

REACH Situation Overview: Displacement and Needs in Eastern Aleppo City, Syria

30 September 2016

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INTRODUCTION

Hostilities in and around Aleppo city, ongoing since early July 2016, intensified further in mid-September, with civilian casualties and damage to infrastructure reaching unprecedented levels since the beginning of the Syrian conflict.¹ Although a Cessation of Hostilities agreement was announced starting 12 September, it was unilaterally declared over by the Syrian government one week later.¹ While intermittent access along the Ramouseh Road allowed for limited population movement in early August², the road was cut on September 4th and around 250,000 - 275,000 people remain trapped in eastern Aleppo³.

Following the end of the ceasefire agreement, intensive shelling has affected populations, and hundreds of civilian casualties were reported in the span of less than one week.⁴ It has been estimated that over the past week, approximately 100 children have been killed and over 200 injured.⁵

Since the beginning of July, humanitarian access to Aleppo has been extremely restricted with the isolated exception of Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood. On 19 September an inter-agency convoy intended for the city was targeted by airstrikes while passing through the community of Big Orm, causing extensive casualties and destroying many of the goods

transported. Assistance intended for eastern Aleppo has remained on the Turkey-Syria border since mid-September.⁶

Following the escalation of fighting, key informants (KIs) report that populations are unable to access safe or secure shelter anywhere in eastern Aleppo, leaving them increasingly vulnerable to the ongoing conflict. Many communal generators have shut down due to a lack of fuel, resulting in neighbourhoods without access to electricity.

The health system within eastern Aleppo is in critical need of assistance; **facilities continue to be targeted by airstrikes³ and cannot cope with the increased number of casualties given the shortage of life saving supplies and personnel.** At the time of writing, there are an estimated 35 doctors serving the population³.

Similarly, food security remains a priority, as the scarcity of many basic commodities has forced local shops to shut down or led to significant price increase for remaining items.

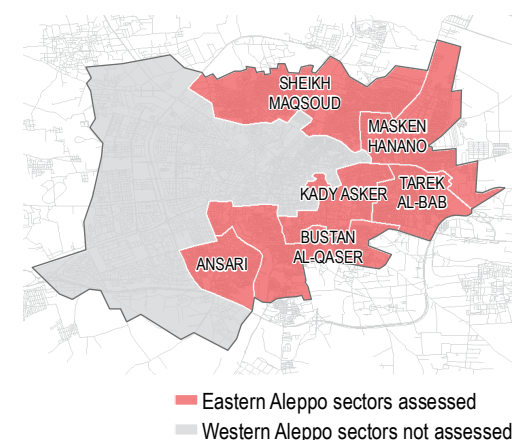
Following damage sustained by two water pumping stations within the last week, **populations are now sourcing water from open wells in order to compensate and KIs have reported that the water being consumed tastes or smells bad. Further, health professionals have expressed grave**

concern at the risk of widespread illness from contaminated water³.

To provide a better understanding of the unfolding humanitarian situation in eastern Aleppo, **REACH conducted a rapid assessment on 26-28 September 2016**, building on three previous assessments conducted during August and September. This most recent rapid assessment offers updated information on access to food, water, shelter, non-food items and healthcare, as well as on the priority needs and future intentions of those who remain in eastern Aleppo.

Data was collected through 25 qualitative interviews KIs residing in the same previously assessed neighbourhoods: Ansari, Bustan al-Qaser, Kady Asker, Masken Hanano, Sheikh Maqsoud and Tarek al-Bab. It was not possible to assess all affected communities within Aleppo city due to an inability to obtain information from KIs during the timeframe of the current assessment. Accordingly, the list of assessed areas should not be considered representative of all affected neighbourhoods and findings cannot be generalised further. Interviews were conducted with community representatives with sector specific knowledge about their neighbourhood: local council representatives, nurses, pharmacists, workers from local relief organisations, teachers, shop owners and businessmen.

Map 1: Assessed neighbourhoods of Aleppo City



INTENTIONS

Displacement

Movement between neighbourhoods in eastern Aleppo has increased over the last week due to the escalation of airstrikes. Civilians, displaced due to the destruction of their homes, were reported both leaving from and arriving in the neighbourhoods of Ansari and Kady Asker in search of shelter. Residents of eastern Aleppo remain unable to leave the city due to sustained shelling, with the exception of those living in Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood.

During the mid-September ceasefire, a secure access route opened between Sheikh

¹ UN DPI Staffan de Mistura Statement, 25 September 2016

² REACH Situation Overview: Displacement and Needs in Eastern Aleppo City, Syria, 30 August 2016

³ OCHA Aleppo Crisis Situation Report No.1 29 September, 2016

⁴ ReliefWeb, Syrian Arab republic: Massacre in Aleppo leaves medical NGO pleading for No Fly Zones and aid. 26 September 2016

⁵ La Stampa. UNICEF Unicef: "In Syria there is an ongoing genocide of children". La Stampa. 29 September 2016; Save the Children, Children make up approximately half of casualties in eastern Aleppo, according to medics. 25 September 2016

⁶ OCHA Syria Flash Update on Recent Events. 21 September 2016

Maqsoud and the adjacent neighbourhood of Ashrafiyeh. In previous months, the road has been too insecure for civilian, commercial or humanitarian vehicle use, however, it currently remains open from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. each day, allowing access for both civilians on foot and vehicles carrying commercial goods and humanitarian assistance. Approximately 25% of the population of Sheikh Maqsoud has reportedly departed via the Ashrafiyeh road since last week; while most remain in Ashrafiyeh, those who can afford to pay for further movement have travelled to communities within the sub-district of Afrin, northern Aleppo.

According to KI estimates, an estimated **70% of the population would leave eastern Aleppo as soon as it is possible to do so.** This represent a significant increase from 50% in comparison to the previous REACH rapid assessment (September 6, 2016). The escalation of conflict and the insecurity of Aleppo city in comparison to other areas were the most common reasons for wanting to leave, as well as the reduced access to basic services such as water, electricity and healthcare. While many KIs reported that an acute escalation of airstrikes would drive them to flee, they also pointed out that movement would remain impossible until secure access routes were provided and safety assured.

If able to leave, residents of assessed areas mostly intend to travel to Idlib and Aleppo governorates, in particular to communities in Maaret Tamsrin, Idlib, Dana and Atareb sub-districts. As in previous assessments, this is

mainly due to these areas' relative safety and security, access to income or employment opportunities, and family ties.

Of those who intend to stay in eastern Aleppo, the most common reasons reported were due to a desire to protect assets, a lack of money to pay for transport and a perception that there is nowhere else to go. Despite the partial securing of the Ashrafiyeh road of Sheikh Maqsoud and the departure of many neighbourhood residents, others have stayed due to an inability to pay for shelter in other locations or to afford transport out of the area.

CURRENT HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

Healthcare

Since the end of the ceasefire, the health situation in all assessed neighbourhoods has deteriorated rapidly, and remaining facilities are unable to cope with the increased number of casualties.³ **Some health facilities have reportedly been turning patients away due to a lack of supplies, space and personnel to treat those in need. Further, emergency evacuations for critically injured residents have remained unavailable since the closure of the Ramouseh road in early September.** Within the past week, two hospitals, the Al-Sakhour hospital and Omar Bin Abd Al-Aziz hospital, both sustained significant damage due to shelling³. The Al-Sakhour hospital was put completely out of service, while at the time of writing, the extent of the damage to Omar Bin Abd Al-Aziz hospital was still being assessed³.

Reported medical facilities functioning by neighbourhood⁷

	Hospitals	Mobile clinics / field hospitals	GP surgeries / clinics	Informal emergency care points	Change in overall health situation in the last week
Ansari	✗	✓	✗	✓	↓
Bustan al Qaser	✓	✓	✓	✗	↓
Kady Asker	✗	✗	✗	✓	↓
Masken Hanano	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓
Sheikh Maqsoud	✗	✓	✗	✗	◊
Tarek al Bab	✗	✓	✓	✗	↓

✗ Facilities not functioning

✓ Facilities functioning

↑ Positive improvement

↓ Negative deterioration

◊ No change

KIs on the ground supported these reports, indicating that over the past week some facilities in each neighbourhood, with the exception of Sheikh Maqsoud, have stopped functioning due to damage sustained in the conflict.

Available facilities included mobile clinics, field hospitals, surgeries, GP clinics, and emergency accident and injury care, though all of these remained extremely limited in functionality and capacity. However, in the neighbourhood of Masken Hanano, no functioning health facilities reportedly remain, either because they are out of service due to shelling or because they have been forced to move to other areas of eastern Aleppo.

No medical assistance has entered the region since late August, and health facilities are currently experiencing critical shortages of medicines and supplies. **All KIs indicated that populations were in desperate need of medical services, most commonly antibiotics, emergency care for accidents and injuries, and surgery.** In order to deal with the critical shortage of medical supplies, health facilities have reportedly asked local residents to donate blood of all types; **they have additionally been recycling medical items (i.e. syringes, needles and bandages), operating without anaesthesia and using non-medical items for treatment (i.e. wooden sticks as splints and salt water for wound sterilisation).** Due to the lack of capacity within

⁷ Functioning does not necessarily imply full access to services or treatment by a doctor formally trained in the relevant procedure, or the use of anaesthesia or appropriate clinical equipment.

Most common health services needed by populations^a

1. Antibiotics
2. Emergency care for accidents and injuries
3. Surgery
4. Treatment for chronic disease

available facilities, non-medical populations have also been trying to treat injured civilians themselves while they wait for available space. In some cases, this has reportedly led to the patients' disability or death.

Shleter and NFIS

With the current intensity of the conflict, KIs indicate that populations are unable to access safe or secure shelter anywhere in eastern Aleppo. As a result of the increased damage to civilian housing and infrastructure, a greater number of people are being displaced within neighbourhoods.

Host populations typically remain in homes or apartments they owned or rented often sharing accommodation with IDPs. The majority of displaced populations across all neighbourhoods tend to be housed by local councils in formerly abandoned buildings; these neighbourhood-

driven initiatives have largely replaced collective shelters, which are frequently targeted by airstrikes along with other types of civilian infrastructure. KIs received fewer reports of IDPs renting accommodation or living with host community households than in previous assessments.

Access to NFIs has deteriorated over the last week in most neighbourhoods of eastern Aleppo. Most shops are closed and NFIs are very difficult to obtain, and the few traders who offer do so set increasingly high prices. In response, local populations are avoiding new purchases and rationing the supplies they have left. **Markets in Masken Hanano, Tarek al-Bab and parts of Kady Asker have not been functional for 7-10 days;** elsewhere, many NFIs tend to be rare or absent from markets, and households can seldom afford the items that are available. Personal and household hygiene items are only reliably accessible in Sheikh Maqsoud, Ansari, Bustan al-Qaser and parts of Kady Asker; access to female hygiene items is more sporadic. Non-consumable NFIs, including jerry cans, buckets, cooking utensils, blankets, sleeping mats, clothes and shoes, are almost universally inaccessible across eastern Aleppo.

Sheikh Maqsoud is the only assessed area of eastern Aleppo that does not currently report difficulty accessing NFIs. This can be attributed to the recent entry of humanitarian vehicles and commercial goods via the Ashrafiyeh road, which has enabled distributions to take place and replenished market supplies of many goods, and to the decreased demand for

Reported access to NFIs by neighbourhood

	Personal hygiene items	Female hygiene items	Household hygiene items	Jerry cans / buckets	Cooking utensils	Blankets / sleeping mats	Clothes / shoes	Overall change since last week
Ansari	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓
Bustan al Qaser	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓
Kady Asker	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓
Masken Hanano	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓
Sheikh Maqsoud	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	↕
Tarek al Bab	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	↓

✓ Reported access ↑ Positive improvement
 ✓ Some reported access ↓ Negative deterioration
 ✗ No reported access ↕ No change

items given the departure of populations. **By contrast, residents of Masken Hanano and Tarek al-Bab report that virtually all NFIs are inaccessible in their neighbourhoods.**

Food and markets

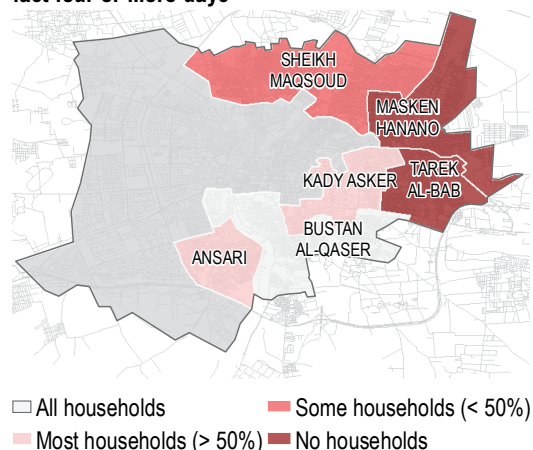
In all neighbourhoods but Sheikh Maqsoud, a deterioration in access to food and markets has been reported since the end of the ceasefire. **The population in Masken Hanano and Tarek al-Bab neighbourhoods reportedly have no access to food or markets at all. In order to survive, residents here are consuming small quantities of any basic food items they have (such as tomato paste) or that they**

can obtain from their neighbours. During the ceasefire, people had reportedly been able to move around relatively freely, with limited security risks, and many shops were able to open. At the time of data collection, however, ongoing fighting severely limited people's ability to leave their homes to access markets in their own or other neighbourhoods, while many shops have closed, which has caused food items to become scarce and prices to rise dramatically.

Consequently, people in all neighbourhoods aside from Sheikh Maqsoud have been forced to rely on food reserves, which are often insufficient to meet the needs of households. KIs reported

^a'Most needed' does not necessarily imply unavailability. Furthermore this list is not intended to be a comprehensive list of most needed medical items or services, but rather indicative of needs based on community perception

Map 2: Populations with enough food stocks to last four or more days



that **no households in Masken Hanano or Tarek al-Bab have enough food stocks to last more than four days**. In Bustan al-Qaser, Ansari and Kady Asker this figure remains over 50% of the population, as was also reported in the previous rapid assessment (September 6). While less than 50% of the population in Sheikh Maqsoud also have food stocks to last more than four days, residents are not reportedly relying on them given the availability of food in markets.

When markets are at least partially accessible, insufficient quantities of food, a lack of resources to afford available food items and limited availability and high cost of cooking fuel further limit people's access to food in Ansari, Bustan al Qaser and Kady Asker. There, **core food items such as flour, eggs, sugar, vegetables, fruit, chicken, oil and infant formula continue to be widely unavailable in markets**. While the same was reported for Sheikh Maqsoud during the previous rapid needs assessment, most core food items, except for some fresh vegetables, are available now.

Compared to the ceasefire period, prices of basic food items have increased in Ansari, Bustan al-Qaser and Kady Asker, by approximately 20% across all assessed goods. Prices have remained stable but high in Tarek al-Bab and Masken Hanano, while in Sheikh Maqsoud prices have decreased since previous assessments due to increased availability and local council subsidies.

The end of the ceasefire has reportedly led to decreased access to bread in all neighbourhoods, with the exception of Sheikh Maqsoud. While subsidised local

council sales are the main source of bread in all neighbourhoods but Sheikh Maqsoud, people face serious challenges in accessing this bread, including heavy shelling causing damage to bakeries, limited access to distribution sites, limited amount of bread available, and high prices of bread and flour placing these items out of reach of vulnerable residents.

With the exception of Sheikh Maqsoud, **all KIs indicated that residents are unable to access cooking fuel**. While access is better in Sheikh Maqsoud, less than 50% of the population are still able to access sufficient cooking fuel to meet household needs.

While at varying degrees, **the population in all assessed neighbourhoods reportedly continues to adopt strategies to cope with a lack of food, with a reported increase in the use of such strategies in all but one neighbourhood since the end of the ceasefire**. No change in the adoption of coping strategies was reported by KIs in Sheikh Maqsoud, however populations in remaining neighbourhoods widely reported reducing their overall food consumption in order to cope.

Concerns persist over the health and wellbeing of the population in eastern Aleppo affected by a lack of food with children under the age of five universally identified as the population most at risk of a lack of food.

Water

The damage sustained by two water pumping stations over the past week has greatly impacted patterns of water supply in eastern Aleppo. Residents in Tarek al-Bab and Masken Hanano most commonly source water from open wells, while in Ansari, Bustan al-Qaser and Kady Asker populations can currently rely on intermittent access to the municipal network as their primary source of water, but also widely rely on wells as a secondary option. **WASH cluster members have warned of widespread contamination of the water network in eastern Aleppo, which has placed the population at risk of water-borne diseases;**³ KIs on the ground corroborate these warnings, reporting that the water they drink has an abnormal taste or smell.

Average reported prices of core food items and reported change over the past week (SYP)^{9,10}

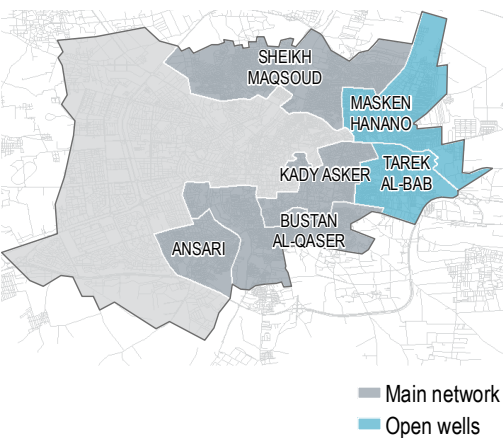
	Ansari			Bustan al Qaser			Kady Asker			Masken Hanano			Sheikh Maqsoud			Tarek al Bab		
Bread (1 pack)	700	↑	+23%	690	↑	+23%	660	↑	+14%	125	◇		100	◇		433	◇	
Rice (1 Kg)	490	↑	+32%	480	↑	+17%	540	↑	+8%	300	◇		300	◇		367	◇	
Bulgur (1 Kg)	430	↑	+30%	420	↑	+27%	420	↑	+11%	350	↑	+5%	160	◇		283	◇	
Flour (1 Kg)	400	↑	+14%	400	↑	+14%	Not available			Not available			200	◇		Not available		

↑ Negative increase
↓ Positive decrease
◇ No change

⁹ Some assessed core food items were reportedly unavailable across many parts of eastern Aleppo this week. As such, comparative changes are not necessarily reflective of areas experiencing high prices last week and current unavailability.

¹⁰ \$1 = 515 SYP (UN operational rates of exchange as of 1 September 2016)

Map 3: Most common source of water



Nearly all respondents reported frequent, lengthy interruptions in supply and difficulty obtaining enough water to meet household needs, suggesting that the municipal network and the city's overstretched network of wells were inadequate even in combination. The fact that they were still so widely used reflected a lack of other options.

In particular, the worsened security environment and restricted humanitarian access made it difficult to operate water trucking services, a sharp contrast to the situation in late August. Residents in Sheikh Maqsoud remain able to access their water network, which is run independently by the local Kurdish council, and was the only neighbourhood in which residents could still rely on water trucks as a secondary source.

To cope with the sporadic availability of water, households modified their hygiene practices by washing and bathing less often; they also reduced their consumption of drinking water. Residents also adapted to frequent water cuts by filling up tanks and large containers for future use whenever the municipal network was functioning.

Aid

With the exception of Sheikh Maqsoud, no formal humanitarian assistance has reportedly been received by populations within eastern Aleppo since late August. The last assistance reported entering was approximately six weeks ago, when a limited amount of formal and informal humanitarian aid entered the city through back roads. However in general, humanitarian agencies have not been able to effectively reach populations in need since the closure of Costello road on July 7.¹¹

Given the opening of the access route for residents in Sheikh Maqsoud, humanitarian vehicles have reportedly been able to enter the neighbourhood without restrictions since the ceasefire began. Here, humanitarian deliveries have provided food items such as sugar, rice, bulgur, oil, beans and lentils, hygiene and sanitation items such as soap and water sterilisation tablets, and NFIs such as cooking utensils.

Populations in remaining assessed neighbourhoods remain highly concerned about the targeting of distribution points by shelling, and this remains the biggest

Summary of priority reported needs by sector

Priority	Sector specific needs
1. Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased in number of health facilities, quantity of medicines, medical personnel, and supplies• Increased fuel supplies to power generators, medical equipment and ambulances• Availability of medical evacuations for critically ill and injured patients
2. Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to affordable basic food items in markets or through continued distributions• In particular: flour, eggs, milk, sugar, meat, rice, fruit, vegetables and baby milk
3. Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to secure shelters which will provide safety and protection to civilians from the ongoing conflict
4. Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public water network needs repairing to avoid critical water shortages• Provision of chlorine to purify unsafe water sources and prevent disease outbreaks• Increased fuel to pump water to households

HUMANITARIAN PRIORITY NEEDS

potential barrier to accessing assistance if it were to be delivered. Due to these fears, KIs commonly reported that populations would only attend distribution points during the night or in periods of perceived security. In Kady Asker and Masken Hanano, however, it was reported that some residents are in such critical need that they would still travel to distribution points under any circumstances. The community preference remains for assistance to enter through Ramouseh road and be distributed to households during the night by local councils.

The table above displays the ranking of priority needs as reported by KIs, with a breakdown of reported needs by sector. The most recent assessment indicates health as the greatest priority with medical centres and supplies under great strain, followed by food, water, and shelter. This is perhaps indicative of the recent intensification of violence since the last assessment. Water was cited as a major concern with the local network needing repairs. Safety and security and fuel were crosscutting concerns which are affecting all sector needs.

¹¹ UNHCR Syria Flash Update on Recent Events. 21 September 2016

CONCLUSION

Following the end of a Cessation of Hostilities agreement in late September, an acute escalation of conflict has led to the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation within eastern Aleppo with the exception of Sheikh Maqsoud. For the 250,000 to 275,000 people³ remaining in the area, humanitarian assistance and protection from the ongoing conflict is of critical need.

While the securing of the Ashrafiyeh access route has stabilised the situation in the Kurdish neighbourhood of Sheikh Maqsoud, **populations with no access to commercial goods or humanitarian aid in other assessed neighbourhoods of east Aleppo are facing severe shortages of medical supplies, fuel, water and fuel.** The serious escalation of conflict within the past week has affected all sectors, with a drastic increase in conflict-related casualties, the destruction of civilian shelters, health facilities, roads, civil defence buildings, shops and markets, and water pumping stations. Additionally, the heightened insecurity is preventing populations from leaving their homes at all to access available food or NFIs.

Health is the top priority need for populations across eastern Aleppo. Facilities are in critical need of assistance as they struggle to cope with insufficient supplies, staff or space to treat the increased number of casualties. Hospitals are being repeatedly targeted in the ongoing conflict and some health facilities have reportedly been turning patients away due to the inability to treat them.

Populations are in need of an increased number of medical personnel to alleviate the demand placed on remaining staff, increased quantity of life-saving medicines and supplies, and fuel in order to operate equipment. Medical evacuations for critically injured patients is also a priority.

Access to food remains the second most important priority need for populations, **particularly in the neighbourhoods of Masken Hanano and Tarek al-Bab, which reportedly have no access to food or markets at all. Unable to leave their homes due to fear of shelling, these populations are relying on the consumption of small amounts of very basic available food items such as tomato paste.** The availability of food items has decreased given the inability for vehicles to enter the area and core food items including flour, eggs, sugar, vegetables, fruit, chicken, oil and infant formula continue to be widely unavailable in markets and emergency food stocks continue to be consumed. **Populations are in need of renewed access to affordable basic food items in markets or through continued distributions.**

With the intensification of conflict, access to secure shelter remains a critical need for civilians amid the increasing number of airstrikes. **Key informants report that there are no longer any safe spaces for populations to seek safety in eastern Aleppo, leaving civilian populations without appropriate protection from shelling.**

Finally, following the damage to two water pumping stations, **access to water also**

remains a critical concern. Populations across eastern Aleppo all indicated issues in accessing water, and are largely relying on the intermittent access to the water network or water from open wells. However, this has left thousands of residents susceptible to water-borne diseases.³ **In addition to renewed access to the water network, residents are in need of chlorine to purify contaminated water sources and prevent a widespread disease outbreak.**

Populations remain concerned about gathering in large groups to receive assistance, due to fears of being targeted. Further, it was widely reported that populations would only attend distribution points at night time or during periods of perceived security. As has been reported in previous assessments, community preference is for assistance to be distributed directly to households at night, under the co-ordination of local councils.

As the humanitarian and security situation continues to deteriorate across eastern Aleppo, there are serious concerns for the populations who remain unable to leave. Residents in the neighbourhoods of Ansari, Tarek al-Bab, Masken Hanano, Bustan al-Qaser and Kady Asker are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and an alleviation of the constant shelling.

With dynamics constantly changing, REACH will continue to monitor the situation in eastern Aleppo in order to provide updated information on the needs and intentions of remaining populations.

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information, you can write to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

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