

Rapid needs assessment in response to the conflict escalation in Deir-ez-Zor governorate.

September 2023 | Northeast Syria

CONTEXT & RATIONALE

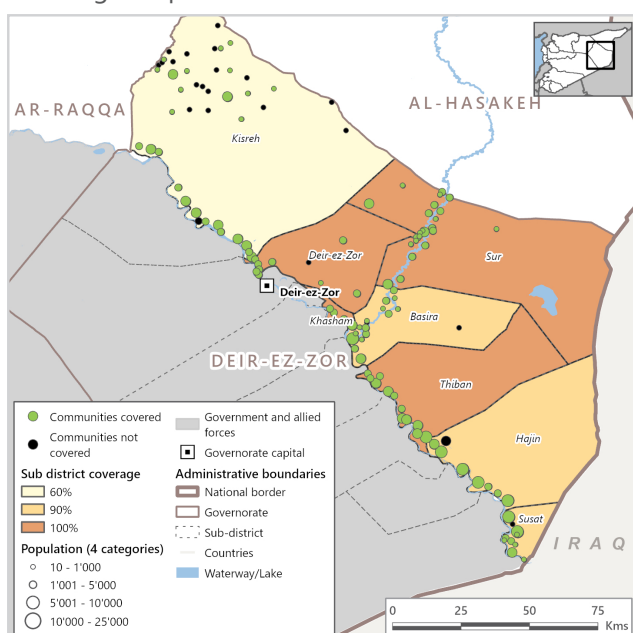
In late August 2023, following several weeks of increasing tensions, there was a significant escalation of conflict in parts of Northeast Syria (NES), with several sub-districts in Deir-ez-Zor governorate being among the most affected areas by the deteriorating security situation. The fighting has resulted in dozens of civilian deaths, led to new displacements, and disrupted the flow of humanitarian aid and access to basic services such as healthcare, drinking water, and electricity.

These developments follow a steadily worsening humanitarian situation in the region in general and have exacerbated several preexisting challenges and trends. In response to the conflict escalation, REACH, in coordination with the NES NGO Forum, carried out a rapid needs assessment to provide humanitarian actors with timely information about related humanitarian impacts and needs.

KEY MESSAGES

- Findings indicate that **the recent security deterioration in Deir ez-Zor has significantly reduced households' access to basic services**, including healthcare, markets and livelihoods across all sub-districts.
- Thiban sub-district was reportedly most severely impacted** in terms of access to services and livelihoods. KIs in Thiban also reported the highest reliance on humanitarian aid prior to 27 August.
- As a result of conflict escalation, **movement restrictions and insecurity have prevented people from physically accessing workplaces and markets**. Additionally, **disrupted supply chains** are causing shortages of essential items, fuel and water.
- Access to health services has reportedly decreased in 94% of assessed communities**. All sub-districts recorded closures of health facilities or the suspension of health services, while insecurity limited households' ability to access functioning health services.

Coverage Map: Assessed communities in Deir-ez-Zor



METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This RNA was conducted using a key informant (KI) methodology at the community level. REACH enumerators interviewed 1 KI per community relying on REACH's extensive KI network in Deir-ez-Zor. The brief presents information gathered from 106 communities across Deir-ez-Zor. Data collection took place on the 10 September. All indicators refer to the situation since the conflict escalation on 27 August.

Where possible, the brief also draws on relevant indicators from the August round of [Humanitarian Situation Overview Syria \(HSOS\)](#) and [Joint Market Monitoring Initiative \(JMIMI\)](#) for indicative comparative purposes. Findings are indicative rather than representative and should not be generalised across the population and the region.

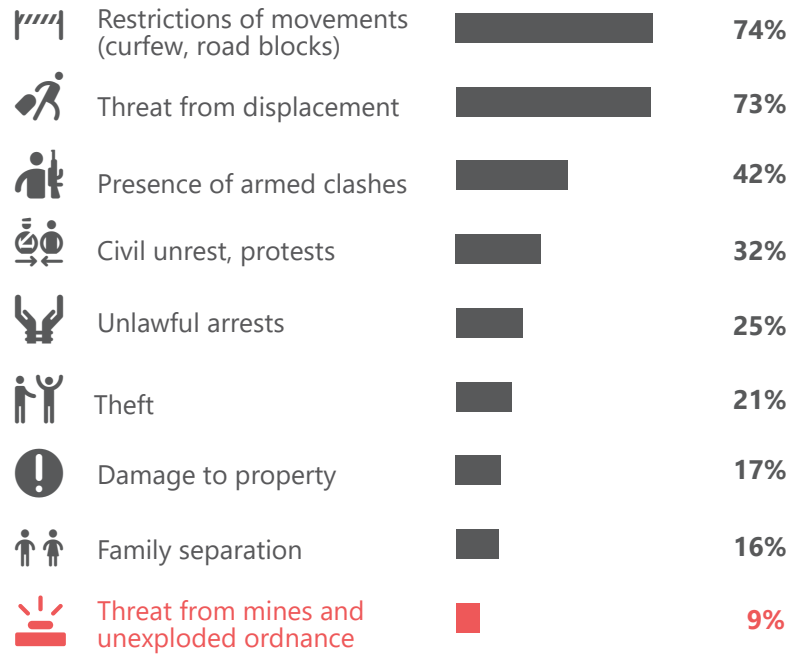
The complete dataset and descriptive analysis can be accessed [here](#).

Displacement and protection issues

The deterioration in security has reportedly led to new displacements in conflict-affected communities. KIs in Thiban reported by far the highest number of households that had left their community due to the fighting, followed by Deir-ez-Zor, Sur, and Basira. This aligns with KIs in Thiban reporting the most acute humanitarian impacts across most indicators, including access to basic services, livelihoods, and humanitarian aid. In addition, according to [secondary data sources](#), thousands of people have crossed to the western bank of the Euphrates River to seek safety from the conflict.

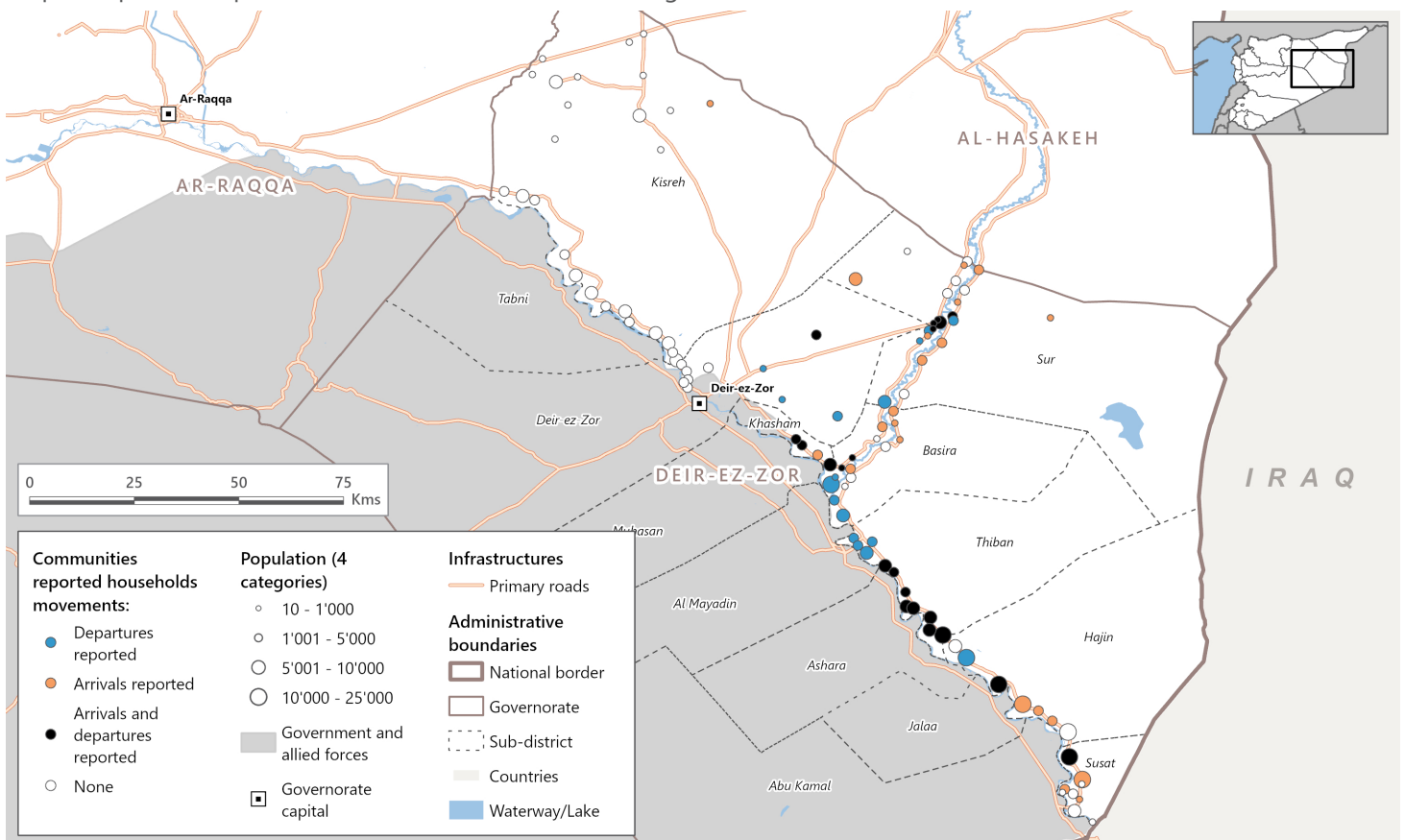
Displacement was also the second most commonly reported increased protection issue across all assessed communities. Fear of conflict, armed clashes, and civil unrest/protests were also commonly reported increased protection issues, reflecting the key drivers of displacement. A lack of access to basic services and markets not functioning are also likely driving new displacements.

Protection issues reported in Deir-ez-Zer governorate (% of assessed communities)



Reported in **Thiban** (in 5 communities), **Deir-ez-Zor** (2), **Kisreh** (1), **Sur** (1) and **Hajin** (1) sub-districts

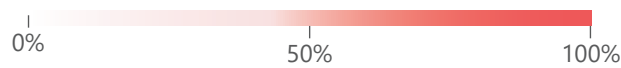
Map 1: Reported displacements in Deir-ez-Zor since 27 August



Reduced access to basic services and livelihoods

Percentage of KIs reporting access had significantly decreased since 27 August

Sub-districts	Markets	Health	Education	Water	Electricity	Livelihoods
Deir-ez-Zor (11) ¹	55%	91%	45%	55%	100%	64%
Kisreh (26)	12%	19%	23%	46%	38%	31%
Basira (16)	94%	81%	100%	69%	50%	81%
Khasham (3)	100%	100%	67%	100%	100%	100%
Sur (22)	68%	77%	86%	86%	45%	77%
Hajin (8)	100%	75%	100%	87%	100%	100%
Susat (9)	44%	0%	78%	11%	11%	33%
Thiban (11)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



Movement restrictions and suspended services

Movement restrictions (e.g. curfews and road blockages) heavily impacted households' ability to meet their basic needs and have likely led to a significant loss of livelihoods. In 76% of assessed communities, KIs reported that markets were not opening due to movement restrictions, and people reportedly faced difficulties accessing markets in 65% of assessed communities. The impact of movement restrictions on access to markets and livelihoods was especially pronounced in Thiban, Basira, Khasham and Deir-ez-Zor sub-districts, according to KIs.

KIs indicated that movement restrictions have had a major impact on people's ability to reach their workplace (reported in 80% of assessed communities). Furthermore, reduced demand for daily labour, which is a primary source of income for many households in Deir-ez-Zor, was reported in 61% of communities. Similarly, movement restrictions are likely to affect households' access to financial service providers to receive remittance payments, another key income source for people in Deir-ez-Zor.²

Findings also highlight major impacts on health and education. KIs reported widespread closures of health facilities (in 47% of assessed communities) as well as

the suspension of some services at health facilities (in 58% of assessed communities). Health facility closures or the were mostly reported in Thiban, Basira, Khasham and Deir ez-Zor sub-districts. Shortages of health workers, likely a direct result of movement restrictions, was highly reported across most sub-districts. KIs across all assessed communities also reported that education services had been suspended in response to the security situation (in 68% of assessed communities).

In addition, **movement restrictions impacted the delivery of maintenance services for critical infrastructure** such as water stations (reported in 42% of assessed communities) and electricity facilities (reported in 43% of assessed communities). The sub-districts where limited access to access infrastructure for maintenance was highly reported also commonly reported damage to infrastructure because of looting (Thiban, Khasham, and Deir-ez Zor).

¹ Number of assessed communities per sub-district

² HSOS KI NES August 2023: Loans and remittances reported as a common sources of meeting basic needs in 86% of assessed communities of Deir-ez-Zor

Supply chain disruptions

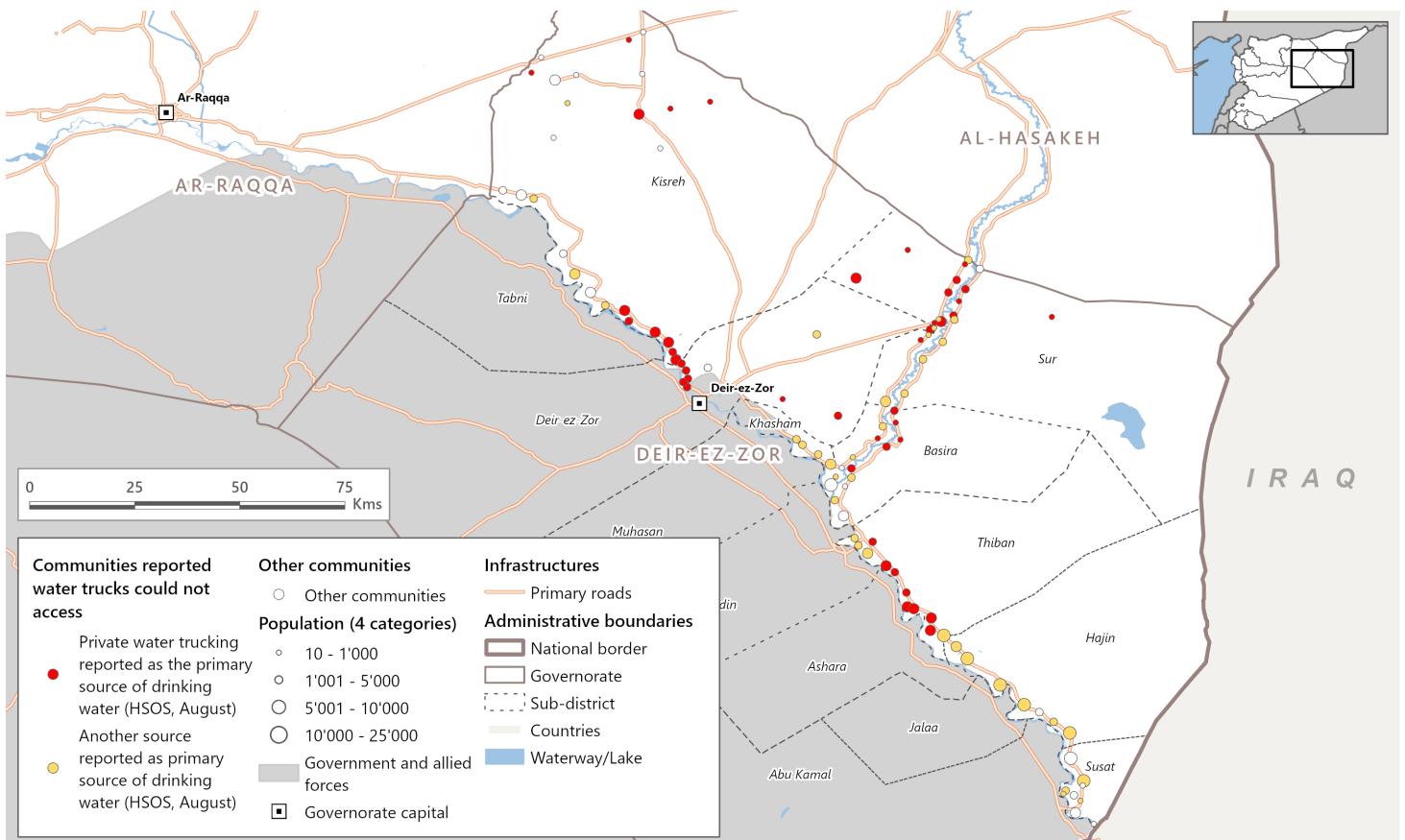
Disrupted supply routes reportedly resulted in a lack of essential goods in markets across all sub-districts and most notably in Deir ez-Zor, Khasham, and Thiban. Even in communities where markets were functioning and accessible by consumers, the prices of essential items are likely to increase due to shortages linked to supply chain disruptions. This compounds the existing affordability crisis in the current context of rapid inflation and currency depreciation. As such, KIs in 97% of community assessed by HSOS in early August reported that households could not afford essential food items despite them being broadly available in markets.

Pre-existing fuel shortages in Deir ez-Zor have reportedly been exacerbated by recent supply chain disruptions. According to KIs, increased unavailability of fuel impacted the functioning of electricity generators (reported in 74% of assessed communities), water pumps (in 42% of assessed communities), and water stations (in 41% of assessed communities). Fuel shortages were widely reported to have impacted households' access to basic services as well as businesses' operations. For example, several KIs specifically mentioned that bakeries were not functioning due to shortages of fuel and flour

In all sub-districts, **KIs widely reported that access to drinking water had been affected by trucking services being unable to reach communities.** This is a key concern given the high reliance on private water trucking for drinking purposes across Deir-ez-Zor governorate. According to HSOS data, all assessed communities rely at least in part on water trucking for drinking purposes. Already prior to the recent security deterioration, KIs in 93% of assessed communities in Deir ez-Zor reported that households have insufficient access to water (HSOS).

Health facilities have also reportedly been impacted by disruptions to the supply of essential medicines, fuel and electricity, most notably in Thiban and Deir ez-Zor sub-districts. KIs across most sub-districts reported that disrupted medical supplies was a key barrier limiting households' access to health. These challenges are occurring in the context of existing shortages in health facilities across Deir-ez-Zor. At the beginning of August, KIs in 73% of communities reported that a lack of medicines/equipment was inhibiting access to healthcare (HSOS).

Map 2: Water truckers reduced access



Increased insecurity

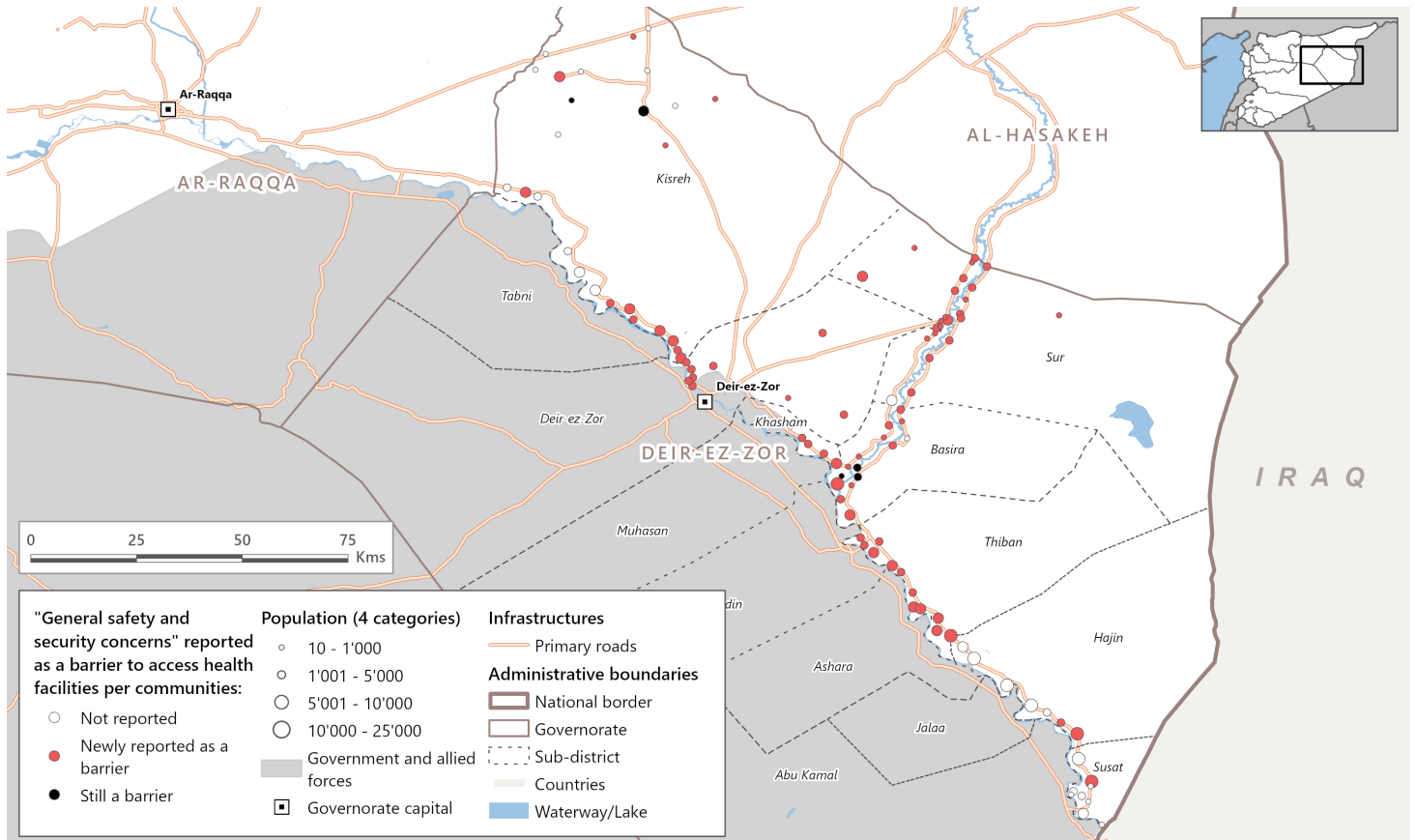
KI interviews indicated that increased insecurity in Deir ez-Zor impacted households' access to basic services as people feel unsafe when travelling.

Across most sub-districts, KIs reported that conditions in schools or travel to schools were unsafe as a result of changing security dynamics. This was most commonly reported in Thiban sub-district where more than half (6/11) of surveyed KIs reported damage to education infrastructure. Notably, surveyed KIs indicated that schools were being used by parties of the conflict across 6 of the 8 assessed sub-districts. This was most frequently reported in Basira (16/16) and Thiban (10/11) sub-districts.

Similarly, **safety concerns reportedly inhibited households' access to health care in 75% of assessed communities in Deir-ez-Zor.** This starkly contrasts with findings from HSOS data from the beginning of August, where KIs in only 8% of assessed communities reported security concerns impact household access to health services (Map 3).

The findings indicate that the **worsening security situation may have also contributed to a reduction in the availability of essential items in some markets due to looting.** This was particularly reported in Thiban sub-district, and to a lesser extent in Hajin, Sur, Basira, and Deir-ez Zor. While it appears the delivery of humanitarian aid has been heavily disrupted in these areas, these findings point to potential protection concerns travelling to and from distribution centres should it be resumed.

Map 3: Safety and security concerns as a barrier to access health facilities (change August to September)



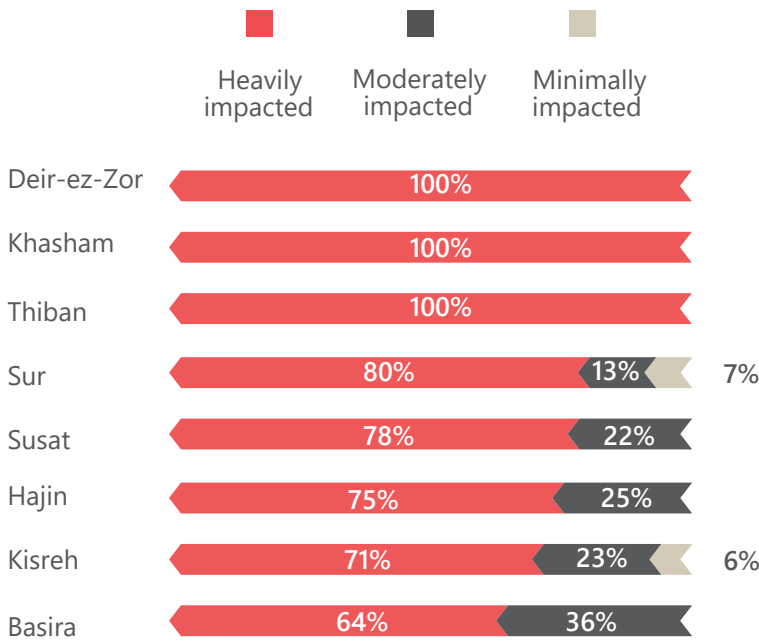
Access to humanitarian aid

KIs in 88% of assessed communities reported that their community was receiving humanitarian aid prior to August 27. Among these communities, **KI interviews indicated that delivery of aid has been severely disrupted since 27 August.**

The most frequently reported barriers which limited access to humanitarian aid were the inability of humanitarian actors to reach beneficiary communities due to movement restrictions (reported in 92% of communities) and insecurity (reported in 78% of communities).

Additionally, KIs widely reported the difficulty of beneficiaries to reach assistance, also because of insecurity (reported in 51% of communities) and movement restrictions (reported in 43% of communities). This was most notable in Deir-ez Zor and Thiban sub-districts where almost all surveyed KIs reported beneficiary access to aid or delivery of aid has been impacted by movement restrictions and insecurity. These are also the two sub-districts where KIs reported heaviest reliance on humanitarian aid before the recent conflict, indicating that the constrained access to aid might have aggravated impacts in these areas.

Reported level of disruption of humanitarian activities in assessed communities relying on aid [88%]



Barriers limiting the access to humanitarian assistance

- 1 Humanitarian actors could not access the community due to movement restrictions **93%**
- 2 Humanitarian actors could not access the community due to insecurity **78%**
- 3 Beneficiaries could not access humanitarian assistance due to insecurity **51%**
- 4 Beneficiaries could not access humanitarian assistance due to movement restrictions **43%**

Priority needs

Top 3 three most reported priority needs for host community households



Top 3 three most reported priority needs for households displaced since 27 August (new arrivals reported in 40% of assessed communities)

