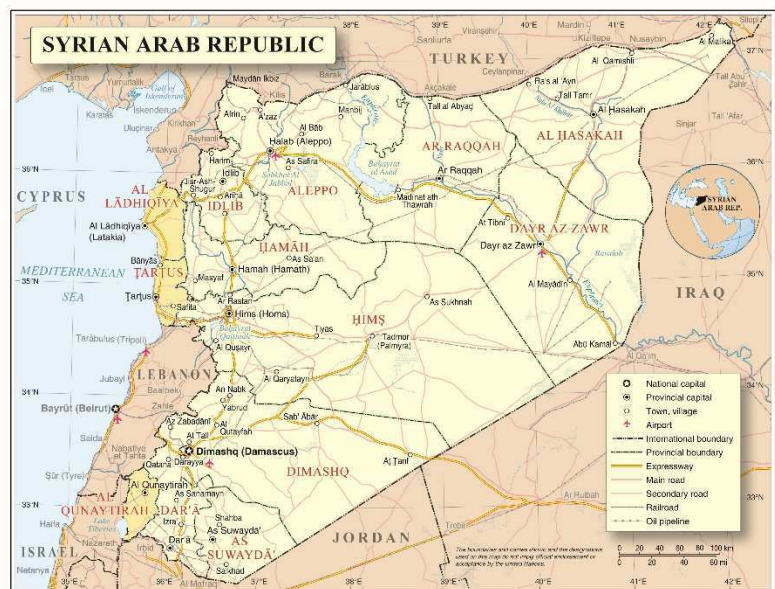


# Syria

*Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra*



Ministry of Immigration  
and Integration

The Danish  
Immigration Service

This brief report is not, and does not purport to be, a detailed or comprehensive survey of all aspects or the issues addressed in the brief report. It should thus be weighed against other country of origin information available on the topic.

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#### **December 2020**

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## Executive summary

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The three governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra have been under control of the Government of Syria (GoS) and its allies throughout 2020, except for the area around the town of Kabani in north-eastern Latakia. In Quneitra, cells of anti-government armed groups are also present.

With the exception of the Kabani area, the governorates of Tartous and Latakia have seen few security incidents in 2020. On the other hand, the security situation in Quneitra is affected by an increasing number of Israeli airstrikes, assassinations and several improvised explosive device incidents.

In Tartous and Latakia, people can generally move around freely. However, movement restrictions are in place close to military installations and at ports. Several checkpoints are located in both governorates, usually manned by the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) or the Syrian security services. Checkpoints also exist on the roads between the governorates and Damascus International Airport, and there have been kidnappings on these roads in 2020.

Freedom of movement is restricted in many locations in Quneitra governorate. There are many military installations and checkpoints due to the proximity to Israel. There is a three to four kilometres wide zone on the border to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, where access for civilians is restricted. In addition, many security incidents occurred in 2020 on the road connecting Quneitra governorate and Damascus International Airport.

The socio-economic situation in all three governorates is affected by the economic downturn that Syria has experienced in recent years. Food is available; however, an average monthly salary for a public servant is no longer enough for a family to cover their basic nutritional needs, and around half of the population is food insecure. Water networks and electricity are subject to frequent cuts and are often only available in urban areas. In Quneitra, many rely on water trucks, but higher petrol prices has made it more difficult for people to procure water from trucks.

Education and healthcare is generally provided for free, yet lower purchasing power has made it increasingly difficult to buy stationery, school uniforms and medicine, and to afford transportation costs to schools and healthcare facilities.

Almost all public hospitals across the three governorates are fully functioning; however, certain specialised types of treatment are unavailable. In Tartous and Latakia, most public health centres are also fully functioning, while this is only the case for about half of the public health centres in Quneitra.

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## Introduction

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This brief report focuses on the security situation, freedom of movement and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra.

The report was written in accordance with the EASO COI Report Methodology.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the report was to collect updated information on issues relevant for the processing of asylum cases. The Terms of Reference (ToR) is included in the end of the report (Appendix 2).

This report is based on relevant written sources supplemented with information collected through e-mail and Skype interviews with sources selected by virtue of their expertise on the topics of this report.

Minutes was written from each correspondence. These were forwarded to each source for their approval, giving them a chance to amend, comment or correct their statements. All sources approved their statements.

Two of the sources, an international security organisation and an international humanitarian organisation, requested anonymity while the remaining four sources agreed to be quoted by name or organisation.

For the sake of reader-friendliness, transparency and accuracy, paragraphs in the meeting minutes in Appendix 1 have been given consecutive numbers, which are used in the report when referring to the statements of the sources in the footnotes.

The report is a synthesis of the information obtained from oral and written sources and does not include all details and nuances provided by the sources. In the report, care has been taken to present the views of the sources as accurately and transparently as possible.

Finally, attention should be called to the volatile situation in Syria and the fact that the information provided may quickly become outdated. Therefore, the issues addressed in this brief report should be monitored periodically and brought up to date accordingly.

The research and editing of this brief report was finalised on 18 December 2020.

The brief report can be accessed from the website of DIS, <http://www.newtodenmark.dk>, and is thus available to all stakeholders in the refugee status determination process as well as to the general public.

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<sup>1</sup> EASO, *EASO Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology*, June 2019, [url](#)

## Abbreviations

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<b>ACLED</b>	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
<b>COI</b>	Country of Origin Information
<b>DIS</b>	Danish Immigration Service
<b>EASO</b>	European Asylum Support Office
<b>FSA</b>	Free Syrian Army
<b>GoS</b>	Government of Syria
<b>IDF</b>	Israeli Defence Force
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>IED</b>	Improvised Explosive Device
<b>IS</b>	Islamic State
<b>ISW</b>	Institute for the Study of War
<b>LDF</b>	Local Defence Force
<b>NDF</b>	National Defence Force
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PHR</b>	Physicians for Human Rights
<b>SAA</b>	Syrian Arab Army
<b>SOHR</b>	Syrian Observatory for Human Rights
<b>SYP</b>	Syrian Pound
<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UN OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>VBIED</b>	Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# 1. Background

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## 1.1. Tartous

The Governorate of Tartous is situated on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and borders the three governorates of Hama, Homs and Latakia as well as Lebanon to the south. The governorate is divided into five main administrative districts: Baniyas, Sheikh Badr, Dreikish, Safita and Tartous.<sup>2</sup> As of August 2020, the governorate had an estimated population of 930,000.<sup>3</sup> Alawites make up about 80 % of the population of the governorate with Sunni Muslims and Christians making up 10 % of the population respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Tartous governorate has been controlled by the Government of Syria (GoS) throughout the Syrian conflict. However, there were violent clashes in the Sunni-majority city of Baniyas in both 2011 and 2013, which resulted in more than 200 deaths, according to opposition activists. In May and September of 2016, the Islamic State (IS) targeted Tartous city in four separate bomb attacks, killing close 100 people.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.2. Latakia

Latakia governorate is located in north-western Syria, bordering the governorates of Idlib, Hama and Tartous, as well as Turkey to the north and the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Latakia is divided into four main districts: Latakia, Al-Haffa, Al-Qardaha and Jablah, with 20 sub-districts.<sup>6</sup> As of August 2020, Latakia governorate had an estimated population of 1.2 million.<sup>7</sup> Around 50 % of the governorate's population are Alawite, 40 % are Sunni Muslim and 10 % are Christian.<sup>8</sup>

Most of the governorate has been government-controlled throughout the conflict, except for the north-eastern mountain area of Jabal Al-Akrad, which has been an armed rebel stronghold since 2012.<sup>9</sup>

## 1.3. Quneitra

The Governorate of Quneitra is located in southern Syria bordering the governorates of Daraa and Rural Damascus as well as the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, Lebanon and Jordan. Quneitra is divided into the district of Quneitra and the district of Al-Fiq, and has six sub-districts.<sup>10</sup> As of August 2020, Quneitra governorate had an estimated population of 100,000.<sup>11</sup>

In the fall of 2012, opposition forces seized control of a number of smaller towns in Quneitra and areas bordering the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. By the start of 2014, opposition forces controlled large parts

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<sup>2</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 112

<sup>3</sup> WFP: 48

<sup>4</sup> The Alawites are a religious sect and group making up approximately 12 % of Syria's population, and to which Syria's ruling Assad-family belongs. Alawites have dominated top positions in the Syrian state, military and intelligence institutions since 1971. EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 112; WSJ, *Assad Draws Shock Troops From Elite Sect in Syria*, 28 August 2012, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 112-113; *Al-Jazeera, Syria's War: Blasts hit Tartous, Homs, Hasaka*, 6 September 2016, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 102

<sup>7</sup> WFP: 48

<sup>8</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 102

<sup>9</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 102-103

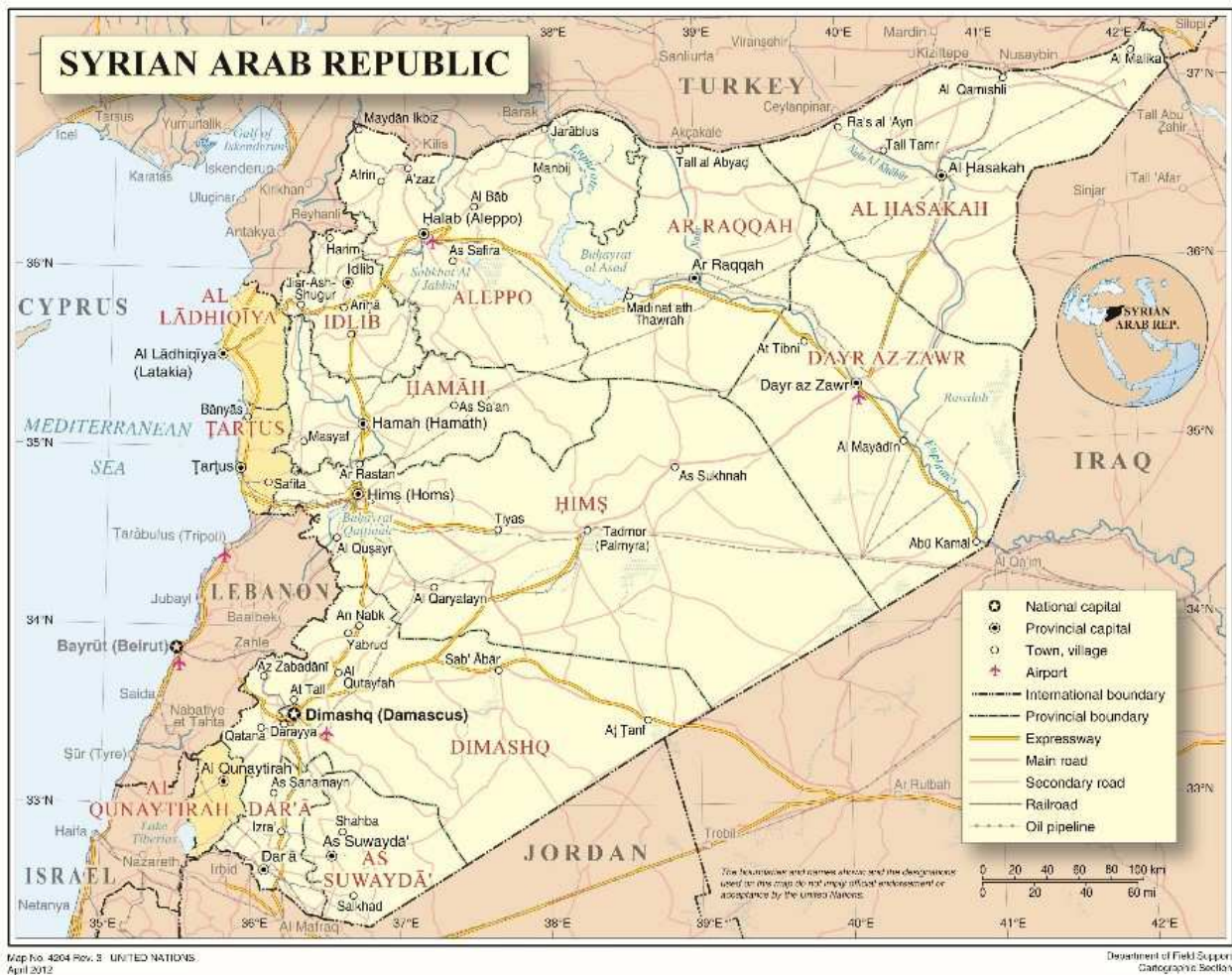
<sup>10</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 220-221

<sup>11</sup> WFP: 48

SYRIA – SECURITY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE GOVERNORATES OF TARTOUS, LATAKIA AND QUNEITRA

of the governorate, while the government remained in control in the north-east, including Khan Arnabah. Opposition forces continued to expand the area under their control in the governorate throughout 2014.<sup>12</sup> IS-affiliated groups have been present in the governorate from at least February 2015.<sup>13</sup>

In 2017, the governments of Syria, Russia, Turkey and Iran reached de-escalation agreements with rebel forces in a number of Syrian governorates, including Quneitra, which led to a decrease in violence. Fighting intensified again in 2018, as the Syrian government retook the governorate. The GoS reached a deal with anti-government rebels to evacuate rebel fighters, their families and selected civilians to the opposition-controlled Idlib governorate in the summer of 2018.<sup>14</sup>



Map 1. The governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, edited by the Danish Immigration Service, based on a UN map.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Sweden, Lifos, *Militär utveckling och territoriell kontroll i Syriens 14 provinser [Military development and territorial control in Syria's 14 provinces]*, 12 January 2017, [url](#), pp. 15-16

<sup>13</sup> Carter Center (The), *The Islamic state in Southern Syria*, 15 May 2015 [url](#), p. 4

<sup>14</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 221-222

<sup>15</sup> The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Danish Immigration Service concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.



## 2. Security situation in Tartous and Latakia governorates in 2020

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### 2.1. General security situation

All of Tartous governorate has been controlled by the GoS throughout 2020.<sup>16</sup> Most of Latakia governorate has also been controlled by the government throughout the year, with the exception of the area around the town of Kabani in the most north-eastern part of the governorate bordering Idlib, northern Hama and Turkey.<sup>17</sup>

The town of Kabani and the area surrounding it has been controlled by rebel groups throughout 2020 and continues to be controlled by Al-Qaeda-linked groups as of 1 December 2020, according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) and Syria Direct.<sup>18</sup> Kabani has been controlled by armed rebels since August 2016, while the surrounding area, known as Jabal Al-Akrad, has been controlled by opposition groups since 2012.<sup>19</sup>

The international security organisation stated that Tartous and Latakia can be considered as one entity with regards to the security situation in 2020.<sup>20</sup> Contrarily, Omran Studies stated that the security structure, including imposed security measures, as well as the behaviour of different security actors, varies in different areas in the two governorates.<sup>21</sup>

The international security organisation considered Tartous governorate and the government-controlled areas in Latakia to be safe areas compared to other governorates in Syria.<sup>22</sup> In the cities of Tartous and Latakia, there were no major security developments between January and October 2020.<sup>23</sup>

In October 2020, Tartous and Latakia governorates were heavily affected by large-scale wildfires. UN OCHA reported three fatalities and estimated that 140,000 people were being affected by the wildfires with up to 25,000 people displaced. More than 9,000 hectares of agricultural and forested land were reportedly destroyed.<sup>24</sup> The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies estimated that 200,000 people had been affected by the wildfires in Tartous, Latakia and Homs governorates with 12,500 people being in need of direct assistance as a result.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Omran Studies: 1

<sup>17</sup> Omran Studies: 7; ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation report: October 14-27, 2020*, 30 October 2020, [url](#); Political Geography Now, *Syria Control Map and Report: Army takes last IS stronghold – November 2020*, 23 November, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation report: January 8-21, 2020*, 24 January 2020, [url](#); ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation report: November 11-December 1, 2020*, 3 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security Situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 103; SOHR, *After cessation of aerial operations for nearly 15 days Russian jets bombard Jabal Al-Akrad, while rebels shell regime positions in Idlib*, 26 November 2020, [url](#); For more detailed information on rebel control in north-eastern Latakia since 2012, please see: EASO, *Syria - Security Situation*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 103 and Waters, G., *Battle of Kabani: A Rare Defeat for the Syrian Army in 2019*, *International Review*, 6 January 2020, [url](#)

<sup>20</sup> International security organisation: 1

<sup>21</sup> Omran Studies: 2

<sup>22</sup> International security organisation: 1

<sup>23</sup> International security organisation: 2

<sup>24</sup> UN OCHA, *FLASH UPDATE #01 Humanitarian Impact of Wildfires in Coastal Areas*, 11 October 2020, [url](#)

<sup>25</sup> IFRC, *Emergency plan of Action (EpoA) Syria: Wildfires*, 23 October 2020, [url](#)

## 2.2. Armed actors present in the governorates of Latakia and Tartous

For a detailed overview of SAA forces present in Quneitra governorate please refer to EASO's report on the security situation in Syria, published in May 2020.<sup>26</sup>

According to Omran Studies, Russia's military presence in Tartous, by virtue of its naval base in Tartous harbour,<sup>27</sup> has meant that Russia has been in control of the security in the city. This has prevented the presence of pro-government militias in Tartous, unlike in other government-controlled areas where pro-government actors such as Iranian militias, National Defence Force (NDF) militias and Local Defence Force (LDF) militias maintain a security presence.<sup>28</sup>

LDFs have a larger security presence in rural areas of Tartous governorate. This sometimes creates security issues and grievances with GoS security agencies in rural areas, where the LDFs might target individuals and impose their own security measures and security controls.<sup>29</sup>

In Sunni-majority villages, such as Baniyas in Tartous, the GoS security grip is stronger than in other parts of the coastal area (Tartous and Latakia governorates), monitoring people's movements more closely, and monitoring the social media accounts of some individuals.<sup>30</sup>

Shabiha militias (pro-government Alawite gangs) are present in all of Latakia governorate and assist in maintaining security in the governorate.<sup>31</sup>

In the majority Alawite city of Jableh in Latakia governorate, the security incidents affecting the city are between the local LDF militias and GoS security services disputing over territory and control of certain areas.<sup>32</sup>

Anti-government armed groups are neither present in the governorate of Tartous, nor in most of Latakia governorate.<sup>33</sup> In the Kabani Mountains, Latakia governorate, anti-government armed groups are present. These are especially ethnic Turkoman and Uyghur militant groups.<sup>34</sup> ISW and Syria Direct reported that the groups operating in the Kabani Mountains are linked or affiliated with Al-Qaeda groups.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 222-223

<sup>27</sup> Business Insider, *Russia plans to invest \$500 million in its only navy base outside the former Soviet Union — here's what it's like there*, 18 December 2018, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> Omran Studies: 4

<sup>29</sup> Omran Studies: 5

<sup>30</sup> Omran Studies: 6

<sup>31</sup> Omran Studies: 8

<sup>32</sup> Omran Studies: 9

<sup>33</sup> International security organisation: 22-23; Omran Studies: 31-32

<sup>34</sup> International security organisation: 23-24

<sup>35</sup> ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation report: January 8-21, 2020*, 24 January 2020, [url](#); ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation report: October 14-27, 2020*, 30 October 2020, [url](#)

## 2.3. Security incidents<sup>36</sup>

The international security organisation recorded 1 incident of ‘terrorism’<sup>37</sup>, 11 incidents of ‘crime’<sup>38</sup> and 67 incidents of ‘hazard’<sup>39</sup> between 1 May and 31 October 2020 for the governorate of Tartous.<sup>40</sup>

For the governorate of Latakia, the international security organisation recorded 179 incidents of ‘armed conflict’<sup>41</sup> and 1 incident of ‘terrorism’ between 1 May and 31 October 2020. 99 % of the security-related incidents in that period were ‘indirect artillery fire’ and 1 % were ‘landmine/explosive remnant of war’.<sup>42</sup>

During the month of October 2020, Tartous and Latakia governorates saw 35 incidents of ‘armed conflict’, no incidents of ‘terrorism’, 8 incidents of ‘crime’ and 113 incidents of ‘hazards’ (of which 95 % were fires). 94 % of the security-related incidents were ‘indirect artillery fire’ in the north-eastern part of Latakia governorate.<sup>43</sup>

There have been continuous clashes and shellings in the Kabani Mountains (Jabal Al-Akrad area) in northern Latakia between GoS forces and rebel forces throughout 2020. As of 7 December, neither the sources interviewed for this report, nor the DIS, had recorded any GoS military ground operations since July 2020, although shelling by rebel forces have affected areas controlled by GoS in northern Latakia governorate near the Kabani Mountains.<sup>44</sup> There have been drone attacks against the Russian Hmeimim Airbase and at times against other locations affiliated with the SAA.<sup>45</sup>

On 26 November 2020, Russia launched airstrikes against targets in the Kabani Mountains in northern Latakia governorate. In response, rebel forces operating in the area shelled GoS positions in Tallat Al-Burkan near Kabani with heavy artillery.<sup>46</sup> A similar incident took place on 4 June 2020, when the Syrian and Russian air forces carried out airstrikes against rebel positions in the town of Kabani, supposedly targeting the Turkistan Islamic Party and the Hurras Al-Din group.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The two sources interviewed for their expertise on security issues categorise security incidents differently. See the footnotes below for how the international security organisation categorises various security incidents. Note that Omran Studies considers arrest of civilians by Syrian authorities as a security incident category in itself. For an overview of arrests conducted by Syrian authorities in the three governorates during the reporting period, and reported by Omran Studies, please refer to the meeting minutes in the appendix to this report.

<sup>37</sup> According to the international security organisation, ‘terrorism’ is divided into the categories: ‘Small arms fire’, ‘assassinations’, ‘improvised explosive devices/vehicle born improvised explosive devices’ and ‘others’.

<sup>38</sup> According to the international security organisation, ‘crime’ is divided into the categories: ‘Robberies’, ‘kidnapping’, ‘arrests/detentions’, ‘murders’ and ‘others’.

<sup>39</sup> According to the international security organisation, ‘hazards’ are divided into the categories: ‘car accidents’, ‘fires’, ‘unexploded ordnances/explosive remnants of war’, ‘landmines’ and ‘others’. Definitions of security incident categories by the international security organisation have been obtained by the DIS through written e-mail correspondences with the international security organisation.

<sup>40</sup> International security organisation: 4-5

<sup>41</sup> According to the international security organisation, ‘armed conflict’ is divided into the following categories: ‘airstrikes’, ‘indirect artillery fire’, ‘fighting’ and ‘others’.

<sup>42</sup> International security organisation: 6-7

<sup>43</sup> International security organisation: 8-9

<sup>44</sup> Omran Studies 13; International security organisation: 3

<sup>45</sup> International security organisation: 3

<sup>46</sup> SOHR, *After cessation of aerial operations for nearly 15 days | Russian jets bombard Jabal Al-Akrad, while rebels shell regime positions in Idlib*, 26 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>47</sup> Syrian Observer (The), *Russian, Syrian Warplanes Strike Foreign Jihadists in Hama, Latakia*, 4 June 2020, [url](#)

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)<sup>48</sup> recorded nine security incidents in Tartous and Latakia governorates from 1 January to 20 November 2020, coded as either ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ or ‘violence against civilians’.

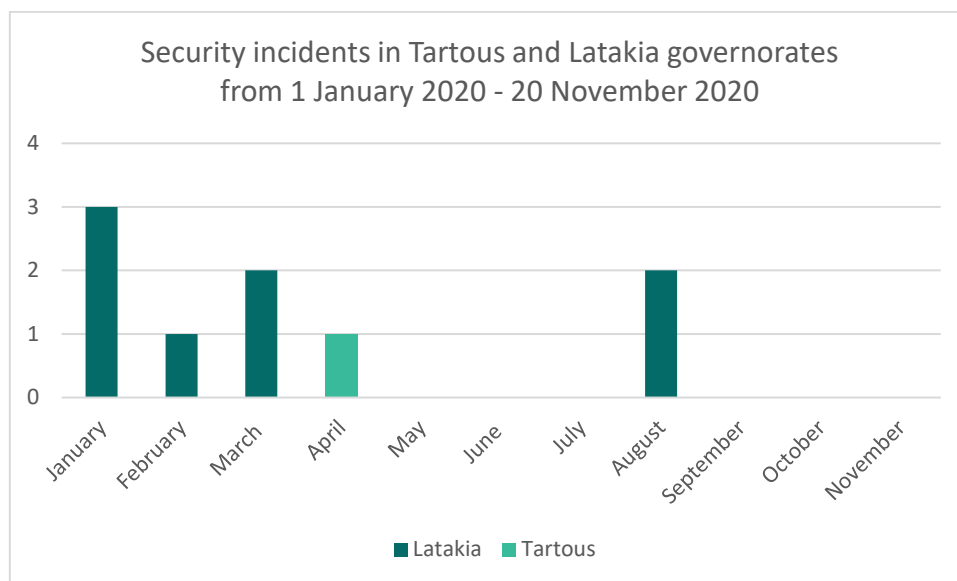


Figure 1. Security incidents<sup>49</sup> coded as ‘battles’, ‘explosions/remote violence’ or ‘violence against civilians’ in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia, 1 January - 20 November 2020, based on ACLED data. ACLED, curated data files, Middle East (20 November 2020), [url](#).

According to Omran Studies, the only major security incidents between January and October 2020 in the GoS controlled parts of Latakia governorate were protests over Syria’s economic situation. The GoS increased security measures in response to the protests.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> ACLED describes itself as “a disaggregated data collection, analysis, and crisis mapping project. ACLED collects the dates, actors, locations, fatalities, and types of all reported political violence and protest events [...]” (ACLED, *About ACLED*, n.d., [url](#)).

<sup>49</sup> ACLED uses the term ‘event’ when registering these incidents. ‘Security incident’ is used here in accordance with the way ACLED data is referred to in the report: EASO, *Syria – Security Situation, May 2020*, [url](#). Note that this understanding of security incident and the way the data is collected is different from that of Omran Studies and of the international security organisation. While ACLED collects data on reported security incidents, some incidents might not be featured in its publicly available database on incidents and are thus not available for extraction using ACLED’s data export tool.

<sup>50</sup> Omran Studies: 7

## 3. Freedom of movement in Tartous and Latakia governorates

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### 3.1. Freedom of movement within Tartous and Latakia governorates

People can move around freely in Tartous and Latakia governorates, although Omran Studies does not consider the roads in these governorates to be safe due to the presence of independent LDF militias. The government is therefore unable to implement full security on these roads. Omran Studies only considers the road between Damascus and Tartous to be safe when the Russian military is traveling on the road.<sup>51</sup> Women do not face any particular movement restrictions in Tartous and Latakia governorates.<sup>52</sup> It is possible to move around freely inside the cities of Tartous and Latakia. However, there are checkpoints when entering the cities.<sup>53</sup> In Tartous city, there are checkpoints placed at the northern and southern entrances to the city. These checkpoints are joint checkpoints for all four GoS security services.<sup>54</sup>

There are no checkpoints within the city of Latakia, but there is a military checkpoint at the entrance to the city, and one near the port of Latakia.<sup>55</sup>

No areas within Tartous and Latakia governorates have restricted access for civilians, with the exception of military bases, such as the Russian Hmeimim Airbase, the port in Tartous containing a Russian naval base, the port in Latakia, and areas around other military installations such as the air defence systems in Tartous.<sup>56</sup>

In the city of Baniyas in Tartous governorate, the Air Force Intelligence has two checkpoints in the city. There are a total of four checkpoints within Baniyas.<sup>57</sup>

Due to the structure of the Syrian security apparatus, it is difficult to say with certainty which security actors are present at checkpoints, according to the international security organisation.<sup>58</sup>

According to Omran Studies, the only movement restrictions in Tartous relate to the movement of goods or merchandise from one area to another. Such movements require a security approval from one of the GoS intelligence services in the area to which the goods are being transported.<sup>59</sup>

Checkpoints are in place close to the airport of Latakia. According to Omran Studies, there are both domestic and international flights to Dubai, Sharjah and Cairo from Latakia airport.<sup>60</sup> UN OCHA reported Latakia airport as being partially open for international travellers on 30 November 2020.<sup>61</sup> However, the

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<sup>51</sup> Omran Studies: 15, 22, 25

<sup>52</sup> International security organisation: 21; Omran Studies 30

<sup>53</sup> International security organisation: 18

<sup>54</sup> Omran Studies: 18

<sup>55</sup> Omran Studies: 26

<sup>56</sup> International security organisation: 20; Omran Studies: 27-29

<sup>57</sup> Omran Studies: 6, 24

<sup>58</sup> International security organisation: 19

<sup>59</sup> Omran Studies: 23

<sup>60</sup> Omran Studies: 27

<sup>61</sup> UN OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 – Humanitarian Update No. 21*, 30 November 2020, [url](#), p. 6

international security organisation reported in October 2020 that neither domestic nor international flights were flying to Latakia airport.<sup>62</sup>

### 3.2. Security on roads connecting Tartous and Latakia governorates to Damascus International Airport

There are two main roads connecting Damascus to Tartous and Latakia. One passes through Homs and another one bypasses Homs. To travel on either road, one has to pass through a junction next to the Shia-majority villages of Al-Mazra'a and Khirbet Attin, which are affiliated with Hizbollah. There have been several kidnappings for ransom on the road in this area in 2020. In August 2020, two individuals were kidnapped in the area and their whereabouts are still unknown.<sup>63</sup>

According to Omran Studies, there are fixed checkpoints next to the village of Al-Husin in western Homs governorate and near the fuel factory next to Homs city, on the road between Damascus and Tartous and Latakia. These checkpoints are smaller and people are usually not asked to present their IDs. This generally only happens at the checkpoints at the entrance to Tartous city.<sup>64</sup>

There are flying checkpoints manned by LDF militias on the road between Tartous, Latakia and Damascus. They are temporary in nature because the Russian military does not tolerate flying checkpoints.<sup>65</sup>

There are checkpoints on all main roads and at the entrances to the main cities. This includes the road between the coastal region and Damascus International Airport. According to the international security organisation, there are at least two checkpoints between Tartous and Damascus International Airport and a minimum of two further checkpoints on the road to Latakia.<sup>66</sup> Checkpoints between Damascus International Airport and the coastal governorates are manned by SAA personnel or by Syrian security services. None of these checkpoints are manned by Russian or Iranian forces.<sup>67</sup>

IDs and other documents are checked at the checkpoints. A person returning to his/her city, town or village should not have issues at these checkpoints unless the individual has a criminal record or other pending security issues with Syrian authorities.<sup>68</sup> Individuals returning to Syria with pending security issues with the authorities might face increased security measures, such as detention, at the airport, or when returning to his/her home governorate. The international security organisation is not aware of arrests or detentions of individuals returning from Lebanon to Tartous and Latakia governorates.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> International security organisation: 10

<sup>63</sup> Omran Studies: 14-16

<sup>64</sup> Omran Studies: 19-20

<sup>65</sup> Omran Studies: 21

<sup>66</sup> International security organisation: 12

<sup>67</sup> International security organisation: 13

<sup>68</sup> For more information, see: Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Security clearance and status settlement for returnees*, December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>69</sup> International security organisation: 14-16

## 4. Security situation in Quneitra governorate in 2020

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### 4.1. General security situation

The governorate of Quneitra has been controlled by the Syrian government since August 2018.<sup>70</sup> Hizbollah has been present in the governorate since before the GoS takeover in 2018 and has likely expanded its presence in the area since, according to Carnegie Middle East Center.<sup>71</sup>

There have been an increasing number of airstrikes by the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in Quneitra governorate in 2020. These have targeted the SAA, Hizbollah and Iranian forces.<sup>72</sup>

There has also been an increase in small arms fire attacks, as well as attacks involving improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), conducted by a number of anti-government armed groups, including IS.<sup>73</sup> IS has taken responsibility for some of the attacks. Many of the attacks are carried out by former opposition fighters. These opposition fighters continue to fight GoS forces in spite of formally having reached reconciliation agreements with the authorities in connection with the GoS takeover in 2018.<sup>74</sup>

Assassinations have contributed to making the security situation in the governorate very fragile as they are the main security issue facing Quneitra, according to Omran Studies. There were four assassination attempts in October, of which three were successful.<sup>75</sup>

### 4.2. Armed actors present in Quneitra governorate

For a detailed overview of SAA forces present in Quneitra governorate please refer to EASO's report on the security situation in all of Syria's governorates published in May 2020.<sup>76</sup>

Hizbollah has been present in the governorate since before the GoS takeover in 2018 and has likely expanded its presence in the area since, according to Carnegie Middle East Center.<sup>77</sup> Since the GoS retook full control of Quneitra governorate in 2018, opposition news outlets have reported a growing presence of pro-Iranian forces in the governorate. In February 2020, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that there are Iranian military stations in the northern part of Quneitra governorate.<sup>78</sup>

Both IS and Al-Qaeda are present in Quneitra governorate. The international security organisation does not know of other armed groups present in Quneitra besides IS and Al-Qaeda.<sup>79</sup> According to Omran Studies, anti-government groups calling themselves 'the popular resistance' are present in the governorate. These groups both consist of former opposition fighters that did not reconcile with the GoS in 2018, and of former

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<sup>70</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, *How Southern Syria Has Been Transformed Into a Regional Powder Keg*, 14 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>71</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, *How Southern Syria Has Been Transformed Into a Regional Powder Keg*, 14 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> International security organisation: 25; Omran Studies: 35

<sup>73</sup> International security organisation: 27

<sup>74</sup> International security organisation: 25; Omran Studies: 33, 37

<sup>75</sup> Omran Studies: 33-34, 36

<sup>76</sup> EASO, *Syria - Security situation*, May 2020, [url](#), pp. 222-223

<sup>77</sup> Carnegie Middle East Center, *How Southern Syria Has Been Transformed Into a Regional Powder Keg*, 14 July 2020, [url](#)

<sup>78</sup> SOHR, *Buying loyalty: Iran-backed militias offer young people in Al-Quneitra financial incentives*, 12 February 2020, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> International security organisation: 31-32

opposition fighters who reconciled with the GoS, but who are nonetheless fighting the GoS covertly. These groups have not been operating or taking responsibility for any attacks since May 2020.<sup>80</sup>

### 4.3. Security incidents

In the governorate of Quneitra, the international security organisation recorded five incidents of ‘armed conflict’, five incidents of ‘terrorism’ and two incidents of ‘hazards’ between 1 May and 31 October 2020. 43 % of the security-related incidents were Israeli missile attacks, 29 % were IEDs/VBIEDs and 28 % were landmines/explosive remnants of war.<sup>81</sup>

According to Omran Studies, 10-15 % of all assassinations carried out in southern Syria, i.e. the governorates of Daraa, Quneitra and Suweida, were in Quneitra governorate.<sup>82</sup> As of 25 November 2020, SOHR had recorded 36 Israeli attacks in Syria since the beginning of 2020, resulting in 206 fatalities among GoS forces, pro-government militias, Iranian forces and Hizbollah.<sup>83</sup>

In the period from 1 January to 20 November 2020, ACLED recorded three security incidents in Quneitra governorate coded as ‘explosions/remote violence’.

#### Recent examples of security incidents in Quneitra governorate

- On 25 November, a military post belonging to a pro-government militia was hit and destroyed by IDF airstrikes near Ruweihina, killing eight militiamen.<sup>84</sup>
- On 9 November, a GoS soldier was killed by an IED in Jaba. On the same day a former opposition leader, who had joined the Military Intelligence, was injured by gunshots fired by unknown gunmen in Mumtana.<sup>85</sup>
- On 3 November, a member of the Military Intelligence was found dead with gunshot wounds near Sadd Al-Mantarah.<sup>86</sup>
- On 25 October, a GoS military officer was killed by unknown gunmen in an attack on a military post in a rural part of the governorate.<sup>87</sup>
- On 21 October, an Israeli airstrike targeted a school in the town of Al-Hurriyya. The school was not operating as a school at the time of the attack. Hizbollah was present either inside the school or close to it. Three fatalities were reported in the attack.<sup>88</sup> According to ISW and Syria Direct, the IDF also shelled the SAA’s 90<sup>th</sup> brigade.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Omran Studies: 43

<sup>81</sup> International security organisation: 28-29

<sup>82</sup> Omran Studies: 37

<sup>83</sup> SOHR, *New Israeli attack in rural Damascus and Quneitra | Eight non-Syrian militiamen killed, and rocket depots and vehicles destroyed in airstrikes on positions of pro-Iran militias and Lebanese Hezbollah*, 25 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>84</sup> SOHR, *New Israeli attack in rural Damascus and Quneitra | Eight non-Syrian militiamen killed, and rocket depots and vehicles destroyed in airstrikes on positions of pro-Iran militias and Lebanese Hezbollah*, 25 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>85</sup> SOHR, *Al-Quneitra countryside | Regime security agent killed and former opposition leader injured in two separate incidents*, 9 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>86</sup> SOHR, *Al-Quneitra countryside | Regime security agent killed and former opposition leader injured in two separate incidents*, 9 November 2020, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> SOHR, *Armed attack on military post: Regime officer killed and others injured in rural Al-Quneitra*, 25 October 2020, [url](#)

<sup>88</sup> International security organisation: 26; Omran Studies: 35, SOHR, *Al-Quneitra: Three Hezbollah-backed militiamen killed in Israeli attacks on school in northern countryside*, 21 October 2020, [url](#)

<sup>89</sup> ISW and Syria Direct, *Syria Situation Report: October 14-27, 2020*, 30 October 2020, [url](#)



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- On 15 October, two GoS soldiers were killed in a landmine explosion in rural Quneitra.<sup>90</sup>
- On 12 August, a Hizbollah-affiliated group clashed with NDF in Khan Arnabah over a supposed drug deal. The clash led to injuries.<sup>91</sup>
- On 26 May, the IDF shelled bases belonging to Hizbollah and Iranian-militias in the northern part of the governorate.<sup>92</sup>
- On 5 March, the IDF shelled Hizbollah bases in the southern part of the governorate.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> SOHR, *Sweeping operation in southern Syria | Two regime soldiers die in landmine explosion in rural Al-Quneitra*, 15 October 2020, [url](#)

<sup>91</sup> Syrian Observer (The), *Hezbollah, National Defense Forces Clash Over Drug Dealing in Quneitra*, 13 August 2020, [url](#)

<sup>92</sup> Syrian Observer (The), *Israeli Army Shells Bases of Iranian Militias in Northern Quneitra*, 26 May 2020, [url](#)

<sup>93</sup> Syrian Observer (The), *Israeli Army Shells Bases of Iranian Militias in Northern Quneitra*, 26 May 2020, [url](#)

## 5. Freedom of movement in Quneitra governorate

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### 5.1. Freedom of movement within Quneitra governorate

There are many military checkpoints in Quneitra due to its proximity to the border with Israel. All civilians face movement restrictions in the governorate due to the fragile security situation in the area.<sup>94</sup>

The international security organisation does not have specific names of areas where movement is restricted. Some areas in Quneitra governorate were already restricted before the civil war, but more areas have been restricted after the war began, due to the presence of radical Islamic groups.<sup>95</sup>

Special security measures are in place along the border to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, where civilians have restricted access to a three to four kilometre wide de-escalation zone.<sup>96</sup> Areas containing military installations and equipment belonging to Hizbollah are also off-limits for civilians. These sites have continuously been attacked by the Israeli air force in 2020.<sup>97</sup>

### 5.2. Security on roads connecting Quneitra governorate to Damascus International Airport

The security situation on the road between Damascus International Airport and Quneitra is very fragile and unstable. There have been kidnappings, killings and enforced disappearances on this road in 2020. People do not use the road at night because they fear being kidnapped or robbed by either pro-government armed groups, former rebels or criminal gangs. Trucks delivering food or other goods do not use the road at night unless they are assisted by a private security company.<sup>98</sup>

There are approximately five permanent checkpoints on the road between Damascus and Quneitra. These are controlled by the Military Intelligence Service and the Air Force Intelligence Service.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Omran Studies: 40-42

<sup>95</sup> International security organisation: 30

<sup>96</sup> International security organisation: 30; Omran Studies: 40

<sup>97</sup> Omran Studies: 40

<sup>98</sup> Omran Studies: 38

<sup>99</sup> Omran Studies: 39

## 6. Socio-economic situation

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The socio-economic situation in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra is similar to the situation in other parts of Syria controlled by the government. For this reason, most of the information in this section is of a more general character. However, local differences exist and will be elaborated on below.

For more information on the general socio-economic situation in Syria, see the DIS-report [Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the government-controlled areas](#) from October 2020.

### 6.1. Access to food, water, sanitation and electricity

#### Food

Food is generally available in all of Syria, according to World Food Programme (WFP) and researcher Suhail Al-Ghazi. On the other hand, the international humanitarian organisation mentioned that there is a shortage of agricultural produce because of lower production. All three sources agreed that many Syrians are currently facing difficulties affording basic food items.<sup>100</sup>

The food security<sup>101</sup> situation has deteriorated considerably following the depreciation of the Syrian pound (SYP) during the past 12 months, due to international sanctions and because of the COVID-19 situation. WFP estimated that around 50 % of the Syrian population was food insecure in October 2020.<sup>102</sup>

The government provides subsidised food through the so-called Smart Card that allows people to buy cheaper goods at particular stores administered by the Syrian Trading Company, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection. There are two types of Smart Cards one for household-related purposes and another for vehicle-related purchases (i.e. petrol).<sup>103</sup>

The Smart Card is available to everyone who requests one, including returnees. However, the amount of food that is made available through the Smart Card is insufficient to meet the needs of the population. To get sufficient basic goods, many have to resort to informal markets where prices are much higher.<sup>104</sup> Before COVID-19, in order to buy the items that comprise a food basket,<sup>105</sup> unskilled labourers would spend around 80 % of their salary, and public servants between 60-80 % of their salary.<sup>106</sup> As of October 2020, the

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<sup>100</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 2; WFP: 1-2; Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Damascus and Rural Damascus*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 46

<sup>101</sup> Food security is defined as a “situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020*, 2020, [url](#), p. 254)

<sup>102</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 3; WFP: 1-3, 30; UNICEF: 19-20. See also: Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the government-controlled areas*, October 2020, [url](#), pp. 15-16

<sup>103</sup> WFP: 19-20, 38

<sup>104</sup> WFP: 8, 20-21, 23-24, 28, 40-41, 51

<sup>105</sup> A food basket is a country-specific collection of goods that covers the essential nutritional needs of a family of five for one month (WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 1).

<sup>106</sup> UNICEF: 20

average price of a food basket in Syria was 88,138 SYP, while the highest monthly salary in the public sector was 80,240 SYP.<sup>107</sup>

Around 89 % of the population has adopted at least one coping strategy to handle the rising food prices. The most common strategies are eating less food and skipping meals. Other coping strategies adopted include taking children out of school, marrying daughters off and joining an armed group.<sup>108</sup>

### Water and sanitation

The water available from the normal water distribution network is generally of adequate quality. However, network water is only available for a limited number of hours each day.<sup>109</sup> 42 % of all households in Syria receive water from alternative sources, e.g. water trucks.<sup>110</sup> Samples of water from trucks taken at the point of use showed that only 13 % had a sufficient level of chlorine. To clean polluted water, people use various materials such as chlorination tablets.<sup>111</sup>

Rural areas are particularly dependent on water trucks. The price of water from trucks is higher than the water network price, and trucks only go to areas where people can afford to pay the additional costs for fuel. Those who rely on water trucks spend an average of 10 % of their income on water.<sup>112</sup>

In all of Syria, more than 70 % of sewage is untreated, according to UNICEF. Generally, there has been a fall in the capacity to treat sewage water due to conflict-related destruction and lack of maintenance. Recent estimates indicate that 9 % of the population is still served by functional wastewater treatment plants.<sup>113</sup>

### Electricity and fuel

Most urban areas have access to electricity through the power grid, but will only have electricity for a few hours followed by hours without electricity. Many rely on generators for continuous access to electricity. In some urban and many rural areas, generators are the only source of electricity.<sup>114</sup>

Syria has seen a fuel crisis with people waiting in queues for days at gas stations.<sup>115</sup> On 21 October 2020, the government increased the subsidised petrol (octane 90) price from 250 SYP/litre to 450 SYP/litre, which removed the queues. Petrol is rationed, so only 30 litre of fuel can be purchased every five days, and a maximum of 100 litre of subsidised petrol and 100 litre of non-subsidised petrol can be purchased every month.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> UN OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic: COVID-19 – Humanitarian Update No. 21*, 30 November 2020, [url](#), p. 3; COAR, *The Syrian Economy at War – Part 2: Labor Pains Amid the Blurring of the Public and Private Sectors*, November 2020, [url](#), p. 6; WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>108</sup> WFP: 34-36

<sup>109</sup> UNICEF: 16

<sup>110</sup> UNICEF: 12

<sup>111</sup> UNICEF: 15

<sup>112</sup> UNICEF: 13-14

<sup>113</sup> UNICEF: 18

<sup>114</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 4; WFP: 42

<sup>115</sup> WFP: 37; International humanitarian organisation: 1

<sup>116</sup> WFP: 37, 39; WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 2

## Access to services for women

The Syrian conflict has transformed the workforce, with women now working within fields previously reserved for men. The number of female-headed households has increased, making more women the breadwinners of their families.<sup>117</sup>

Female-headed households have more difficulties accessing jobs and services and hence rely on help from relatives, income from their children or from engaging in sexual relationships.<sup>118</sup>

### 6.1.1. Tartous

A food basket cost 94,223 SYP in October 2020. At that time, the average daily wage for an unskilled labourer<sup>119</sup> in the governorate was 6,000 SYP.<sup>120</sup> The average retail price for 1.5 litres of drinking water was 275 SYP in October 2020.<sup>121</sup>

In the governorate, the proportion of moderately food insecure people rose from 11.6 % of the population in 2018 to 21 % in 2019, while the proportion of severely food insecure people rose from 0.7 % in 2018 to 0.9 % in 2019.<sup>122</sup>

Among children between 6 months and 5 years old, 0.4 % are suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and 0.2 % from severe acute malnutrition.<sup>123</sup>

UNICEF estimates that relatively more people in the governorate are connected to the water network compared to Syria as a whole.<sup>124</sup> Data from 2016 indicated that 58.67 % of the households in Tartous governorate received water from the water network, while the remaining 41.33 % received it from multiple other sources.<sup>125</sup>

### 6.1.2. Latakia

In Latakia governorate, a food basket cost 90,723 SYP in October 2020, while the daily wage for an unskilled labourer was 6,000 SYP.<sup>126</sup> The average retail price for 1.5 litres of water was 275 SYP in October.<sup>127</sup>

The proportion of moderately food insecure people rose from 10.1% of the population in 2018 to 20.5 % in 2019, while the proportion of severely food insecure people rose from none in 2018 to 0.9 % in 2019.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> EASO, *Syria - Situation of Women*, February 2020, [url](#), pp. 28-29

<sup>118</sup> WFP: 50

<sup>119</sup> Here, the daily rather than the monthly wage is mentioned as most unskilled labourers earn their money on a day-to-day basis and often have their monthly wage based on a different number of workdays each month. Few labourers are employed daily, as the unemployment rate in the private sector is high. WFP estimated that around 50 % of the population was unemployed before Covid-19 and that this number has increased since (International humanitarian organisation: 13; WFP: 44).

<sup>120</sup> WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), pp. 1, 7

<sup>121</sup> WFP, *vam – food security analysis*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>122</sup> WFP: 32

<sup>123</sup> UNICEF: 23

<sup>124</sup> UNICEF: 12

<sup>125</sup> World Bank, *The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis, 2020*, [url](#), p. 140

<sup>126</sup> WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), pp. 1, 7

<sup>127</sup> WFP, *vam – food security analysis*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>128</sup> WFP: 33

Among children between 6 months and 5 years old, 0.4 % are suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and none from severe acute malnutrition.<sup>129</sup>

UNICEF estimates that relatively more people are connected to the water network in the governorate of Latakia compared to Syria as a whole.<sup>130</sup> Data from 2016 also shows that 80 % of the households in the governorate got water from the water network, while about 20 % received water from multiple other sources.<sup>131</sup>

### 6.1.3. Quneitra

In July 2020, the price of a food basket in the governorate was 91,562 SYP and the daily wage for an unskilled labourer was 3,875 SYP.<sup>132</sup> In the same month, the average retail price for 1.5 litres of water was 372.91 SYP.<sup>133</sup>

From 2018 to 2019, the proportion of moderately food insecure people rose from 38 % of the population to 39 %, while the proportion of severely food insecure people went down from 2 % in 2018 to 1 % in 2019.<sup>134</sup> According to WFP, 52 % of surveyed households in Quneitra governorate had an inadequate food consumption in October 2020.<sup>135</sup>

Among children between 6 months and 5 years old, 1.9 % are suffering from moderate acute malnutrition and 0.8 % from severe acute malnutrition.<sup>136</sup>

According to UNICEF, people in Quneitra rely heavily on water trucks.<sup>137</sup> This view is supported by data from 2016, which shows that 71.5 % of the households received water from trucks, 11.05 % from multiple other sources and 17.45 % from the water network.<sup>138</sup> It should be noted that in 2016, the governorate was not under full control of the GoS. Data from 2019 indicated a change in the percentages with 35-45 % of households in Quneitra being entirely dependent on trucks for water supply.<sup>139</sup>

## 6.2. Access to healthcare

Healthcare in Syria is mainly provided through public hospitals and public health clinics. Private hospitals, private clinics and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also provide healthcare services.<sup>140</sup> Consultations in public health facilities are generally free. However, for some surgeries, patients have to pay for certain materials, medicines and medical supplies.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> UNICEF: 23

<sup>130</sup> UNICEF: 12

<sup>131</sup> World Bank, *The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis, 2020*, [url](#), p. 139

<sup>132</sup> WFP, *Syria Country Office: Market Price Watch Bulletin (issue 71)*, October 2020, [url](#), pp. 1, 7

<sup>133</sup> WFP, *vam – food security analysis*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>134</sup> WFP: 31

<sup>135</sup> WFP, *Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 49*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>136</sup> UNICEF: 23

<sup>137</sup> UNICEF: 12

<sup>138</sup> World Bank, *The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis, 2020*, [url](#), p. 139

<sup>139</sup> Humanitarian Needs Overview, *Syrian Arab Republic*, 1 March 2019, [url](#), p. 81

<sup>140</sup> WHO: 1, 18-22

<sup>141</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 6; UNICEF: 26; WHO: 4

Among the services provided in the public hospitals are emergency care and surgery, laboratory and imaging services, inpatient and outpatient services, elective surgeries, intensive and trauma care, deliveries and Caesarean section and management of non-communicable diseases.<sup>142</sup>

Public health centres provides services such as emergency care, basic laboratory, outpatient services, immunisation, growth monitoring, integrated management of childhood illnesses, antenatal care and family planning.<sup>143</sup>

According to WHO, a patient must present an ID card to receive public health services. Sometimes, a referral form must also be provided. For childbirths, family papers are needed as well.<sup>144</sup> The international humanitarian organisation mentioned that hospitals sometimes ask for civil documentation, and that they accept all kinds of documents, including those issued by foreign governments.<sup>145</sup>

In general, women do not face obstacles to receive healthcare. However, a woman will need her husband's approval for services related to reproductive health.<sup>146</sup>

The higher transportation costs due to the fuel crisis might be an impediment for some to access healthcare.<sup>147</sup>

Private-for-profit health clinics are available. The sources disagreed as to whether the clinics are generally affordable. WHO stated that the private-for-profit health clinics are unaffordable for many people, with an average consultation price being around 6,000 SYP. On the other hand, the international humanitarian organisation stated that there is cheap access to private clinics in GoS-controlled areas.<sup>148</sup>

Sources interviewed for this report estimate that around or more than 50 % of healthcare workers left Syria during the current conflict.<sup>149</sup> By June 2020, public hospitals in all of Syria had 14.7 health staff (doctors, nurses and midwives) and public health centres had 8 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants.<sup>150, 151</sup>

Some primary healthcare medicine and non-communicable diseases medicine is produced in Syria and is available in pharmacies.<sup>152</sup> However, throughout Syria, the availability of medicine is limited. There is shortage of cancer medicine<sup>153</sup> and other types of medicine. These include haemodialysis kits and fluids (used for patients with kidney diseases), immunosuppressant (medicine to treat autoimmune diseases), heparin (used for patients at risk of cardiac failure), insulin and anaesthetic medicines, as well as lifesaving drugs, e.g. atropine and dopamine.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> WHO: 11

<sup>143</sup> WHO: 13

<sup>144</sup> WHO: 1

<sup>145</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 17

<sup>146</sup> WHO: 2

<sup>147</sup> UNICEF: 26

<sup>148</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 6; WHO: 19-20

<sup>149</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 7; UNICEF: 28; WHO: 27

<sup>150</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 25; WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>151</sup> The minimum density of doctors, nurses and midwives is set 44.5 per 10,000 inhabitants in the WHO global strategy on health staff for 2030 (WHO, *Global strategy on human resources for health: Workforce 2030*, 2016, [url](#), p. 42)

<sup>152</sup> WHO: 24

<sup>153</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 9; WHO: 24-25

<sup>154</sup> WHO: 25

Between August and November 2020, the price of medicine almost tripled.<sup>155</sup> A household survey conducted in October 2020 indicated that out of the 1,387 surveyed households, 45 % reported that they were not able to buy the medicine they needed. Around two-thirds of these households indicated that this was due to lack of sufficient funds.<sup>156</sup>

According to the independent research centre Jusoor, the quality of the locally-produced medicine has decreased as the GoS has forced Syrian medicine companies to sell the medication at a price that is lower than production costs.<sup>157</sup>

### 6.2.1. Tartous

All seven public hospitals in the governorate of Tartous are functioning. They are unable to provide inpatient care for management of mental disorders by specialised healthcare providers.<sup>158</sup>

All 168 public health centres in the governorate were fully functioning in December 2019, and 99 % of these were accessible and 97 % not damaged.<sup>159</sup> None of the health centres were able to provide skilled care during childbirth, basic emergency obstetric care and post-exposure prophylaxis for sexually transmitted infections.<sup>160</sup>

A WHO report covering the first half of 2020 indicated that there were only 147 public health centres in the governorate by June 2020. However, the report did not address the reason for the fall in the number of health centre facilities. Of the 147 public health centres, 144 were fully functioning, one partially functioning and two non-functioning by June 2020. The percentage of accessible and not damaged health centres were about the same as in December 2019.<sup>161</sup>

Some types of specialised healthcare such as organ transplants, plasmapheresis, neurosurgery and advanced neonatology are not available in the governorate.<sup>162</sup>

The shortage of healthcare workers in Tartous is relatively lower than in the rest of Syria, but nevertheless affects some services such as specialised surgeries, neurology and haemodialysis.<sup>163</sup> In June 2020, the public hospitals had 39.7 health staff and the public health clinics 32 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants.<sup>164</sup>

The NGO Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) has monitored attacks on healthcare facilities since the beginning of the conflict. As of 30 November 2020, none of the 595 documented attacks that have taken place throughout the conflict were in Tartous governorate.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> WHO: 25

<sup>156</sup> WFP, *Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 49*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>157</sup> Denmark, DIS, *Syria – Security and socio-economic situation in the governorates of Damascus and Rural Damascus*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 49

<sup>158</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 7; WHO: 6, 8

<sup>159</sup> For WHO definitions of functionality, accessibility and damage, see WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), pp. 4, 8, 10

<sup>160</sup> WHO: 12, 15

<sup>161</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), pp. 5, 9, 12

<sup>162</sup> WHO: 23

<sup>163</sup> WHO: 27

<sup>164</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 25; WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>165</sup> PHR, *Illegal Attacks on Health Care in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)



By 30 November 2020, the official COVID-19 numbers in the governorate of Tartous were 393 confirmed cases and 15 confirmed deaths.<sup>166</sup> The international humanitarian organisation stated that the COVID-19 situation in the governorate of Tartous is much worse than what official numbers indicate.<sup>167</sup>

### 6.2.2. Latakia

There are seven public hospitals in the governorate. The public hospitals in the governorate are generally functioning.<sup>168</sup> Six of the public hospitals are not damaged and fully functioning, while one, the Ibrahim N'ama Hospital in Jableh, is partially damaged and partially functioning.<sup>169</sup> None of the hospitals in the governorate provide inpatient care for management of mental disorders by specialised healthcare providers.<sup>170</sup>

There were 120 public health centres in the governorate in December 2019, of which 110 were fully functioning, 1 partially functioning and 9 non-functioning. Six of the non-functioning health clinics were located in Al-Haffa, two in Al-Shamiye and one in Latakia city. Of the all the public health centres in the governorate, 96 % were accessible and 90 % undamaged. All of the inaccessible health centres were located in Al-Haffa.<sup>171</sup>

By June 2020, the number of public health centres had decreased to 119. There were 110 fully functioning and 9 non-functioning health centres. Four of the centres, all located in Al-Haffa, were inaccessible, while the remaining health centres were accessible. Nine of the health centres were either fully or partially damaged.<sup>172</sup>

As of 30 November 2020, PHR had not recorded any attacks on healthcare facilities in the governorate of Latakia in 2020. The latest recorded attack took place on 23 May 2016 in Jableh.<sup>173</sup>

Some types of specialised healthcare are not available in the governorate, e.g. organ transplants, plasmapheresis, neurosurgery and advanced neonatology.<sup>174</sup>

There were 38.5 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants in the public hospitals of the governorate and 18 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants in public health clinics by June 2020.<sup>175</sup> Although the shortage of healthcare workers is less than for Syria as a whole, services such as specialised surgeries, neurology and haemodialysis are affected by the insufficient amount of healthcare staff in Latakia.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Syrian Ministry of Health, كورونا المسجلة بفيروس كورونا: حالات الإصابة المسجلة بفيروس كورونا [The Syrian Arab Republic: Recorded cases of Corona virus], 1 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>167</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 9

<sup>168</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 8

<sup>169</sup> WHO: 7

<sup>170</sup> WHO: 8

<sup>171</sup> WHO: 14

<sup>172</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), pp. 5, 9-10, 12

<sup>173</sup> PHR, *Illegal Attacks on Health Care in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>174</sup> WHO: 23

<sup>175</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 25; WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>176</sup> WHO: 24

As of 30 November 2020, the official COVID-19 numbers in the governorate of Latakia are 792 confirmed cases and 27 confirmed deaths.<sup>177</sup> However, according to the international humanitarian organisation, the COVID-19 situation in Latakia is much worse than what official numbers indicate.<sup>178</sup>

### 6.2.3. Quneitra

There is one public hospital in the governorate of Quneitra. While the hospital is fully functioning and accessible, it is unable to provide inpatient care for management of mental disorders by specialised healthcare providers, management of cancer diseases and rehabilitation services.<sup>179</sup>

There were 59 public health centres in there governorate in December 2019, of which 30 were fully functioning, 20 were partly functioning and nine were non-functioning. The health centres are unable to provide skilled care during childbirth, basic emergency obstetric care, syndromic management and post-exposure prophylaxis (preventive healthcare) for sexually transmitted infections, prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections and prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission.<sup>180</sup>

By June 2020, one more public health centre was categorised as fully functioning, while one less was non-functioning. Of the 59 centres in total, 54 were accessible, two hard to access and three inaccessible.<sup>181</sup>

In the governorate of Quneitra, specialised healthcare like organ transplants, plasmapheresis, neurosurgery and advanced neonatology is not available.<sup>182</sup>

As of November 2020, PHR had recorded no attacks on healthcare facilities in Quneitra in 2020. Throughout the conflict, PHR has recorded one attack on a healthcare facility in the governorate. The attack took place on 21 September 2016 and was a mortar attack on the Jubata Al-Khashab Field Hospital.<sup>183</sup>

In the public hospitals, there were 25.8 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants and in public health centres 38 health staff per 10,000 inhabitants by June 2020.<sup>184</sup>

As of 30 November 2020, the official COVID-19 numbers in the governorate of Quneitra are 109 confirmed cases and four confirmed deaths.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Syrian Ministry of Health, الجمهورية العربية السورية: حالات الإصابة المسجلة بفيروس كورونا [The Syrian Arab Republic: Recorded cases of Corona virus], 1 December 2020, [url](#)

<sup>178</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 10

<sup>179</sup> WHO: 9-10

<sup>180</sup> WHO: 16-17

<sup>181</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), pp. 5, 9, 12

<sup>182</sup> WHO: 23

<sup>183</sup> PHR, *Illegal Attacks on Health Care in Syria*, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>184</sup> WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Hospitals in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 25; WHO, *HeRAMS Bi-Annual Report: January – June 2020: Public Health Centres in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 2020, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>185</sup> Syrian Ministry of Health, الجمهورية العربية السورية: حالات الإصابة المسجلة بفيروس كورونا [The Syrian Arab Republic: Recorded cases of Corona virus], 1 December 2020, [url](#)

## 6.3. Access to schools

Public schools are free of charge and available to everyone in all GoS-controlled areas. It is compulsory for children between six and twelve years old to attend school. According to UNICEF, there are no bureaucratic obstacles to enrolling children at public schools.<sup>186</sup>

Books are provided by the Ministry of Education; however, school uniforms, school bags and stationery must be paid by the student.<sup>187</sup> Children in rural areas in Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra might also have difficulties accessing schools due to high transportation costs.<sup>188</sup>

Generally, parents want to send their children to school.<sup>189</sup> Some parents have, however, decided to take their children out of school because of the schooling and transportation costs.<sup>190</sup> A WFP report from October 2020 showed that 14 % of the surveyed households had taken children of compulsory school age out of school in the preceding month due to economic problems.<sup>191</sup>

Capacity problems in schools can also be an obstacle for children to attend schools as many schools are unable to take in more children. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are particularly affected by this issue.<sup>192</sup>

The number of education personnel is around two-thirds of what it was before the conflict began.<sup>193</sup>

The availability of teachers in rural areas in Quneitra and Tartous is also affected by the fuel prices, as most teachers do not have sufficient money to pay for transportation. UNICEF knows of schools where teachers only came to teach once or twice a week because of this.<sup>194</sup>

It was reported in May 2020, that in former opposition-held areas, some teachers have decided to stay away from their jobs as they fear being arrested because they taught in schools when the areas were not controlled by the GoS.<sup>195</sup>

One in three schools in Syria has been destroyed during the conflict, and other schools have been worn down. In addition, there is a general lack of materials and teaching aids, according to UNICEF.<sup>196</sup>

### 6.3.1. Tartous

According to the international humanitarian organisation, the schools in the governorate are generally good, but they might need rehabilitation to adequately meet the students' needs.<sup>197</sup> UNICEF notes that the

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<sup>186</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 11; UNICEF: 1; United States, U.S. Department of State, *2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Syria*, 11 March 2020, [url](#)

<sup>187</sup> UNICEF: 10

<sup>188</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 12

<sup>189</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 11

<sup>190</sup> WFP: 35

<sup>191</sup> WFP, *Syrian Arab Republic – mVAM Bulletin Issue no. 49*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 4

<sup>192</sup> UNICEF: 1, 5

<sup>193</sup> UNICEF: 7

<sup>194</sup> UNICEF: 6

<sup>195</sup> Netherlands (The), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Country of origin information report Syria*, May 2020, [url](#), p. 29

<sup>196</sup> UNICEF: 8-10

<sup>197</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 11

schools in the governorate of Tartous are under an increased pressure due to a high number of IDPs and a lack of rehabilitated schools in other governorates.<sup>198</sup>

### 6.3.2. Latakia

The international humanitarian organisation stated that schools in the governorate of Latakia generally are good, but could need rehabilitation to adequately meet the needs of the students.<sup>199</sup> According to UNICEF, the governorate's schools are experiencing increased pressure because schools elsewhere have not been adequately rehabilitated and due to a high number of IDP children.<sup>200</sup>

### 6.3.3. Quneitra

In Quneitra, there has been no significant rehabilitation of schools since the governorate came under control of the GoS in 2018.<sup>201</sup> A non-functioning school in the town of Al-Hurriyya was damaged in an airstrike by an airstrike conducted by the IDF on 21 October 2020.<sup>202</sup>

## 6.4. Housing and infrastructure

Housing is generally expensive in Syria.<sup>203</sup> Returnees who return to their own homes will usually not have to spend money on rent; however, many return to looted houses and have to invest in rehabilitating their homes to make them liveable again.<sup>204</sup>

It is necessary to have a security permit in order to move furniture from one area to another. This must be obtained by a GoS intelligence service in the area to which the furniture is being transported.<sup>205</sup>

People returning to rural villages in Tartous and Latakia will often find their land arid and need to rebuild the irrigation infrastructure, which can be costly.<sup>206</sup> Some villages in the northern part of Latakia, close to the governorate of Idlib, have been heavily damaged.<sup>207</sup>

The wildfires in Tartous and Latakia have damaged the infrastructure in the affected areas. Water and electricity networks in some areas in Latakia have been severely damaged.<sup>208</sup>

Israeli airstrikes in Quneitra have damaged the infrastructure in the governorate.<sup>209</sup> There are relatively more areas with severe damage to infrastructures in Quneitra than in Tartous and Latakia.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> UNICEF: 4-5, 9

<sup>199</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 11

<sup>200</sup> UNICEF: 9

<sup>201</sup> UNICEF: 8

<sup>202</sup> International security organisation: 26

<sup>203</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 15

<sup>204</sup> WFP: 52

<sup>205</sup> Navvar Shaban: 23

<sup>206</sup> UNICEF: 22

<sup>207</sup> UNICEF: 29

<sup>208</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 14; UNICEF, *Whole of Syria: Humanitarian Situation Report*, October 2020, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>209</sup> International humanitarian organisation: 14

<sup>210</sup> UNICEF: 29

In absolute numbers, Quneitra, Tartous and Latakia were among the governorates in Syria with the least damage to physical capital<sup>211</sup> in the period between 2011-2018, accounting for 0.4 %, 0.5 % and 2.4 % of the total costs in Syria as a whole.<sup>212</sup> These numbers should be considered in relation to the population size of each governorate (see section 1) compared to that of Syria as a whole.

According to UNICEF, the GoS does not put a significant amount of money into the rehabilitation of infrastructure.<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Physical capital is defined as “the tangible fixed assets produced and [it] consists of dwellings, other buildings and structures, machinery and equipment, and cultivated assets” (UN ESCWA and University of St. Andrews, *Syria at War: Eight Years On*, 2020, [url](#), p. 83)

<sup>212</sup> UN ESCWA and University of St. Andrews, *Syria at War: Eight Years On*, 2020, [url](#), p. 51

<sup>213</sup> UNICEF: 30

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## Annex I: Meeting minutes

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### Meeting with WFP (World Food Programme), Skype, 21 October 2020

*WFP is the largest humanitarian organisation fighting hunger worldwide. In 2020, the organisation helped 100 million people in 88 countries to fight hunger, improve their food security and build brighter futures.*

*WFP is the largest humanitarian organisation in Syria and currently provides lifesaving food, nutrition support and livelihoods assistance to 4.8 million people each month. This includes families whose lives have been affected by conflict, displacement and who are unable to access sufficient food each month to meet their nutritional needs.*

1. Food is generally available in Syria and food production is present. Prior to the conflict, Syria was the bread basket of the Middle East. The country is still an important producer of fresh produce in the region. Yet, while food is by-and-large available, financial access to the food is limited. In fact, when the land border to Jordan re-opened recently after being closed for over a month due to COVID-19, more than 300 trucks with food items left Syria. Hereby, demonstrating the high demand for Syrian produce elsewhere but also highlighting the weak consumer purchasing power within Syria. The exportation of food from Syria is currently also being heavily influenced by the fact that the Syrian pound has devalued considerably (by over 70%) in the last 12 months making it more profitable for Syrian farmers and traders to look for markets in neighbouring countries using foreign currencies, rather than selling food in Syria. These trends make it more likely that food in Syria will become more scarce and at a higher price for Syrians in the near future.
2. However, access to food is a problem as the price level is above what people can afford.
3. The Lebanese financial crisis has resulted in a weakening of the Syrian pound (SYP). Because of the unilateral coercive measures against Syria, Lebanon was the main way by which Syria was accessing the international market. However, as banks in Lebanon blocked the available funds, Syria was unable to use money for imports. This weakened the Syrian pound compared to the US dollar (USD), making import of commodities more problematic.
4. Syrians' purchasing power is being eroded due to the worsening exchange rates. Common food commodities such as rice, cooking oil and sugar are imported, and as a consequence of the exchange rate depreciation, the prices of the commodities is rising, leading to an increase in food insecurity.
5. The further intensification of the unilateral coercive measures in June 2020 further impacted the Syrian economy negatively. It meant that many countries and companies are wary with dealing with any Syrian entity. The Kurdish areas of Syria seem to be reluctant to provide wheat and fuel to the government-controlled areas as they might be accused of breaching the international sanctions.
6. The humanitarian situation in Syria has deteriorated to levels not previously seen in the country's recent history. Food insecurity has reached record levels, with 46% of the population food insecure. Current projections indicate that a further deterioration of the food security situation is likely before any significant recovery materializes. The pressure on WFP's food distribution points has never been

greater.

7. COVID-19 also had a negative impact on the food security situation in Syria. Many shops were shut and this made it difficult to access commodities. From March to June 2020, the number of people who indicated to have poor diet diversity rose from 25% to 52%.
8. The government tried to alleviate the situation by putting in subsidies, but these subsidies are by no mean sufficient to make the ends meet. The government has not purchased enough fuel and food to meet the subsidy quotas, as a result people frequently depend on the informal market to access key imported goods, where however prices are much higher. As a result, people having to further reduce their consumption levels.

### **Currency rates**

9. The Syrian government is in shortage of USD, but they cannot access it. So they are requiring people coming from outside of Syria to exchange USD.
10. Previously, the Syrian government were providing traders with preferential trade rates, so the traders could import food from abroad without losing money. As of June 2020, this is no longer the case and traders will have to find other means to exchange SYP. Exchange SYP informally is banned and punishable by law with up to a seven-year prison sentence. Currently, importers in Syria are having difficulty in exchanging SYP at the official rate of 1,250 SYP/USD however there is limit of USD in Syria and therefore it is not possible to access the required USD for their imports.
11. The two different exchange rates also affect remittances going to Syria. The companies who handle remittances have to use the official, rather than the informal market rate.
12. The only group who gains from the having two rates are persons who managed to get USD outside of Syria and who have an income based in another currency than SYP, and then do the conversion inside Syria.
13. Every time a Syrian re-enters Syria he/she now needs to pay a tax of 100 USD that will be converted into SYP at the official rate and returned to the traveller. This makes it even more difficult for the most vulnerable in society to leave and re-enter Syria.

### **Food prices**

14. Prices of commodities in Syria have close to doubled in just six months and have more than tripled over the past year. A basic basket of food now costs a staggering 22 times what it did before the crisis. The cost of WFP's reference food basket (basic items) now costs more than the average government salary in Syria.
15. In 2020, the price of basic food items reached record highs, with the price of a standard food basket increasing by 251% in just one year at its highest point. Even during the worst years of conflict food prices have never reached these levels and this has put a basic meal beyond the reach of many Syrian

families.

16. Food prices differ between the governorates in Syria. The difference is primarily due to transport, as food would have to be transported from the place of production or place of import to where it is being sold. Another element affecting food price levels is access to markets as conflict lines and COVID-19 have limited movement of people and goods across parts of the country.
17. In some governorates prices increase and decrease depending on the season. Hasakah and parts of Raqqqa governorates have summer crops, which means that the price of vegetables is lower in the summer and higher in the winter, when they depend on vegetables from greenhouses in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia.
18. Another factor affected the food prices especially of imported goods are traders taking advantage of the lack of competition. There are only a handful of big traders in Syria who control the market of food items.

#### **Access to subsidised food**

19. The Syrian government subsidises some food items and other commodities through the so-called Smart Card. There are two different Smart Card systems, one for households and one for vehicles (petrol).
20. The subsidised food is found in shops administered by the Syrian Trading Company, which is a subsidiary of the Syrian Ministry of Internal Trade and Consumer Protection. There are around 1,000 of these shops spread throughout Syria.
21. People face issues with not finding the commodities they need, and there are often long queues of people waiting. You have a specific allocation of goods that should be available on a monthly basis on specific dates.
22. Bread is being sold through the Smart Card for households in some governorates such as Tartous and Latakia, while it is not the case in other governorates such as Quneitra.
23. Bread was sold at the subsidised price of 75 SYP/bundle<sup>214</sup> even before the Smart Card was introduced. Now, however, there are limits as to how much bread a family can buy: A household of one to two members can buy two bundles per day and one consisting of three to four members can buy four bundles per day. No household is allowed to buy more than eight bundles per day, no matter the size of the household.
24. Flour is difficult to find in Syria because it is an imported commodity and it comes at a very high price. The subsidised bread is of poor quality. You are likely going to find other ways to make bread, e.g. going to a private bakery. There are alternatives to subsidised bread if you have the economic means.

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<sup>214</sup> A bundle contains 1.1 kg of bread.

25. Bakeries are mostly present in urban areas, whereas areas affected by heavy conflict, would not have bakeries present. Instead, these areas are being supplied by mobile bakeries. Private companies would transport subsidised bread by truck to these areas, however, the purchasers would have to pay the extra amount for transport costs.
26. To reduce queues, in the beginning of COVID-19, bread was sold through agents. However, around June-July these agents were removed in the government-controlled areas. In the Kurdish areas, bread is still being sold through agents.
27. Everyone typically has to wait in the queues even if they tend to be rowdy.
28. Everyone who requests a Smart Card should be able to receive it.

### **Poverty and food security**

29. It is difficult to assess the poverty level<sup>215</sup> in Syria. Before the Lebanese financial crisis, the poverty level was around 66-70%. It is estimated that 80-85% of the population in Syria live below the poverty level.
30. In 2019, 7.9 million (39% of the population) were food insecure. Today it is likely that around 50% of the population is food insecure. The number of acute food insecure in Syria has doubled between September 2019 and April 2020, from 500,000 to 1,000,000.
31. In Quneitra, the number of moderately food insecure increased from 36% in 2018 to 39% in 2019, while the number of severely food insecure went from 2% in 2018 to 1% in 2019.<sup>216</sup>
32. In Tartous, 11.6% of the population were moderately food insecure in 2018 while this went up to 21% in 2019. The severely food insecure amounted to 0.7% in 2018 and 0.9% in 2019.
33. In Latakia, the moderately food insecure comprised 10.1% of the population in 2018 and 20.5% in 2019. There was no severely food insecure in Latakia in 2018, while 2019 had 1.3% severely food insecure.

### **Coping strategies**

34. A focus group study conducted by WFP showed that around 88-89% of the population were adopting at least one coping strategy in order to meet their food needs. To handle the food crisis, people are eating less food and skipping meals.
35. In some instances when parents cannot afford schooling costs and transport to school, parents are taking their children out of school or marrying their underage daughters off in order to have one less mouth to feed. Child marriages are more common in southern and eastern Syria.

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<sup>215</sup> WFP uses the World Bank definition of 1.9 USD/day.

<sup>216</sup> When conducting the survey in 2018, WFP could not access Quneitra, however assessments were made afterwards.

36. Another reported coping strategy is to join the military or another fighting group. Furthermore, there are people resorting in dealing in illegal activities and crimes as a coping strategy.

#### **Access to fuel and electricity**

37. There was a fuel crisis where people are waiting in queues from 1 to 5 days at gas stations. This has ended after the Syrian government doubled the subsidised fuel price.

38. Fuel and gasoline petrol is subsidised through the Smart Card.

39. The official price of fuel increased from 250 SYP/L to 450 SYP/L on 21 October. The amount of fuel allowed per refill was reduced from 40 L to 30 L. At least five days have to pass between each refill. In addition, there is a cap of 100 L of subsidised fuel allocated per month. Gasoline petrol increased from 800 SYP/L to 1,000 SYP/L. Non-subsidised fuel is also rationed with the allowed amount having been decreased from 400 L/month to 100 L/month.

40. In case more fuel is needed, one could buy it from neighbours. Prices of fuel and gasoline petrol would typically be three times higher in the informal market.

41. Heating/cooking gas is also rationed with everyone having access to a canister of 25,000 L of pressurised butane gas every 29 days. The price of a canister is officially 8,500 SYP, while it is 18,000 SYP on the informal market. The canister, however, is likely to often contain 18,000 L rather than the required 25,000 L. Not everyone is able to receive their allocation on time, meaning that they have to resort to the informal market to access the butane gas while they wait for their allocated subsidised refill.

42. Syria has different forms of access to electricity. Prior to the conflict most of the urban areas in the country had access to grid electricity, while rural areas would need generators. However, currently some urban areas of the country have no access to grid electricity and depend heavily on generators for their electricity needs (lighting, heating, electrical appliances).

43. Due to lack of power in Syrian, even areas of country with access to grid electricity need to depend on generators for 24/7 electricity supply, as power is provided in slots. Typically, slots range from 4 hours on and 4 hours off, however it frequently happens that slots change unannounced and one can also experiences slots of 2 hours on and 4 hours off.

#### **Wages and employment**

44. The unemployment rate was 50% before COVID-19. In the COVID-19 period, the level of unemployment rose well beyond that and people say it is difficult to get jobs.

45. In the governorates of Latakia and Tartous, the worsening economic situation means that farmers are unable to hire manual labourers. This has been further exacerbated because of the recent fires that have hit the two governorates. It is difficult to say whether the unemployment rate in these

governorates is higher than in other governorates.

46. Quneitra was, together with Homs, Hama and Daraa, one of the governorates with a large non-greenhouse agricultural production. The production in Quneitra has been greatly reduced because of looting and destruction.
47. The public wages are fixed and rarely change. They are between 60,000 and 83,000 SYP currently (48 USD to 66 USD/month using the official 1,250 SYP/USD rate. At the informal 2,500 SYP/USD rate this is 24 USD to 33 USD/month). There is no real assessment for wages on the private market.

### **Population**

48. Out of a population of 20 million, there are an estimated 6.5 million IDPs in Syria. August 2020 estimates from UN OCHA shows that the population of Quneitra is 100,000, Latakia is 1.2 million, and Tartous is 930,000.

### **Situation for women**

49. Typically, women with husbands have greater access to food than female-headed households. Female-headed households tend to find it more difficult to access jobs and services.
50. As coping strategies, single-headed female households rely on help from relatives, on income from their children or by engaging in sexual relationships.

### **Returnees**

51. People returning from abroad would have to sign up in order to have access to food distribution through the Smart Card system.
52. While returnees are returning to their homes so they do not require to spend money on rent, they often return to homes that have been looted and ransacked, leaving very little behind. As a result returnees have immediate needs to make their homes liveable in again as soon as they return. They also need to find a new job and re-integrating in to the local society.

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### **Meeting with an international security organisation, Skype, 21 October 2020**

*The source works with analysis of the security situation in Syria and receives daily reports on the security situation in the whole country.*

### **General developments in the security situation in the coastal region in 2020**

1. The coastal region, which includes the governorates of Tartous and Latakia, can be grouped as one regarding security. In general, the governorates of Latakia and Tartous are considered to be safe places compared to other governorates in Syria.
2. No major security developments took place in the cities of Tartous and Latakia in 2020.



3. There have been drone attacks on the Hmeimim airbase and sometimes on other locations that are affiliated with the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) or the Russian forces. Most attacks in this region are conducted by non-state armed groups. This is a non-state armed group operating in the northern part of Hama governorate and on the edge of Idlib and Latakia governorates governorate.

#### **Prevalence of security incidents in the coastal region**

4. In the governorate of Tartous, the international security organisation has recorded 0 incidents of armed conflict<sup>217</sup>, 1 incident of terrorism<sup>218</sup>, 0 incidents of civil unrest, 11 incidents of crime<sup>219</sup> and 67 incidents of hazard<sup>220</sup> between 1 May and 31 October 2020.
5. No security-related incidents took place in that period.
6. In the governorate of Latakia, the international security organisation has recorded 179 incidents of armed conflict, 1 incident of terrorism, 1 incident of civil unrest, 34 incidents of crime and 127 incidents of hazard from 1 May to 31 October 2020.
7. 99% of the security-related incidents in that period were indirect artillery fire and 1% in the category of landmine/explosive remnant of war.
8. In October 2020, the coastal region as a whole saw 35 incidents of armed conflict, 0 incidents of terrorism, 0 incidents of civil unrest, 8 incidents of crime and 113 incidents of hazard (of which 95% were fires).
9. 94% of the security-related incidents were indirect artillery fire. These were placed in the north-eastern part of Latakia governorate.

#### **Security situation on the road connecting the coastal region and Damascus International Airport**

10. No internal or international flights are currently going to Latakia airport.
11. There are checkpoints on all the main roads and at the entrances to the main cities, this includes on the road between the coastal region and Damascus International Airport.
12. At least two checkpoints will be passed in order to reach Tartous from Damascus International Airport. These are located when exiting Damascus and entering Tartous. As a minimum, further two checkpoints will be passed in order to reach Latakia, as the road to here goes through Tartous. These checkpoints will be passed when exiting Tartous and when entering Latakia.

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<sup>217</sup> Armed conflict is divided into the following categories: airstrikes, indirect artillery fire, fighting and others

<sup>218</sup> Terrorism is divided into the categories: SAF, assassinations, improvised explosive devices/vehicle born improvised explosive devices and others

<sup>219</sup> Crime is divided into the categories: Robberies, kidnapping, arrests/detentions, murders and others

<sup>220</sup> Hazards are divided into the categories: car accidents, fires, unexploded ordinances/explosive remnants of war, landmines and others

13. The checkpoints between Damascus International Airport and the governorates of Tartous and Latakia are manned by personnel from the SAA or the Syrian security forces. None of these checkpoints are manned by Russian or Iranian forces.
14. At the checkpoints there will be checks of IDs and other verification documents. A person returning to his city, town or village who do not have a criminal record or other security problems should not have issues at these checkpoints.
15. Persons who are returning to Syria and have pending issues with the authorities might face security measures such as detention at the airport or when he is returning to his own province.
16. The international security organisation does not have any records of arrests or detentions of people returning from Lebanon to the governorates of Tartous and Latakia.
17. Around May or June 2020, some people had problems with returning to Syria from Lebanon, as a negative COVID-19 test was required. Around 2,000 persons were caught in a no-mans-land between the Lebanese and Syrian borders, as the COVID-19 tests were expensive for a normal worker. Later, the government of Syria solved this by moving them all to one location for testing. A COVID-19 test is still required to enter Syria from Lebanon. It has to be no less than 96 hours old.

#### **Freedom of movement inside the governorates of Tartous and Latakia**

18. It is possible to move freely around the cities of Tartous and Latakia. However, there are checkpoints when you are entering the cities.
19. In the city of Tartous, there are at least two checkpoints; one at the northern entrance towards Latakia and one at the southern entrance towards Damascus. Due to the construction of the Syrian security apparatus it is difficult to say which actors are present at the checkpoints. Each area has a specific security agency that is taking care of security checks and security issues.
20. No areas within Tartous and Latakia governorates have restricted access for civilians.
21. There are no particular movement restrictions for women in Tartous and Latakia governorates.

#### **Presence of anti-government armed groups**

22. There is no presence of anti-government armed groups in Tartous and in most of Latakia.
23. In the Kabani Mountains, in the north-eastern part of Latakia on the border to Idlib province, there is a presence of anti-government armed groups. These are especially ethnic Turkoman-militant groups opposed to the Syrian government and Uyghur militant groups. There has been ongoing battles in this area for almost two years.
24. The area around Kabani mountains is overlooking the M4, which is the road coming from Aleppo through Idlib to Latakia. There has been an agreement between Russia and Turkey to reopen this road,

but because of attacks on their patrols, only one patrol has successfully reached Kabani through the M4.

#### **General developments in the security situation in Quneitra governorate in 2020**

25. In 2020, there has been an increasing number of IDF airstrikes in the governorate of Quneitra targeting the SAA, Hizbollah and Iranian forces.
26. On 21 October 2020 there was an airstrike that targeted a school in the town of Al-Hurriyya in Quneitra. It was not an active school and no casualties among children were recorded. According to the source, Hizbollah was present either near or inside the school.
27. In addition, there has been an increase in other types of attacks such as small fire attacks, IEDs and VBIEDs, which have targeted the SAA in Quneitra. These attacks have been conducted by a number of smaller active anti-government armed groups, including the Islamic State (IS). IS has taken responsibility for some those attacks. In other cases no other anti-government armed groups have taken responsibility for attacks. According to the source, many of the attacks in Quneitra governorate have been carried out by former opposition fighters, who have continued to fight the government forces in spite of formally having reached reconciliation agreements with the Syrian government in connection with the government takeover of Quneitra in 2018.

#### **Prevalence of security incidents in Quneitra governorate**

28. In the governorate of Quneitra, the international security organisation recorded 5 incidents of armed conflict, 5 incidents of terrorism, 0 incidents of civil unrest, 0 incidents of crime and 2 incidents of hazard in the period between 1 May and 31 October 2020.
29. 43% of the security-related incidents were Israeli missile attacks, 29% were IEDs/VBIEDs and 28% were landmines/explosive remnants of war.

#### **Areas with restricted access in Quneitra governorate**

30. There are special security measures in the border area to Israel as well as in other locations in the governorate. The international security organisation does not have specific names of areas within Quneitra where access is restricted. Some of these areas were already restricted before the civil war, but more areas have been restricted after the war, because there was a presence of many radical Islamic groups.

#### **Presence of anti-government armed groups in Quneitra governorate**

31. Both IS and Al-Qaeda have a presence in the governorate of Quneitra. Both are ideological groups. Once they have planted their ideas and beliefs among the people, there will be a certain activity or new attacks from these groups.
  32. The international security organisation does not have records of other armed groups in the governorate of Quneitra than IS and Al-Qaeda affiliated groups.
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**Meeting with an international humanitarian organisation working in Syria, Skype, 27 October 2020**

1. The conflict has produced divides within the Syrian population and between the Syrian population and the public institutions, as well as across borders and areas of control. All these dynamics play a role and impact the access people have to services and protection.

**Food**

2. There is a fuel and bread crisis in Syria. People are standing in long lines to access these commodities. There is a shortage of agricultural food because of a lower production and the price of imported commodities has risen starkly. The situation has worsened since the beginning of 2020.
3. Large scale forest fires in Latakia and Tartous governorates have affected the olive production and farmers have lost their livelihoods.
4. Furthermore, the decreased value of the Syrian pound (SYP) and the implementation of the recent US-sanctions, known as the Caesar Act, have affected the socioeconomic situation negatively.

**Electricity**

5. Electricity has in general been missing throughout the summer, due to increased use of electricity in order to air-condition residential housing in urban and rural areas. Many Syrians depend on fuel-powered generators for electricity as it at times is unavailable for entire an entire day or days.

**Healthcare**

6. Public healthcare is generally for free. There is also cheap access to private clinics in government-controlled areas in Syria.
7. A large majority of Syrian doctors have left Syria during the course of the Syrian conflict.
8. The hospitals in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia provinces are generally functioning.
9. Throughout Syria, there is a limited availability of medicine and a lot of the available medicine has expired. Cancer medicine is in shortage and cancer patients sometimes drive to other governorates in order to buy medicine or look to the black market to purchase the medicine needed for treatment. The medical sector has been particularly impacted by the recent Caesar Act entered into force at the beginning of summer 2020.
10. In Tartous and Latakia, the COVID-19 situation is much worse than official numbers indicate.

**Schools**

11. Generally, parents want to send their children to school. Schools are free and available to everyone. Schools in Tartous and Latakia are good; however the furniture might be old and schools might need rehabilitation and reconstruction to adequately service the needs of the students.

12. There can be obstacles to access schools for children in rural areas in Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra, as some have to go by car or public transportation to school, while fuel might not be available.

### **Employment**

13. The international humanitarian organisation is not aware of the exact unemployment rate in Syria. However, unemployment in the private sector is high.
14. The salary in the public sector is around 40,000 SYP/month. This is far from enough to sustain a living for an average Syrian family. Many people working in the public sector supplement their income through accepting bribes from other Syrians in return for services provided by the public sector.

### **Housing and infrastructure**

15. Housing is generally expensive in Syria. The fires in Tartous and Latakia, as well as Israeli airstrikes in Quneitra, have damaged infrastructure in those areas.

### **Situation for women**

16. The number of women lacking civil documentation is higher than for men. This could create problems, e.g. in cases of inheritance.
17. Hospitals will sometimes ask for civil documentation. The hospitals will accept any kind of documentation, including documentation from foreign authorities.

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### **Correspondences with WHO (World Health Organization), email, 29 October and 2 November 2020**

*WHO has an office in Syria that supports the Syrian government at central and local level in strengthening health services and addressing public health issues.*

1. Healthcare is mainly delivered through public hospitals and public health centres. In order to receive medical services at these facilities, a person must present his/her personal identity card for registration. In some cases, a referral form from another facility is also needed. For births, family papers should be provided.
2. In general, women do not face any obstacles when seeking healthcare services. However, she would need her husband's approval for services related to reproductive health such as using contraceptive medication or a Caesarean operation.
3. Returnees from abroad do not face particular obstacles when accessing health care.

### **Public hospitals**

4. All services at public hospitals in Syria are free, including inpatient care. For some surgeries patients have to pay to buy materials, e.g. stents and valves for cardiovascular surgeries, as public provision has decreased for some items, due to economic crisis and sanctions. Service operations and haemodialysis sessions also require that patients procure consumables and medicines. There are also private areas

within hospitals that patients can choose to pay for getting access to.

5. All services in public hospitals and public health clinics in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra are free of charge, however not all services are available. The main challenge is services for chronic diseases that require heavy and continued care, such as kidney failure, cancer, and diabetes. Patients are required to procure consumables and medicines in order to receive the service, e.g. for service operations and haemodialysis sessions.
6. In the governorate of Tartous there are seven hospitals that are all fully functioning and accessible.
7. There are seven hospitals in the governorate of Latakia of which six are fully functioning and one (Ibrahim N'ama Hospital in Jableh) is partially functioning. Six of the seven hospitals are not damaged while one (Ibrahim N'ama Hospital in Jableh) is partially damaged. All hospitals are accessible.
8. There are no public hospitals in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia that provide inpatient care for management of mental disorders by specialised healthcare providers.
9. The governorate of Quneitra has one hospital that is fully functioning and accessible.
10. The public hospital in Quneitra is unable to offer inpatient care for management of mental disorders by specialised healthcare providers, management of cancer diseases and rehabilitation services.
11. The services provided in the public hospitals are among others emergency care and surgery, laboratory and imaging services, inpatient and outpatient services, elective surgeries, intensive and trauma care, deliveries and Caesarean section, management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and complication of systolic anterior motion (SAM).

#### **Public health centres**

12. In Tartous governorate there are 168 public health centres that all are fully functioning. Of these, 99% are accessible and 97% not damaged.
13. The services provided at public health centres are emergency care, basic laboratory, outpatient services, immunization, growth monitoring, integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI), antenatal care (ANC), family planning etc.
14. Latakia governorate has 120 public health centres. 110 of these are fully functioning, nine are non-functioning (six in Al-Heffeh, two in Ash-Shamiye and one in Latakia city) and one is partially functioning. Out of the 120 public health centres 96% are accessible and 90% not damaged. All of the inaccessible health centres are located in Al-Heffeh.
15. The public health centres in Tartous and Latakia are unable to provide skilled care during childbirth (including essential care for newborns), basic emergency obstetric care (BEOC) and post-exposure

prophylaxis for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

16. The governorate of Quneitra has 59 public health centres of which 30 are fully functioning, 20 partially functioning and nine non-functioning.
17. The health centres in Quneitra are unable to provide skilled care during childbirth (including essential care for newborns), basic emergency obstetric care (BEOC), syndromic management and post-exposure prophylaxis for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), prophylaxis and treatment of opportunistic infections, prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission (PMTCT).

#### **Private healthcare**

18. There are many private hospitals and clinics available, as almost all specialists working in public sector hospitals run their own private clinic in the afternoon and evening.
19. Private healthcare is unaffordable for many people and is mostly sought after by rich people.
20. There is no fixed fee for consultations at private facilities. It is based on the geographical location, with it being more expensive in urban than rural areas, and type of specialty. The change in currency rate has led to an increase in consultation prices with it now averaging 6,000 SYP.

#### **NGOs**

21. In addition to the public and private health centres, there are 15 NGOs in Latakia and 7 NGOs in Tartous that provide health services. NGOs provide primary healthcare services in remote areas and in areas where there are no health facilities. Their services are mainly provided to IDPs, returnees and the host population in the areas they operate in.
22. The primary healthcare services offered by these NGOs includes outpatient consultation, antenatal care, supporting referrals, NCDs, paediatric, and health education.

#### **Specialised treatment**

23. Specialised treatment is partly available at secondary and tertiary healthcare level. However, some specialised care such as organ transplants, plasmapheresis, neurosurgery and advanced neonatology is not available in the governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra.

#### **Medicine**

24. Primary healthcare (PHC) and NCD medicine is produced in Syria and is available in pharmacies, however there is always a shortage of some medicines at public hospitals and health centres.
25. There is shortage of medicine for treatment of cancer, haemodialysis kits and fluids, immunosuppressant, heparin, insulin and anaesthetics medicines, and lifesaving drugs such as atropine and dopamine.

26. The price of medicine has almost tripled in from August to November 2020 due to the depreciation of the Syrian pound.

#### **Health workers**

27. More than 50% of the skilled health workers left Syria during the conflict. There is a general shortage of health workers today. The shortage is relatively less in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia as these governorates were not active conflict zones. However, even in these governorates some specialised healthcare services suffer from shortages on skilled healthcare workers, e.g. for specialised surgeries, neurology and haemodialysis.

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#### **Meeting with Salam Al-Janabi, UNICEF, Skype, 2 November 2020**

*Salam Al-Janabi is the Chief of Communications of UNICEF Syria. UNICEF works across different sectors, e.g. health, education, water, sanitation and nutrition. UNICEF Syria is has an office in Tartous covering the governorates of Tartous and Latakia, and an office in Rural Damascus covering the governorate of Quneitra.*

#### **Education**

1. Primary education is free in all government-controlled areas, including in Tartous, Latakia and Quneitra. There are no bureaucratic obstacles to having children enrolled in public schools, but it can be difficult to find schools that have the capacity to take in more students.
2. Private schools are also available. However, they are mostly clustered around Damascus and Aleppo and are out of reach financially for the most disadvantaged.
3. One third of school-aged children in all of Syria are out of school. This is between 2.1 and 2.5 million children. Another million is at risk of dropping out, because they are doing poorly or are in need of special classes.
4. The rate of children out of school is higher among internally displaced persons (IDPs) and children in rural areas. However, there are also children in urban areas that have seen acts of conflict who are out of school. There is no significant difference in primary school attendance between girls and boys.
5. For IDPs the problem is that many schools are already full and therefore unable to take more children in. In Tartous and Latakia many schools are overcrowded because of the many IDPs there. A significant amount of IDP children has lost at least two or three years of schooling.
6. In rural areas in Quneitra and Tartous, there is an issue with getting sufficient teaching staff, as most teachers do not have the money for transportation to go to the rural villages. UNICEF know of examples where people have returned to rural villages and rehabilitated schools, but teachers only come one or two times a week because of the lack of funds for transportation.



7. Since the start of the crisis, one third of the teachers and education personnel (around 140,000) are no longer part of the education workforce.
8. One in three schools is destroyed, with relatively more schools being destroyed in areas that have seen significant conflict. There have not been a dramatic increase in the number of rehabilitated schools in Quneitra after the governorate came under government-control.
9. Many schools in other areas are worn down. There has been an increased pressure on the functioning schools in e.g. the governorates of Latakia and Tartous due to the lack of rehabilitated schools elsewhere.
10. The equipment in schools is insufficient. There is a general lack of materials and teaching aids. The Ministry of Education provides books, however all other materials is not provided or supported by the government. This means that all other stationary needs to be bought, which can be a challenge economically. Recently, there have been a debate in the population and on social media about the high costs for school uniforms, school bags and stationary.
11. Children returning from Lebanon face difficulties in having their degrees certified in Syria so they can enter the class that match their level. UNICEF does not know whether returnees from other countries have the same problems, as only few people have returned.

#### **Water, sanitation and hygiene**

12. In all of Syria, about 42% of households are receiving water from alternative sources (i.e. not from the normal water distribution network). People in Quneitra has relied heavily on water trucks. UNICEF does not have the numbers for Latakia and Tartous, but estimates that more people there would have access to the network.
13. In general, people in rural areas are more reliant on water trucks than those living in cities. This was also the case before the conflict.
14. Water trucks only go to areas where people are able to pay for the water. Families who have no option but to purchase water from commercial water trucks spend on average 10% of their income on water, with 3% of the population spending more than 20% of their income to purchase water and in extreme cases as high as 40% (Areesheh sub-district in Al-Hasakeh Governorate). The situation is even more dire for people living in informal settlements, where families can spend more than 50% of their incomes on water.
15. Some of UNICEF's partners have tested the quality of water coming from trucks. Only 13% of the samples taken across Syria had a sufficient level of chlorine at the point of use. The polluted water is being cleaned up by help of various materials such as chlorination tablets. The public water authority did at one point provide these chlorination tablets.

16. The quality of water coming from the normal distribution network is generally good. However, network water is rationed. In Damascus, the water is only available for 5 hours a day. Salam Al-Janabi believes that water is available for an even shorter period elsewhere in Syria.
17. There have not been any serious water-related disease outbreaks in Syria.
18. At least 70% of the sewage is untreated and recent estimates indicate that 9% of the population are still served by functional wastewater treatment plants. There is a general fall in the capacity to treat sewage water, mainly due to destruction because of conflict as well as a lack of maintenance.

### **Poverty**

19. Data from 2019 indicates that about 83% of the Syrian population lived below the poverty line. UNICEF estimates that more people live below the poverty line today due to the depreciation of the Syrian pound, the economic situation in Lebanon and the consequences of COVID-19.
20. Before COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns, an unskilled labourer would spend about 80% of the salary on the items that comprises a food basket. For a public servant the number would be around 60-80%.
21. The increased poverty is visible as people are standing in long lines to get bread and are protesting because of the high food prices.
22. There is an additional challenge for those who return to their villages in e.g. Latakia and Tartous as their land is arid and in need for irrigation. It is costly to rebuild the infrastructure for the land to become productive again.

### **Malnutrition and stunting**

23. A recent survey of nutrition shows that the global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate for all of Syria is 1.7%, the moderate acute malnutrition rate (MAM) is 1.3% and the severe acute malnutrition rate is 0.4%. The survey also have numbers on governorate level:
  - Quneitra: GAM is 2.7%, MAM is 1.9% and SAM is 0.8%
  - Tartous: GAM is 0.6%, MAM is 0.4% and SAM is 0.2%
  - Latakia: GAM is 0.4%, MAM is 0.4% and SAM is 0%
24. Both malnutrition and poverty rates are higher among IDPs, returnees who have recently moved to areas that previously were inaccessible and those who already lived in rural areas. Children below three years old are also in greater risk of malnutrition.
25. The same survey shows that the stunting levels for children between 6 and 59 months are 12.6% in all of Syria, 16.5% in Quneitra, 5.6% in Tartous and 7.9% in Latakia.

### Healthcare

26. Public healthcare is either heavily subsidised or free. There might be issues with accessing healthcare because of the physical distance. Sometimes people would go for many hours in a car to have a check-up, which some people are unable to afford.
27. Almost half of the health facilities in Syria, including maternal health services, are either not functional or only partly functional.
28. About 50% of the medical personnel have left their jobs, either because of displacement inside or outside the country, or because they have looked to other sources of income.

### Severe damage to infrastructure

29. Quneitra has relatively more areas with severe damages to infrastructure than Tartous and Latakia. However, there are also villages in northern Latakia close to the border to Idlib that are heavily damaged. There is less damage in the areas close to the coast as there have been less active conflict there.
30. The Syrian government does not put a significant amount of money into rehabilitation today, particularly due to the current exchange rate of the Syrian pound.

### Female-headed households

31. In Tartous and Latakia there is a high number of female-headed households as many men have either been killed or injured. Before COVID-19, many women participated in the work force in both the public and private sector. Now, as there are fewer jobs available, UNICEF estimates that many women have stopped working and are essentially relying on the food provided by the World Food Programme. However, there are no legal obstacles for women to work.

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### Meeting with Navvar Shaban, Omran Center for Strategic Studies, Skype, 23 October 2020

*Navvar Shaban is the Information Unit Manager and Military Expert at Omran Center for Strategic Studies, which is an independent think tank and policy center focusing on Syria. The Information Unit specialises in collecting data to understand Syrian and regional affairs. It also offers support to the Research Unit at Omran Studies by monitoring and archiving news and information received from sources in Syria.*

### General developments in the security situation in the coastal region in 2020

1. All of the governorate of Tartous is controlled by the Syrian government or pro-government forces.
2. The coastal areas (the governorates of Tartous and Latakia) should not be considered as one coherent entity with a similar security structure and system. Instead, the security structure in the coastal areas varies between different areas in the two governorates. Each area has its own characteristics when it comes to the imposed security measures. The behaviour of different security actors also vary across the different areas in the coastal region.

3. During the Syrian conflict security measures in Tartous city have been more lenient than in other places in Syria. An example of this is that many businessmen from Homs and Aleppo were able and allowed to relocate their businesses to the city of Tartous as the conflict increased in Homs and Aleppo in 2012/13.
4. In Tartous city, Russian military presence has ensured that that Russia is controlling the security there. The security system in the city is unique, as the security system is supervised by the Russians, which have prevented the presence of pro-government militias in Tartous city. This is different from other government-controlled areas in Syria that often has a presence of Iranian militias, National Defence Force (NDF) militias and Local Defence Force (LDF) militias.
5. Areas in the countryside of the governorate of Tartous are at times facing security problems. There, the LDFs have a larger presence and influence. LDFs might handle the security in an area to benefit themselves, for instance by retaliating against specific individuals or carrying out their own security controls. This sometimes results in problems or grievances with the government's security agencies.
6. In Sunni majority villages, such as Baniyas, the security grip is stronger, peoples' movements are being monitored more closely than in other coastal areas, and some people even have their social media accounts monitored. There are four checkpoints within the city of Baniyas.
7. All of Latakia governorate is government-controlled. The only security incidents that occurred in Latakia in 2020 have been demonstrations over Syria's dire economic situation, which made government of Syria (GoS) conduct a security campaign to control people. According to Navvar Shaban, the protests were strictly related to the economic situation and is not an anti-government protest.
8. According to Navvar Shaban, Shabiha militias (pro-government Alawite gangs) are active and present all over Latakia province and help to maintain security in the province.
9. In the city of Jableh, an Alawite city in the governorate of Latakia, the security issues affecting the town occur between the local militias and GoS security services. Local LDF militias in areas and towns such as Jablah sometimes come into conflict with GoS security services over territory and control of a certain area. This can impact the security situation in that area.

#### **Prevalence of security incidents in the coastal region**

10. In September 2020, the Military Security Intelligence Service conducted a campaign in Safita in the governorate of Tartous against IDPs from Homs. Five men were arrested on charges relating back to 2013/14. Some of these men had fled Syria earlier in the conflict, returned to Syria and reconciled their affairs with the GoS, but were nevertheless arrested.
11. In May 2020, there was security incident in Golden Sands in Tartous governorate. A group of young people, around 18-19 years old, who originate from Homs, got into an argument with a group of local youths. The next day, the State Security Service arrested two females and one male from the Homs-group, because the local youths had reported the incident to the State Security Service. The three persons were imprisoned for a month until their families were able to bribe authorities into releasing them.
12. In the coastal areas, the security services know which people and families with money they can extort for bribes. This type of targeting is a widespread in the coastal region, according to Navvar Shaban.

13. Continuous clashes have occurred in the Kabani Mountains on the border of Latakia and Idlib-province between GoS forces and anti-government forces. The last military ground operation undertaken by the GoS against the rebels occurred in July 2020, but shelling by both parties has been happening continuously in the area since then. Shelling by rebel forces has affected civilian areas controlled by GoS in northern Latakia province near the Kabani Mountains.

#### **Security situation on the road connecting the coastal region and Damascus International Airport**

14. Two different roads go from Damascus to Tartous. One road goes through Homs while the other does not pass through Homs. To pass through on either of the roads, one has to pass a junction next to the villages, Al-Mazra'a, and Khirbet Attin that are controlled by the Shia majority in the area, who are loyal to Hezbollah. Navvar Shaban stated that many incidents of kidnappings for ransom have occurred on the road in this area in 2020. There were two cases in August in which two individuals were kidnapped in the area and have since disappeared.
15. Navvar Shaban does not consider the roads between Tartous and Damascus to be safe and states that the GoS is not able to implement full security these roads. The only time when the road is secure, is when the Russian military is traveling on the road, due to the heavy presence of Russian military police.
16. The security situation on the roads connecting Latakia governorate and Damascus International Airport are the same as in Tartous, as one has to use the same roads to get to Damascus.
17. Fixed checkpoints exist on the road connecting Tartous and Latakia to Damascus International Airport.
18. In the city of Tartous there are two checkpoints at the northern and southern entrance to the city, respectively. These checkpoints are joint checkpoints for all four GoS security services.
19. There is also a checkpoint in the city of al-Husin, next to Krak de Chevaliers castle in western Homs province.
20. There is another fixed checkpoint close to Homs city next to the fuel factory. Most of these checkpoints are small and people are usually not asked to show their IDs to pass through these checkpoints. That typically only happens at the checkpoints at the entrances to Tartous city.
21. Flying checkpoints also exist on the road between Tartous, Latakia and Damascus and are manned by LDF militias. The reason these checkpoints are temporary is because Russian security forces do not tolerate the checkpoints. To avoid skirmishes with Russian forces, the LDF militias set up checkpoints when the lack of Russian forces in an area allows for it.

#### **Freedom of movement inside the governorates of Tartous and Latakia**

22. People can generally move freely around Tartous city and in the governorate of Tartous. Navvar Shaban does not consider the roads in the governorates of Tartous and Latakia to be safe because of the presence various local LDF militias.
23. The only movement restrictions in Tartous are when an individual wants to move goods and merchandise from one area to another, e.g. household goods, furniture or electronic equipment. This requires a security permit from one of the GoS intelligence services in the area to which the goods are being transported.

24. The Air Force Intelligence Service has two checkpoints within the city of Baniyas.
25. People can generally move freely around Latakia city and in the province of Latakia.
26. There are no checkpoints within the city of Latakia. There is a military checkpoint at the entrance to the city of Latakia, and one near the port of Latakia.
27. There are security measures and checkpoints close to Latakia's airport, which also houses Hmeimim Air Base that is operated by Russia. According to the source, domestic flight travel is possible from Latakia airport as well as international flights to Dubai, Sharjah (UAE) and Cairo.
28. Access to the port area in Tartous is restricted. Access to military bases and military installations such as air defense systems in Tartous are restricted for civilians. Apart from the port in Tartous and military areas there are no restrictions with regards to freedom of movement of people in Tartous province.
29. Access to military bases and military installations, such as the Hmeimim Airbase in Latakia province are restricted for civilians. The same goes for the port in Latakia.
30. Women do not face any particular issues when moving around in the cities and governorates of Tartous and Latakia.

#### **Presence of anti-government armed groups**

31. No anti-government armed groups have an active presence in the governorate of Tartous according to the source.
32. No anti-government armed groups have an active presence in the governorate of Latakia according to the source.

#### **General developments in the security situation in Quneitra governorate in 2020**

33. The security situation in the governorate of Quneitra is very fragile due to an ongoing conflict between former rebels and GoS forces. The former rebels have been integrated into GoS forces, as a part of the reconciliation agreements that rebels agreed to in connection with the GoS takeover of the governorate in 2018.
34. The main security issue currently facing the governorate of Quneitra is assassinations. Four assassination attempts occurred in October 2020. Three of them were successful.
35. Other security issues included Israeli airstrikes in province due to its proximity to Israel. Israeli airstrikes hit Quneitra in October 2020.

#### **Prevalence of security incidents in Quneitra governorate**

36. In October, a military intelligence official was assassinated together with his civilian brother.
37. Generally speaking, 10-15% of all assassinations happening in southern Syria, i.e. the governorates of Daraa, Quneitra and Suweida, occur in Quneitra.

### **Security situation on the road connecting Quneitra governorate and Damascus International Airport**

38. The security situation on the road connecting Quneitra and Damascus International Airport is very fragile and unstable. People do not use the road at night out of fear of being kidnapped or robbed by pro-government armed groups, former rebels or criminal gangs. Trucks delivering food or other goods do not use the road at night unless they are assisted by a private security company. Kidnappings, killings and enforced disappearances have been happening on this road in 2020.
39. There are approximately five permanent checkpoints on the road between Damascus and Quneitra. The Military Intelligence Service and the Air Force Intelligence Service control the checkpoints between Damascus and Quneitra.

### **Areas with restricted access in Quneitra governorate**

40. There is a three to four kilometer wide de-escalation zone along the border with Israel where access is restricted for civilians. Other areas containing military installations and equipment belonging to Hezbollah have also been off-limits to civilians. These sites have continuously been attacked by the Israeli Airforce in 2020.
41. There are many military checkpoints in Quneitra due to its proximity to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.
42. All civilians, including women, face restrictions of movement in the governorate of Quneitra due to the fragile security situation in the area.

### **Presence of anti-government armed groups in Quneitra governorate**

43. There is a presence of anti-government armed groups in Quneitra. The groups call themselves the *popular resistance* and have a presence in rural areas of the governorate. The *popular resistance* groups consist of former rebel fighters from the area that did reconcile with the GoS in 2018, and who has since taken up arms against the GoS. Former rebel fighters that have now joined GoS-forces are also said to be part of the *popular resistance* groups. According to Navvar Shaban, these groups have not been operating since May 2020 and have not claimed responsibility for any attacks since May 2020.

## Annex II: Terms of Reference

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### 1. General security situation in Tartous, Latakia and Al-Quneitra governorates January-August 2020

- 1.1. Development of the general security situation since January 2020
- 1.2. Prevalence of security incidents and the extent and type of casualties
- 1.3. Security situation on the roads connecting Tartous, Latakia and Al-Quneitra governorates to Damascus International Airport
- 1.4. Freedom of movement inside Tartous, Latakia and Al-Quneitra governorates
  - 1.4.1. Prevalence of restricted access to or exit from certain areas
  - 1.4.2. Freedom of movement of women
- 1.5. Presence of anti-government armed groups

### 2. Socio-economic situation in Tartous, Latakia and Al-Quneitra governorates

- 2.1. General access to electricity, water, sanitation and food
- 2.2. Access to healthcare
- 2.3. Access to schools
- 2.4. Access to employment
- 2.5. Access to housing
- 2.6. Areas with severe damages to infrastructures