingly fragile as their stay extends – many live in rented housing or abandoned buildings, or are hosted by families, often in affiliated communities, many in the poorest parts of Lebanon.

Living conditions, costs of housing and employment prospects have thus worsened in host communities. The destabilising potential of the current refugee flow is evident as host communities and refugees find themselves competing for scarce resources. The added burden on the public sector such as health, social services, education as well as competition in the labour market are source of tensions and occasional harassment and violence.

In 2015, addressing the needs of both refugees and impoverished host communities will be essential.

In 2014, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the Lebanese Red Cross and the Palestine Red Crescent Society Lebanon branch, both supported by IFRC and ICRC, has played a key role in assisting refugees in the country. Its activities focused on **delivering emergency medical services to refugees and host population, providing surgical care and rehabilitation services to those who have been wounded, providing psychosocial support to refugees, cash assistance as well as delivering food and non-food relief items** such as essential household items and winterization kits to the most vulnerable. It continued working with regional and local

authorities to improve the availability of water for both refugees and host communities, to reduce the pressure on residents and the potential for tensions. Meanwhile the existing support to Palestinian refugees through the management of camps, five hospitals and nine clinics, was extended to Syrian refugees as health services were provided to both Palestinian and Syrians at no cost.

JORDAN

Close to 640,000 Syrian refugees are registered in Jordan with approximately **80 per cent living outside of camps** in urban and rural areas with the highest concentration in northern and central Jordan, while the remaining 20 per cent live in the Za'atari, Marjeeb al-Fahood, Cyber City and Al-Azraq camps.

For Syrian refugees, the greatest challenge is finding livelihood opportunities to help pay for their rent. Limited access to an already depressed job market has led to refugees selling personal assets and increasing their debt. Here again, as the refugee flow expanded, living conditions, costs of housing and employment prospects have worsened for refugees and for host communities alike. For example, rent costs have tripled or quadrupled in refugee hosting areas. Although initially welcoming, host communities have become increasingly resentful towards refugees, as evidenced by recent protests and tensions.

The focus of the Movement in Jordan is on the most vulnerable refugees and host communities. **In 2014, refugees on the Syrian-Jordanian border received the most essential aid including ready-to-eat meals, drinking water, blankets and mattresses, diapers and sanitary pads.** Critical water projects were completed where families are hosting Syrian refugees. Better health services were assured to the wounded and sick Syrian refugees during the transit period at the eastern border and the Raba'a Al Sarhan registration centre. **Cash support (through cash transfer programmes) was provided to refugees to support their rent and winter expenditures.**

Since October 2014, the Red Cross Red Crescent hospital in the Azraq Camp have become fully operational providing laboratory, radiology, pediatrics, internal medicine as well as receiving referrals from Azraq camp clinics. The Movement has reached 10,000 people through community-based health services.

IRAQ

Some 220,000 Syrian refugees reside in Iraq – mostly in the Kurdistan province of Duhok – while 1.7 million Iraqis were displaced in 2014. Three decades of war, internal conflict and economic sanctions, have resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and severe damage on the infrastructures and disruption to the central services. The further escalation of the armed conflict in 2014 is challenging further the capacity of humanitarian agencies to respond to the needs of refugees and displaced populations alike.

The Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, supporting the Iraqi Red Crescent, and otherwise involved in the broader humanitarian response in Iraq, **has been supporting over 18,000 Syrian refugees with various services including immediate relief distribution (food parcels, winterization kits, water, hygiene kits), support to restore family links, and physical rehabilitation for the wounded.**

For more information on the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's response to the Syria crisis and its appeals, visit:

www.ifrc.org/syria-crisis and

www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/middle-east/syria