

REACH Situation Overview: Displacement from Dar'a Governorate, Syria

3 March 2016

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In southern Syria, conflict in Dar'a governorate over the past three months has resulted in complex displacement of civilians across the area; this has significantly intensified over the past month. As of 25 February 2016, there were 53,540 people newly displaced in the south of Syria since the escalation of fighting in November 2015, in comparison to 43,000 estimated to have been displaced just two weeks ago.¹

The United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that there is a total of 320,773 IDPs across the Governorate, at present.² The majority (32,000), of those newly displaced are in the west of the Governorate while the remaining are in the east.³ Moreover, the change of control in Sheikh Miskine earlier this year has also triggered further displacement towards villages in the south, namely from Sheikh Miskine and Abtaa to D'ael, Sahm El Golan and Ash Shajara.⁴ With regards to IDP needs in the area, there are families reportedly without shelter and the overall hosting capacity in the west is reaching its limit.

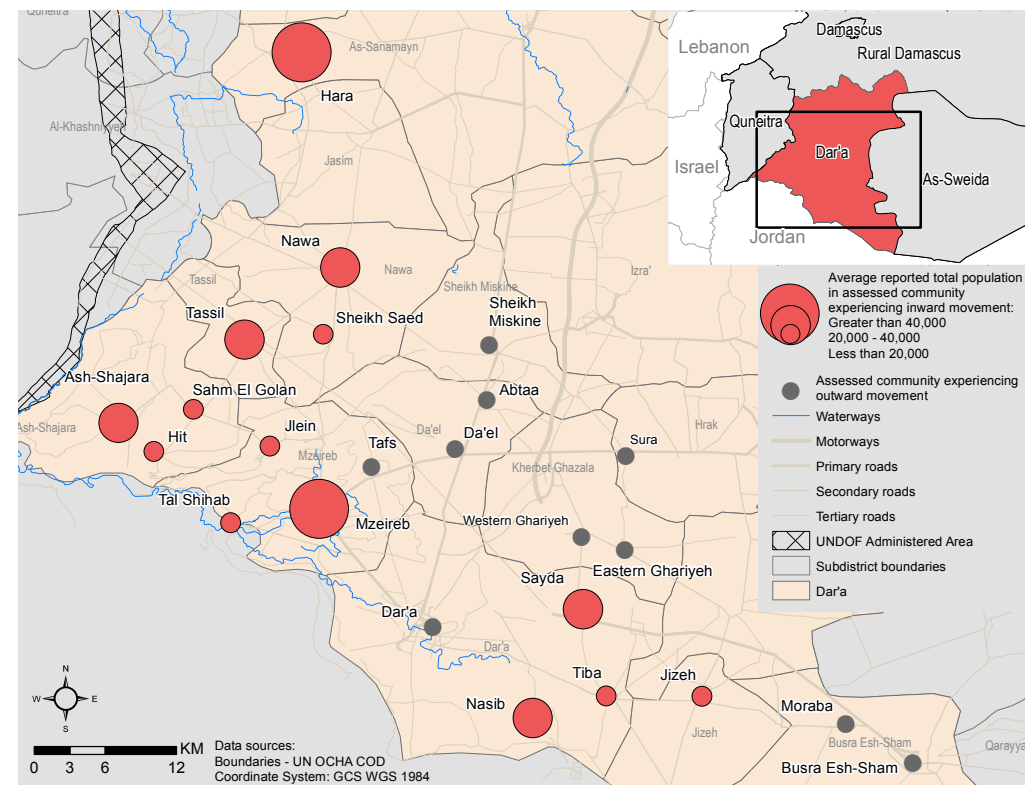
Following previous assessments of displacement within Dar'a governorate (18th February)⁵ as well as in Quneitra governorate (26th February)⁶, REACH conducted a third rapid assessment to monitor the current situation. Based on primary data collected from 48 Key Informants (KIs) from 29th February to 2nd March, this document provides an update

on displacement within Dar'a and further information on priority needs within assessed communities. Communities have been divided according to whether they have experienced significant inward or outward movement over the past month. It was not possible to assess all affected communities due to an inability to obtain information from KIs during the timeframe of the assessment as well as network difficulties impeding communication with KIs. Therefore, findings are specific to communities assessed and cannot be generalised further.

Key findings

The escalation of conflict, and resulting displacement of people across Dar'a in the past month, has led to an increase in humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities of communities within the governorate. Over the past two weeks, significant outward movement from assessed communities has continued, with people fleeing to other communities in Dar'a as well as to locations in Quneitra⁶ and the Jordanian border. Future migration is likely to continue, with exact locations dependent on the security situation. Although it appears that many of the recently displaced are intending to stay in their current locations in the medium term, some have already started to return to their areas of origin and others have plans to move elsewhere, with the Jordanian border being a popular intended destination.

Map 1: Reported displacement from and to assessed communities*



*This assessment covered all communities assessed in the previous assessment, with additional locations added based on reports of significant inward or outward movement, as well as the ability to access KIs.

1 UNHCR, Flash Update on Aleppo, Idlib and Dar'a, 1 March 2016

2 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Snapshot (as of 29 February 2016).

3 UNHCR, Flash Update on Aleppo, Idlib and Dar'a, 24 February 2016

4 OCHA, Syria Flash Update no.3: Sheikh Miskine-Abtaa Displacement, 27 January 2016

5 REACH, Dar'a displacement situation overview, 18 February 2016

6 REACH Quneitra displacement and needs situation overview, 25 February 2016

Displacement

Overall, **between 25-35% of individuals in the assessed conflict-affected communities are estimated to have fled in the past month.** Displacement patterns mirror conflict dynamics and the reported trigger for displacement, the escalation of conflict, remains unchanged since the previous Dar'a assessment. People have been leaving from the majority of communities assessed since the first two weeks of February, though the rate of outward movement from Moraba, Busra esh Sham, Sheikh Miskine, Sura, Eastern Ghariyeh and Western Ghariyeh, in the last two weeks, has reportedly decreased. Further, **in the past two weeks some people have started to return to half of the communities assessed:** approximately 5% of those who left have reportedly returned to Moraba and Busra esh Sham, 10-20% to Western Ghariyeh and 30-50% to Abtaa and Eastern Ghariyeh.

Three main patterns of displacement have been observed:

- Westward using the M5 highway towards communities along the border with Jordan
- North-westward using the M5 highway towards communities close to the border to Quneitra as well as onwards into the Quneitra governorate
- South-eastward using the M5 highway towards communities close to the Jordanian border and As Sweida governorate.

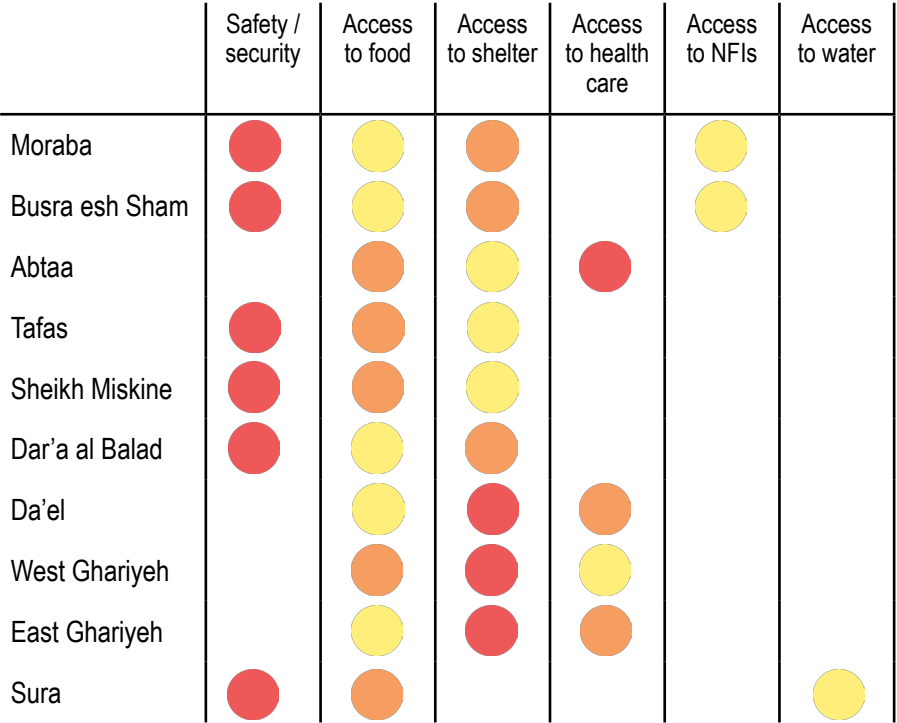
Typically, recently displaced groups

consist of whole families, travelling in small groups (2-9 households) and using private cars and other vehicles such as tractors. An estimated 25-40% of the recently displaced are children, and there have been reports of unaccompanied children arriving in Tassil, Sayda, Mzeireb and Jlein. IDPs usually bring clothes, blankets and personal items with them, and an estimated 80% have reportedly been able to bring documentation. Similar to previous findings, receiving assistance from Local Authorities was common across communities assessed, in the form of helping to secure transport, advising on the safest routes from outgoing communities and searching for shelter for incoming communities.

Intentions

Future movement depends primarily on the security situation, with people continually assessing and basing their movements on the evolving conflict. However, in the coming month, more than 50% of those who left Moraba, Busra esh Sham, Da'el, Western Ghariyeh and Eastern Ghariyeh are expected to return to these communities, with smaller proportions expected to return to Tafas and Abtaa, based on current perception that conflict intensity will subside in these areas. In contrast, **returnees are not expected in the coming month in Sheikh Miskine, Dar'a al Balad and Sura. No IDPs were living in these communities even before conflict escalated at the beginning of February, and all expect further outward movement in the coming two weeks.**

Figure 1: Reported priority needs in assessed communities with outward movement

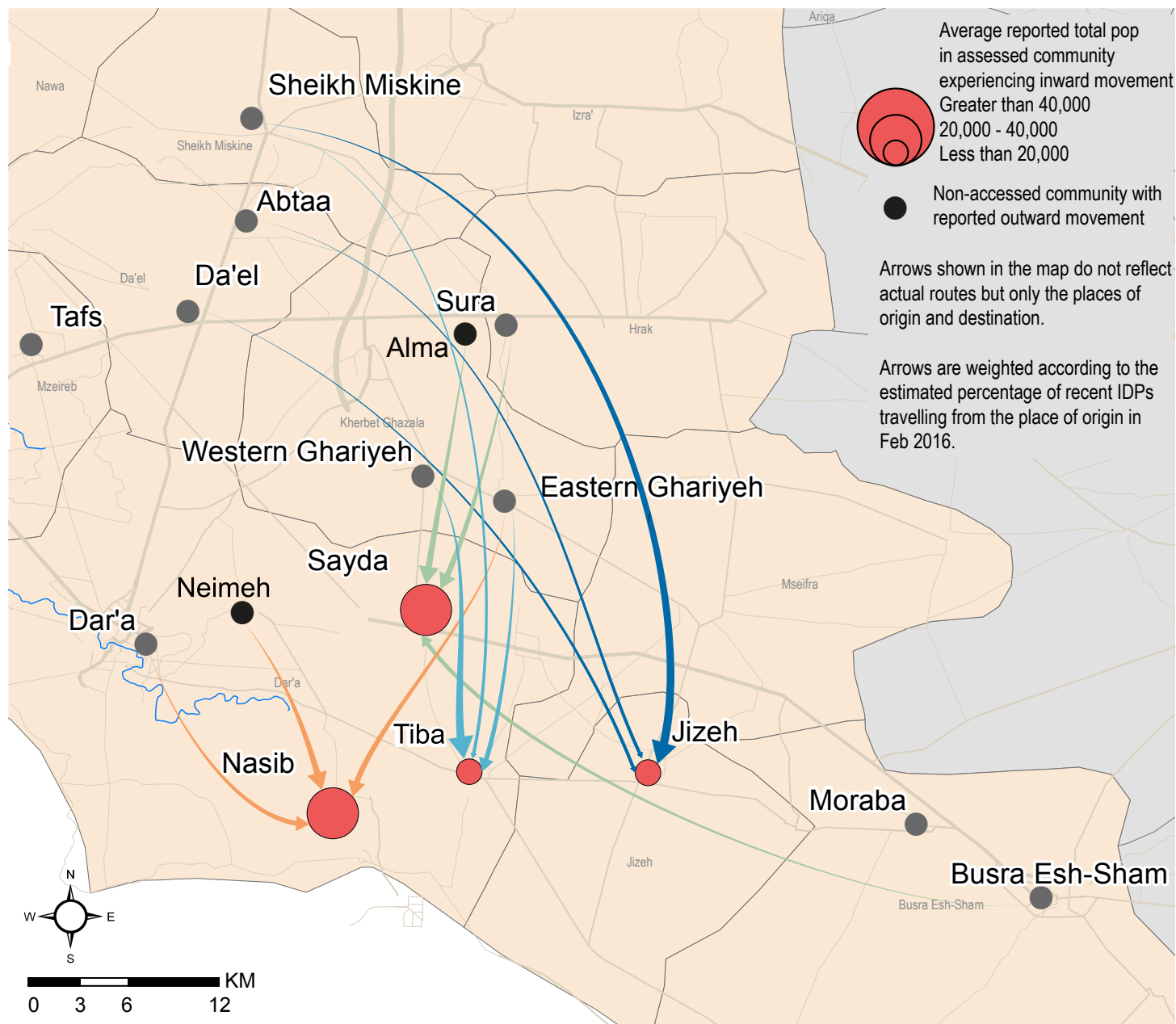


Of those who are not planning to return, reportedly people are more likely to stay for longer periods of time (more than six months) in certain communities assessed - Sheikh Saed, Jizeh, Nasib, Tassil, Nawa and Jlein - due to the relative safety of these locations as well as the perception that there are basic services and some livelihood opportunities available. **In Sahm el Golan, Ash Shajara and Hit, Tal Shihab and Mzeireb, IDPs are more likely to be in transit due to these towns proximity to the Jordanian border which is generally their top reported intended destination.**

COMMUNITIES WITH OUTWARD MOVEMENT
Priority needs

Safety and security was the top ranked priority need in over half of communities assessed (see figure 1), with those remaining concerned about the impact of the conflict on their personal security. Shelter was ranked as the top priority need in Da'el, Western Ghariyeh and Eastern Ghariyeh, which host large proportions of IDPs and have also seen some damage to houses, whereas healthcare was reportedly a priority

Map 2: Routes of displacement within Dar'a governorate: southward movement



in Abtaa. Additionally, food and medicine were reported in all communities to be the items most needed but which were also unable to access.

In all communities assessed, the ability of the remaining population to meet their needs has stayed the same or worsened during the previous two weeks. In particular, it was noted that in Sura and Sheikh Miskine, conflict has continued to disrupt services within the communities as well as limit the entry of goods.

Shelter

Independent houses were the most common shelter type lived in by the remaining population across the majority of communities assessed. However, 20-40% of the remaining population reportedly lived in collective shelters (primarily schools and mosques, with some large shared houses) in Moraba, Busra esh Sham and Western Ghariyeh, whilst more than 50% reportedly lived in these shelter types in Dar'a al Balad and Sura. In Moraba, Western Ghariyeh and Busra esh Sham, people living in collective shelters were generally either IDPs or people whose shelters have been destroyed, whereas in Dar'a al Balad and Sura, which do not host large numbers of IDPs, collective shelters are primarily used by those whose shelters have been partially or fully destroyed.

In Tafas, Sheikh Miskine, Dar'a al Balad, Da'el, Western Ghariyeh and Sura, shelters were reported to be overcrowded and partially destroyed, with some fully destroyed in Da'el. Shelter is also particularly problematic in Tafas and Sura, where schools have reportedly stopped functioning in order to host people, as

well as in Sheikh Miskine where people were reportedly living outside on farmland.

Food security

All communities assessed, with the exception of Abtaa and Western Ghariyeh, reportedly experienced problems accessing food. The high price of food, general shortage of food in the markets and lack of availability of fuel were commonly reported across assessed communities. Additionally, in Dar'a al Balad, a lack of functioning markets limited community access to food, and in parts of Moraba and Busra esh Sham, people faced physical barriers to accessing markets, primarily damaged roads. Food was also reportedly of a poor quality in Da'el, Eastern Ghariyeh and Sura.

Access to bread was reported to be particularly problematic: over the past month, it was not possible to access bread every day in any of the communities assessed, largely due to the price of or inability to access electricity, fuel and flour. Bulgur and rice were available across all communities assessed, however, price rises in the past two weeks were reported everywhere (see figure 2). Sheikh Miskine and Dar'a al Balad have experienced particularly high levels of inflation in the past two weeks.

NFIs

In over half of communities assessed, people reportedly had access to sufficient cash to last them at least one month. However, in Dar'a al Balad, Sheikh Miskine, Sura and Abtaa,

people reportedly had very little access to cash, and commonly resorted to borrowing from family / friends, using their savings and selling assets. The situation in Dar'a al Balad and Sheikh Miskine appears to be particularly severe, with reports that people commonly skip meals as a coping mechanism to address the lack of resources to buy food.

Access to fuel was problematic across all communities assessed, with no communities reporting the availability of sufficient fuel to meet household needs. Further, price increases have been observed in all communities with the exception of Moraba, Tafas, Da'el and Western Ghariyeh (see figure 2).

People were generally able to access water through trucking, though amounts of water delivered were reportedly insufficient in Busra esh Sham, Tafas, Dar'a al Balad and Eastern Ghariyeh.

Health

Recent conflict has led to injuries being the most common health problem faced in the majority of communities assessed, followed by respiratory infections. Receiving health care can be problematic, with facilities damaged in the majority of locations: all facilities in Sheikh Miskine, over 70% in Moraba, Busra esh Sham, Dar'a al Balad and Western Ghariyeh, and between 20-50% in Abtaa, Tafas and Da'el. Further, provision of health services in all communities is severely limited by a lack of medicine and medical equipment, with the most needed medicines being antibiotics and medicine for heart disease, diabetes and high

blood pressure.

Education

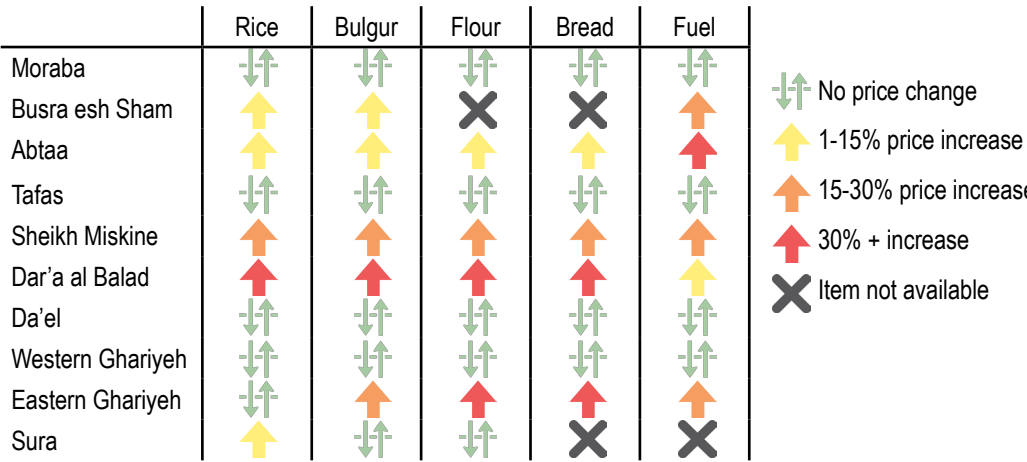
Some educational facilities were reportedly not functioning in all communities assessed, with the exception of Da'el where all were operating. The situation was particularly severe in Dar'a al Balad, Sheikh Miskine, Sura and Western Ghariyeh, where there were reportedly no schools at all functioning in the past two weeks, as they were either damaged/ destroyed or hosting people. In Eastern Ghariyeh, approximately half of schools were not functioning due to destruction, and elsewhere smaller proportions of schools were out of use. Lastly in Sheikh Miskine, there were also reportedly no children remaining in the community.

COMMUNITIES WITH INWARD MOVEMENT
Priority needs

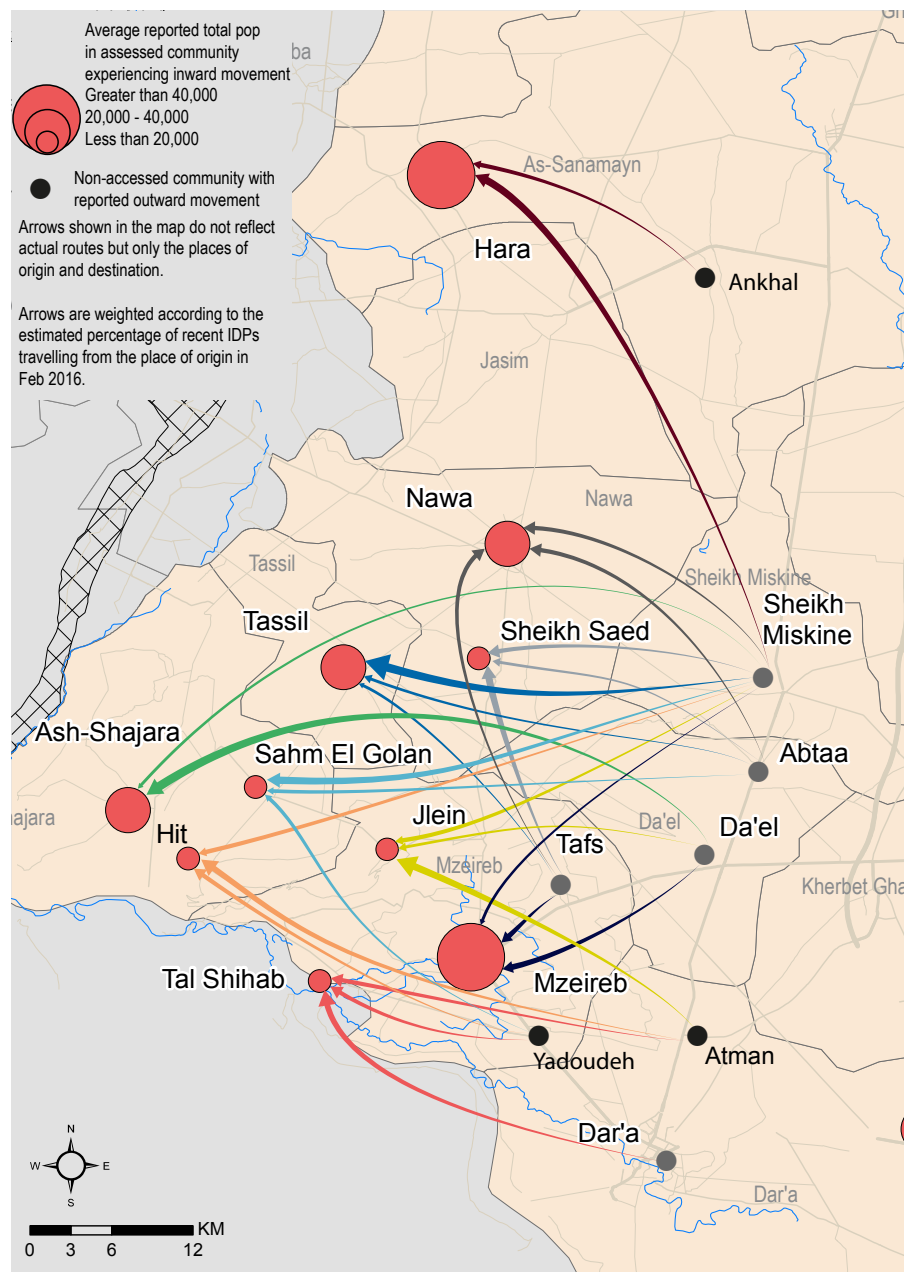
The ability of communities to address the needs of the recently displaced in the past two weeks has reportedly either largely stayed the same or worsened (with a reported lack of sufficient assistance to deal with the influx).

Even after moving to locations with decreased conflict, safety and security was ranked the top priority need for the recently displaced in all communities with the exception of Mzeireb, where shelter assistance was reportedly most crucial (see figure 3). Shelter assistance was ranked as a second priority in over half of communities, with access to food also commonly reported. The items which people most needed but were unable to access were food and medicine; this was reported in all communities with the exception of

Figure 2: Reported price increases in communities with outward movement



Map 3: Routes of displacement within Dar'a governorate: westward movement



Nasib, where goods were generally reportedly available.

Shelter

All communities assessed with the exception of Hit and Nasib reported facing problems with shelter; the most common issue was overcrowding, reported as the main problem in the majority of communities.

The most common shelter type for IDPs was in independent or shared houses, though over 60% were reportedly living in collective shelters in Tal Shihab, Ash Shajara and Hara. Many of the recently arrived were staying with people in the host community: in Sheikh Saed, Jizeh and Tassil, over 60% of the host community were reportedly hosting IDPs, and in Hit, Tiba, Sahm el Golan and Mzeireb, over 30% were. There were no reports of significant tension between IDPs and the host community, or between IDPs.

Even prior to February 1st, IDPs were reportedly living in tented settlements in Sheikh Saed, Tassil, Ash Shajara, Sahm el Golan, Mzeireb and Jleim, and the recently arrived have reportedly joined such settlements in these areas. Tents are primarily self-made, though in Ash Shajara and Mzeireb some people are reportedly using tents distributed by aid actors. It was reportedly only possible to buy tents on local markets in Jleim, and these were considered to be extremely expensive.

Collective shelters were reported to be available in all communities assessed with the exception of Tiba and Nawa. In Tal Shihab, Sheikh Saed, Ash Shajara, Hara and Hit, some schools had

stopped operating in order to house IDPs. Other communities had arrangements to dedicate sections of the schools for IDPs to use.

Education

There were some accessible and functioning educational facilities in all communities assessed. However, given that an estimated 25-40% of recently arrived IDPs are children, these **services are likely to come under strain if people remain in their current locations.** This could be particularly problematic in Tal Shihab, Sheikh Saed, Ash Shajara, Hara, Hit, Nasib, Tiba, Sahm el Golan, Nawa and Mzeireb, where some schools were reportedly not functioning due to hosting IDPs and/or damage to facilities.

Food security

Although food is generally available, **all communities assessed have seen food price increases over that past two weeks** (figure 4). Prices of rice, bulgur, flour and bread rose in Sheikh Saed, Jizeh, Ash Shajara, Hit, Tiba, Sahm el Golan and Jleim, in many cases by over 30%. Jizeh, Ash Shajara, Tiba and Jleim have experienced particularly high inflation.

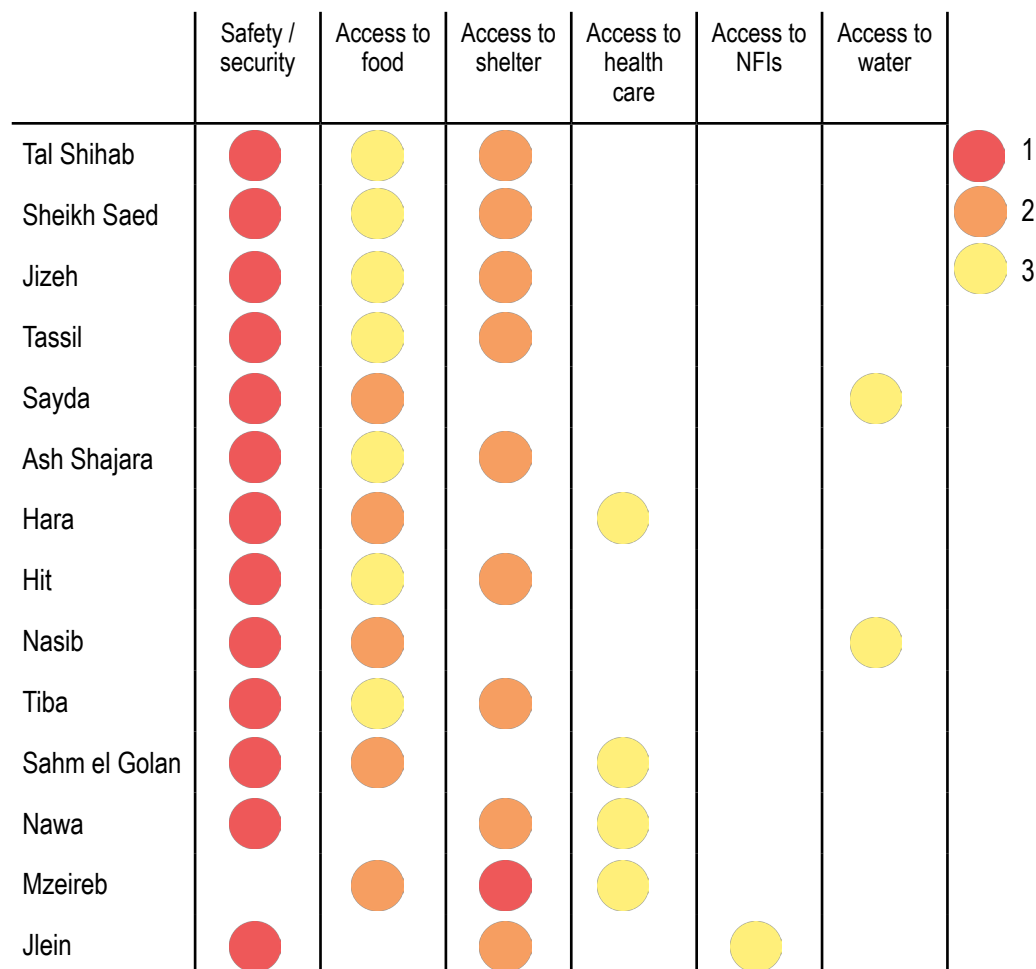
The recently arrived reportedly face challenges to accessing food in all communities assessed with the exception of Nasib. The high cost of food, lack of certain types of food in markets and lack of availability of cooking fuel were common across communities assessed; additionally, in parts of Mzeireb there was a lack of functioning markets and in Ash Shajara some people faced physical obstacles to accessing markets.

Access to bread was particularly problematic,

with no community reporting that the recently arrived could access it every day in the previous month. Neither public nor private bakeries were functioning in Sahm el Golan, Mzeireb and Jlein, and elsewhere bread was commonly unavailable in bakeries

for 7-10 days over the past month. This was primarily due to flour and fuel/electricity being prohibitively expensive or difficult to access in the majority of communities assessed, with obtaining wheat reported as an issue in half of communities assessed.

Figure 3: Reported priority needs in assessed communities with inward movement



NFIs

The ability of the recently arrived to obtain goods, both foods and NFIs, is likely to be limited by their lack of access to cash. With the exception of Nasib, where the recently arrived reportedly have enough cash to last for 1-2 months, **recent arrivals generally do not have access to cash**. Some IDPs report having cash in Sheikh Saed, Jizeh, Tassil, Sayda, Ash Shajara, Hara Nasib, Sahm el Golan and Nawa, but this is unlikely to last more than around two weeks. Some are attempting to find work to cope with the lack of income, though the majority are relying on short term measures such as limited remittances, borrowing money or skipping meals.

Nasib was the only community in which the recently arrived could reportedly access sufficient fuel to meet their household needs. Access was particularly limited in Tal Shihab, Sayda, Hit and Jlein, where the majority of recently arrived people could not access fuel at all.

The recently arrived could access water, primarily through trucking, in all communities assessed. However, in Tassil, Sayda, Ash Shajara, Hara and Sahm el Golan, this was reported to be insufficient to meet household needs.

Health facilities

The most common health problems during the past two weeks varied, though **diarrhea, chronic disease, respiratory infections and skin diseases were commonly**

reported across communities assessed. Although there were medical personnel (doctors, nurses and midwives) available in all communities assessed, with the exception of Sayda, treatment was limited by a shortage of medicine and medical equipment, with the most needed medicines being antibiotics and medicine for heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure. Over 50% of health facilities are reportedly damaged in Sayda, Tiba, Sahm el Golan, Nawa, Mzeireb and Jlein.

The presence of recently arrived people with disabilities was noted in the majority of communities assessed, with the most common disabilities being physical, and the main medical needs being wheelchairs and assistive devices.

Conclusion

It is not expected that people will return to Sura, Dar'a al Balad and Sheikh Miskine communities within the next month, further, continued outward movement from these locations is expected. **Remaining populations in these communities appear particularly vulnerable:** entry of goods has been limited and food and NFI prices have risen significantly over the past two weeks, exacerbated by a lack of access to cash. Shelters were overcrowded and partially destroyed, no schools were functioning, and health services were destroyed in Dar'a al Balad and Sheikh Miskine; provision of health care was further exacerbated by the lack of medicine and medical equipment.

Returnees have already been observed in

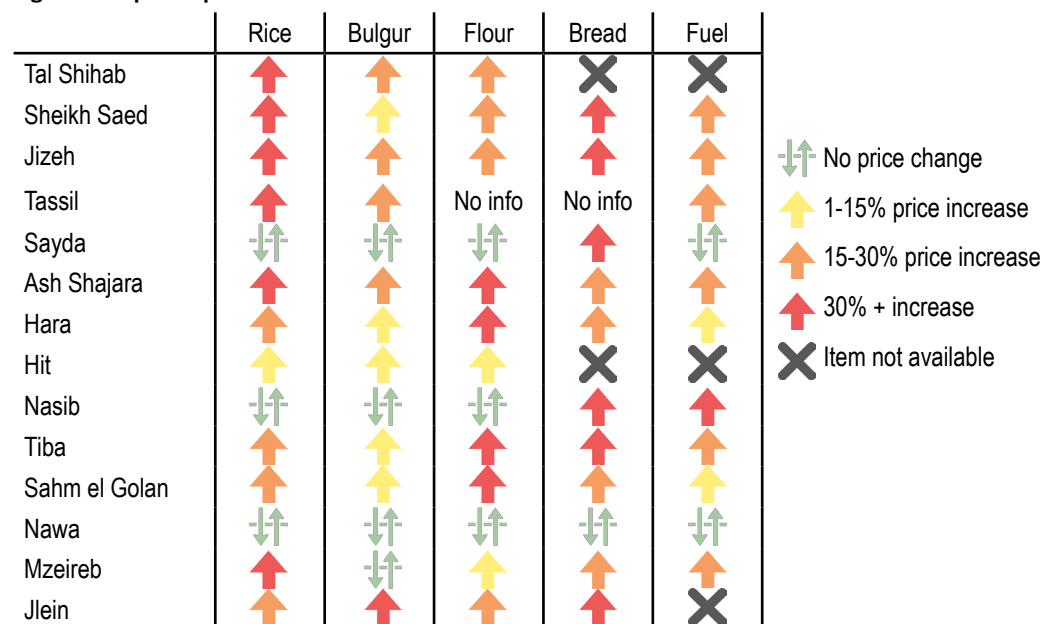
Moraba, Busra esh Sham, Western Ghariyeh, Eastern Ghariyeh and Abtaa and more people are expected to return in the next month providing the security situation remains stable; people are also expected to start returning to Tafas and Da'el. **The ability of these communities to meet needs of remaining populations has not improved over the past two weeks** and damage to shelter, health and education facilities is likely to reduce the ability to cope with further returnees.

Similarly, communities hosting incoming IDPs are showing signs of strain, with the ability to respond to the recently arrived reportedly being either the same or worse in the majority of locations assessed. Relative safety and security is the primary pull factor

drawing people to communities assessed, as well as the top priority need, whilst individual sectoral needs and severity of needs varies across communities. As found in the previous assessment, shelter is also a priority need across assessed communities and the findings presented here confirm that access to food items, fuel and medical supplies is limited.

In the immediate term, food and medicine should be considered a priority to meet lifesaving humanitarian needs in communities which have seen significant outward movement over the past month. For those who have been recently displaced, ensuring safety and security is a top priority, as well as emergency provision of food, fuel, medicine and shelter.

Figure 4: Reported price increases in communities with inward movement



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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