

REACH Situation Overview: Displacement from Hasakeh City, Syria

25 August 2016

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INTRODUCTION

On 18th August, air strikes on Hasakeh city began for the first time since the beginning of the crisis in Syria, together with increased clashes inside the city. Although air strikes subsided after three days, clashes continued, triggering the mass displacement of an estimated 70,000 people.¹ Most fled to suburban neighbourhoods and surrounding villages (approx. 40,000), while the remainder were displaced elsewhere in Hasakeh governorate. On 22-23 August, REACH conducted a rapid assessment of displacement patterns to date, the future intentions of IDPs, and the current situation in locations outside Hasakeh sub-district which have experienced an influx of IDPs.

Information was collected through qualitative interviews with a total of 61 Key Informants (KIs) residing in areas receiving IDPs in the governorate: Darbasiyah, Amuda, Ras al Ain, Tal Tamer, Tal Brak and Quamishli (Map 1). Other displacement locations, including villages in Hasakeh and Hole sub-districts, could not be assessed due to a lack of Key Informants.

Key Informants included individuals from the displaced and host communities with sector-specific knowledge. IDP key informants included teachers, nurses and labourers, while host community respondents included community leaders, members of the local

council and those working in humanitarian response.

Following a ceasefire agreement and cessation of conflict on 23 August, IDPs had reportedly begun to return to Hasakeh city from all locations of displacement at the time of writing (24 August). Others were reportedly waiting to ensure that the situation had stabilised prior to returning. If the ceasefire is respected, it is likely that returns will continue. However, the situation should be monitored carefully over the next two weeks.

DISPLACEMENT

Displacement Patterns

As of the 23 August, the largest outflows of people were reportedly from the neighbourhoods of Salhiyeh, al Mufti, Al Tala'e', Al Mashfa Al Watani Tal Hajar and Kalaseh. Some people reportedly faced difficulties leaving the city, due to a fear of being directly caught in clashes. Initial estimates suggest that whilst around 40,000 are displaced within Hasakeh sub-district², around 25-30,000 have been displaced to elsewhere in the governorate along three primary routes: northwest to Tal Tamer and Ras al Ain, north to Darbasiyah and Amuda, and northeast to Tal Brak and Quamishli (Map 2). There are also reports of small numbers of people heading east to Hole and further northeast to Malikeyeh.

IDP Profiles

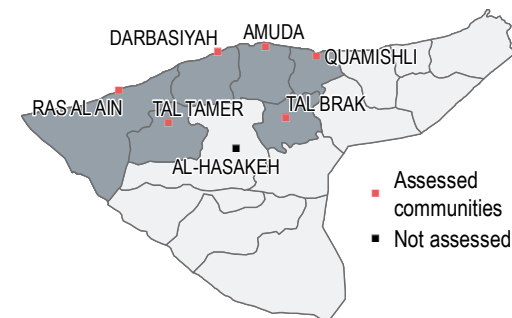
The majority of IDPs are family groups, typically married couples with children. Children are estimated to make up half of newly displaced IDPs. An estimated 5-10% of recent IDPs reportedly suffer from chronic illness, and 1-2% from disability—similar to the proportions found in Hasakeh sub-district as a whole.³

In all assessed locations, reported reasons for leaving al Hasakeh City were similar: primarily due to the escalation of conflict and the deteriorating security situation, specifically due to fear of shelling. Reduced access to food was reported as a secondary reason. IDPs chose their destinations based on perceived access to shelter, the presence of relatives and friends, safety and security, and access to food.

Travel

Newly displaced populations **travelled in small groups of between two and nine households**, using either private cars or buses provided by private companies charging a fee. KIs in Amuda reported that local authorities had also sent buses to Hasakeh City, which provided transportation at no cost. **Few IDPs reportedly faced challenges en route. Some of those travelling to Darbasiyah, Amuda and Quamishli received help on**

Map 1: Assessed communities in Hasakeh governorate



their journey from local authorities and organized groups, most commonly in the form of transportation upon arrival in their destinations. New arrivals in Amuda and Darbasiyah reportedly received food and blankets from NGOs. The vast majority of IDPs travelled with identity documents and some cash, however few brought clothes, personal hygiene items, food and blankets.

INTENTIONS

Those remaining in Hasakeh city do so primarily to protect assets. Others reported a lack relatives and friends to stay with elsewhere, or lack of money to pay for movement. Some neighbourhoods of the city are reported to remain relatively safe, which has also influenced the decision to stay.

If the security situation does not improve, KIs

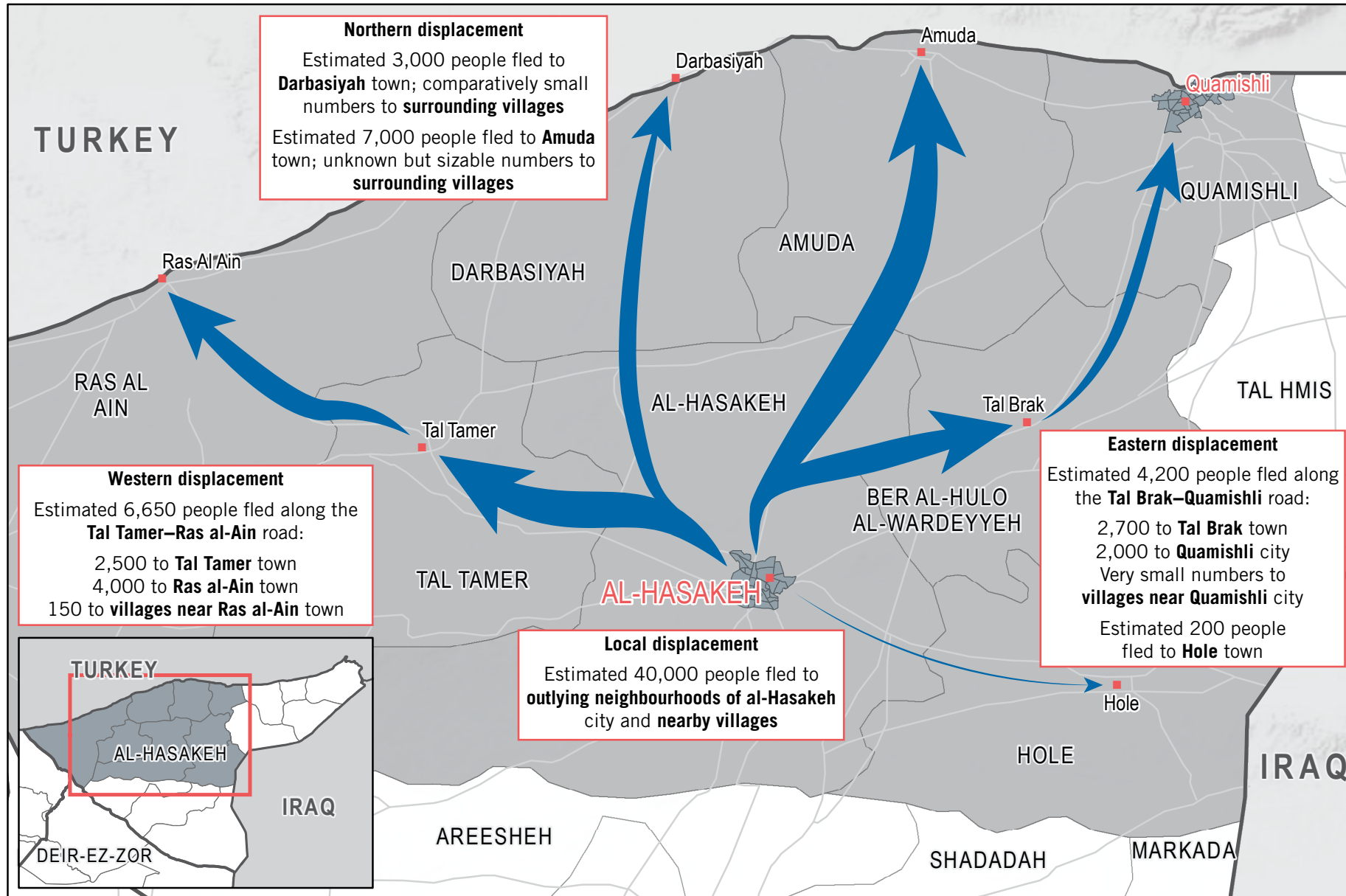
1 OCHA Flash Update: Syria Crisis – Al-Hasakeh, 23 August 2016

2 OCHA Flash Update: Syria Crisis – Al-Hasakeh, 23 August 2016

3 A recent REACH assessment found that 7.6% of the population have chronic diseases and 2.8% have disabilities.

See: REACH, Hasakeh governorate MSNA, August 2016

Map 2: Identified displacement trends from Hasakeh city between 18 and 23 August (estimated numbers)



reported that more people are likely to leave Hasakeh City in the next two weeks, most likely following similar displacement routes to those observed to date.

While future displacement is heavily dependent on the evolving security situation, KIs estimate that continued conflict could cause a further 25,000 to leave the city in the next two weeks.

If conflict were to subside, IDPs displaced to areas outside of Hasakeh sub-district reportedly intend to return to Hasakeh City. KIs estimated that approximately half of new IDPs will likely remain displaced for one month or more, while the remainder would prefer to return sooner if possible. In general, IDPs in the assessed locations do not have plans to move to elsewhere. Instead, they prefer to remain close to Hasakeh city in the hope that the security situation will soon improve. Some returns had already been reported following the 23 August ceasefire.

IDP SITUATION

Shelter

The majority of IDPs across all assessed areas are staying in shared houses or apartments, commonly hosted by relatives or friends. However, in some locations **those unable to stay with the host community are residing in collective shelters**, with a few in unfinished buildings and in open spaces.

In Amuda town, 7 schools and 1 mosque are being used as collective shelters (some were

initially sleeping in tents in school grounds but have now been transferred indoors). IDPs residing in the mosque have reportedly received little to no assistance. Despite a relatively large influx of IDPs into Ras al Ain, there were reportedly no collective shelters being used as of 23 August.⁴

In Tal Brak and Tal Tamer towns, schools are functioning as a collective shelters, with one school in each town housing approximately 200 IDPs. Two schools are reportedly hosting IDPs in Darbasiyah town, and three in Quamishli, with two more intended to be used as of 23 August.


In both Tal Brak and Quamishli, some IDPs are also staying in unfinished buildings.


Food


Overall, **KIs reported that IDPs are typically obtaining food from family and friends or purchasing supplies from shops and markets.** Those in collective shelters in Amuda, Darbasiyah and Quamishli also had access to food from local authorities and NGOs. However, the ability of local authorities to continue distributions is reportedly limited, and IDPs in Ras al Ain, Tal Brak and Tal Tamer have reportedly had little to no assistance at all.

While most food items were available across locations assessed, the **inward movement of populations has reportedly placed strain on markets, causing increased prices and a decline in the availability of core items** over the last two weeks.

Figure 1: Average reported prices of core food items (SYP)

	Amuda	Darbasiyah	Quamishli	Ras al Ain	Tal Brak	Tal Tamer
Bread (1 pack)	63 ↑	96 ↑	50 	127 ↑	60 ↑	125 ↑
Rice (1 Kg)	696 ↑	690 ↑	693 ↑	731 ↑	667 ↑	750 ↑
Bulgur (1 Kg)	283 ↑	268 ↑	214 ↑	285 ↑	433 ↑	300 ↑
Flour (1 Kg)	263 ↑	187 ↑	190 ↑	123 ↑	291 ↑	100 ↑

 increase in average prices since previous week

 No change since previous week

On average, market prices of all assessed core food items have increased in the past two weeks, most notably in Amuda where average prices of flour, rice and bulgur have increased by 30%.

In general, KIs did not report that recently displaced populations are resorting to extreme coping strategies to deal with a lack of food. However, KIs in Quamishli and Amuda indicated that IDPs have had to borrow money from family or friends in order to purchase basic items.

In all assessed communities, displaced populations generally have access to bread, with the exception of Tal Tamer where this was reportedly the case for only some IDPs. However, the quantity of bread available from bakeries in Amuda, Tal Brak and Darbasiyah is reportedly insufficient to meet population needs.

Prior to the recent influx of IDPs, 10-18% of households in Quamishli, Tal Tamer and Ras al Ain already reported facing challenges to accessing bread, compared to 3-6% in Amuda and Darbasiyah.⁵

Water

Water sources are similar for IDPs living with host families and those in collective shelters, with both either connected to the main network or reliant on water from wells. However, **sufficiency of water appeared to vary by shelter type as well as location.** Half of all KIs reported that IDPs have enough water for their needs, whilst the other half reported that problems related to water access.

IDPs staying with relatives and friends typically have reasonable access to water through the network. However KIs residing in collective shelters in Amuda are reliant on local authorities to provide water and reported

⁴ Numbers of collective shelters in use as reported by Key Informants in local authorities as of 23rd August.

Figure 2: Reported IDP access to NFIs per community

	Personal hygiene items	Female hygiene items	Household hygiene items	Jerry cans / buckets	Cooking utensils / equipment	Blankets / sleeping mats	Clothes / shoes
Amuda	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Darbasiyah	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quamishli	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Ras al Ain	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Tal Brak	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tal Tamer	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

- ✓ Reported access
- ✓ Some reported access
- ✗ No reported access

that IDPs face problems accessing sufficient water. Some IDPs in collective shelters reportedly faced difficulties accessing water in Darbasiyah, Tal Brak and Quamishli.

While the vast majority of KIs did not report that IDPs are employing coping strategies to deal with a lack of water, in Tal Brak, Quamishli and Amuda, **IDPs in collective shelters were reportedly reducing their consumption of drinking water and modifying hygiene practices (i.e., bathing less) in response to a lack of water.**

Non Food Items

Access to core NFIs varied across assessed locations. The majority of KIs in Ras al Ain and Amuda reported that IDPs have little or no access to personal hygiene items, female hygiene items, jerry cans, clothes and shoes, or blankets/sleeping mats. However, IDPs staying with host families in Amuda were more likely to have access to core NFIs than those in collective shelters, who reported little or no access to assessed items. In Darbasiyah, it was reported that most IDPs could access NFIs; in collective shelters these were typically received from NGOs. In Quamishli, IDPs reported receiving NFIs such as blankets and hygiene items from NGOs. In contrast, KIs in Tal Brak reported that little to no

assistance was being received, leaving IDPs to purchase items or borrow from relatives and friends where possible. Finally, a majority of KIs in Ras al Ain reported that IDPs have little or no access to assessed hygiene items and household NFIs.

Reasons for the lack of access to NFIs also varied across communities assessed. In Ras al Ain, KIs largely cited markets being too expensive as the primary barrier, whilst in Amuda and Quamishli, KIs reported a combination of insufficient items on the market, prohibitive prices, and lack of sufficient money or resources to purchase items on the market. A previous REACH assessment found that in July, there were already problems with the reported availability of WASH items in Quamishli, while most were generally available in Amuda.⁶

Health

KIs reported that **IDP access to health facilities is limited, particularly for those residing in collective shelters.** Mobile clinics were reportedly available to serve populations in some collective shelters in Amuda, Quamishli and Darbasiyah; however, in Tal Brak and Tal Tamer, IDP populations were typically unable to access health services and there was no dedicated assistance for those living in collective shelters.

The most commonly required services across all locations were treatment for chronic disease (diabetes, blood pressure, heart problems), antibiotics, emergency care for accidents and injuries, and the provision of assistive devices.

Assistance

IDPs staying in host communities with family or friends are not reported to have received humanitarian assistance. However, **some assistance has reportedly been provided by local authorities and NGOs to IDPs in collective shelters in Amuda, Darbasiyah and Quamishli.** In these communities, distributions included food, blankets and hygiene items. KIs residing in Tal Tamer, Ras al Ain and Tal Brak indicated that little or no assistance had been received at the time of assessment.

Whilst KIs in Darbasiyah indicated that there were no barriers to people accessing assistance, in Amuda and Quamishli the quantity of aid distributed was reportedly insufficient to meet the needs of the population. Overcrowding during distributions was also reportedly a barrier to people receiving aid in Amuda. Overall, current needs appear to exceed levels of assistance thus far.⁶

In general, host populations in assessed communities have reportedly responded well to the newly arrived IDPs. Few tensions between population groups were reported, with a minority of KIs in Amuda and Quamishli indicating that host communities have experienced increases in market prices and shortages of food, NFIs and assistance.

The majority of KIs indicated that if IDPs are facing security or protection related issues they would seek assistance from the Humanitarian Affairs Office or local authorities; however,

Figure 3: Reported priority needs per community assessed

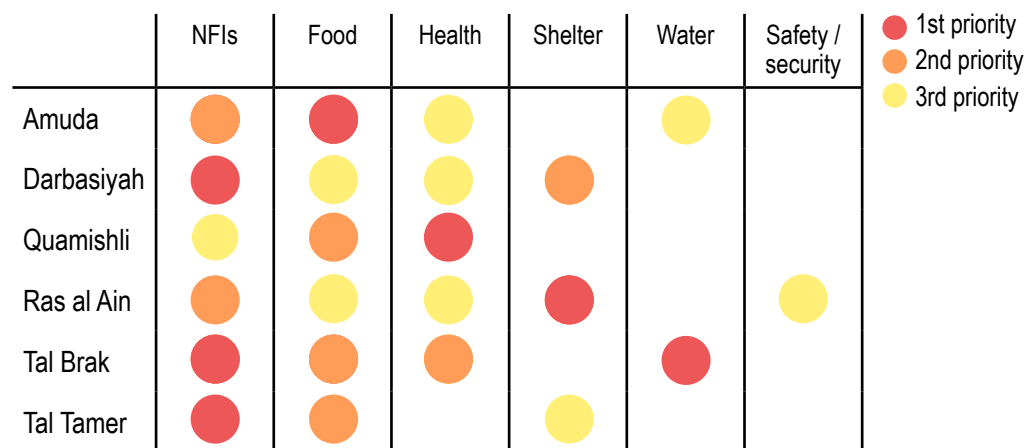


Figure 4: Top ranked priority needs

Priority	Sector specific needs
1. Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic food items for those staying in collective shelters are a priority Increased availability and affordability of basic food items for all IDPs and host communities In particular: canned food, bread, oil, sugar, rice and baby milk
2. NFIs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to hygiene kits to prevent the spread of disease, particularly in collective shelters Cooking utensils and homewares for IDPs
3. Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased availability of medicines, particularly drugs to treat chronic diseases and children
4. Shelter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of adequate shelter for displaced populations Greater security and privacy in existing collective shelters
5. Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of latrines and showers in collective shelters, and maintenance of those already available Improved access to water for drinking and household purposes

some KIs in the communities of Darbasiyah, Tal Brak, and Ras al Ain reported that IDPs were unaware of who to contact in such a situation.

Needs

Overall, the highest ranked priority needs in locations assessed were food and NFIs, followed by healthcare and shelter. Figure 3 presents a breakdown of needs priorities by individual communities whilst Figure 4 (below left) indicates sector-specific needs as reported by KIs. In general, immediate needs such as food and NFIs are based on the assumption of short term displacement, however for populations facing a longer, protracted period of displacement priority needs may change, with access to shelter and water likely to become more important as the length of displacement increases.

CONCLUSION

Recent conflict in Hasakeh city has led to mass displacement across the governorate, both to suburban areas and neighbouring villages in the sub-district as well as to communities in the North and East of the governorate perceived to provide shelter and safety for IDPs. **At this stage, displacement has been rapid and the majority of IDPs have not relocated far from the city, in the hope that the conflict subsides and they will be able to return.**

It is currently unclear whether displacement will be short-term or protracted; however, at the time of writing (24th August) IDPs were reportedly returning to Hasakeh city following a

ceasefire agreement and cessation of conflict.

This report focuses on assessing needs for immediate response; if displacement were to become prolonged, the situation would need to be reassessed.

The majority of IDPs are staying with family and friends in host communities. However, collective shelters, primarily schools, have opened in nearby urban centres (Amuda, Darbasiyah, Tal Tamer, Tal Brak and Quamishli). Despite large influxes of people to Ras al Ain, there are reportedly no collective shelters available to IDPs.

In the immediate term, food is a priority need particularly for those staying in collective shelters. IDPs and host communities are being affected by increased food prices, particularly in Ras al Ain and Amuda. Access to NFIs and healthcare for IDPs are also priorities, particularly hygiene kits and availability of essential medicine.

Current information gaps include a more detailed assessment of the situation of those remaining inside Hasakeh city, as well as populations who have fled to the suburbs of the city and neighbouring villages. REACH will continue to monitor the situation in Hasakeh Governorate, in order to provide updated information on trends related to displacement, intentions, priority needs and the overarching humanitarian situation.

About REACH

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