

31 July 2012

SYRIA

A full-scale displacement and humanitarian crisis with no solutions in sight

War and political violence have led to four major waves of displacement in Syria since 1967, forcing up to two million people to flee their homes. The current uprising, now in its second year, has alone displaced as many as 1,500,000 people internally according to SARC. At least 500,000 more live in situations of protracted displacement stemming from Israel's occupation of the Golan Heights in 1967, the forcible eviction of Kurds from the north-eastern province of al-Hasakah during the 1970s and the 1982 assault on the city of Hama, which put down a revolt by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

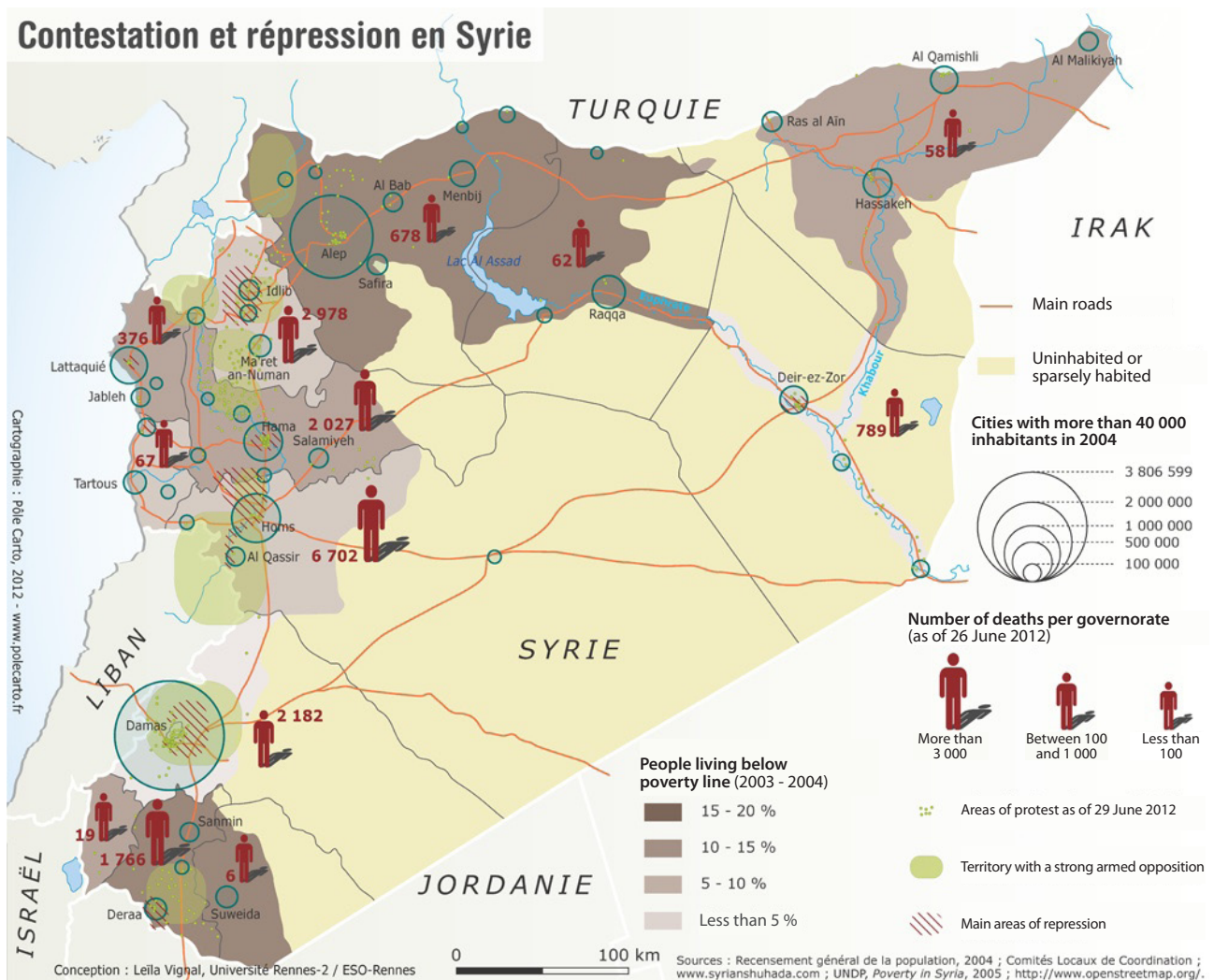
For the last 15 months the Syrian authorities have been confronted with a popular uprising, part of a broader phenomenon across the Arab world which has seen the fall of long-established authoritarian governments. These had ruled for more than a generation, overstressing the rhetoric of anti-colonialism, anti-Zionism and pan-Arab nationalism. Overtime, these ideologies provided these governments with a veil for violence meted out against their own populations and the displacement that it caused. It was under this veil that Syria previously conducted its campaign against the Kurds and the inhabitants of Hama with relative impunity.

None of the Arab governments were prepared for the uprisings that swept the region in 2011. The blossoming of Islam as a political ideology and Gulf States sponsored media has altered the image of the Syrian government as the vanguard of anti-Zionist resistance to that of a shi'a minority government intent on stamping its authority on the country's Sunni majority rather. In contrast, the Syrian government perceives this as a hostile foreign interference.

The Syrian people have become caught in the crossfire of a battle for regional influence between countries such as Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States and western countries on one hand and Iran, Russia and China on the other. The plight of the country's internally displaced people (IDPs) has not been reliably assessed by local and international stakeholders because of a lack of access to the country.

This report covers the causes and scale of Syria's four displacement crises and IDPs' protection needs arising from them. It examines the national response, which – with the exception of the Golanese, who embody the country's resistance to Israel's hegemony – has largely been to ignore IDPs' plight. It also looks at the response of the international humanitarian community, which despite the widespread media coverage of the conflict afforded by the digital age, remains restricted in its capacity to assist IDPs and other Syrians in need.

Protest and repression in Syria



Source: Leïla Vignal, « Syrie, anatomie d'une révolution », La Vie des idées, 27 juillet 2012. ISSN : 2105-3030.
 URL : www.laviedesidees.fr/Syrie-anatomie-d-une-revolution.html
 Map key translated to English by IDMC
More maps are available at www.internal-displacement.org

Background and causes of displacement

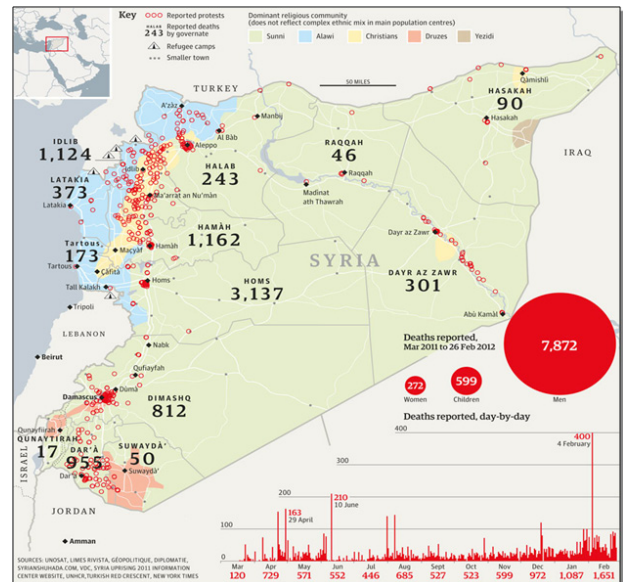
Three major crisis zones currently stand out in Syria: Dara'a in the south, Damascus and its vicinity and the Hama-Homs-Idlib axis. These areas are home to the majority of Syria's 22 million people. The Hama-Homs-Idlib axis is the most ethnically diverse area of the country, where the Alawites – who make up 12 per cent of the population – often live side by side with the Sunni majority, who represent over 70 per cent. Other minorities such as Christians and Druze make up roughly 10 and 4 per cent of the population respectively. Hama and Homs were also the centre of Sunni Islamic opposition to the rule of President Bashar al-Assad's father Hafez. Dara'a and Damascus witnessed the arrival en masse of internally displaced people (IDPs) from the Golan Heights in 1967.

With the exception of the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights, all internal displacement in Syria has been the result of the government's own policies and military campaigns against its own people. This has made it both difficult and precarious to conduct assessments or gather information on the phenomenon. It is also unclear how many of those displaced during the current uprising are secondary displacements from previous displacement.

Current uprising

What began as spontaneous and peaceful demonstrations calling for democratic reforms in February and March 2011 following the fall of the Tunisian and Egyptian presidents, had by the end of the year become an armed uprising against the government. In line with the demands of those protesting across the region, opposition activists called for greater social justice and political accountability in a country rife with corruption and nepotism. In March 2011, the government appeared to make belated concessions, including the reinstatement of Syrian nationality to Kurds denied it since the 1970s, the release of political prisoners and the end of emergency laws.

Unconvinced, however, the protesters started calling for the removal of Assad and his government.



The Guardian 2 March 2012

Within little more than a month, the government began moving tanks into some cities and using heavy weaponry against peaceful protesters. The siege of Dara'a was followed in May by those of Homs, Baniyas, Tafas, Talkalakh, Rastan and Talbiseh. In August, during Ramadan, armoured units fired on civilian areas in Homs, Hama, Deir-el-Zor, Dara'a, Aleppo and Idlib. On 15 August, Palestinian refugees in the coastal refugee camp of al-Ramel were temporarily displaced when the military deployed ground troops and gunboats in an attack on the port of Lattakia. By the end of the summer it was reported that between 2,000 and 5,000 people had been killed and 20,000 arrested (AFP, 2 July 2011; IRIN, September 2011; IRIN, August 2011).

Despite the increasing intensity of the government's offensive during the first half of 2011, damage and destruction of property was not widespread and much of the internal displacement was temporary; when the armed forces pulled out of an area, residents moved back in. This was also true for a significant number of those who sought refuge in Lebanon and Turkey. By June, however,

Syria: a full-scale displacement and humanitarian crisis with no solutions in sight

damage and destruction of property was on the rise, and the continuing violence turned a temporary displacement crisis into a longer-term one.

As the offensive against the protesters intensified, some elements of the opposition began forming armed popular defence groups while some members of the military began to defect. This gave credence to the government's claim that armed gangs were operating, which it used to justify further military action. By November, the government and the Free Syrian Army – which is made up of defectors and a loose confederation of armed Sunni militants – had both stepped up their military campaigns. The death toll rose from around 4,000 in late 2011 to around 9,000 in April 2012, and in May the number of refugees was put at 50,000. The number of IDPs more than doubled between December and April, from 200,000 to 500,000 (Haaretz, 13 March 2012; IRIN, 23 April 2012; Reuters, 29 May 2012; Reuters, 27 March 2012; AlertNet, 5 June 2012); then again the number of IDPs increased dramatically in July 2012 to reach up to 1,5 million IDPs according to SARC (IRIN, 20 July 2012).

In the meantime peaceful protests calling for regime change and better socio-economic justice have considerably increased from 51 street protests on Friday 17 June 2011, to 493 on Friday 6 June 2012 and to 939 on Friday 1 June 2012



OCHA February 2012

(Idées.fr 27 July 2012). As the crisis drags on, Syrians are finding it harder to cope with everyday life. This lack of stability in terms of their employment has led others to take risks in search of physical security and triggered further displacements. During the winter, lengthy queues began to form at petrol stations and commodity prices soared (Syria Today, January 2012).

The Syrian pound began to depreciate in September 2011 and plummeted in value on 24 January. This has added an enormous burden on the population as a whole and particularly on the displaced, many of whom have lost their livelihoods. A combination of drought, the current economic hardships and insecurity has hit Kurdish farmers in the north hard, forcing around 18,000 families into secondary displacement (IRIN, 17 February 2012).



Syrian pound official exchange rate from May 2011 to May 2012

The United States, the European Union, Turkey and most of the Arab League countries imposed sanctions on Syria at the end of November 2011. Measures include an oil embargo, curbs on international financial transactions and travel bans. These have had a very tangible effect on the economy. As Rateb al-Nimr, a teacher in Homs, told Reuters: "People are cutting trees to get

heating, with the severe shortage of heating gas and continued electricity cuts that can stretch for several days" (Reuters, 11 January 2012). In May the Syrian authorities estimated the cost of the sanctions and civil unrest at \$4 billion (The Globe and Mail, 24 May 2012).

A history of displacement

Much attention is focused on the current crisis in Syria, but the country has a history of displacements dating back to 1967, all of which remain unresolved. The authorities' failure to address previous crises is very much reflected in their handling of the current one.

The Hama massacre

The current uprising was sparked by widespread disenchantment with the government, but by late 2011 it had taken on sectarian overtones with the opposition led by Sunnis in general and radical Sunni militants in particular. By early 2012, the Syrian National Council (SNC), a coalition of opposition groups, was dominated by members of the Muslim Brotherhood (Reuters, 6 May 2012; Al Monitor, 25 June 2012; Washington Post, 13 May 2012).

It is not the first time that Sunnis have opposed the government. The first clashes between the Muslim Brotherhood and the armed forces took place in the 1960s, and in 1964 the group was outlawed resulting in its radicalisation. The clashes reignited and intensified between 1976 and 1982 with the Muslim brotherhood increasingly resorting to terrorism as a method of warfare against the government. Between 1979 and 1981 the Brotherhood is reported to have killed over 300 people mainly government officials and Alawis including clergymen in the city of Aleppo. In the context of the Sunni revolt attackers tried to assassinate President Hafez al-Assad in 1980 (University of California Press, 1989; T. Friedman, 1995; Oxford University Press, 1990; Human rights Watch, 1996; Amnesty, 14 October 2009).

In February 1982, Muslim Brotherhood fighters ambushed the Syrian army and seized the city of Hama. In response, the government mounted a month-long siege of city and subjected its 250,000 inhabitants to indiscriminate bombardments until troops backed up by tanks regained control. It is estimated that as many as 25,000 people were killed and entire neighbourhoods razed. An unaccounted number of residents were either displaced or forcibly expelled following the violence and destruction of the city. The government eventually rebuilt some areas of the historic city centre, but it did nothing to address to the victims' plight (Friedman, 1995; Oxford University Press, 1990; Syrian Human Rights Committee, 2006).

The Arab belt

Kurds have also played a central role in the current crisis. From its outset of the current conflict, Bashar al-Assad tried to appease them by reinstating Syrian nationality to some of those who had been deprived of it in order to try to woo them over; however Kurds have continued to protest for change albeit independently of the SNC (The Guardian, 26 April 2012). Syria's Kurds, who are non-Arabs, have been considered a threat and targeted by successive governments. In 1962, around 120,000 lost their citizenship during a census carried out in the Kurdish heartland of Jazeera, today the governorate of al-Hasakah. Out of the blue, people were asked to prove that they had lived in Syria since 1945, and those unable to do so were issued with new documents confirming their status as *ajanib* or "foreign" (although they were still forced to serve in the army). Those who failed to register for the census received no documentation at all and are known as *maktoum* or "hidden". Without citizenship, they were not allowed to own, extend or repair property. Their descendants inherited the same status, meaning around 300,000 Kurds out of an estimated population of 1.7 million were still stateless as of 2011 (HRW, 2009; I.C. Vanly, 1992; Dekker, 2011; Chatham House, 2006).

In 1965, the government established the Arab belt or *Hizam al-Arabi* to sever Syrian Kurds' links with their counterparts in Turkey and Iraq. It did so by expelling tens of thousands of Kurds from a strip of border land 280 kilometres long and 15 kilometres wide, and settling Arab farmers there instead. The project "to establish model state farms" continued under President Hafez al-Assad and 41 were set up before it ended in 1976. Its effects have never been undone and the government has since continued to forcibly transfer Kurdish activists and civil society members from the belt (HRW, 2009; Vanly, 1992).

The occupied Syrian Golan

When Israel seized the Golan Heights, a plateau overlooking the Jordan Valley and the Sea of Galilee in the Six Day War of 1967, nearly all of its inhabitants were displaced within Syria. According to the Syrian government, the Israeli military forcibly expelled them and destroyed villages and farms. Some Golanese IDPs, however, claim that the population fled following alarmist instructions from the Syrian army ahead of Israel taking control. The Israeli government maintains that they fled in fear of violence (Arnold, 1 February 2000).

Following the Six Day War, the UN Security Council passed resolution 242, which called for the Israeli armed forces' withdrawal from the territories they had occupied during it. Syria made an unsuccessful attempt to take back the Golan Heights in 1973, prompting the Security Council to adopt resolution 338 urging the both sides to agree to a ceasefire. This was signed in 1974, and Israel pulled out of the destroyed town of Quneitra in 1975. The UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) was set up to oversee the ceasefire (UN News, 1 October 2007; BBC, 1 October 2007).

The 1967 demarcation line is not an internationally recognised border, so those who fled elsewhere in Syria are considered IDPs. Israel annexed the

Golan Heights in December 1981 and it has been under Israeli jurisdiction ever since, despite the UN Security Council stating in resolution 497 that "the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect" (UNSC, 17 December 1981).

Only five villages in the Golan Heights are still inhabited by Syrians. At 22,000, their total population is roughly the same as the number of Israeli settlers (UNHRC, 19 October 2004, para.10; UNHRC, 16 April 2003; Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UN in Geneva, October 2004; UNSC, 11 December 2006). The occupied Syrians from the Golan who were known for their support of the Syrian government have been affected by the current uprising and saw the rise of dissent within the community (Mar15, 22 February 2012).

Displacement figures

In the absence of reliable figures, the number of IDPs in Syria is very difficult to assess. The only official statistics are on the Golanese IDPs, and even these are disputed. In a country where independent academic activity is frowned upon and civil society members are regularly jailed or ill-treated, merely researching displacement may be considered seditious.

International humanitarian agencies and news organisations are denied unhindered access and are unable to get a complete picture.

Current uprising

In June 2011 the entire population of Jisr Al-Shughur of around 41,000 people reportedly fled in fear of military retaliation after the killing of some 120 security personnel in the town (The Guardian, 7 June 2011). In Maarat al-Numaan it was estimated that 100,000 people or 70 per cent of the town's population had been displaced

(The Daily Star, 17 June 2011). In August, nearly all of the 10,000 Palestinian refugees in the al-Ramel camp were temporarily displaced (UN News Centre, 19 August 2011; BBC, 15 August 2011). Most sought refuge either in other cities such as Homs, on the beach or elsewhere in Lattakia (UNRWA, 14 August 2011; HRW, July 2011).

The sustained attacks on the Homs neighbourhoods of Baba 'Amr, Khalidiyeh, Karm el-Zeitoun and Bayadah in February 2012, and the battle of Idlib the following month led to significant increases in displacement. In April, the total number of IDPs in Syria was estimated by the Syrian Red Crescent (SARC) to be 400,000, double the figure before the onset of winter. In July, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and SARC put the figure at 1,5 million, of IDPs, (IRIN, 20 July 2012; Xinhua, 24 July 2012).

The Hama massacre

It is not possible to verify the number of people displaced by the massacre, principally because the world's attention was focused on the civil war in Lebanon and the massacres of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila camps in the weeks that it took place. Estimates of the death toll vary from 20,000 to more than 25,000, and the number of IDPs is likely to have been several times that figure (Oxford University Press, 1990; HRW, 1993; Friedman, 1995).

The Arab belt

There are no figures for the number of Kurdish IDPs from the Arab belt, and it is difficult to distinguish between internal displacements other forms of rural to urban migration. Human Rights Watch and Minority Rights Group have cautiously reported that a significant number of the 60,000 Kurds who moved from Jazeera province in the 1970s were forcibly displaced, while the late author and authority on the Kurds, Ismet Chérif Vanly, puts the figure at 140,000 (HRW, 2009; Minority Rights Group, 2009; Vanly, 1992).

The occupied Syrian Golan

The Syrian government estimates that 130,000 people were displaced as a result of the Six Day War, and that including their descendants there were 433,000 to 500,000 Golanese IDPs by 2007 (Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the UN in Geneva, September 2007; jawlan.org). According to the Israeli government, only 70,000 people were displaced in 1967 (USCR 2002), which on the same extrapolation as the Syrian government figure would equate to 236,000 IDPs by 2007. Whatever their number, most have settled in the Damascus suburbs or in Sweida and Dera'a in southern Syria (Fecci, June 2000; Khawaja, 2002).

Before 1967 there were roughly about 150 villages in the Golan Heights. Within the first few years of the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights all the Syrian villages were destroyed with the exception of five villages – Majdal Shams, Masadeh, Buq'atah, Ein Kenya and Ghajjar – which are currently home to around 22,000 Syrians (jawlan.org; ICRC, 15 February 2011). The overwhelming majority of the occupied Syrians rejected Israeli citizenship when Israel annexed the territory in 1981. The former regional capital of Quneitra was abandoned by the Israeli army to the Syrian authorities and is still in ruins.

Protection needs

Current uprising

Until late 2011, the Syrian authorities refused to acknowledge that the country faced a humanitarian crisis or protection needs, though it has blamed armed gangs for endangering civilians' lives and disrupting public order. Towards the end of 2011, however, the UN had begun to talk in terms of "pockets of civil war" and according to journalist Stephanie Nebehay on 8 May the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said that the situations in Homs and Idlib met the three criteria of non-international armed conflict - intensity, duration and the level of organisa-

tion among the rebels (Reuters, 8 May 2012). As the fighting between government forces and the Free Syrian Army and Sunni Islamic militants has intensified so has the burden on the civilian population. By May, the death toll nationwide was estimated as high as 9,000, including 500 children and 244 women (UNICEF 30, March 2012), although figures have been difficult to verify leading OHCHR to stop providing a death-toll in December 2011 (BBC News, 29 May 2012). The targeting of civilians prompted ICRC to publicly express its shock and to urge the parties to the conflict to distinguish between civilians and combatants (ICRC, 27 May 2012). Protesters also report that the military operations have destroyed homes and farmland, particularly in Dara'a, Tel Kalakh, Jisr Al-Shughur, Homs and Idlib.

There have been several attempts to develop mechanisms to ensure a minimum level of protection for civilians. The UN has held an exceptional number of special sessions on the human rights situation in Syria, a special Rapporteur was appointed on 9 December 2011 and a commission of inquiry has produced two reports - one in November 2011 and one in March. The Arab League sent a large observer mission to Syria on 26 December 2011, but withdrew it a month later after the Gulf States pulled their observers out stating that they had not succeeded in holding the perpetrators to account.

The former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan put forward a six-point peace plan in February that envisaged the immediate establishment of a daily, two-hour humanitarian truce and a full ceasefire from 10 April 2012, with government forces pulling back from population centres. Annan also proposed the deployment of 300 UN military observers to monitor compliance with the plan. The observer mission was authorized by the UN Security Council on 21 of April 2012 by the resolution 2043 and agreed to by the Syrian government. By the following day, however, most of plan's conditions had already been violated,

and the population continued to be put at risk; it failed to protect the population and was left in tatters following the Houla massacre on 25 May, in which of more than 100 civilians including 49 children and 34 women were killed (BBC, 1 June 2012). The UN observer mission suspended its work on 16 June, saying that the escalating violence prevented it from carrying out its mandate (UN News Centre 16 June 2012).

The UN and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) conducted an assessment in Syria between 18 and 21 March. It estimated that more than 1.7 million people were in need of assistance and protection, some 800,000 of them children and teenagers (UNICEF, 30 March 2012). It concluded that Idlib, Homs, Dara'a and the outlying parts of Damascus were the areas worst affected by the violence, and where people were suffering the most pressing humanitarian needs. There has been widespread displacement as a result of violence and loss of property and livelihoods. Many IDPs lack adequate shelter, and are facing food shortages and a lack of medical services, water, and proper sanitation (UNHCR, March 2012).

The Alawite's historical homeland, formerly an autonomous state during the French mandate of 1920 to 1946, has been less affected than the rest of the country, offering those displaced from mixed areas including Homs, relatively safe refuge from the violence perpetrated against them.

Christians, who represent around 10 percent of the population, have stayed largely neutral throughout the uprising, though some did take part in protests while others supported the government for fear that the alternative would be radical Sunni rule. As the violence has increased, there have been reports that nearly 100,000 Christians have fled Homs to escape the crossfire (Mission Network News, 19 April 2012). There is also worrying evidence of threats, kidnappings and intimidation by armed opposition groups in areas they controlled,

and these too have led to displacements. Groups such as the al-Faruq battalion of the Free Syrian Army, which is made up of army defectors, have reportedly levied “taxes” on Christians. Their church in Homs and a monastery in Saidnayah came under attack, but the perpetrators have not been identified (USA Today, 11 May 2012; La Stampa, 21 April 2012). That month Mother Agnès-Mariam de la Croix of the St. James monastery reported killings of Christians and Alawi civilians in the Khalidiya neighbourhood of Homs (Vox Clamentis, 11 May 2012; FAZ, 7 June 2012).

The occupied Syrian Golan

The information available suggests that most of the people displaced from the Golan Heights and their descendants have integrated into the areas where they initially took refuge. There are reports that in the past the government favoured some for public sector jobs and university places. That said, some Golanese IDPs have claimed that Hafez al-Assad, a military commander at the time, was in part responsible for their displacement. They even suggested that a degree of collusion between the Syrian and Israeli governments lies behind the fact that the demarcation line has long been the quietest of Israel’s “borders”. Some Golanese IDPs have also criticised the Syrian government for failing to provide adequate assistance and social services (Fecci, June 2000; Khawaja, 2002; Dr. Mohammed ‘Anad Soleiman on Facebook).

Those still living in the occupied Syrian Golan say that Israel’s restriction on their freedom of movement are the single most important issue to them. Contact with family members has been severely curtailed since 1992 and remained so in 2011. Separated family members are generally unable to attend funerals, weddings, births or other important events, though the Israeli government does on rare occasions give permission on a case-by-case basis. Students, pilgrims and brides have been allowed to cross the demarcation line accompanied by the ICRC (ICRC, 21 March 2005, 16 March 2007 and 28 June 2004; Syria

Today, 1 January 2005; UN Special Committee, 23 September 2004, Sect.B). Since the 1994 peace treaty between Israel and Jordan, family members separated from each other by the demarcation line have been able to meet in Amman, and links have improved with better telephone services and internet access.

Prospects for durable solutions

Until early 2012, the government showed no willingness to acknowledge or address the ongoing displacement crisis in the country, and international organisations had only a very limited role prior to the current uprising. As long as the violence continues displacement will continue to rise. Furthermore if Syrian authorities refuse to recognise that their actions have caused displacement, it is unlikely that there will be a progress towards IDPs achieving a durable solution.

In the case of the occupied Syrian Golan, the government has sought to highlight the plight of Golanese IDPs, albeit for political purposes related to the ongoing conflict with Israel. The international community considers the annexation of the Golan in 1981 to be illegal and the territory to be occupied since 1967. Returning the Golan to Syria in exchange for a comprehensive peace agreement has been a key negotiating point between Israel and Syria. However, Syria’s insistence on a complete return to the 1967 border, which would mean access to the Sea of Galilee and control over water resources remain stumbling blocks as well as evacuating Israeli settlements.

In the demilitarized zone of the Golan, Syria has not been willing to instigate development to enable the IDPs from those areas to return, including to the capital Quneitra. Under grassroots pressure some largely symbolic rehabilitation and rebuilding activities have taken place, but they are not integrated in a broader development plan and often lack substantial input from those displaced

from the area. In addition, fertile land remains unused and those attempting to use the land are at risk of explosive remnants of war which have not been cleared after the 1967 and 1973 wars.

National response

Current uprising

The Syrian authorities denied that a humanitarian crisis was taking place until Bashar al-Assad and his wife helped volunteers pack food rations for victims of what the government called “armed gangs and terrorists” on 18 April (National Post, 18 April 2012). The authorities’ tight control over the humanitarian response has meant that the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) has played a central role. All of the assistance officially allowed into the country has been channelled through the SARC whose capacity is overstretched.

Restrictions on aid and the intimidation and obstruction of humanitarian responders has forced civilians to smuggle in the supplies they need (IRIN, 30 March 2012). SARC staff has shown dedication and fairness in assisting victims of the uprising despite strong links to the authorities at the local level (ICRC, 1 June 2012; IFRC, 11 June 2012).

Otherwise, the response has been erratic. The provision of medical services has been compromised by the fact that the authorities have labelled some of the injured as suspected terrorists and has arrested doctors and surgeons for that have attempted to provide them with medical care. (MSF, 8 February 2012).

ICRC and the UN World Food Programme (WFP) have been working with SARC and by 20 April it had assisted around 60,000 people in several governorates, including Homs, Dara’a and the outlying areas of Damascus, and delivered medical supplies.

Together with more traditional charitable organisations such as the Catholic and Orthodox

churches and Muslim charities such as Hefaz al N’ema, they have managed to address some IDPs’ needs by providing shelter and food. Their capacity, however, is hampered by the government’s unwillingness to authorise access, and is ever more disproportionate as the crisis intensifies (Ijaramedia, 22 May 2012; IRIN, 30 March 2012; ReliefWeb, 20 April 2012).

The Hama massacre

After the massacre, the Syrian government rebuilt parts of the historic city worst affected by the violence but left untouched large residential areas that had been razed. When Bashar al-Assad took office, he initially signalled greater openness to political debate, the reform, however, was short-lived. In the same year, the few political freedoms granted were abruptly revoked (Reuters, 6 May 2012; John Rosenthal, 1 May 2012).

The current uprising has breathed new life into the Muslim Brotherhood, which has also played a central role in smuggling in essential supplies. It can rely on the sympathy of other branches of the movement in Jordan, Egypt, Libya and Lebanon (Reuters, 6 May 2012).

The Arab belt

It remains doubtful whether the government is genuinely willing to integrate the Kurdish population and resolve the situations of those it forcibly displaced in the 1970s. In 1977, Kurdish place names were replaced by Arab ones, the Dagh region for example being renamed *Jabal al-Uruba* or Arab’s Mountain. Kurds were also banned from using their own language in publications, schools and workplaces, and from celebrating festivals such as Nowruz (HRW, 2009 and 1993).

A 2008 presidential decree restricted property transactions in border areas, and inhabitants, mainly Kurds, have since needed authorisation to buy, sell, repair or extend their property. The authorities have no deadlines for giving such authorisations, nor do they have to justify their decisions.

Since the 2011 protests began, Assad has announced reforms such as the end of the emergency laws and the single party policy. In April 2011 he announced that Syrian citizenship would be reinstated to the country's 220,000 *ajanib* or "foreign" Kurds but not the 80,000 *maktoum* or "hidden" ones. The scope of these reforms and the extent to which they have been implemented is debatable, but in any case they have failed to appease the protesters (Anne Dekker, 2011; CNN, 7 April 2011; Al, 2011).

The occupied Syrian Golan

Syria regained control of the area around Quneitra in 1974, but there has been little progress in facilitating returns. In 1975, it began assisting some Golanese IDPs to return to the villages it was left controlling under the terms of the truce. In the 1980s and against in 2004, the Syrian government launched the Project for the Resumption of Reconstruction of the Freed. Around half of the development, however, remains unoccupied. (Syria Today, March 2005; IHT, 23 October 2004).

International response

Current uprising

The UN Security Council has failed to put significant pressure on Syria during the current uprising, and the government has benefited from the consistent support of China and Russia. The economic sanctions imposed by the US, EU, Turkey and most of the Arab League have had a very tangible effect on ordinary people, but little impact on the authorities. The determination of protesters in the face of the government crackdown has, however, increasingly forced the international community to react. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) set up a fact-finding mission in April 2011, but it has not been allowed to enter the country. In August, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) condemned the fact that Palestinian refugees in the al-Ramel camp had

come under fire, and called for immediate humanitarian access (Ali Abunumah, 2011; IRIN, August 2011). As the situation deteriorates in Syria, the fate of the 100,000 Iraqi refugees assisted by UNHCR and the 500,000 Palestinians, has become a genuine protection concern; especially for the Palestinians whose statelessness has discouraged neighbouring states from allowing them in.

In October, efforts to pass a UN Security Council resolution on Syria were blocked by China and Russia. Turkey, however, has repeatedly condemned the government's role in the bloodshed, and Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Tunisia have withdrawn their ambassadors. In an unprecedented step, the US and French ambassadors stayed in Hama for a few days in July ahead of an anticipated assault by the armed forces. The move allowed Hama residents to organise one of the largest protests at the time, but once the diplomats had left more than 130 people were killed as the government retook control of the city (AFP, August 2011; UN Watch, August 2011).

The Arab League proposed a peace plan in late 2011, after some of its Gulf member states, Turkey and most significantly China and Russia criticised the authorities' crackdown. On 2 November, the Syrian government accepted the peace plan, which required them to end the violence, take troops off the streets and release imprisoned protesters. The next day, however, it was reported that tanks had opened fire on Homs (BBC, November 2011). The Arab League deployed observers in December but their mission came to an abrupt end when a month later the Gulf countries pulled their members out. This happened when the Arab League had just managed to extend the observers' mission prompting some analyst to suggest that the observers' unpublished report did not go the Gulf countries wanted, Saudi Arabia stated that the report did not go far enough in holding the Syrian government to account (BBC, 24 January 2012; Russia Today, 29 January 2012).

In the aftermath, Kofi Annan was tasked in February 2012 by the UN and the Arab League to find solutions to the conflict in Syria. On 16 March 2012, Kofi Annan submitted to the UN Security Council a Six-Point plan which laid the ground for cease-fire aimed at ensuring the provision of humanitarian assistance and envisaged the deployment of 200 to 250 UN military observers. On 21 April 2012, the Security Council adopted the plan under Resolution 2043 and established the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) with 300 observers for 90 days (UN SC, 21 April 2012). The ceasefire was never implemented and the UN observers' mission was suspended on 16 June 2012 due to escalating violence (UN news, 16 June 2012).

ICRC has been at the forefront of the international response. In July 2011, it was allowed to enter Dara'a and Idlib after it had criticised the lack of access a couple of months earlier and its president, Jakob Kellenberger, had visited Damascus in June. Working with the Syrian Red Crescent, it has distributed essential food items to more than 5,000 people and sleeping kits to more than 2,500. ICRC activities in Syria have a budget of \$41 million and constitute its eighth largest operation, on a par with Yemen. As of May 2012, it was trying to provide clean water for 1.5 million people and food parcels for about 100,000 a month. It has delivered aid to more than 300,000 displaced people. By the 14 July, the ICRC had declared that the threshold for a non-internal armed conflict in Syria had been met. (Reuters, 8 May 2012; ICRC, 27 May 2012 and 1 June 2012).

A humanitarian response framework has been developed under the auspices of UN's regional humanitarian coordinator for Syria. It includes 46 projects across eleven sectors and envisages a budget of \$180 million for its first six months of operations. Forty per cent of the budget is allocated to food and the bulk of the rest to health, non-food items, shelter and education. Funding, however, has been slow to come and logistics

are still to be agreed with the Syrian authorities (YaLibnan, 22 April 2012; Alertnet, 5 June 2012). There are indications though that Syria may be increasingly prepared to accept assistance in tackling its humanitarian crisis. It has asked UNICEF to help it with the renovation of 1,000 damaged schools, but whether the plan will be implemented on the scale envisaged remains to be seen.

With regards to the Hama massacre and the Kurds displaced in 1970, the divided position of the international community on Syria has meant that no effective actions were taken to assist IDPs and other vulnerable groups. Regional organisations such as the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation have never raised these issues, and they were barely discussed in Arab media until the onset of the Arab spring.

In the end, conditions for IDPs in Syria are deteriorating and their belonging looted or destroyed according to reports by the SARC. According to ICRC, the assets of many IDPs have been looted or destroyed and several public buildings where IDPs had been temporarily sheltering have been damaged and lack water and electricity. Meanwhile UNHCR has reported high levels of trauma and distress among Syrian refugee children, a shortage of food and a lack of basic household items for many refugees. Its regional appeal issued in March 2012 for US\$84 million was funded at only 36 percent in May (Brookings Institution, 4 July 2012; IFRC, 11 July 2012).

Sources:

Agence France-Presse (AFP), 2 July 2011, Assad sacks Hama governor, as Syria death toll mounts

Agence France-Presse (AFP), 18 August 2011, UN Human Rights Council to hold special session on Syria

Al-Monitor, 21 June 2012, How the Syrian Opposition can court the Kurds

AlertNet, 5 June 2012, UN, Syrian sign aid agreement but access key

Amnesty International (AI), 14 October 2009, Syrian authorities urged to seek justice for men killed by security forces

Amnesty International (AI), 2012, Year of rebellion: The state of human rights in the Middle East and North Africa

Amnesty International (AI), 19 April 2011, Syrian reform pledges ring hollow as more protesters killed

Anchor Books, 1989, From Beirut to Jerusalem

Arabic News, 14 November 2002, ICRC in Syria to restore family links broken by Israeli occupation of Golan

Arnold, Michael S., February 2000, "The Golan capture" in Jerusalem Post

BBC News, 29 May 2012, Syria crisis: Counting the victims

BBC News, June 2012, Houla massacre 'may be crime against humanity'

BBC News, 15 August 2011, Syrian unrest: Palestinian refugees flee camp, says UN

BBC News, October 2007, Assad sets conference conditions

Brookings Institution, 4 July 2012, Migration, Displacement and the Arab Spring: Prospects for the Next Year

Chatham House, 2006, The Syrian Kurds: A people discovered

CNN, 7 April 2011, Stateless Kurds in Syria granted citizenship

Crisis group, 30 March 2012, Middle East Endgame III: Israel, Syria and Lebanon – how comprehensive peace settlements would look

Dekker, Anne, 7 February 2011, Consequences of statelessness: Ajanbi and Maktoum in Syria

Dr. Mohammed 'Anad Soleiman, May 2012, Golanfree1

Fecci, JoMarie, June 2000, "A View from Damascus: Internal Refugees From Golan's 244 Destroyed Syrian Villages" in Washington Report on Middle East Affairs

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 July 2012, Abermals Massaker in Syrien

Friedman, Thomas, 1995, From Beirut to Jerusalem

Ha'aretz, 13 March 2012, UN: 230,000 people have fled the violence in Syria

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 5 July 2011, Syrians' Flight from Harm

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1996, Syria's Tadmor Prison: Dissent Still Hostage to a Legacy of Terror

Human Rights Watch (HRW), November 2009, Group Denial Repression of Kurdish Political and Cultural Rights in Syria

Human Rights Watch (HRW), 1993, Syria
Unmasked: The Suppression of Human Rights by the Asad Regime

Idée.fr, 27 July 2012, Syrie, anatomie d'une révolution

Ijaramedia, 22 May 2012, Q&A: Olivier Beucher Country Director for Syria and Lebanon of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)“.

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 17 February 2012, Insecurity makes drought-hit farmers even more vulnerable

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 30 March 2012, AID POLICY: A “new humanitarianism” at play in Syrian crisis

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 23 April 2012, Syria: New UN response plan awaits government agreement

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 20 July 2012, Fighting in capital adds to growing displacement challenge

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 21 September 2011, SYRIA: New report indicates over 5,000 deaths since March

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 15 February 2011, Occupied Golan: nurturing ties with the rest of Syria

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 27 May 2012, Syria: Parties to the fighting must distinguish between civilians and fighters

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), June 2012, Syria: thousands of displaced in Houla need urgent help

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 28 June 2004, ICRC Annual Report

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 8 July 2011, Syrie : accès plus large du CICR dans les zones où sévissent des troubles

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 22 March 2007, ICRC activities in the occupied Golan

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), 16 March 2007, Occupied Golan: wedding day joy clouded by sadness

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)/International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 11 June 2012, Emergency appeal n° MDRSY002

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)/International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), 11 July 2012, SARC appeal for Appeal Launched to assist Syrian Arab Red Crescent in its crisis response

Khawaja, Marwan, 2002, Internal migration in Syria: Findings from a national survey, FAfo

La Stampa, 21 April 2012, Christians oppressed by rebels in Syria in Vatican Insider

Mar15, 22 February 2012, Golan's Druse break silence to criticise Syria's brutality

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), 8 February 2012, Syria: medicine used as a weapon of persecution

Middle East Media and Research Institute (MEMRI), 23 January 2000, An Account of the Syrian-Israeli Negotiations, Special Dispatch, No.68 - Syria

Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), 26 July 2007, The Golan Waits for the Green Light, by Nicolas Pelham

Minority Rights Group International (MRG), 16 July 2009, State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009

Mission Network News, 19 April 2012, Syrian Christians targeted in Syria

National Post, 18 April 2012, Assads pictured packing food aid after UN wives attack Syrian first lady in YouTube video

National Review, May 2012, In Syria American Allies with the Muslim Brotherhood

Oxford University Press, 1990, Pity the Nation

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Syria to the United Nations, Geneva, 11 October 2004, Information provided on IDPs in Syria to NRC upon request

ReliefWeb, 20 April 2012, Demos test Syria's cease-fire as 32 killed

Reuters, 11 January 2012, Syrians face more economic hardship as unrest spreads

Reuters, 27 March 2012, U.N. raises Syria death toll estimate to more than 9,000

Reuters, 20 April 2012, Demos test Syria's cease-fire as 32 killed

Reuters, 6 May 2012, Syria's Muslim Brotherhood rise from the ashes

Reuters, 8 May 2012, Some Syria violence amounts to civil war: Red Cross

Reuters, 29 May 2012, Half a million displaced in Syria; refugee numbers rise: U.N.

Routledge, 1992, The Kurds in Syria and Lebanon, in *The Kurds: A contemporary Overview*

Russia Today, 29 January 2012, Arab League halts observer mission in Syria

Support Kurds, 7 February 2012, Consequences of statelessness: Ajnabi and maktoum in Syria

Syria Today, 15 April 2012, Q&A: Olivier Beucher Country Director for Syria and Lebanon of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

Syria Today, 2012, Let there be light

Syria Today, 2005, Divided Heights- Occupied Golan Feature

Syria Today, March 2005, Syria buys apples from Golan as stones laid to rebuild Quneitra

Syrian Human Rights Committee (SHRC), 2006, Massacre of Hama (February 1982) Genocide and A crime against Humanity

The Daily Star Lb, 17 June 2011, Syrian troops shoot dead 16 protesters

The Globe and Mail, 24 May 2012, Syrian oil minister says sanctions cost the country \$4-billion

The Guardian, 26 April 2012, Syrian's Kurds: part of the Revolution?

The Guardian, 8 May 2003, Israel ready to reopen Syria peace talks

The Guardian, 17 July 2003, Syria 'ready for Israel talks'

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 30 March 2012, Syria Crisis Sub-Regional Funding Needs Document

United Nations Commission on Human Rights (CHR), 16 April 2003, E/CN.4/2003/L.10/add.8 Question of the Violation of HR in the Occupied Arab Territories, including Palestine

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), March 2012, Syria Regional Response Plan

United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC), 19 October 2004, Third periodic report submitted by Syria under Article 40 of the Covenant to the Human Rights Committee, CCPR/C/SYR/2004/3

United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC), 27 March 2003, UN HRC takes up debate on situation in occupied Arab territories, including Palestine

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 16 August 2011, Thousands of Palestinians flee refugee camp near Latakia, Syria

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), 16 August 2011, UNRWA gravely concerned about heavy gun fire into the refugee camp in the Syrian port city of Latakia

United Nations Security Council (UN SC), 22 October 1973, Resolution 338

United Nations Security Council (UN SC), 22 November 1967, Resolution 242

United Nations Security Council (UN SC), 17 December 1981, Resolution 497

United Nations Security Council (UN SC), 11 December 2006, Report of the Secretary-General on the Middle East (S/2006/956)

University of California Press, 1989, Asad, the Struggle for the Middle East

UN News Centre, 16 June 2012, UN suspends monitoring activities in Syria amid escalating violence

UN News Centre, October 2007, Syrian Foreign Minister says Security Council should condemn Israeli acts

UN News Centre, 19 August 2011, UN provides emergency help to Palestinian refugees displaced by fighting in Syria

UN Watch, 22 August 2011, EU waters down UN Human Rights Council resolution on Syria

USA Today, 11 May 2012, Christians in Syria live in uneasy alliance with Assad

Vox Clamantis, 11 May 2012, Une experience vécue de la situation sécuritaire actuelle en Syrie

Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 15 November 2006, The Golan Heights and Syrian-Israeli Relations: What Does Asad Want? by Seth Wikas

Washington Post, The, 13 May 2012, Syria's Muslim Brotherhood is gaining influence over anti-Assad revolt

Xinhuanet, 24 July 2012, Syrian refugees continue fleeing into neighboring countries: UNHCR

Yale University Press, 1991, Syria Unmasked: The Suppression of Human Rights by the Asad Regime

YaLibnan, 22 April 2012, UNHCR warns of funding shortfall for Syrian refugees

About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) was established by the Norwegian Refugee Council in 1998, upon the request of the United Nations, to set up a global database on internal displacement. A decade later, IDMC remains the leading source of information and analysis on internal displacement caused by conflict and violence worldwide.

IDMC aims to support better international and national responses to situations of internal displacement and respect for the rights of internally displaced people (IDPs), who are often among the world's most vulnerable people. It also aims to promote durable solutions for IDPs, through return, local integration or settlement elsewhere in the country.

IDMC's main activities include:

- Monitoring and reporting on internal displacement caused by conflict, generalised violence and violations of human rights;
- Researching, analysing and advocating for the rights of IDPs;
- Training and strengthening capacities on the protection of IDPs;
- Contributing to the development of standards and guidance on protecting and assisting IDPs.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at www.internal-displacement.org

Contact:

Frank Smith

Head of Middle East, Europe, Caucasus and Asia department
Tel: +41 22 799 07 10
Email: frank.smith@nrc.ch

Guillaume Charron

Country Analyst
Tel: +41 22 799 07 11
Email: guillaume.charron@nrc.ch

IDMC

Norwegian Refugee Council
Chemin de Balexert 7-9
1219 Geneva, Switzerland
www.internal-displacement.org
Tel: +41 (0)22 799 0700
Fax: +41 (0)22 799 0701