

AL-QUSAYR

City Profile

October 2019



UrbAN
SYRIA



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Acronyms

AFID	Air Force Intelligence Directorate	RMP	Russian Military Police
AID	Airforce Intelligence Directorate	RPBA	Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment
AOG	Armed Opposition Group	SAA	Syrian Arab Army
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics	SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
CSO	Civil Society Organisation	SSNP	Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party
EC-JRC	European Commission-Joint Research Centre	SSSD	Syrian Society for Social Development
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War	SYP	Syrian Pounds
FSA	Free Syrian Army	UFI	Urban Functionality Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UN	United Nations
GID	General Intelligence Directorate	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
GIS	Geographic Information Systems	UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
GoS	Government of Syria	UNHABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
GUSW	General Union of Syrian Women	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
HLP	Housing, Land, and Property	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
HTS	Hayat Tahrir al-Sham	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
IED	Improvised Explosive Device	UrbAN-S	Urban Analysis Network for Syria
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	USD	United States Dollar
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
MID	Military Intelligence Directorate	WASH	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
MoE	Ministry of Education	WFP	World Food Programme
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	WHO	World Health Organisation
MoH	Ministry of Health		
MoLAE	Ministry of Local Administration and Environment		
MoSAL	Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour		
MoWR	Ministry of Water Resources		
MP	Member of Parliament		
MW	MegaWatts		
NDF	National Defence Forces		
NDVI	Normalised Difference Vegetation Index		
NFI	Non-Food Items		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation		
NNGO	National Non-Governmental Organisation		

Acknowledgment

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Disclaimer

The information and views set out in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Neither the European Union institutions and bodies nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

The content of this report serves to feed in preparations for the post-agreement phase, thereby creating assessments and analytical building blocks that could enrich a possible future Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA). Where feasible, the content of this study could be used to inform current humanitarian and resilience programming in line with the guidance of the EU Council Conclusions on Syria. The EU will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, negotiated by the Syrian parties in the conflict on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, is firmly under way.

Front cover: Saint Elijah (Mar Elias) Greek Melkite Church in Al-Qusayr www.christiansofsyria.org

Urban Analysis Network for Syria

The Urban Analysis Network for Syria (UrbAN-S) approaches the analysis of urban areas as an adaptive exercise to understand how cities are (or are not) functioning, and how the people living in them cope during, and in transition, from conflict. UrbAN-S brings a combination of expertise in urban analysis and information management, along with a collaborative and inclusive approach to better understand needs on the ground. This results in information which is more relevant and more accessible, building the capacity of Syria actors to use that information.

Objectives of UrbAN-S are framed within global efforts to enhance responses in urban areas, and the call for a paradigm shift in humanitarian assistance in urban areas to be community based.

UrbAN-S urban profiling provides an integrated snapshot of the current physical and social conditions from a conflict and displacement context. This includes identifying gaps between the population needs and the capacity of the city to provide for those needs. Analysis will support the identification of priority areas of intervention and contribute to inclusive, responsible and sustainable urban recovery in view of the post-agreement phase.

The Urban-S analytical framework serves as a roadmap for answering three main questions:

One: How have conflict dynamics affected or continue to affect the city?

Two: How have population movements affected, or continue to affect, the city?

Three: How and to what extent does the city provide an adequate standard of living for all residents?

1. Executive summary

Al-Qusayr, a border city in the Orontes River basin, is rich in water and surrounded by fertile farming land. The city is the administrative centre of the district and sub-district. With an estimated total population of 33,313 prior to the conflict, it was a diverse city comprised of predominantly Sunni and Christian populations, with smaller Shia, Bedouin, and Alawite minority communities, many of whom migrated from small surrounding villages inhabited by minority groups.

Al-Qusayr's economy relied on several major sectors including public services and agriculture. The city was a major hub for the production and trade of agricultural, livestock, and dairy products. Another key feature in Al-Qusayr's economy was smuggling, which was pervasive even before the conflict. Indeed, the city is one of the four smuggling corridors on the Lebanese border. These smuggling operations took place openly until the late 2000s when the Government of Syria (GoS) efforts to stem them, which began in the mid-1990s, became more systematic. However, the formal economy was not generating sufficient livelihood opportunities for the population to thrive. The GoS crackdown on smugglers resulted in casualties, creating a contentious relationship with the authorities. Furthermore, Al-Qusayr fell under new legislation controlling border areas in 2004 (Law 41/2004), which sharply curtailed construction and limited access to housing and other urban expansions. These policies fueled resentment against the government and drove residents to take to the streets in 2011 when protests spread across the country. Following these demonstrations the armed opposition took up arms against Government forces. Heavy fighting during 2012 led to between 60 and 70 percent of the population being displaced from the city. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) took over major parts of the city in the wake of this confrontation. In November 2012 the GoS imposed a siege on the city leading to further population displacement.

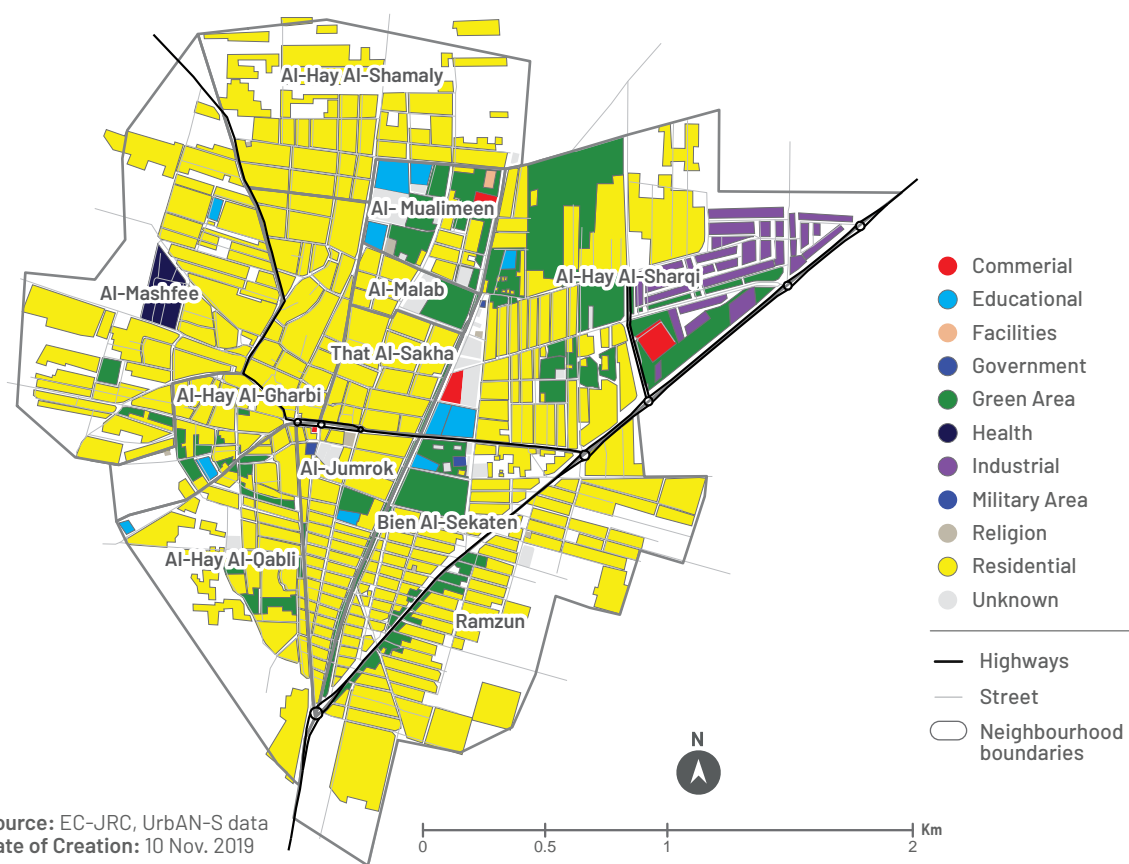
In mid-2013, the GoS led an offensive to retake the city, which introduced Hezbollah as a player in the Syrian conflict for the first time. Following the GoS and allied forces regaining control of the city, a small flow of returns occurred. In total, approximately 5,000 people, including 1,200 Christians, were able to return. Along with these returns, land and housing occupation issues arose due to inaccessible farms and widespread destruction. Shortly afterwards, the GoS put a halt on further returns to the city for five years. In March 2019, there were reports of government-led initiatives to return families to Al-Qusayr, mainly of public staff and following a comprehensive security screening. However, lack of economic opportunities and housing issues rendered the initiative ultimately unsustainable.

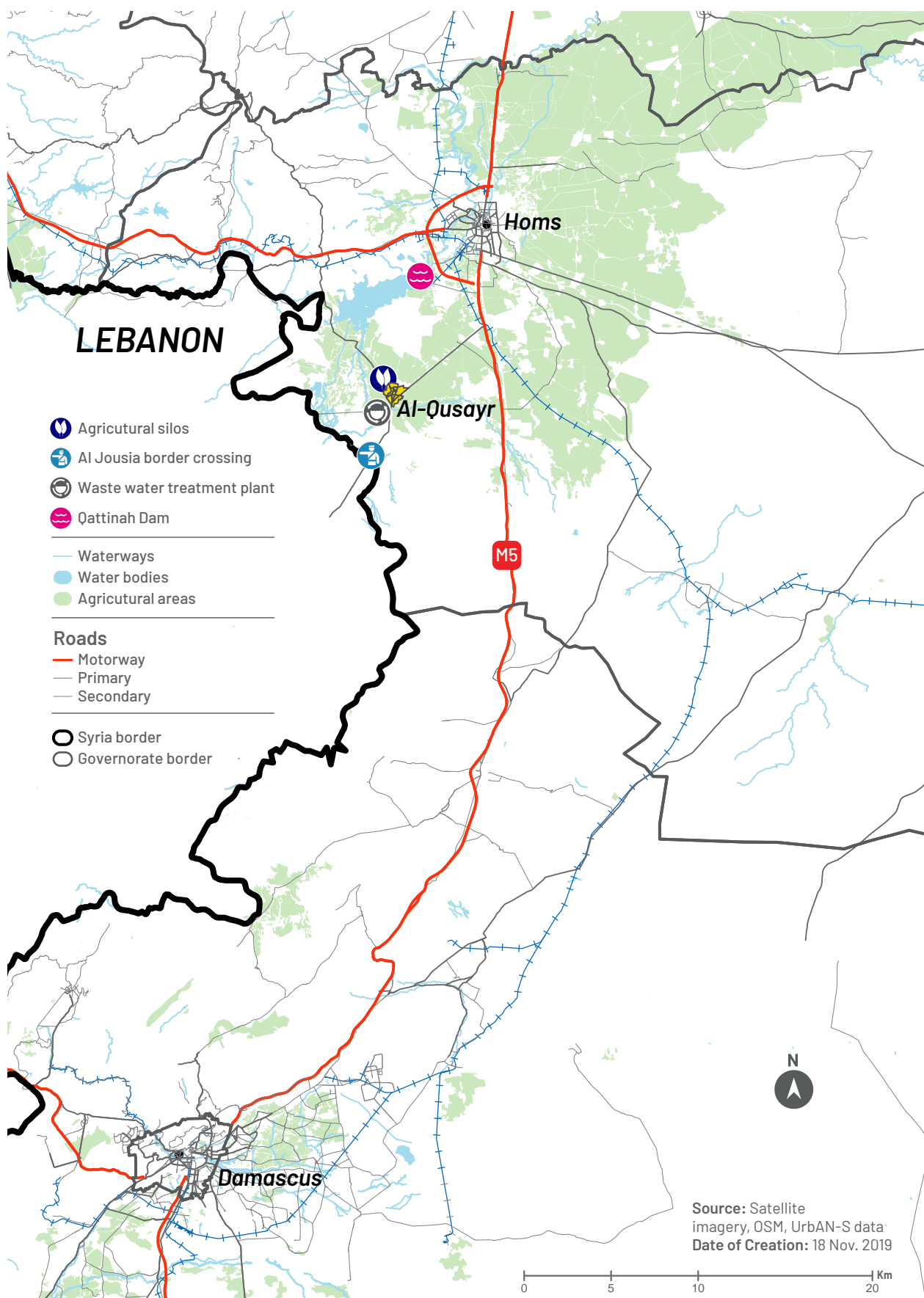
Al-Qusayr's population is now estimated at 3,038. The population is declining, as those who first returned suffered from severe mobility constraints, which impeded their livelihoods and social relations. The Governor of Homs has taken measures to facilitate returns, but important issues remain. Al-Qusayr may undergo an unintended demographic change as people will not return under the current conditions. Although certain humanitarian response actors are permitted within the city and service provision has improved, this has not been sufficient to unlock returns given ongoing security and stability challenges.

Hezbollah's presence in and around the city is declining. The military and security presence of Hezbollah is now limited to a small base, however, they remain a key actor in all local decision-making processes. This presence has fueled narratives of demographic change, especially after the arrival of several Shia families that were deported from Idlib in 2017, yet the scale and nature of such population movements remain highly contested and unverifiable.

The return potential could increase if investments in the city occur. Incentives should be given to occupiers as much as potential returnees in this case, and dispute mechanisms should be put in place. Civil society actors, such as the Catholic church and the municipality have been instrumental in facilitating dispute resolutions and should be built upon. Al-Qusayr is a case where humanitarian and recovery response should have an upfront peacebuilding agenda for any rural and urban initiatives they may lead.

Map 1.1: Land use



Map 1.2: Regional location of Al-Qusayr and in relation with major cities in Syria

Key themes

- The southwestern portion of the city has been designated for redevelopment under the implementation mechanisms of Law 10/2018. However, Law 10's successful application through local authority initiatives has yet to be proven effective, and announcements made by the municipality in this regard remain largely symbolic.
- Secondary land occupation is a pervasive HLP issue in Al-Qusayr. This applies mainly to farm lands, but also to scores of houses.
- Recovery programming, if properly designed, has the potential to mitigate HLP violations and support inclusive returns across the demographic spectrum.
- Agricultural land on the periphery of the city has been left unoccupied during and in the aftermath of the conflict.
- Severe damage to housing and other urban infrastructure presents a barrier to those who wish to resettle over the long-term. However, there is significant accommodation capacity for returns over the short-term.
- Security actors have imposed restrictions for recent returnees and residents currently in the city from accessing and returning to certain neighbourhoods.
- Chronic insecurity presents a continued deterrent to large-scale returns.
- Returns continue to be restricted for the majority of the city's former residents. Refugees in Lebanon hosted by relatives suffer from less restrictions and enjoy better hosting situation as compared to other Syrian refugees hosted in border camps. They will have little incentive to return under the current circumstances.
- Community engagement efforts should involve former residents who have been displaced within Syria and abroad.
- UN agencies and INGOs face access challenges severe programming restrictions in Al-Qusayr.
- International organisations should be aware of the programming risks and reputational risks associated with operating in a context as politicised as Al-Qusayr.

Overall considerations

- Focus programming on the city's centre neighbourhoods where economic activity is concentrated.
- Develop livelihoods programming that links the town to its rural periphery.
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements for internal connectivity.
- Initiate livelihood assistance, in the short-term, to encourage and support sustainable returns.
- Encourage growth in industries which facilitate transportation and cross-border trade and offer alternatives to illicit smuggling.
- Ensure equal services are available all over the city when planning for potential projects, prioritizing neighbourhoods with the highest densities and most pressing needs.
- Advocate for a transition towards greater civilian control of governance and the economy.

2. Methodology

The methodology for city profiles are regularly refined in line with improving the analysis process. Moreover, updates are made with the introduction of new data collection tools, changes in a specific city's context, as well as data availability affecting the methodology. The following briefly describes the methodologies adopted and utilized in the development of the Al-Qusayr City Profile. Further description of these methodologies are available upon request.

Coverage

UrbAN-S field data puts the number of neighbourhoods in Al-Qusayr at eleven. Neighbourhood boundary delineations were made in the course of the further investigation of the city. All neighbourhoods were covered in the course of data collection efforts.

Data Compilation

The methodology for the data collection followed a "mixed-methods" approach. Therefore, the profile represents a synthesized area-based analysis utilizing the following methods:

Secondary data review

Information was derived by review of existing reports focusing broadly on Syria and specifically on the Governorate of Homs and City of Al-Qusayr. These reports provided historical and contextual information on pre-conflict trends and baselines which provided for the triangulation and contextualization of results from primary data collection.

Primary data collection

Asset survey

The survey's primary objective focused on information gathering for a variety of public assets. This information was used to understand the damage and operational status of public infrastructure, municipal and community facilities. Combined with population, survey data is also used to support capacity analysis and needs of existing community members. Asset classes inventoried include governance, health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), solid waste management, energy, and transportation.

Sectoral expert interviews

A series of interviews with specialists and knowledgeable people from a variety of sectors. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone with local practitioners or government officials with local knowledge in the city and the region. They may also include local stakeholders, response actors or community leaders including the secretary of the local council. Sectoral expert interviews also include those aware of the security situation.

Local area experts

Teams interviewed two neighbourhood representatives, or local area experts per neighbourhood. The survey was designed to investigate community perceptions on a variety of sectors at the neighbourhood level. Responses were close ended, permitting only a singular answer. They addressed all studied sectors, providing insight into the needs of local residents.

Remote sensing

Satellite imagery was acquired in April 2018 at a resolution of 0.3 meters, was analysed as part of regular monitoring of damage since October 2014, in the context of post-conflict urban analysis for Syria by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre's (EC-JRC). Satellite imagery was visually evaluated to obtain the level of damage of buildings and infrastructure. Definitions for damage categories have been defined by the EC-JRC.¹

Morphological visual data

Visual data including pictures, videos and base-maps (produced through a compilation of open-source materials) were analysed to understand changes which have occurred in the city. The data was then validated from multiple local sources.

Damage Assessment Analysis

An in-depth analysis of the damage assessment was conducted to aggregate the assessment of damage at the neighbourhood level.

GIS tools were heavily involved to carry out the analysis. Land use classifications, average floor number and building typology were factored in order to calculate the number of buildings and living units.

The result is compared to the damage points and estimations of affected buildings according to every damage level in each neighbourhood. ²

The neighbourhoods were subsequently categorized according to the percentage of the affected buildings. The classification of damage is as follows:

- **Not damaged** – neighbourhoods with less than one percent of the area damaged.
- **Lightly damaged** – neighbourhoods with area damage between 1-9.9 percent.
- **Moderately damaged** – neighbourhoods with area damage between 10-24.9 percent.
- **Severely damaged or destroyed** – neighbourhoods with area damage more than 25 percent.

Population Estimates

Population estimates conducted for the profile are taken from a variety of sources.

- 2004 estimates from the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics.
- 2011 – 2015 is unavailable.
- 2016 – 2018 estimates are provided by operational partners and Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).
- 2019 population numbers at the neighbourhood level are provided by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

Infrastructure and Services Functionality Analysis

Access to health

Accessibility to healthcare services is estimated by measuring associations one or more of the following key indicators:

1. Location and catchment area of operational facilities; in other words, distance to the nearest operational facility.
2. Presence of medical staff.
3. Operational bed capacity (for hospitals only)
4. Access challenges such as checkpoints

The above indicators are quantified using three and four-point scales to reflect the degree of their impact on accessibility. All figures are contextualized comparing pre-conflict and most recent population figures with special focus on the vulnerable groups. ³

Access to Education

A nominal estimation of the number of students per each neighbourhood is calculated using pre-conflict population as a reference for the actual population of the city. This number is then compared to the total functional student capacity of the schools in each neighbourhood. This gives a nominal deficit of (number of students unserved) per each neighbourhood.

Access to functional education facilities has also been calculated based on the number functional schools in each Neighbourhood.

Access to Electricity

Accessibility to energy presents information based on reporting of available grid power supply. It considers the connection, power provided, as well as the private service providers. Interventions undertaken by government and non-government actors are surveyed, in order to understand the electricity infrastructure capacity outlook for the city.

Access to Water

Several indicators are utilized as a proxy for access to water. The list of below indicators focusing mainly on the demand side over the supply. One or more have been used in assessing access to water:

1. Number of supply hours per day.
2. Reported water quality.
3. Reported damage and operability.

- 1 The original damage data points were provided by the *EC-JRC* and classified in four categories of damage. To comply with damage needs assessment, this layer was in some instances grouped into two categories.
- 2 See publication: JRC Methodology for assessing the damage in Syria through visual interpretation of Very High Resolution (VHR) satellite imagery in built-up areas (forthcoming December 2019).
- 3 Vulnerable groups include: lactating women (calculated as 70 percent of children aged below one), population below 5 and above 65 years of age, and people with chronic disease (calculated as 5–10 percent of the population)

3. Demographics and population movement

Pre-conflict population trends

Historically, Al-Qusayr was a small Sunni settlement. During the second half of the 20th century, the town became increasingly diverse, comprised of Sunni, Christian, Shia, Bedouin, and Alawite communities as part of a trend of urbanisation that occurred throughout Syria. Indeed, the town began to receive Christian and Bedouin migrants in the 1950s and during Hafez al-Assad's presidency the city began to receive Alawite migrants, who tended to congregate in particular neighbourhoods and occupied security and public administration jobs. There are several smaller settlements that surround Al-Qusayr which are largely populated by Christian and Shia communities.⁴

Prior to the conflict, the city had an estimated total population of 33,313.⁵ The Sunni population was the largest with 60 percent of the total, while Christians and Shia population each comprised 15 percent.⁶

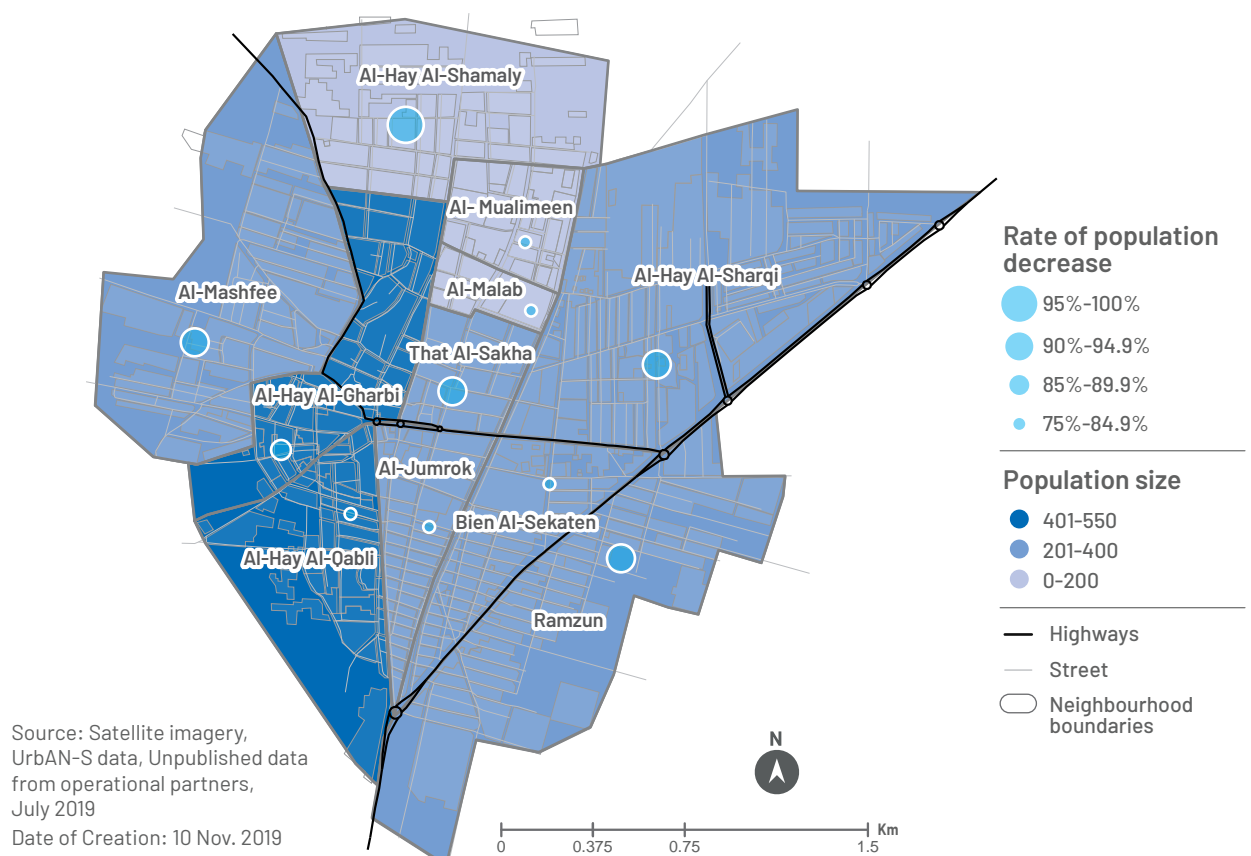
Conflict period population dynamics

The specific sectarian nature of the conflict in Al-Qusayr had a heavy impact on the demographics and overall population of the city. Indeed, the initial protests in 2011 sparked sectarian tensions and split the Sunni and Christian communities, which had previously co-existed amicably and enjoyed reasonably good social links in the city.⁷ Moreover, aggression by Sunni opposition forces towards surrounding Shia communities due to the latter's support of the Government led to the involvement of Hezbollah in the conflict, which fought on the side of the Syrian Government. This strengthened the Syrian Arab Army's (SAA) position against the Free Syrian Army (FSA), but also added to the sectarian tensions in the city.⁸

After the FSA took control of the city, the SAA besieged the city in November 2012. This led to between 60 and 70 percent of the population to leave the city. In mid-2013, as the SAA and its allied forces began their campaign to retake the city, the majority of the remaining population was displaced due to intense fighting in the city.

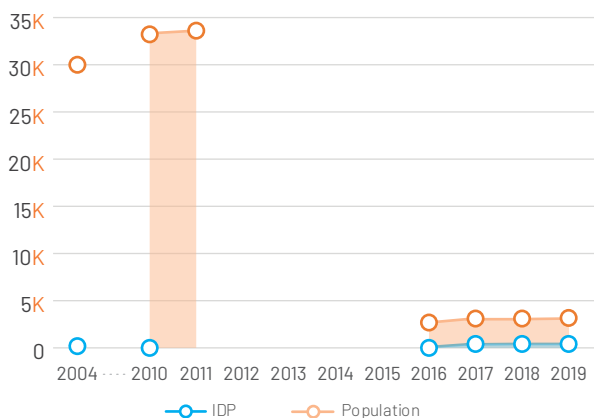
Following the Syrian Government and allied forces assuming control of the city once again, a minor flow of returns occurred. In total, approximately 5,000 people, including 1,200 Christians and a small number of Sunni residents, were able to return before the Government put a halt on further returns to the city.

Map 3.1: Population size and population change (2010 Vs 2019), by neighborhood



The majority of IDPs from the city, mostly Sunni, have up until now been barred from returning.⁹ After Government forces took control of the city, local sources report that the new residents of the city were relocated primarily from the Shia villages of Foah, Bennsh subdistrict; as well as Kafraya, Maaret Tamsrin sub-district in rural Idlib.¹⁰ While reports have claimed that the Syrian Government and allied actors in the city have attempted to change the pre-existing demographic constitution of the city, this has not been substantiated by field reports.

Figure 3.1: Population and IDP Estimates (2004–2019)



Current population and return trends

Due to the access restrictions and lack of adequate services available to the city's residents, the population that remained at the end of 2013 has slowly dwindled. As of July 2019, the total number stood at 3,038, of which 415 are IDPs.¹¹ The majority of the population present in the city are located in the eastern neighbourhoods.

The return of IDPs to Al-Qusayr continues to be a challenge. While the Syrian Government seeks to project a public image of encouraging returns, various security measures are being taken which tend to hinder the displaced population from acquiring the required permission to do so. Returns are reportedly restricted to civil servants; known Government supporters; and those that can prove ownership of houses that are undamaged.¹² Furthermore, current residents of the city, as well as potential returnees, are also restricted from returning to certain neighbourhoods in Al-Qusayr City, specifically the western, southern, and northern neighbourhoods. To note these were previously held by opposition forces and are under strict checkpoint control.

There is the perception that current Government actions are aiming to tip the balance of power between the city's different sectarian groups, mostly moving away from the Sunni majority towards one that is more supportive of the Syrian Government. This is being implemented primarily by blocking Sunni refugees and IDPs from returning to Al-Qusayr. This could generate enduring sect-based demographic changes in Al-Qusayr. The presence of Hezbollah and Iranian elements in the city reportedly supports these Government objectives. These groups allegedly have tight control as to how returns occur in the city at the present time, through a high security presence in the city.

In March 2019, media reports stated that the Government of Syria had begun allowing the return of a limited number of families to the city. However, according to local sources, these 126 approved families are from the northern village of Eastern Buwayda and not originally from Al-Qusayr. In July 2019, further security approvals were given and around 1000 people were allowed to return from the city of Homs and other small towns in the area, including Hasya, Shinshar and Jandar.¹³

In September 2019, calls for the return of the displaced population of Al-Qusayr and surrounding rural areas currently in Lebanon were made by Hezbollah leadership. Talks were held between Syrian and Lebanese officials to further encourage these returns. While returns to Al-Qusayr City as a result of these entreaties have not been verified, media reports suggest that there have been returns to the Al-Qusayr region by displaced people living in Lebanon. These returnees were reportedly pressured by Lebanese security officials.¹⁴

In October 2019, Al-Qusayr's Local Council reported on its Facebook page that 400 families had returned to the city.¹⁵ Local sources report that the security clearance process for returns is improving and that further returns, including from Lebanon, are expected in the near future.¹⁶

Figure 3.2: Resident to IDP ratio (2019)

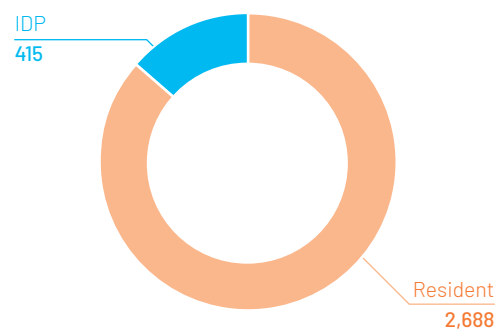
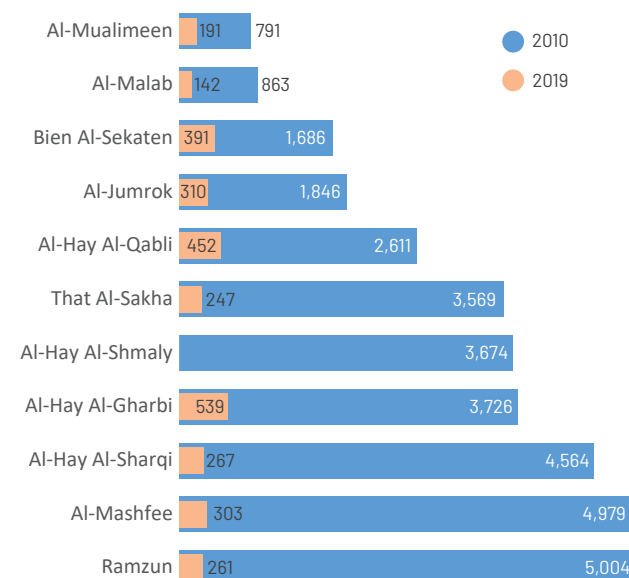


Figure 3.3: Change in population, by neighbourhood (2010–2019)



Continuing barriers to return

Security approvals for return and heavy presence of security forces continue to limit return

As of now, large segments of the Al-Qusayr population continue to be denied the security clearances necessary to return to the city, due to their existing opposition allegiances. This particularly affects those currently displaced to Lebanon. Despite recent statements by Hezbollah leadership the continuing presence of its and other government-aligned militias in the city and surrounding areas reinforce the security barriers that limit returns.

Advocacy for equitable and inclusive population return by reducing the onerous security clearance requirements will allow more displaced families to return. Facilitating the de-securitization of the city by reducing the presence of militias and controlling the influence that they have over the city's population will ensure that prospective returns and current residents feel safer in the city.

Limited livelihood opportunities continue to prevent long term population stability

With the high level of displacement seen in Al-Qusayr, economic demand has softened and livelihood opportunities in the city that are required for sustainable return are few.

Livelihood assistance programming in the short term will encourage and support sustainable return, while local markets recover and begin to offer further employment opportunities.

Damage and other threats to housing continue to prevent return

Al-Qusayr experienced high damage to housing as a result of the conflict in the city. Returning population are expected to pay for repairs to damaged housing, which is unaffordable to most; while the Government has also reportedly prevented people from returning to homes that are badly affected. Other Housing Land and Property related issues, including secondary occupation and impending redevelopment plans in the city, also continue to bar possible return to certain areas.

Continued programming that targets the housing sector through repairs to damaged housing units will alleviate this barrier to adequate accommodation, while advocacy surrounding HLP issues in the city will point Al-Qusayr's recovery in a more equitable direction that benefits all of the city's people. (See city profile section 6: "Housing: Housing Land and Property Concerns")

- 4 A large portion of Syria's Shia population lived in this region of western Homs governorate.
- 5 According to United Nations' *operational partners*, July 2019.
- 6 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 7 Fabrice Balanche: "SECTARIANISM IN SYRIA'S CIVIL WAR," (*The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2018).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 <https://www.memri.org/reports/together-its-allies-syrian-regime-forcing-demographic-change-areas-country-self-protection>
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- 15 <https://www.facebook.com/%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B5%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%86%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%84-%D9%8A%D8%A9-1594434770884796/>
- 16 Personal interview by *UrbAN-S* with local contact familiar with the city's security and return dynamics, November 2019

4. Context timeline

Local causes and triggers of conflict

Like many border towns, Al-Qusayr constituted a breeding ground for protests in 2011 due to historic grievances. Even prior to the conflict, smuggling represented a pillar of the economy. Indeed, the importance of cross-border smuggling with Lebanon to the town's economy spiked in the 1980s with the imposition of Western sanctions. Sanctions, combined with rising inflation and the growing trade deficit, led the government to impose restrictions on many foreign goods, starting in 1981.¹⁷ The restrictions on imported goods generated increased demand for foreign goods and an increase in smuggling from Lebanon.

In the late 2000s, the government launched a crackdown on smuggling. Both petty and major smugglers were assassinated systematically. Over the span of a few years, most families in Al-Qusayr had lost at least one male family member.¹⁸ The economy of the town had been decimated in the absence of alternative livelihoods opportunities. Sunni families were particularly affected as they controlled most of the smuggling activities at the time.¹⁹ These policies fueled resentment against the government and drove residents to take to the streets in 2011 when protests spread across the country. The government's violent crackdown against the protestors in Al-Qusayr, which peaked with the Orontes (Al-A'ssi) massacre, where a number of peaceful protesters were killed. This generated further frustration and defections amongst residents serving in the Syrian Arab Army (SAA). Many of these defected soldiers joined armed opposition factions in Al-Qusayr, which later confronted the government militarily.²⁰

Effects on existing social, tribal, and political cleavages

Al-Qusayr's pre-war population was mixed, comprised of a Sunni majority and Christian, Shia, Bedouin, and Alawite minorities.²¹ These groups largely coexisted peacefully prior to the conflict and maintained a division of labour between the various economic sectors. For example, Alawites primarily occupied security jobs, Christians were typically involved in agriculture and livestock, and Sunnis predominantly occupied public sector jobs, in addition to running smuggling networks.²² However, the conflict generated sectarian tensions between Sunnis and non-Sunnis. In June 2012, opposition forces, who were majority Sunni, demanded Christians leave Al-Qusayr as they perceived them to be aligned with the GoS.²³ The presence of Hezbollah from May 2013 onwards exacerbated sectarian divisions and dramatically altered the political, economic, and social balance of power within the city.

Since the group has taken control of the city, smuggling has changed hands from the Sunni community to the Shia community, which operates under Hezbollah's oversight. In addition, Hezbollah, as well as the GoS, have restricted returns to Al-Qusayr, particularly for Sunnis. Moreover, Hezbollah has settled its fighters, as well as Shia and Alawite families from the surrounding areas, in Al-Qusayr.²⁴ Insofar as returns remain restricted for Sunni residents and the city remains under Hezbollah's control, sect-based demographic changes in Al-Qusayr are likely to become permanent. Amongst the few thousand residents that are allowed to reside in Al-Qusayr, most intra-communal tensions are caused by HLP issues or generalised insecurity. When tensions arise, most residents reportedly rely on religious institutions or the police to mediate.²⁵

Risks of conflict relapse

The resurgence of an organised armed opposition is extremely unlikely in Al-Qusayr as all opposition fighters have withdrawn from the city, barriers to return continue to exist for the majority of former residents, and Hezbollah's remains in control of the city. On the other hand, the presence of Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed forces puts the city at risk of sporadic airstrikes by Israel. The most recent airstrikes took place in May 2018 when Israel targeted a Hezbollah munitions in al-Dab'a air base northeast of Al-Qusayr city.²⁶ While future efforts by the GoS and Russia to curb Hezbollah's presence in Al-Qusayr could potentially devolve into armed clashes, the likelihood of open conflict between them remains unlikely.

Phase I: Protests and early violence (March 2011 – August 2011)

On 25 March 2011, peaceful protests begin in the city of Al-Qusayr. Protesters gather in the Khaled Ben Walid Mosque and march towards Al-Sayyida Aicha square, which becomes the main site of protests. Protests occur every Friday and eventually are held every day. The

unarmed peaceful protesters are met with violence by government forces. On 22 April 2011, the first protesters are killed during peaceful demonstrations. Afterwards, waves of defections occur within the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), many of which join the FSA in Al-Qusayr.

Phase I

MARCH 2011

Protests start taking place in the city of Al-Qusayr in solidarity with the peaceful protests in Dar'a.

JULY 2011

The Syrian Arab Army enters Al-Qusayr with tanks and armored vehicles to help government security forces suppress the protests.

Population impact: During the first months of the conflict, minorities within the city, including Alawites and Christians, are displaced from western, southern, and northern neighbourhoods due to fears of increasing sectarian hostilities with the emergence of Islamist armed opposition groups.

Phase II: The battle for control of Al-Qusayr (September 2011–June 2013)

Government of Syria (GoS) forces heighten their attacks on civilians within the city. On 24 September, a large number of peaceful protesters in the city are killed in what comes to be called the Orontes (Al-A'si) Massacre. Over the course of 2011, AOGs proliferate in number within the city and the surrounding areas. In February 2012, the battle of Al-Qusayr begins when fighting breaks out between the GoS forces and their allies on the one hand, and the FSA on the other. Initially, the FSA makes

advances and extends its control over Al-Qusayr. GoS forces retaliate by placing the city under siege from November 2012 to June 2013. This severely affects the local population by restricting the entry of medicine and basic supplies, their mobility within the city and their ability to flee. On 4 April, 2013, the GoS and allied forces launch a major military offensive to take control of Al-Qusayr, with Hezbollah playing a pivotal role. By June 2013, Al-Qusayr is under the full control of the GoS.

Phase II

SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

The GoS bombs the opposition-held eastern neighbourhoods of the city. Civilians flee the fighting in Al-Qusayr through what locals dubb "the corridor of death" between the villages of Shamsin and Hseiniyeh. Around 100 people go missing and the death toll is estimated at more than 30.³¹

FEBRUARY 2012

The FSA takes control of an intelligence services building in the city, killing five people. The FSA continues to gain ground against the SAA and takes over the city's state hospital and town hall.³² By late February, control of the city is split between the FSA and the GoS.

MARCH 2012

After an FSA advance in the city, the SAA conducts a counteroffensive. A number of residential neighbourhoods are shelled heavily and snipers shoot at civilians in the streets.³³ FSA groups that had retreated from Homs City enter Al-Qusayr to fight against the GoS. The FSA subsequently takes control of the entirety of the city.

NOVEMBER 2012–JUNE 2013

The city is besieged by GoS forces from the northern and eastern sides and Hezbollah forces from the southern and western sides.

APRIL 2013

GoS forces, backed by the NDF and Hezbollah, launch an offensive on the city. The ground assault is led by Hezbollah, marking the group's first instance of significant military involvement in Syria.

MAY 2013

On 19 May, the Battle of Al-Qusayr is launched by the GoS and its allies. Hezbollah fighters enter the city from the south, east, and western neighbourhoods and advance northwards, clearing the city of opposition fighters block by block.

JUNE 2013

The FSA and a large number of Sunni civilians withdraw on 3 June, through a route in the north of the city. Afterwards, Hezbollah and the SAA increase the intensity of their attacks on the town and capture the city on 5 June.

Population impact: In September 2011, residents of the western neighbourhoods flee heavy shelling to the western side of the Orontes river, west of Al-Qusayr city.

In February 2012, an estimated 60 to 70 percent of the city's population is displaced due to heaving fighting between the GoS and FSA.²⁷ In June 2012, an opposition commander makes an announcement calling for all Christians to leave the city within six days. Only 1,000 Christians out of 10,000 choose to remain within the city.²⁸ In May 2013, an estimated 40,000 people flee Al-Qusayr district due to heavy fighting, 7,000 of whom are reported to have remained in the area of Hasiyeh in Homs sub-district.²⁹ After the fall of the city to the GoS and its allies in June 2013, an estimated 20,000 people are estimated to have fled Al-Qusayr city and settled in and around Aarsal, Lebanon in makeshift refugee camps.³⁰

Phase III: Government of Syria control (June 2018–October 2019)

After the opposition is forced to withdraw from the city, a large number of residents are also forcefully displaced, the vast majority of whom are Sunni Muslims. The GoS and its allies transform the area into a militarized zone.

Any entry into the city continues to require the approval of the state security apparatus and Hezbollah.

Phase III

JUNE 2018

Russian troops redeploy to Al-Qusayr and other areas along the Lebanese border, causing friction with Hezbollah.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, Hezbollah purportedly withdraws from Al-Qusayr and transfers control of the Lebanese-Syrian border to the GoS' Eleventh Division.³⁵ However, Hezbollah combatants remain present within the city and the Lebanese border against Russian orders.³⁶

JULY 2019

The Military Intelligence Directorate grants 1,000 IDPs approval to return to Al-Qusayr.³⁷

SEPTEMBER 2019

GoS security agencies approve the return of 1,200 families from Homs Governorate, including Homs City, East and West Qalamoun, Hasya', Shansar, and Jandar.³⁸ On 20 September, Hezbollah's Hassan Nasrallah calls on the people of Al-Qusayr to return, claiming that Hezbollah has "arranged the conditions in Al-Qusayr to accommodate a full return of the residents of the city and surrounding villages."³⁹ However, former residents in Lebanon continue to be denied GoS security approvals to return.⁴⁰

OCTOBER 2019

Hezbollah fighters remain present within the city and continue to represent a deterrent to return for many IDPs and refugees from Al-Qusayr.⁴¹ Despite the thousands of security approvals reportedly granted by the GoS, only 125 residents return to Al-Qusayr between July and October 2019.⁴²

Population impact: Following the return to GoS control, approximately 5,000 people, including 1,200 Christians and a small number of Sunni residents, are able to return before the Government puts a halt on further returns to the city. For five years, refugees and IDPs are not allowed to return to the city of Al-Qusayr, while residents are restricted from accessing the western, southern, and northern neighbourhoods. In the fall of 2019, the GoS approves the return of 1,200 IDP families from government-controlled areas.

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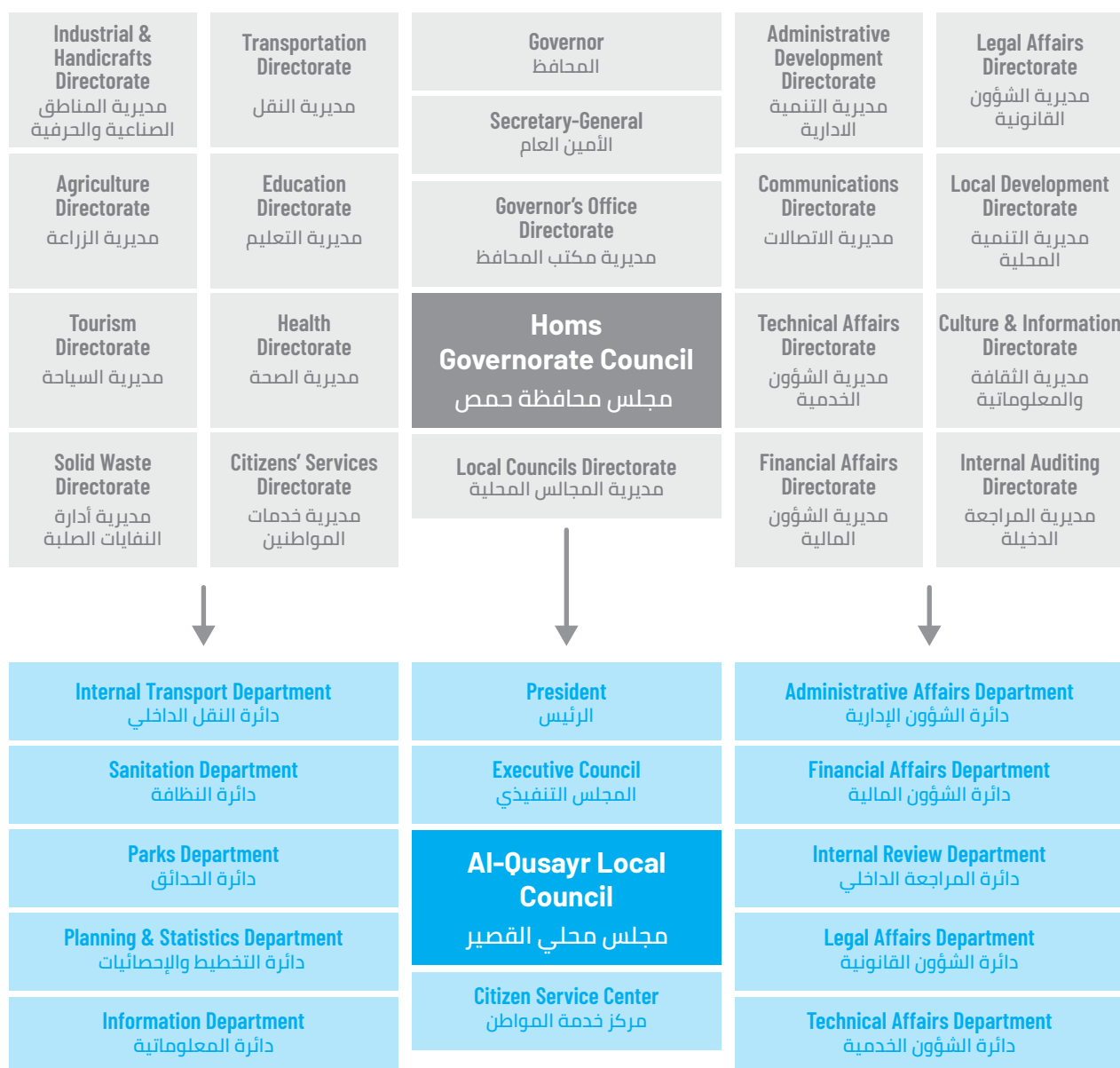
5. Governance and stakeholder analysis

Governance actors and dynamics

Al-Qusayr Local Council was formed following nationwide local council elections in September 2018. As in other GoS areas, candidates were subject to a security screening and had to be nominated by the government to participate.⁴³ The current President of the Local Council is Abdel Kafi Al-Khatib. The Local Council reports to Homs Governorate Council, with departments reporting to corresponding directorates within Rural

Damascus Governorate Council (see Figure 5.1 Local administration structure). The Governor of Homs is appointed directly by the President. The Governor works to ensure Local Councils throughout the Governorate follow policies and decisions made in Damascus. The current Governor, Talal Al-Barazi, exercises a significant role over decision-making in Al-Qusayr and has played a key role in negotiations surrounding returns to the city.⁴⁴

Figure 5.1: Local administration structure⁴⁵



Due to the intensive bombardment the city experienced, most government buildings are severely or moderately damaged.⁴⁶ In the absence of reconstruction, most local administration buildings were partially operational or not operational at all as of February 2019 (see *Map 5.1 Operationality of governance assets*). Furthermore, Al-Qusayr remains a military zone under the control of Hezbollah and State security forces. Consequently, civilian bodies are confined to a limited and oftentimes, symbolic role. This is exemplified by the fact that the President of the Local Council is not allowed to formally reside in the city. Other public sector employees, like teachers, are also unable to reside in the city. They enter the city during the day to work and leave their ID cards with security actors. They then take them back upon leaving in the evening.⁴⁷ This allows security actors to identify who is illegally residing in the city. The local administration's subordination to and active cooperation with military and security forces was highlighted during a ceremony organised by Hezbollah in November 2017 in Lebanon. During the ceremony, Hezbollah thanked Al-Barazi for "caring for Lebanese citizens inside Syria." Al-Barazi subsequently thanked Hezbollah for its "direct and political support to Syria." He added that "we are partners and we will remain brothers in all stages of struggle and jihad because we have one project."⁴⁸

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) has a presence in the city and is particularly popular among Christian residents.⁴⁹ The Ba'th party, which many Local Council

members belong to, has a significant presence in Al-Qusayr. The party has been pushing back against the iron grip of Hezbollah and other Iranian-backed groups in the area in an effort to open access and allow returns in the area.⁵⁰ In addition, church associations have lobbied the government to allow for the return of Christian residents. These efforts culminated in Damascus organising several highly mediated IDP convoys in 2019, with Vice President Mohammed Ibrahim al-Shaar reportedly playing a leading role.⁵¹ Nevertheless, returns remain limited due to the continued lack of government security approvals, particularly for Sunnis, and inadequate return conditions – including lack of basic services, livelihoods, and security amidst Hezbollah's continued presence.⁵²

The continued lack of GoS security approvals for Sunnis, coupled with the resettlement of Shia and Alawite families by Hezbollah, is perceived by many as an attempt to change the city's demographic landscape. Hezbollah has resettled the families of its fighters in Al-Qusayr, as well as Shia and Alawite families from the surrounding villages and other parts of Syria.⁵³ Many of these new arrivals have occupied the homes and farmlands of displaced Sunni and Christian residents.⁵⁴ These demographic changes are perceived as an attempt by Hezbollah to gain a permanent foothold in Al-Qusayr and the border region in order to secure geopolitical and economic interests. Reconstruction, under the auspices of Law 10, is perceived as a means of further consolidating these demographic changes.

Figure 5.2: Al-Qusayr Local Council building (Photo taken by UrbAN-S, January 2019)



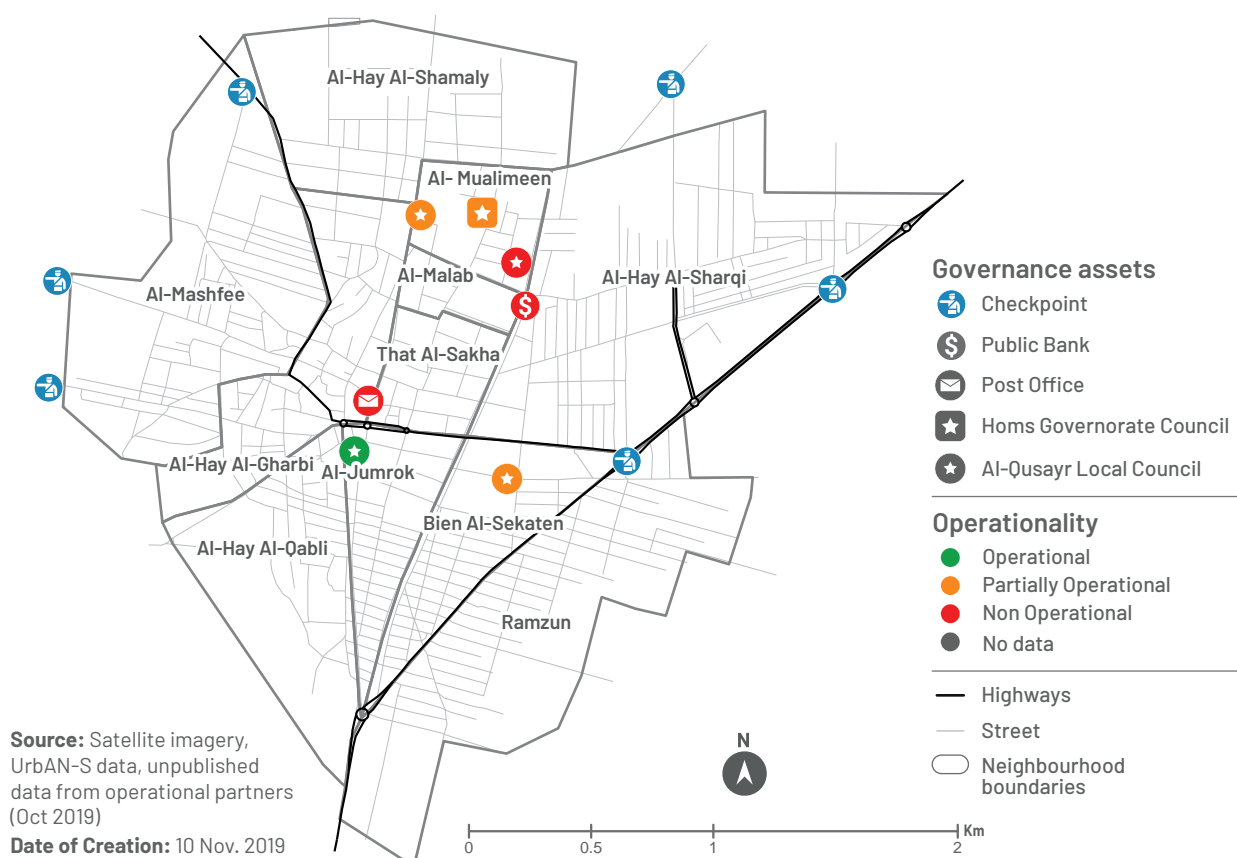
Local control over urban planning and reconstruction

In April 2018, President Bashar al-Assad issued Law 10. The law grants local councils and other administrative bodies the ability to designate “one or more development areas.”⁵⁵ Property owners with these development areas must prove ownership within 30 days or the land is expropriated by the administrative body in question.⁵⁶ In cities where there has been large-scale displacement, there is a risk of widespread expropriation of land and property of displaced residents. The risk is particularly high in former opposition-controlled areas where the government has attempted to leverage Law 10 to reward supporters, punish communities it perceives to have betrayed it, and alter the demographic fabric accordingly.⁵⁷ As Al-Qusayr was formerly under opposition control, experienced significant depopulation, and has already experienced significant demographic changes to date, the city is at risk of redevelopment and expropriation. However, the lack of funding of the GoS and its regional allies renders the implementation of Law 10 unlikely over the short to medium-term.

Al-Qusayr was among the first cities to be designated for redevelopment and reconstruction. Six months after Law 10 was decreed, Al-Qusayr Local Council announced a development area for the city on its Facebook page. Based on the contours of the map that was released, it appears that Hay Al-Qabli and

Al-Jumrok neighbourhoods have been designated for redevelopment (see *urban profile section 6, ‘Housing’*).⁵⁸ As these were Sunni-majority neighbourhoods prior to the conflict, the plan has reinforced the perception of many former residents that the government is pursuing demographic engineering in the city. In the Facebook post, the Local Council asked residents to submit any questions objections to the plan within a month, between 10 October and 9 November 2018. Comments on the Facebook page asked for further details but were not addressed.⁵⁹ The top-down redevelopment process and the lack of responsiveness to the concerns it has elicited is reflective of a wider lack of community engagement. In interviews conducted in January 2019, Al-Qusayr residents reported that they are not given the opportunity to participate in local issues that affect their neighbourhoods, nor are they able to discuss local issues online or in person.⁶⁰ With the majority of the town’s former residents displaced and unable to return from other parts of Syria and Lebanon, as well as stringent access restrictions within the city for current residents, it remains difficult for current and former residents alike to participate in the urban planning and reconstruction process or assert their rights over their own properties (see “*Land redevelopment plans in Al-Qusayr*” under *city profile section 6, ‘Housing,’* for more information).⁶¹

Map 5.1: Operational status of government assets



Security actors and dynamics

Al-Qusayr is a highly militarized zone and security actors currently exercise significant control and influence over governance and civil society actors. The Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) is the most influential of the Syrian security agencies within Al-Qusayr and controls the checkpoint linking Al-Qusayr with the M5 highway and Homs City.⁶² Any access to the town must be approved by the MID. Local sources report that the Airforce Intelligence Directorate (AFID) also retains a presence in the southern neighbourhoods of the city. The agency's influence stretches as far as the Dab'a Airbase, which is located northeast of Al-Qusayr and southwest of Homs City.⁶³ The Syrian Arab Army (SAA) has a presence in the town's eastern neighbourhoods and controls checkpoints at the entrance of the city. Iranian-affiliated National Defense Forces (NDF) are present in the city centre, as are SSNP-aligned militias. The Russian Military Police (RMP) are present at the eastern entrance of the city.⁶⁴

Hezbollah's military involvement in Al-Qusayr marked a crucial turning point in the ability of the GoS to regain control over the city. Hezbollah's presence played a significant role in intensifying the sectarian nature of the conflict within Al-Qusayr, given that the town's population was majority Sunni prior to returning under government control. Hezbollah currently administers the recently opened Syria-Lebanon Jousia-Qaa border crossing and controls cross-border smuggling in Al-Qusayr. Smuggled goods include narcotics, Captagon, and weapons.⁶⁵ Narcotic pills are produced in Al-Qusayr and exported to countries in the region. The profits of these smuggled and illicit goods have provided significant funding for Hezbollah's military operations in Syria. Hezbollah has also provided refuge to Lebanese Shia traffickers in Al-Qusayr, many of which are wanted for arrest in Lebanon due to currency counterfeiting, kidnapping, and murder.⁶⁶

Rising tensions between Hezbollah, Russia, and some branches of the GoS have become evident. These tensions have been increasing since November 2016, when Hezbollah held a military parade in Al-Qusayr showing hundreds of fighters with dozens of military vehicles and weapons including rocket launchers. Several incidents indicate that both the Syrian and Lebanese governments are concerned by Hezbollah's presence on the border.⁶⁷ According to local sources, there are constant tensions between Hezbollah on the one hand and the NDF and SSNP on the other hand. There were also reported tensions in June 2018 between Hezbollah and the RMP after the latter deployed near the Lebanese border. Moreover, Hezbollah was suspected to have vandalised a housing rehabilitation project intended for returnees that had been approved by the GoS. This incident indicates that rights-based, equitable programming that challenges the dominance of military and security actors over returns and other important issues is likely to be met with hostility and violence. There are currently no anti-government residents in the city, as most have been evacuated or are not allowed to return, which means a resurgence in active conflict is unlikely. Moreover, the presence of Hezbollah and Iranian forces keeps the city at risk of sporadic attacks by Israel, which has already conducted airstrikes against military installations of these groups in the vicinity of Al-Qusayr, most recently in May 2018.⁶⁸

Since July 2019, several waves of security approvals were reportedly issued for former residents of Al-Qusayr. Syria's Vice President, Mohammed Ibrahim al-Shaar, reportedly exerted pressure on the Governor of Homs to facilitate returns and organise IDP return convoys.⁶⁹ The first state-sponsored IDP convoy occurred on 7 July 2019.⁷⁰ However, the move was largely symbolic as only a handful of families reportedly remained following their return. Most found living conditions inadequate and left, while others were reportedly not originally from Al-Qusayr.⁷¹ Other reports indicated that the returnees were government employees, military personnel, and Ba'th Party members residing in GoS-controlled areas of Homs Governorate.⁷² Nevertheless, the recent wave of security approvals Christian and Sunni residents is likely linked to efforts by Russia and individuals within the GoS to curb Hezbollah's influence in the area by diluting its Shia support base in the town. In addition, there are reports that five of the town's checkpoints have been transferred from Hezbollah's control to the MID, and that only the southwestern and southeastern entrances of the town remained under the former's control as of July 2019.⁷³ Efforts by the GoS and Russia to stem Hezbollah control are linked to the fact that Hezbollah, like other Iranian-backed militias, now challenge the state's monopoly over violence and neither party is able to exert direct control over them.⁷⁴ In addition, GoS officials are no longer receiving lucrative kickbacks in exchange for facilitating smuggling, as they did prior to Hezbollah control.⁷⁵

Civil society actors and dynamics

UN, INGOs, NNGOs, and CSOs

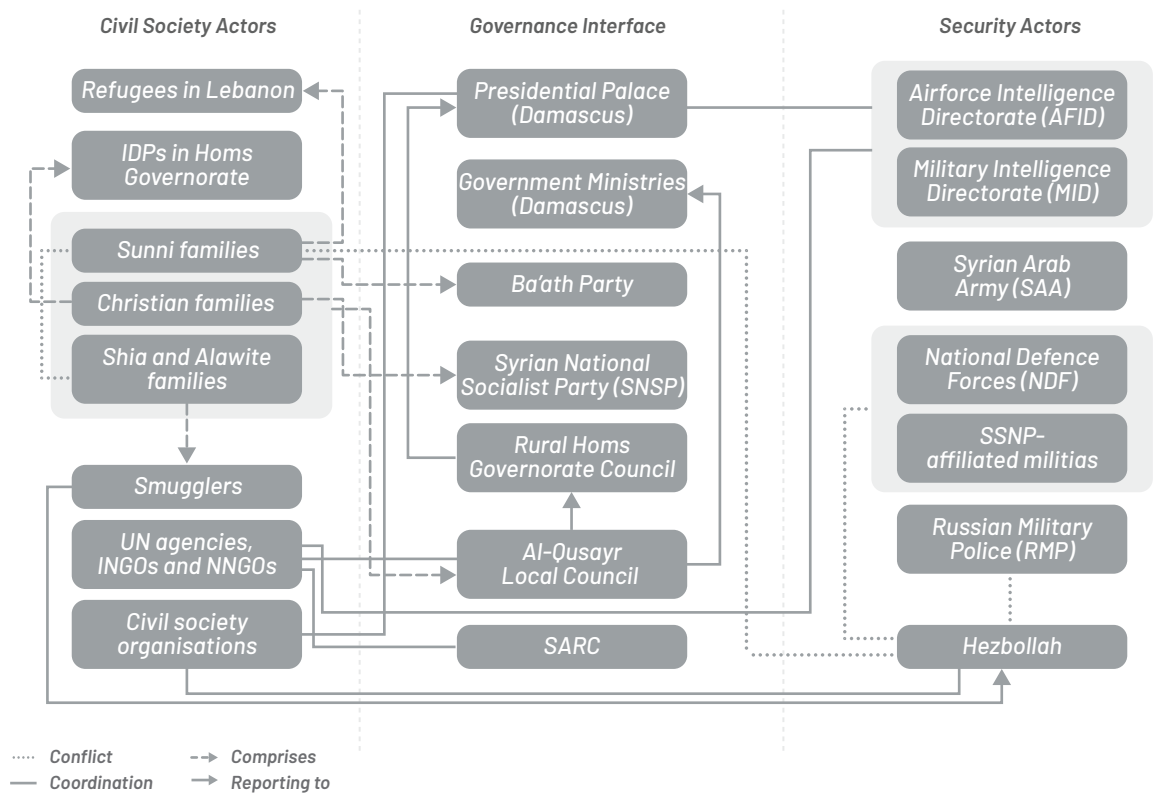
Civil society actors are largely comprised of local charities and church-affiliated organizations that work independently or jointly with SARC to provide services. In a context where civil society actors are tightly regulated by the government, surveillance by the security apparatus, and Hezbollah's hegemony, the space for civil society is extremely small. Consequently, many CSOs are affiliated with the government or armed actors. Syria Trust for Development is run by President Bashar Al-Assad's wife Asma, while Al-Bustan Association is run by his cousin, Rami Mahklouf. Both he and the charity are under US and EU sanctions due to the organisation's financing of pro-government militias.⁷⁶ Zeinab Foundation is managed by a strong supporter of Bashar al-Assad although it is unclear whether it is directly funded by the government. Hezbollah is also providing services through two of their main organisations: Al-Shahid Social Association (also referred to as the Martyr's Foundation), and the Orphans' Foundation. The Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) is also active in Al-Qusayr and coordinates closely with the government and security apparatus.⁷⁷ The General Union of Syrian Women (GUSW) is a part of the Ba'th Party and receives funding from it.⁷⁸ It provides support for women, however, the organisation's role in Al-Qusayr is limited. Church associations like the Monastery of St. James the Mutilated and the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Association (GOPA) provide humanitarian aid within Al-Qusayr city.⁷⁹ In addition, church associations have been particularly active in advocating for the return of Christian residents. Other national organisations include Kareem Charity, Al-Birr Association, Syrian Family Planning Association, Syrian Society for Social Development, Aoun for Islamic Relief, Al-Raja' Charity, Al-Mawadda Charity Association, and Childhood Care Society.

Very few international actors are conducting programming in Al-Qusayr, though a number of UN agencies have been subcontracting work in the city through national or local organisations such as SARC.⁸⁰ As of October 2019, Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI) was only (NGO) reportedly active in the city (see *city profile section 15, '4W Analysis,' for more information on programming.*)

Prominent families

Families are the primary social identifier in Al-Qusayr. Currently, notable families residing in Al-Qusayr are those that retained positive relations with the GoS. Al-Qusayr's prominent Sunni families have all been largely displaced, although certain members have been able to return to the city. For example, the current head of the Ba'th Party branch in Al-Qusayr is Sunni and was allowed to return to the city. Most Christian residents have been displaced, although many have allegedly been recently granted security approvals to return.⁸¹ With the militarisation of the city, the influence of prominent families has been undermined by security actors.

Figure 5.3: Governance interface



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- 47 Contextual research conducted by UrbAN-S, June 2019.
- 48 "حزب الله يكرم محافظ حمص طلال البرازي في الهرمل," *Enab Baladi*, November 7, 2018, www.enabbaladi.net/archives/261862.
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- 55 Hasan Arfeh, "The institutionalization of demographic change in Syria," *Atlantic Council*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/the-institutionalization-of-demographic-change-in-syria/>.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 "القصر أول منطقة تنظيمية يعلن عنها وفق القانون الرقم عشرة," *Alawsat*, October 12, 2018, aawsat.com/home/article/1424081/-أول-القصير-منطقة-تنظيمية-يعلن-عنها-وفق-القانون-الرقم-عشرة.
- 59 Post from "Al-Qusayr City - Local Development" Facebook page, October 10, 2018, www.facebook.com/1594434770884796/photos/a.1594520847542855/2110994642562137/?type=3&theater.
- 60 Interviews with local area experts by UrbAN-S, January 2019.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 The M5 highway stretches across Syria from the Turkish border in the north and to Jordan in the south. It represents an important route for national and international trade.
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- 64 Ibid.
- 65 "Hezbollah turns the city of Qusayr in Homs into a center for narcotic pills and Captagon," *Syria Call*, November 18, 2018, <https://neda-sy.com/en/news/9818>.
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- 74 Haid Haid, "Reintegrating Syrian Militias: Mechanisms, Actors, and Shortfalls," *Carnegie Middle East Center*, December 12, 2018, <https://carnegie-mec.org/2018/12/12/reintegrating-syrian-militias-mechanisms-actors-and-shortfalls-pub-77932>.

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76 Nick Hopkins and Emma Beals, "How Assad regime controls UN aid intended for Syria's children," *The Guardian*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/29/how-assad-regime-controls-un-aid-intended-for-syrias-children>; "Treasury sanctions additional individuals and entities in response to continuing violent attacks on Syrian citizens by the Syrian government," U.S. Department of the Treasury, May 16, 2017, <https://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/sm0087.aspx>;

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78 Pernille Arenfeldt and Nawar Al-Hassan Golley, Mapping Arab Women's Movements: A Century of Transformations from Within. *New York, NY (2012): The American University in Cairo*.

79 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>.

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6. Housing

Damage overview

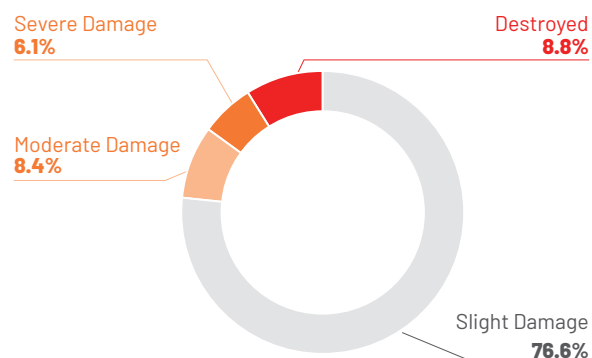
Al-Qusayr city is divided into five main areas: the eastern neighbourhood of Ramzoun which falls east of the N4 highway between Homs and Baalbek; the northern neighbourhood which includes the industrial area and Souq Al Heil area; the western neighbourhoods, including the old city of Al-Bayyada, the Al-Masaken district, and the Al-Mou'allimeen area; the southern neighbourhoods, including Al-Hara Al-Qabliyya; and the Been Es Sekteen neighbourhood.⁸²

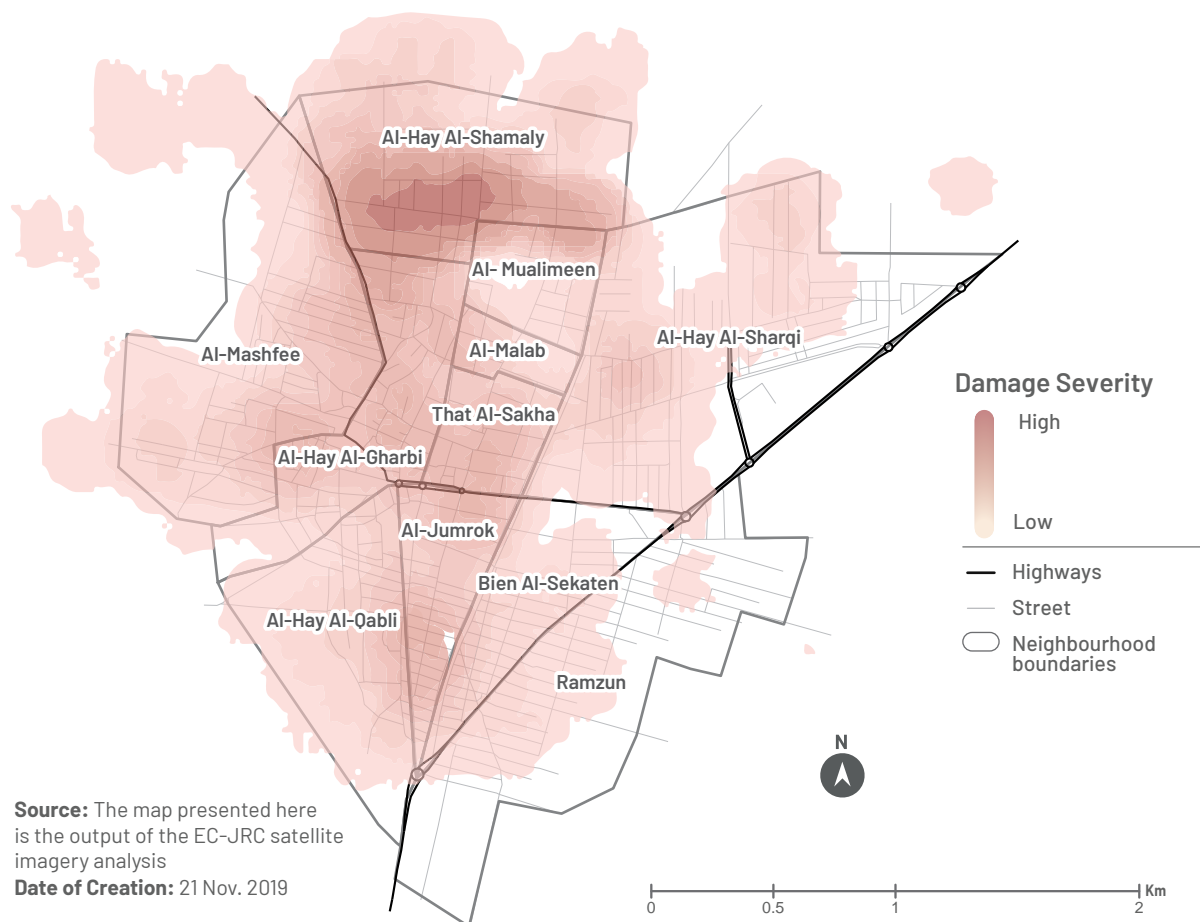
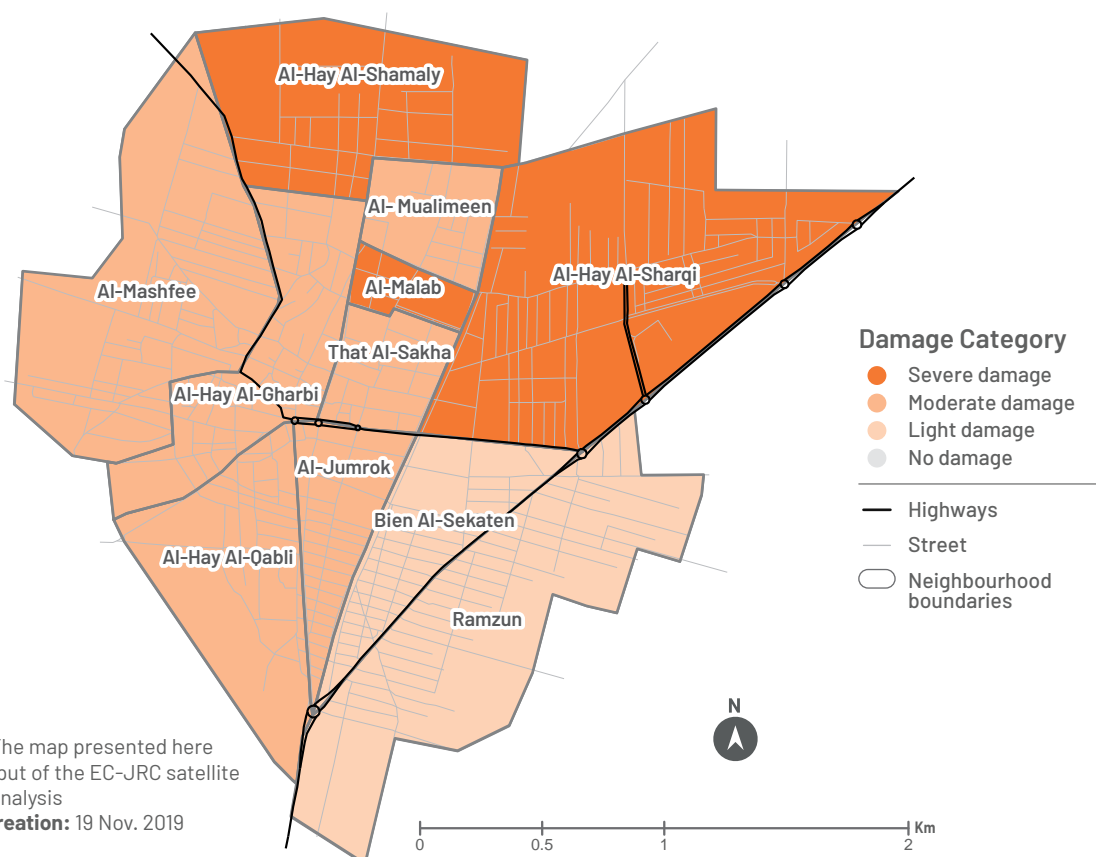
Opposition offensive and subsequent control of Al-Qusayr led to more than a year and a half of siege conditions and continued attack on the city by Government forces, between February 2012 and September 2013. This extended conflict in the city caused widespread damage to the residential and other buildings of Al-Qusayr, together with the mass displacement of the city's population.

The neighbourhoods to the north, west and south of the city were occupied by opposition forces that controlled much of the city during the conflict period, and these neighbourhoods were particularly targeted by Government bombardment. Consequently these areas received the worst damage.⁸³ An assessment of the damage patterns indicates that 3 out of 11 of the city's neighbourhoods are severely damaged due to extensive shelling during this time, including Al-Hay Al-Shmaly (the worst affected neighbourhood), Al-Hay Al-Sharqi, and Al-Malab; while the moderately damaged neighbourhoods include Al-Hay Al-Gharbi, Al-Hay Al-Qabli, Al-Jumrok, Al-Mualimeen, Al-Mashfee and That Al-Sakha. The only two neighbourhood that received only light damage were Ramzun and Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhoods, in the south-eastern corner of the city.

While there will eventually be the need for rehabilitation to residential buildings in the neighbourhoods which are worst affected by damage during the conflict, these formerly armed-opposition-held territories remain blocked to returnees.⁸⁴ Programming to address damage has been undertaken by a number of organisations and agencies, including distribution of shelter kits and rehabilitation of residential units. (See Section 15: 4W Analysis for further details).

Figure 6.1: Housing damage, by level of severity



Map 6.1: Damage heatmap**Map 6.2:** Housing damage, by level of severity

Impact on community housing stock and damage level

Prior to the conflict, the total housing stock of Al-Qusayr numbered approximately 7,357 units. While the active conflict and siege period in Al-Qusayr was shorter-lived than in other cities, there was still significant damage sustained to the city's housing stock.

14.3 percent of housing units were severely damaged or destroyed with a further 8.6 percent sustaining moderate damage. Together, these damage categories account for roughly 1,676 housing units in total that require significant rehabilitation or must be rebuilt altogether. 77 percent of housing units received slight damage or no damage at all.

The city's capacity for return accommodation

Damage throughout Al-Qusayr was extensive and a high number of buildings have been left uninhabitable. However this is matched by the large drain on the city's population. As of march 2019 the population stood at an estimated 3,038.⁸⁵ Analysis of damage to housing shows that at that time there are approximately 6,307 liveable housing units. This indicated that return potential to the city is high from a housing stock perspective, and upon provision of necessary resources to aid returning families to marginally damaged units.

Given the current low population level this indicates a healthy surplus of 5,700 units and would allow for the accommodation of approximately 28,498 further returnees. While indications of planned returns, allowed by the government and other authorities in the latter part of 2019, will reoccupy many of these units, housing capacity is unlikely to be a burden on the city in the medium to long term.

Housing, Land and Property Concerns

Threats to Housing Land and Property (HLP) rights in Al-Qusayr existing prior to the start of the 2011 conflict were based primarily on Al-Qusayr's location close to the Lebanese border. Due to restrictions on building within a buffer zone along the border (deemed necessary for national security reasons), building in the city and on its periphery was limited.⁸⁶ This suppressed the real estate market in the area in the early 2000s. In the early stages of the conflict a period of increased construction was experienced as residents capitalised on reduced official oversight.

Currently HLP threats are prominent and bound up with the high level of displacement from the city. While levels of damage to housing stock do not represent an overt barrier to return, these displaced communities will face difficulties with many other HLP issues, now and in the future. These include, but are not limited to damage to basic infrastructure; poor capacity for maintenance within local and provincial authorities; secondary occupation which is widespread; recent plans put forward to redevelop parts of the city; significant levels of looting of property; difficulties regarding lack of civil and legal documentation; and strained access to legal processes. Even for residents that remain in the city, limited access to many of the neighbourhoods challenge their ability to adequately protect their properties.

Figure 6.2: Damage to housing in Al-Qusayr, following the Battle for Al-Qusayr in 2012 - Photo Credit - Reuters, 2012



Secondary occupation

In many cases, returnees to the city have occupied houses that suffered less damage during the conflict. A local church reportedly documented many of these cases and has written to affected families and provided commitment papers that these secondary occupations won't become permanent.⁸⁷ However, other local sources explain that Hezbollah forces are working around this and are forging the property ownership documents of previous owners and illegally transferring the properties to loyalist residents.⁸⁸ In other cases, families loyal to Hezbollah have bought shares in multiple real estate assets within the city.⁸⁹ Local sources also report that "committees" and "mercenaries" have seized their properties and sold them on the black market.⁹⁰ The scale of these illegal activities remains difficult to verify, however the continued return and movement restrictions placed on the population of Al-Qusayr increase the risk that such illegal activity will continue and possibly increase. Gradual population return and increase is key to ensuring the restoration of due process and to enable government's oversight mechanisms to expand.

Initiatives such as the one undertaken by religious organisations, to facilitate organised secondary occupation of undamaged and slightly damaged housing, should be encouraged. These would allow for the immediate return of many of the city's population, while at the same time giving property owners security over the tenure of their properties and a mechanism whereby they can possibly receive some benefit from them in the short term, and reclaim them in the long term, as they return.

Rural land occupation

The majority of the irrigated farm lands around Al-Qusayr City are located in the western side of the city, along Orontes River Valley. According to local sources, these lands are mostly owned by Sunni and Christian farmers, however, they neighbour other farming lands owned by Shia farmers from the smaller villages that surround Al-Qusayr. Several bridges and road intersections that connect the city with these agricultural lands were destroyed during the military operation by Government forces, cutting off access.

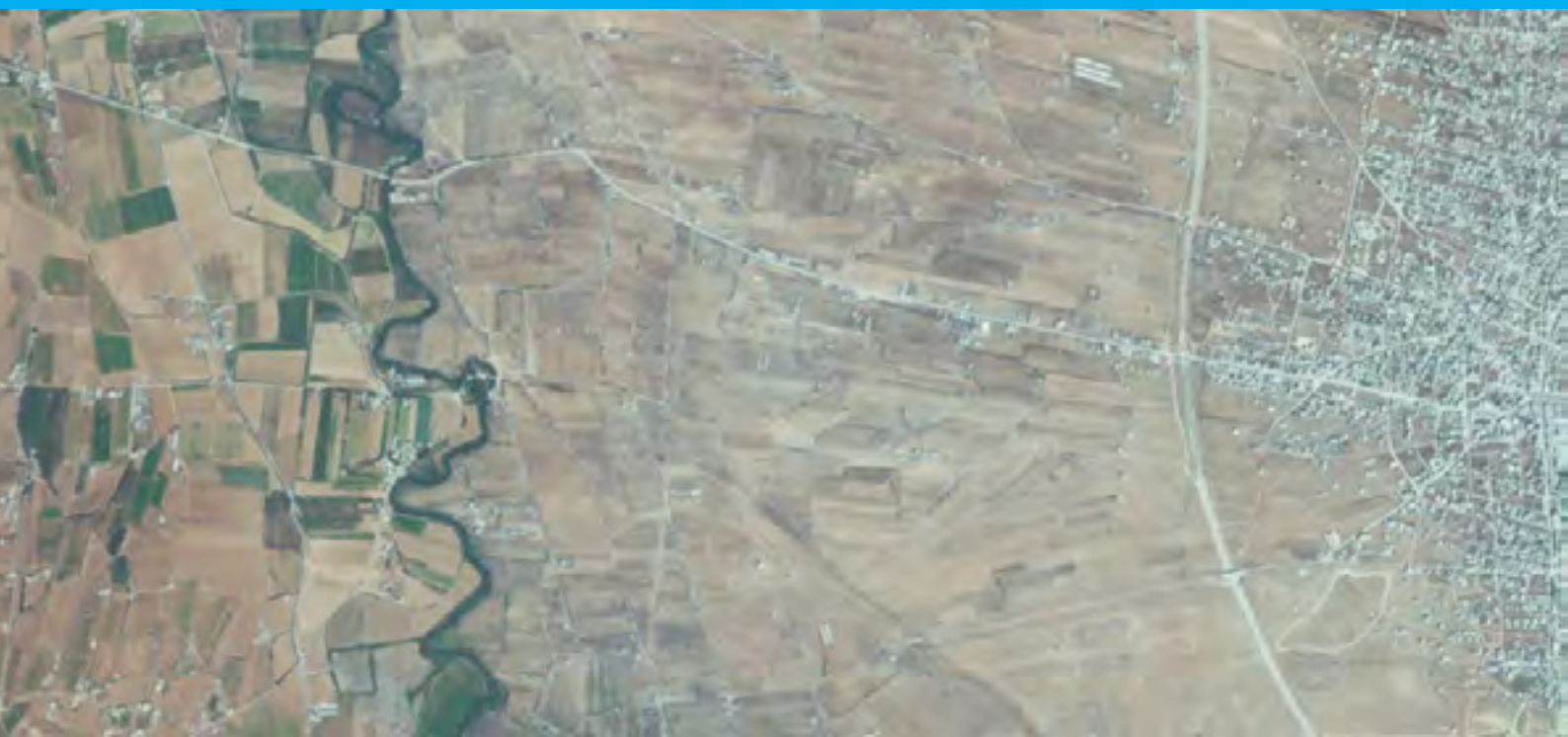
Following the end of the opposition military occupation of the city, many cases of Shia farmers extending their farming activities over lands belonging to Sunni and Christian Al-Qusayr people were reported. This has created arguably the largest case of land occupation in Syria currently.

Security forces who were consulted by Christian farming families who returned to Al-Qusayr, in order for them to access their lands, expressed an inability to address the occupation of farms by Shia farmers, given their connections to the Syrian Hezbollah.

The damage of the bridges was also referenced in engagements with security actors and attempts to restore the bridges were made to facilitate access to the original farmers. However, the occupying farmers requested hefty amounts of money to settle the dispute.

The satellite imagery clearly shows how the river basin itself creates the new boundary between the occupied land (western side, fully cultivated) and the inaccessible eastern side (see Fig 6.3). There is however a risk that premature and poorly considered projects to rehabilitate the bridges may lead to expansion of the occupation rather than restoration of access of Al-Qusayr farmers to their land on the western bank. Relevant programming should take this into consideration.

Figure 6.3: Satellite image showing continued cultivation of occupied agricultural land near Al-Qusayr, 2019.



Land redevelopment plans for Al-Qusayr

Al-Qusayr was one of the first cities to announce a new Master Plan for a part of the city with the intention of applying Law 10/2018⁹¹, after the law was passed in April 2018.⁹² In October 2018, the local council of Al-Qusayr city announced a digital organizational plan⁹³ for the city on the council's Facebook page. Full details of the plan and the neighbourhoods that would be included in the scheme were not revealed.⁹⁴ In the announcement, affected parties were asked to submit comments and objections to the plan within a month however there was little follow-up given by the city authorities to queries that were received. Furthermore, property claims regarding the Master Plan claims could only be submitted to the municipality in the city. With the high rate of displacement, including to Lebanon, and the inability to access the city due to security restrictions, the claiming process was not as open as intended in the 1982 urban planning law which governs the Master Planning process.

This process in Al-Qusayr seems to have stalled since the initial announcement. Law 10 processes elsewhere in the country have also come under pressure and have not progressed as anticipated, indicating that Al-Qusayr is unlikely to face any major tabula rasa redevelopment schemes in the near term.⁹⁵ However, in the event that these plans do proceed under Law 10, it is anticipated that the city's residents that would be affected will struggle to assert their property rights, due to their continued displacement.

Looting

There has been a noticeable level of looting in the city. Local sources state that building materials have been stripped from houses and sold on the black market. Due to the damage sustained and lack of returns to large areas of the city, the ongoing looting problem has not yet been formally addressed and poses a threat to the stability of the city. It adds to feelings of resentment from some sectors of the former Al-Qusayr population who feel a sense of persecution from particular sectarian factions who remain in control of the city and were involved in the conflict violence.⁹⁶

Land transfer

Local sources report that the purchase or selling of real estate in Al-Qusayr city is currently forbidden except in accordance with specific security procedures which are said to be complex and dependent on sect and loyalty to the Government of Syria.⁹⁷

The housing market in Al-Qusayr has been severely depressed due to the conflict and protracted displacement from the city. Local sources claim that before the conflict, the average monthly rental cost for a two bedroom unit in the city was approximately 5,000 SYP. In the intervening period this price has increased to approximately 15,000 SYP, while in other cities across Syria prices have risen much faster and the average rental price for a similar unit is reportedly 50,000 SYP.⁹⁸

Figure 6.4: Organisational plan proposed by the Al-Qusayr Local Council - Photo Credit: Al-Qusayr Local Council Facebook Page



HLP Risk Analysis

This risk analysis info-graph, which provides a summarised outline of the risks to Housing, Land and Property identified in Al-Qusayr, is based on the relevant guidance note of the UN Secretary General,

issued in March 2019. This guidance note stands as a reference point for the analysis of risks affecting lands and properties in a conflict situation.

1. Politics of exclusion

- Official restrictions on building close to the national border put pressure on the real estate market.

2. Damage to property

- High levels of damage were widespread across the city, with 1,676 of the city's housing units (23 percent) moderately, severely damaged, or destroyed.

3. Issues related to natural resources

- Access restrictions to agricultural land deprives the population from their single most important source of livelihoods before the war.
- A generations-old water shed management and sharing tradition has been lost.

4. Population pressure

- Persistent population displacement (approximately 90 percent of city population) and barring of return to the city for large portions of the population.
- Pressure on other cities that host IDP populations is high.

5. Weak land administration

- Poor law enforcement mechanism for housing and land occupation.
- Temporary cadastral service has recently been resorted, which can improve legitimacy and facilitate land and property claims.

6. Poverty

- Return initiatives by the governorate were poorly managed and did not yield sustainable return due to level of damage and financial insecurity – IDPs are currently incapable of restarting their lives in Al-Qusayr.

7. Nation-state fragmentation

- Heavy militia presence in the city and the government's inability to control their influence creates one of the biggest barriers against return and protecting land occupation.

8. Occupation

- Secondary occupation by families whose own houses were damaged are of vacant housing units of current displaced families – Local organisations together with the municipality did some work to regulate and document, but disputes are expected in any return scenario as the occupants introduced many repairs and modifications.
- Occupation of Al-Qusayr's rural lands is widespread and must be addressed in order to restore property rights and access to livelihoods back to the city's people.

9. Economic and political competition

- The 3 major sources of pre-conflict livelihoods (agriculture, markets and illicit cross-border trade) have been stemmed leading to weak return incentive.
- Capacity and potentials for self-recovery do not exist still.

Risk Level: ■ Very High ■ High ■ Average ■ Low

- 82 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 83 "القصر-كما-تبدو اليوم," *Al-Modon*, February 10, 2017, <https://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2017/2/9/القصر-كما-تبدو-اليوم>.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Low levels of additional return have been seen in the city, where Government and government-aligned militias have allowed for it (See city profile section 3, "Population and Demographics: Current population dynamics"). However, March 2019 population and housing damage have been used for the purposes of this analysis.
- 86 Law 41/2004 (regulating lands in border areas) imposed severe restrictions and demanded security clearance prior to any construction activity in these areas, which often included cities and towns. Legislative Decree 43 of 2011 (amending Law 41) relaxed some of the early restrictions, mainly in a reform step directed at the North Eastern Governorates (specifically Al Hasaka) which had suffered the most from the consequences of the earlier version of the law.
- 87 Contextual research conducted by *UrbAN-S*, June 2019
- 88 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Underpinning this process is the suite of planning and development laws passed by the Government of Syria, including Law 10/2018 and its amendments under Law 42/2018, which allow for the implementation of new planning processes in cities and small towns across Syria. These laws provide for the allocation of certain areas to privately established holding companies in order for them to implement the country's reconstruction process. The requirements that have been outlined by Law 10/2018 for land owners and residents to claim ownership of their properties are stringent. This is especially true of Qusayr's people given that they are mostly displaced from the city; have limited access to legal support; and oftentimes lack of necessary civil and other documentation. Furthermore, these laws also provide little in the way of rights or compensation for those affected by the development processes.
- 92 "Law 10 and the demographic change of Al-Qusayr - The people of the city may not return to it," (*Alsouria.net*, October, 29, 2018), <https://www.alsouria.net/content/إليها-يعودون-قد-لا-يعودون-إليها>
- 93 A term frequently used to describe a detailed master plan
- 94 "القصر-أول-منطقة-تنظيمية-يعلن-عنها-وفق-القانون-الرقم-عشرة," *Al-Awsat*, October 12, 2018, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1424081/القصر-أول-منطقة-تنظيمية-يعلن-عنها-وفق-القانون-الرقم-عشرة>.
- 95 Facebook post by "Al-Qusayr City - Local Development," October 10, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/1594434770884796/photos/a.1594520847542855/2110994642562137/?type=3&theater>.
- 96 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Ibid

7. Economy

Overview

As a former hub of trade, commerce, and regional services, Al-Qusayr's economy relied heavily on its rural resources. Before the conflict, the Orontes Basin contributed around 25 percent of the total agriculture production in Syria. The city enjoyed ample water access from its location downstream of Lake Qattinah in western Homs Governorate. The region was known for cultivating apricots, olives, apples, wheat, barley, and tobacco. In 2011, Al-Qusayr was reportedly producing 20,000 tons of apples per year alone. By 2014, after the government's military offensive, production decreased to less than 1,000 tons.⁹⁹ Agriculture is now essentially nonexistent. Severe population drain, insufficient resources and continued securitization and sectarian tensions have left the region's agriculture to lie fallow. The city's drained population, along with continued barriers to return, means available labour is inadequate to facilitate a significant economic recovery.

The city's proximity to the Lebanese border has made it a key international smuggling route by Hezbollah and Syrian traders alike. Its favorable geography makes it a natural transportation/trade route as it lies in flat lands within a mountainous region. Local sources confirm that many items, including diesel, cigarettes, and weapons, are smuggled from Lebanon into the city.¹⁰⁰ The area is also known for the production and smuggling of illicit drugs, including captagon and cannabis.

The city's economic recovery will be based on sustainable returns. It will also require a restoration of services and a lawful protection of property rights. A comprehensive response will be needed, assisting in the reemergence of the city's traders, markets, shops, and rural producers supplying the city and the region with marketable commodities.

Employment and economic sectors

Prior to the conflict, the city employed nearly 15,000 workers and an additional 10,000 people worked in the rural vicinity. It is estimated that 30-40 percent of employment was in the public sector, including education, health, defense and government administration. Privately held jobs were dominated by agriculture and construction. (See figure 7.1, "Number and percentage of total employment by economic sector")

Regional infrastructure and industrial facilities also provided employment opportunities for Al-Qusayr's residents. These included the Ein Tanour water plant, Homs City landfill (with recycling facilities), and the Sareco wastewater treatment plant. The General Fertilizer Company's superphosphate plant was also a significant private-sector employer.

Prior to the conflict, unemployment hovered around 15 percent. Although the current unemployment rate is difficult to assess, reports indicate that those in the city are employed by the government, military, or in the services sector. Additionally, several small-scale projects, such as dairy production, handicraft items, or running small shops, provide jobs for a portion of community members.

There were clear divisions of labour between the town's various social and religious groups. Alawites occupied security and public sector jobs, while Sunni residents worked in health and education, basic municipal work, and smuggling. Christians were engaged in farming, markets and agro-processing, while the Shia community invested in the poultry industry.¹⁰¹

Figure 7.1: Number and percentage of total employment by economic sector. Al-Qusayr City (2004)¹⁰²

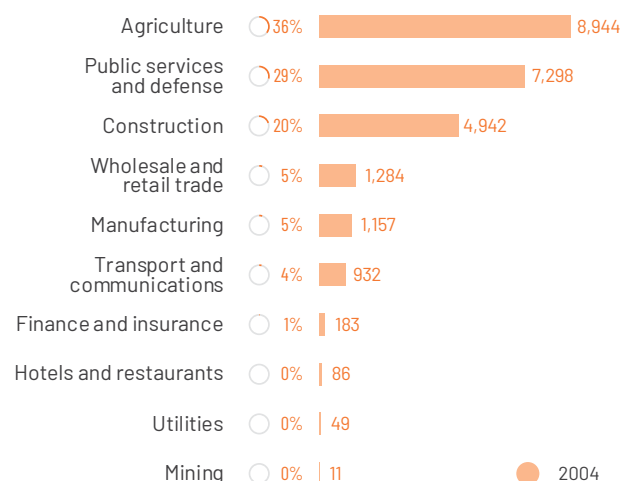
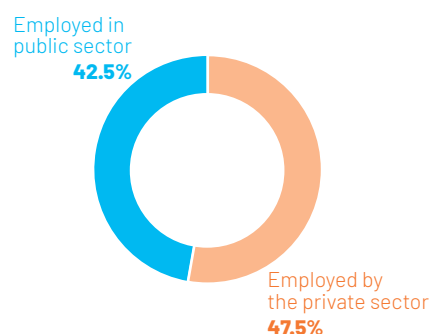


Figure 7.2: Share of employment – public and private. Al-Qusayr City (2004)¹⁰³



Remuneration and family expenditures

In the course of the conflict, the value of the Syrian Pound has decreased fourteen-fold when compared to the US dollar.¹⁰⁴ The drop of household purchasing power negatively impacts families, especially those dependent upon public service employment and government salaries. Although remuneration for public service employees has doubled since 2011, the prices of goods and commodities have increased tenfold over the past decade.

According to local sources, public sector jobs in Al-Qusayr are divided into categories: "A," "B", and "C". Each level receives a basic salary as well as add-ons. These include extra shifts, family compensation, and an allowance for food and clothing. (See table 7.1, "Public salaries by employment type")

Price hikes of basic food commodities in Al-Qusayr has impacted the purchasing power of residents. Table 7.2, "Prices of goods in city markets (pre-conflict and 2019)" lists the price of certain commodities and salaries of certain jobs within the city of Al-Qusayr before 2011 and as of March 2019.¹⁰⁵

Table 7.1: Public salaries by employment type (pre-conflict and 2019 (Q2)) – Al-Qusayr¹⁰⁶

Employment Type	Monthly salary, prior to the conflict. SYP (\$USD)	Monthly salary, 2019. SYP (\$USD)
Teacher (category A)	18,000 SYP (\$387)	35,000 SYP (\$80)
Army volunteer – Soldier	16,000 SYP (\$344)	45,000 SYP (\$103)
Employee in the electricity sector (category A)	17,000 SYP (\$365)	40,000 SYP (\$92)
Supply Monitor (category B)	17,000 SYP (\$365)	40,000 SYP (\$92)
Police Officer	12,000 SYP (\$258)	43,000 SYP (\$99)
Nurse (category B)	10,000 SYP (\$215)	30,000 SYP (\$69)
Judge	45,000 SYP (\$967)	100,000 SYP (\$230)
Colonel (Military)	24,000 SYP (\$516)	60,000 SYP (\$138)
Doctor	24,000 SYP (\$516)	50,000 SYP (\$115)
Engineer	20,000 SYP (\$430)	39,000 SYP (\$89)

Table 7.2: Prices of goods in city markets (pre-conflict and 2019 (Q2))¹⁰⁷

Food Type	Price, pre-conflict. SYP (\$USD)	Price, 2019. SYP (\$USD)
Eggs	3 SYP (\$0.06)	50 SYP (\$0.11)
Potatoes (1 kg)	10 SYP (\$0.21)	500 SYP (\$1.15)
Apples (1 kg)	50 SYP (\$1.07)	500 SYP (\$1.15)
Tomatoes (1 kg)	5 SYP (\$0.10)	250 SYP (\$0.57)
Milk (1 litre)	15 SYP (\$0.32)	250 SYP (\$0.57)
Rice (1 kg)	75 SYP (\$1.61)	750 SYP (\$1.72)
Whole Chicken (1 kg)	75 SYP (\$1.61)	1,000 SYP (\$2.30)
Sheep Meat (1 kg)	500 SYP (\$110.73)	6,000 SYP (\$13.81)
Olive Oil (1 litre)	200 SYP (\$4.30)	2,000 SYP (\$4.60)

Note: As of March, 2019, the official current rate was 434.19 SYP to 1 USD

War economy and smuggling

The location of the city of Al-Qusayr, ten kilometers from the Syria-Lebanon international border, makes it one of the main formal and informal crossing points between the two countries. Smuggling networks have historically represented a large share of the town's economy. Prior to the conflict, smuggling networks were run primarily by the Sunni community with links to Lebanese towns across the border. Many were connected through kinship ties and cross-border marriages. Smuggling took place in both directions. Subsidised Syrian fuel was smuggled into Lebanon, while cigarettes, second-hand clothes, used electronics, petty drugs, and other hard-to-find products were brought into Syria informally.

These smuggling operations took place openly until the late 2000s when the GoS began stemming smuggling more systematically.¹⁰⁸ The government conducted intermittent operations to crack down on smugglers, which often proved fatal.¹⁰⁹ Public markets selling smuggled goods were removed by the GoS. The town's economy was hit hard by these stricter smuggling rules. The economy was also affected by a cut in state fuel subsidies in 2005 upon the recommendation of the International Monetary Fund. This resulted in a seven-fold increase in fuel prices between 2005 and 2008 and a three-fold increase in the price of diesel between 2007 and 2008.¹¹⁰ This reduced the commercial incentive to sell oil outside the country. The cuts also severely impacted agriculture and industries.¹¹¹

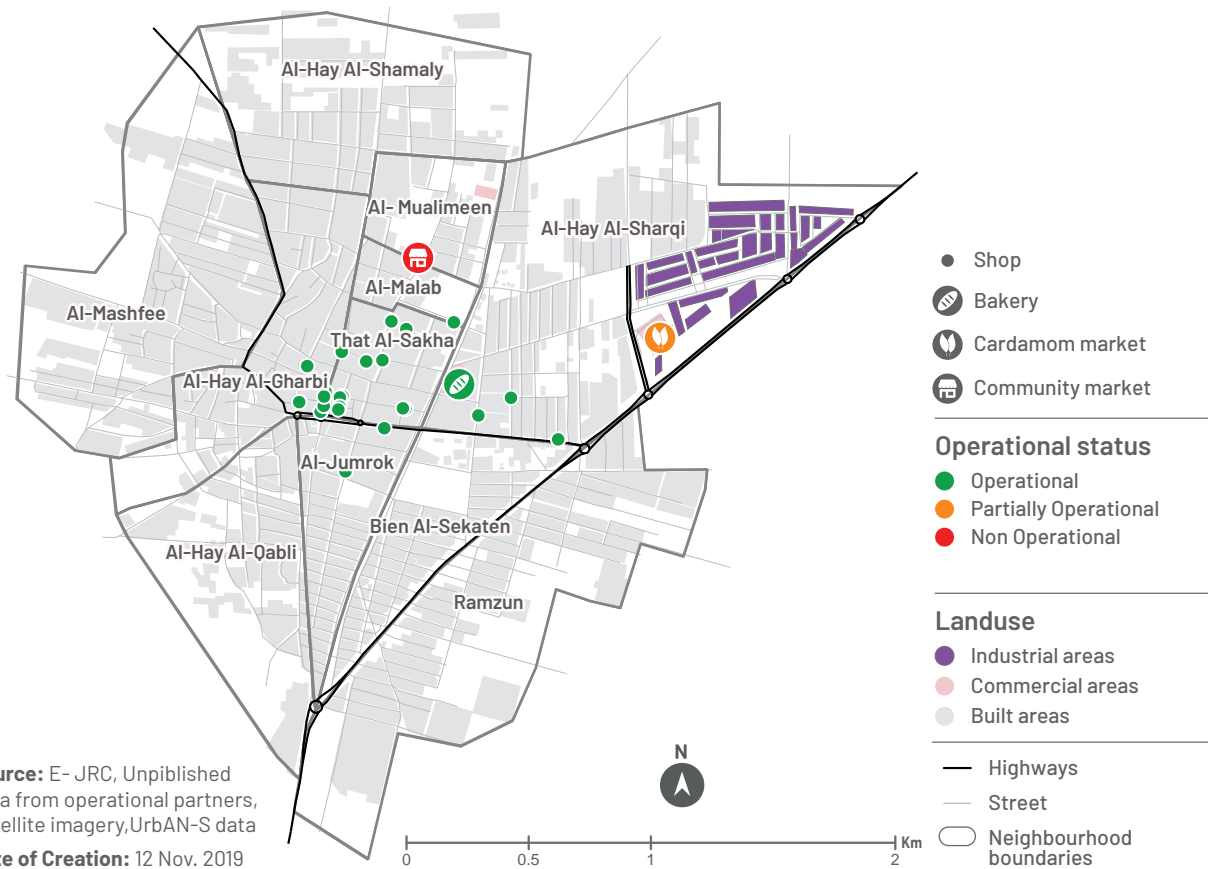
During opposition control from 2011 to 2013, smuggling of weapons, drugs, and other goods was rampant. Its proximity to the border incentivized Hezbollah to become militarily active in the area.¹¹² The organization sought to secure the border area, cut-off the cross-border flow

of goods and fighters to opposition areas, and establish their own smuggling networks. Currently, smuggling in the Al-Qusayr area is rife. Smuggling networks are reportedly exclusively controlled by Hezbollah who have a significant presence and influence in neighbouring Lebanon, especially along the border areas. Smuggling provides a significant source of funding to the organization.¹¹³

The primary goods smuggled are weapons (including rockets) and drugs. The area is now known as the 'captagon corridor' where the illicit amphetamine drug is reportedly smuggled from Syria to Lebanon and beyond.¹¹⁴ Additionally, fuel smuggling and other illicit trade takes place in the area. The local Shia community controls the distribution of the fuel supplies from the Homs Refinery to Homs City and Al-Qusayr.¹¹⁵ Of note, the local security forces, led by the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID), are discontent with the Hezbollah presence in the area, particularly since they are no longer receiving kickbacks from smuggling as they did prior to the conflict. As a result, they have taken measures to curtail their control over checkpoints.¹¹⁶ These activities are allegedly one of the primary reasons for preventing returnees in the area, as a larger population footprint would curb their ability to conduct this work. Moreover, the Sunni community, which formerly controlled the smuggling networks, are not motivated to return since this economic sector is no longer available to them.¹¹⁷

Markets

Map 7.1: City markets and facilities and their operational status¹¹⁸



Prior to the conflict, Al-Qusayr hosted several active local markets. Inventories were mainly dependent on products distributed from Homs City and agricultural produce from the region. However, local markets also significantly benefited from smuggled goods from Lebanon.

According to reports, commerce in the city all but ceased as a result of the crisis. Marketplaces were directly targeted by the Government of Syria forces early on during the siege.¹¹⁹ Supply lines were cut, increasing dependency on smuggled goods from Aleppo and Damascus Governorates and across the border with Lebanon.¹²⁰ Once bustling markets were damaged or destroyed and many of the city's merchants and shop-owners fled during the fighting. Many shops have been permanently closed due to owners fleeing and not being allowed to return.¹²¹



Figure 7.3: Damaged shops in Downtown Al-Qusayr in the That Al-Sakha Neighbourhood. (Credit: mapio.net (Undated))

Currently, there are no large-scale markets within the city. Local area experts report that smaller neighbourhood-level shops are present and stocked with basic household commodities and food products. However, representatives complained that shops are not well maintained and do not provide significant opportunities for employment. Shops are primarily dependent on high priced smuggled goods from Lebanon. Local sources confirm the presence of one operational bakery in the city run by the local administration, and bread is available in most neighbourhoods throughout the city. (See figure 7.5, “Local area experts perceptions of neighbourhood markets and economic situation”).

Agriculture

Al-Qusayr benefits from fertile land due to its location along the Orontes river basin and high annual rainfall.¹²² Moreover, the town’s proximity to the Orontes river and Qattinah Dam – and the large man-made lake it creates – has allowed for a steady supply of water for irrigation. Prior to the conflict, development of the irrigation network had produced successful results, particularly in the city of Al-Qusayr and east of Homs City.¹²³ Pre-conflict investments in the local agro-processing sector also boosted the economy. These enabled value-added production of agricultural products to remain in the region. Over 50 percent of crop production was grown on around 295,000 hectares of land irrigated from surface and/or ground water resources. The basin included 83,650 hectares of orchards and plantations, mainly olive groves. There was also a significant investment in poultry production in the area.¹²⁴ These resources supported the meaningful expansion of agriculture and livestock breeding.

The Orontes Basin was one of the prime plantation tree production regions in Syria, growing a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables. It was known for its apricots, olives, apples, wheat, barley, legumes, dairy products, meat, and tobacco. The local economy was dependent on several small-scale factories producing a variety of dairy and fruit products as well as small agriculture tools.¹²⁵ Several olive presses and commercial refrigerators were available for fruit, vegetables and dairy to be sold in the winter season.¹²⁶

Displacement of farmers

The decrease in agricultural output has been largely due to the forced, and ongoing, displacement of local farmers. Estimates suggest that agriculture, overall, has decreased by nearly 30 percent throughout the Orontes Basin area. Since nearly the entire populations of 23 cities and villages were expelled, it’s estimated over 20,000 hectares of irrigated land is in a dilapidated state and has been dried off.¹²⁷ Large numbers of residents were evacuated and previously fertile land has remained fallow and is no longer cultivated. Throughout the conflict, farmers have constantly faced the threat of losing access to their fields at harvest time.

In the aftermath of the fighting, returnee farmers have faced numerous hardships. Despite the regime’s presence, reports suggest armed groups continue to prevent a majority of (mostly Sunni) farmers from returning. Those that do return face adverse financial realities. The prices of agricultural inputs, including fuel, fertilizers and seeds, have all substantially increased. In addition, before settling into their previously owned/rented lands, farmers must settle a financial agreement with border guard/military checkpoints around the city. They are told they must split the income generated from crop production and pay taxes to the city’s militia groups.¹²⁸

Sectarianism and agricultural production in the Orontes Basin

While agricultural lands on both sides of the river are owned by Sunni and Christian families, Shiite farmers from neighbouring areas have occupied and began cultivating farmlands west of the Orontes. Christian families have attempted to cultivate their lands east of the river; however, the destruction of bridges and other vital infrastructure have hindered access. Moreover, Shiite farmers west of the river have burned and sabotaged these fields.¹²⁹ Before returning to their previously owned and rented farmlands, farmers had to pay fees at checkpoints. In addition, reports indicate farmers have also been required to pay taxes to Hezbollah and aligned militias.¹³⁰

Cutting orchards for fuel and cannabis

Local sources explain that orchards and farmlands have been subject to systematic cutting. As energy prices have risen, trees have been cut for wood heating in Homs City.¹³¹ In addition, since Hezbollah's take over, orchards have been turned into cannabis and tobacco farms.¹³² Local sources claim local farmers have begun working with Hezbollah growing cannabis along the border.¹³³

Future food security and resiliency

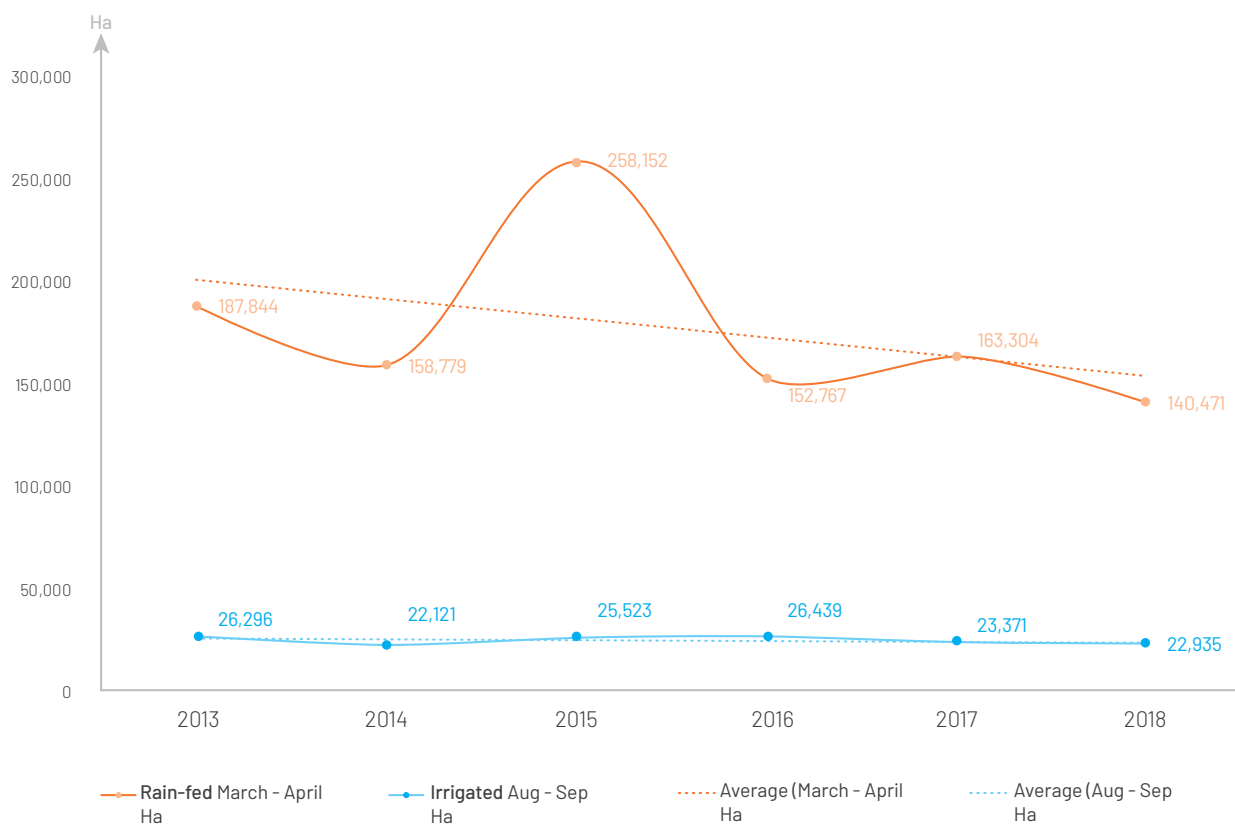
The future of Syria's food security has been dramatically undermined by conflict, which has devastated irrigation infrastructure, displaced farming populations, disrupted trade and caused enormous ecological damage. The FAO advises that, "a resilience-based approach is proving ever more crucial to meet immediate needs while helping affected populations – and the systems which support them – better absorb, adapt and recover from current and future shocks emanating from the crisis."¹³⁴

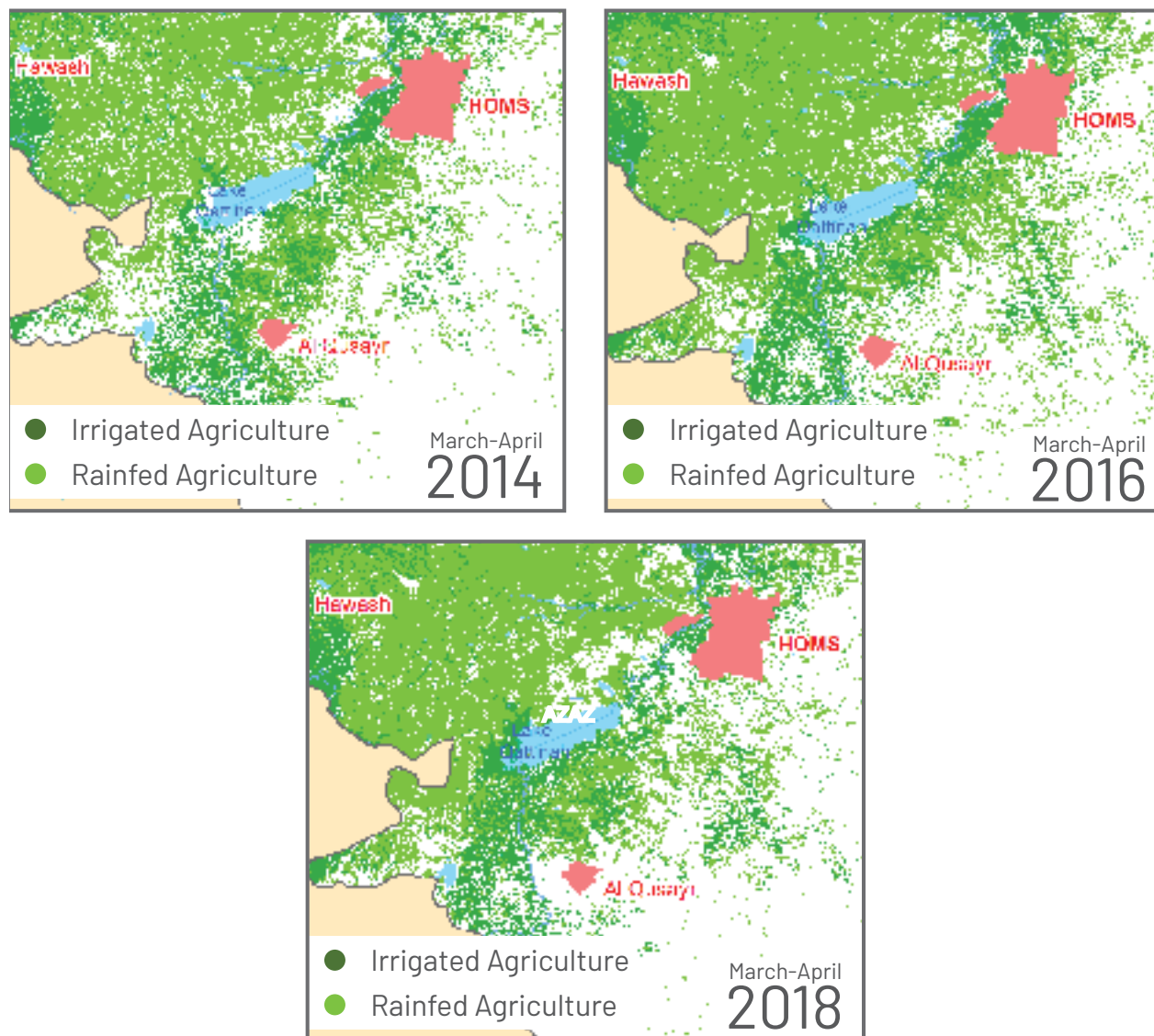
The area's water resources make rehabilitating the irrigation system feasible. Once a steady water supply is re-established, plantation cropping can be revived. This includes olives, pistachios, apples, and tree Lucerne. In addition, it's now recommended to integrate plantation crops with intercropping systems including legumes, vegetables, cumin, spices, etc. This will ensure intensive cropping and continuous provision of agricultural food and income throughout the year. Given that ideal plantation crop types will take years to attain harvestable maturity, intercropping is important and will ensure immediate availability (and access) to agricultural food. Moreover, agronomic pruning of plantation trees will also provide fuelwood as a by-product of plantation tree production.

Environmental issues

Farming has been gravely impacted by degradation of agricultural lands resulting from drought, damaged irrigation and the systematic burning by Government forces.¹³⁵ It is estimated that around 40 percent of surfaces are no longer available for tree production in Al-Qusayr and other areas along the Orontes Basin.¹³⁶

Moreover, recent years of extreme drought hit the agricultural sector hard. Farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture have seen a drastic reduction, or complete loss of crops. The governorate-wide ban on new well digging has impacted and angered those dependent on agrarian systems for their livelihoods.

Figure 7.4: NDVI – Representation and impact on the region's agriculture ¹³⁷

Map 7.2: Vegetated canopy in the Homs / Hama region

Economic impact, recovery and future outlook

The prospect of economic recovery in the near future appears challenging for Al-Qusayr. The economy has collapsed, basic services are limited, and few NGOs conduct programming in the area. According to local sources, a handful of residents work in the service industry, in Government offices, or in the military. Other sources of employment include small-scale economic activities such as dairy production, handicrafts, or small shops.

Agricultural work is currently at a standstill due to land occupation, lack of irrigation and access restrictions combined with the inability or unwillingness of law enforcement actors to enforce land rights. Additionally, critical transportation infrastructure is nonfunctional. Bridges that run between the east of the city and the western side are not traversable, with the tunnel between the two also damaged. Access to these areas is currently restricted. However, even without access restrictions, the long detour from the east to the west of the city on account of the broken bridges and tunnels, and the high cost of fuel makes taking this longer route logistically and financially unfeasible.¹³⁸ However, according to sources, these bridges are presently being rehabilitated, which will help facilitate the recovery of the agricultural sector.

Figure 7.5: Local area experts perceptions of neighbourhood markets and economic situation. Breakdown by neighbourhood¹³⁹

	Al-Hay Al-Gharbi	Al-Hay Al-Qabli	Al-Hay Al-Sharqi	Al-Hay Al-Shmaly	Al-Jum- rok	Al-Malab	Al-Mash- fee	Al-Mual- imeen	Bien Al-Se- katen	Ramzun	That Al- Sakha
Markets	In general, can people (always) access commodities in a nearby market?	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Food available in the nearest market with good quality	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	The nearest market facilities are maintained periodically	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	The city markets are thriving and creating jobs	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
Household	Economic situation over the past three months is improving	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	People can buy basic items that their families need.	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Family workers able to support non-working family members	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
Bread	People can get to at least one functional bakery or outlet for the sale of bread	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	The amount of bread being produced is enough for the population	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	The price of bread in this neighborhood within the reach of everyone	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	The price of bread in this neighborhood follows the price approved by official authorities	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
Banking	People in this neighborhood can access at least one nearby functional bank	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	ATM services are available to residents of this neighborhood	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Money transfer offices are available in this neighborhood	●	●	●	N/A	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Agree
● Disagree
● Don't know
● Mixed response

Sectoral considerations

- Support crop reintroduction programmes as farming returns. Restore affordable farming inputs and supplies. This may support renewed farming capacity in the region, particularly as many farmers have been restricted from cultivating their fields.
- Restore the irrigation networks to recover the agricultural sector. Regional recovery initiatives should include rehabilitation of canals, wells, pumps and other tributaries. A “cash-for-work” programme can be implemented to rehabilitate damaged irrigation canals and schemes; thereby providing initial emergency livelihoods support to vulnerable landless and marginal farmers.
- Initiate a basin-wide hydrological study to properly allocate water resources. Redevelopment of farming to coincide with implementation of an Orontes Basin water resources management plan.
- Rehabilitate buildings and infrastructure to encourage a reemergence of light manufacturing, shopkeepers and traders back to the community. Follow-up on the work of NGOs implementing commercial recovery initiatives and livelihood projects in the community.

- 99 "Homs produces a quarter of Syria's apple .. And trees "short" die standing", *zamanalwsl*, September 14, 2014, <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/53365>
- 100 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr" *UrbAN-S*, March 2019
- 101 Contextual research conducted by *UrbAN-S*, July 2019.
- 102 *Central Bureau of Statistics – Al-Qusayr region* (2004). Breakdown of employed persons 15 years or older based on nature of activity / work
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 The devaluation of the Syrian Pound (SYP) and the subsequent sky-rocketing prices of commodities negative impacted the population's purchasing power. In March 2011, 1 USD equaled to 47 SYP, whereas currently in March 2019, 1 USD equals to 514 SYP. This caused the cost of living to increase in a very short amount of time.
- 105 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr" *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Contextual research conducted by *UrbAN-S*, July 2019.
- 110 "Fuel Subsidy Policy and Popular Mobilization in Syria," *Middle East Research and Information Project*, March 16, 2015, <https://merip.org/2015/03/fuel-subsidy-policy-and-popular-mobilization-in-syria/>.
- 111 Daya Awda, "Qusair farmers are trying to return: Hezbollah in our home" *Enab Baladi*, January 8, 2017, <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/123796#ixzz5odRdrELJ>
- 112 According to local sources, any Hezbollah vehicles coming into Syria from Al-Jousia crossing are prohibited from any kind of inspection by Syrian customs. This allows the free flow of cannabis to be smuggled from areas across Lebanon such as the Beqaa Valley into Syria through rural Al-Qusayr. Source: "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr" *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 113 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 114 "Hezbollah turns the city of Qusayr in Homs into a center for narcotic pills and the Captagon," *Syria Call*, November 18, 2018, <https://t.co/vePVQzMMq>.
- 115 Contextual research conducted by *UrbAN-S*, July 2019.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Personal interview by *UrbAN-S* with local contact familiar with the city's economy, June 2019
- 118 Asset inventory of Al-Qusayr conducted by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 119 Specific targeting of markets by Government of Syria forces has been reported. These activities were meant to deprive civilians of food and basic supplies. Source: "Syria's Qusayr prepares for Ramadan under siege", *Dawn*, July 10, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/733230/syrias-qusayr-prepares-for-ramadan-under-siege>
- 120 "Syria's Qusayr prepares for Ramadan under siege", *Dawn*, July 10, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/733230/syrias-qusayr-prepares-for-ramadan-under-siege>
- 121 Ibid.
- 122 Ahmad Haj Asaad and Ronald Jaubert, "Geostrategic Stakes and the Impact of the Conflict in the Orontes River Basin," Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2014
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 Personal interview by *UrbAN-S* with local contact familiar with the city's economy, June 2019
- 125 Ahmad Haj Asaad and Ronald Jaubert, "Geostrategic Stakes and the Impact of the Conflict in the Orontes River Basin," Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2014
- 126 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr" *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 127 Ahmad Haj Asaad and Ronald Jaubert, "Geostrategic Stakes and the Impact of the Conflict in the Orontes River Basin," Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2014
- 128 Daya Awda, "Qusair farmers are trying to return: Hezbollah in our home" *Enab Baladi*, January 8, 2017, <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/123796#ixzz5odRdrELJ>
- 129 "Homs produces a quarter of Syria's apple .. And trees "short" die standing", *zamanalwsl*, September 14, 2014, <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/53365>
- 130 Daya Awda, "Qusair farmers are trying to return: Hezbollah in our home" *Enab Baladi*, January 8, 2017, <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/123796#ixzz5odRdrELJ>
- 131 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr" *UrbAN-S*, March 2019

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

134 "SUBREGIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN: Resilient Livelihoods for Agriculture and Food and Nutrition Security in Areas Affected by the Syria Crisis", *FAO*, 2014, http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/Syria-res-strategy-EN-web.pdf

135 "Homs produces a quarter of Syria's apple .. And trees "short" die standing", *zamanalwsl*, September 14, 2014, <https://www.zamanalwsl.net/news/article/53365>

136 *Ahmad Haj Asaad and Ronald Jaubert*, "Geostrategic Stakes and the Impact of the Conflict in the Orontes River Basin," Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, 2014

137 Analysis carried out by the *EC-JRC*, February, 2019.

138 Personal interview by *UrbAN-S* with local contact familiar with the city's economy, June 2019

139 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019

8. Health

Overview

Al-Qusayr's health services were severely impacted by the conflict. Prior to fighting, the city's National Hospital, along with area clinics and a private hospital, served the community and surrounding environs with an estimated 85 hospital beds and nearly 500 medical staff.

With the onset of fighting, rival armed groups commandeered community facilities such as schools and hospitals. From 2011 to 2013, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), in its battle with the Free Syrian Army (FSA), positioned itself within the National Hospital, rendering it for military purposes, including storage of tanks and heavy artillery. The UNHRC report asserts that sick and wounded patients approaching the facility were fired upon. During the government's offensive to oust opposition groups, the hospital suffered major damage.¹⁴⁰ Other health infrastructure throughout the city was also badly damaged.

With the government's siege on the city, basic supplies were prohibited from entering the city, which included medical supplies. Humanitarian organizations could not deliver aid, thus could not offer civilians access to medical care.¹⁴¹

Most of the city's professional medical personnel was displaced or emigrated, and have not returned up until now.

Current health needs in the community

Neighbourhoods on the western side of the railroad in the vicinity of the Al-Qusayr's National Hospital were gravely damaged. According to reports, 90 percent of the area has been destroyed and has yet to undergo rehabilitation or reconstruction work.¹⁴²

According to local health specialists, public health concerns include the quality of potable water (See city profile section 10, "Water and sanitation"), food poisoning from contaminated agricultural products, conflict-related pollution including UXO's, and the lack of capacity to monitor and respond to the spread of communicable diseases.¹⁴³ The city has seen a rise of diseases such as respiratory diseases (like asthma), hepatitis, and skin related maladies. These are still present and must be addressed by health officials and aid agencies.¹⁴⁴

Over 500 of Al-Qusayr's residents are considered health vulnerable.¹⁴⁵ Due to population concentrations in eastern neighbourhoods, the highest levels (above 100 individuals) of vulnerable groups are located in Al-Hay Al-Gharbi and Al-Hay Al-Qabli neighbourhoods. (see Map 8.1, "Distribution of health vulnerable population").

Local area experts suggest that the city's primary healthcare challenge is a lack of ambulatory / emergency services. With no emergency services, patients must be urgently transported 30 kilometers away to Homs City in order to receive care. Other challenges include healthcare affordability and the lack of adaptive services for persons with special needs.

Figure 8.1: Healthcare challenges faced by people in the past month (February 2019)¹⁴⁶

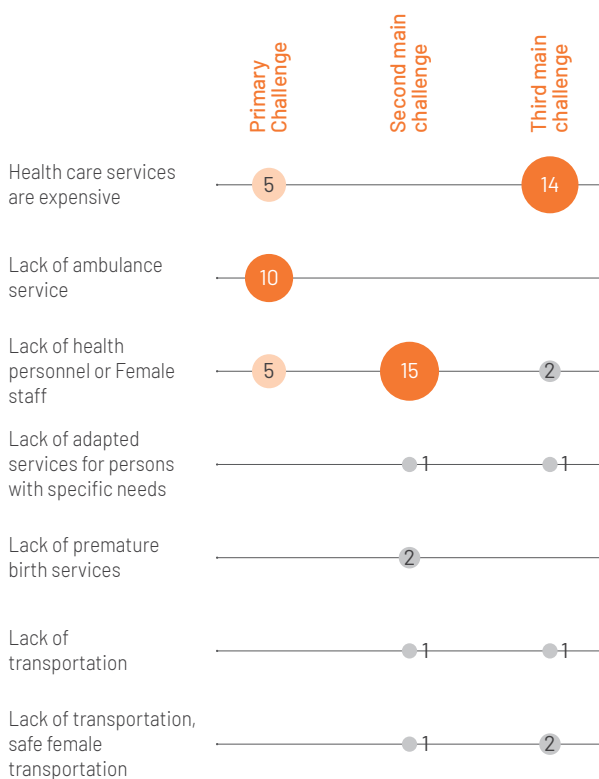
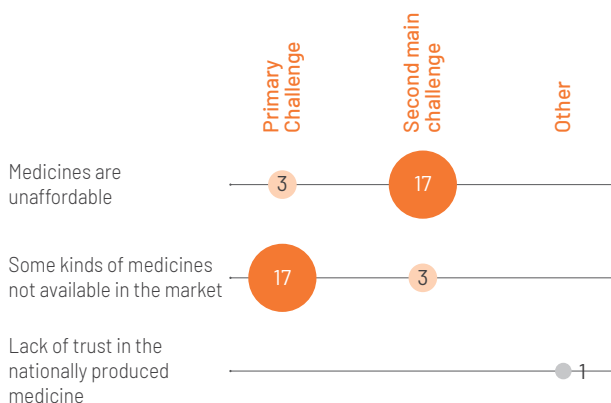
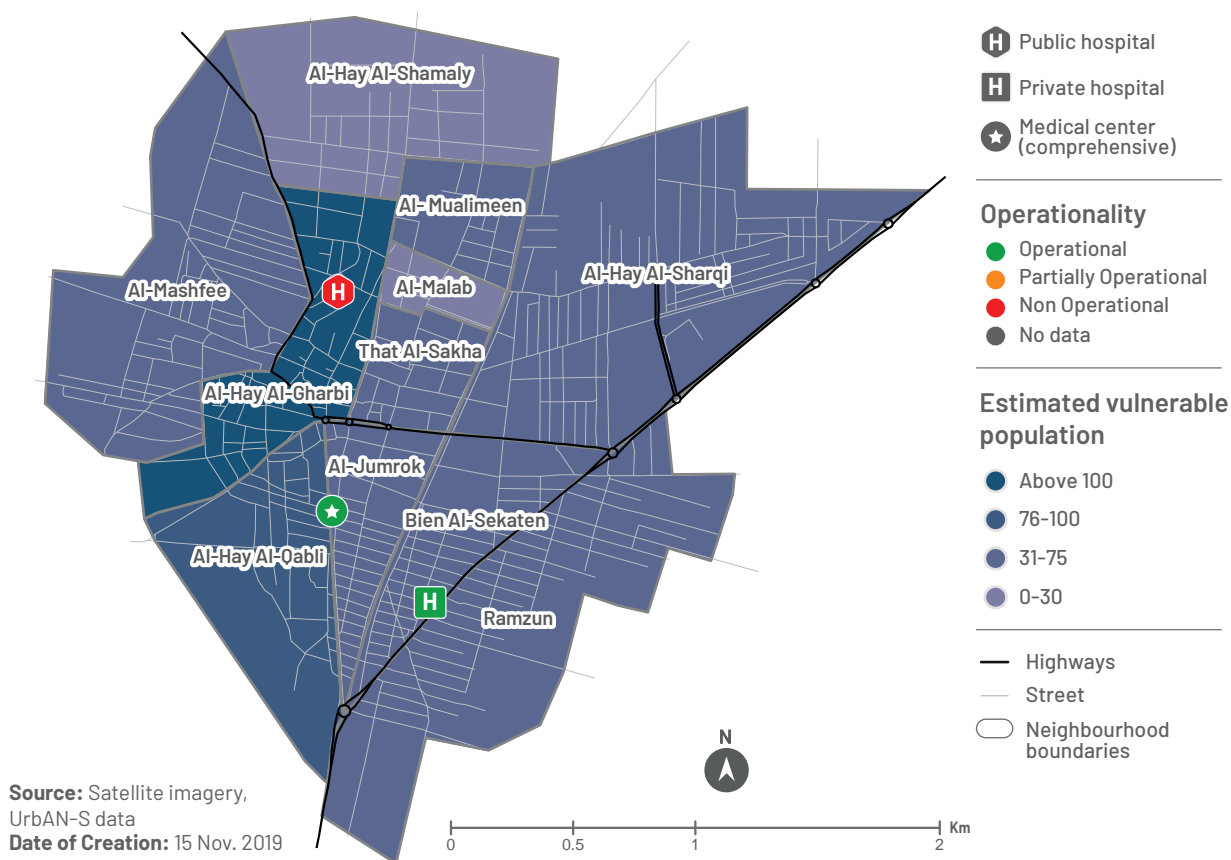


Figure 8.2: Main challenges faced in accessing medication in the past month (February 2019)¹⁴⁷



Map 8.1: Distribution of health vulnerable population groups and the state of health infrastructure

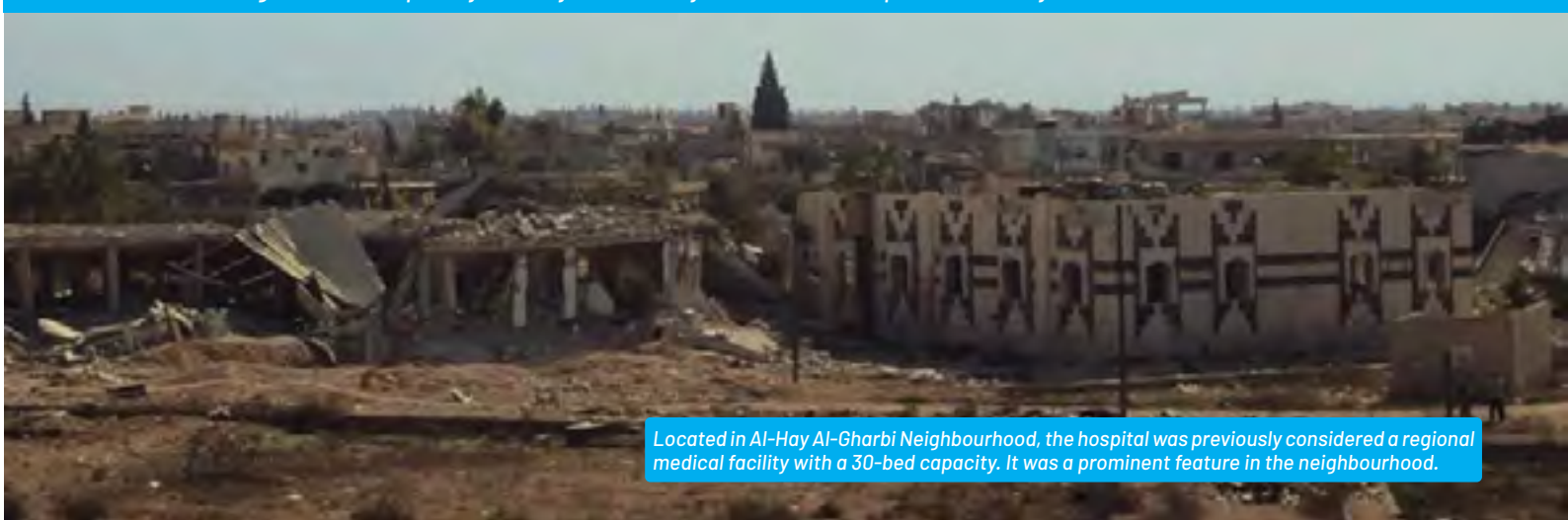
Health infrastructure and capacity

According to local sources, prior to the conflict, medical services were easily available, and healthcare was accessible. Medical specialists were present in the community and the staffing of health facilities was sufficient.

The most significant consequence of the conflict was the destruction of the Al-Qusayr's National Hospital, which is now demolished. The health network and infrastructure, both physical and logistical, is weak. Services are also currently much more difficult to access and options have dramatically decreased. Indeed, services operate at a fraction of their former capacity.

Figure 8.3: Damage to / operational status of health care facilities by type

	Destroyed (Non-operational)	Partially-damaged (Operational)
Public Hospital	1	0
Health centre and comprehensive clinics (public)	0	1
Private Hospital	0	1
Overall	1	2

Figure 8.4: Completely destroyed Al-Qusayr's "National Hospital". Photo by UrbAN-S (Jan. 2019)

Located in Al-Hay Al-Gharbi Neighbourhood, the hospital was previously considered a regional medical facility with a 30-bed capacity. It was a prominent feature in the neighbourhood.

Current capacity

The service area for the city's medical system mirrors the pre-conflict area. However, the distance to operational facilities is now further than pre-conflict. Northern neighbourhoods are especially unserved due to depopulation and no facilities are present.



Al-Qusayr's only publicly-funded primary health care facility is located in Al-Jamrok neighbourhood (Old City). It delivers basic health care, including vaccinations. Al-Ahli private hospital, the city's only functional hospital, operates 30 hospital beds. It is also located in the city's southern area, in the Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhood. It serves all of Al-Qusayr's inhabitants and surrounding communities. When accounting only for Al-Qusayr's current residents, the per-capita hospital bed capacity has increased, as there has been tremendous loss of population citywide. However, when accounting for potential future population of the region, existing facilities are insufficient. (See figure 8.6, "Operational beds and per-capita bed capacity")

There are reportedly six pharmacies operational in the community, two in each of the three central neighbourhoods (Al-Hay Al-Gharbi, That Al-Sakha, and Al Jumrok).¹⁴⁸ Sources also mention at least two private health clinics exist, and may be operating out of individual physician's homes.

Figure 8.5: Per-capita bed capacity¹⁴⁹

	 Pre-conflict (2010)	 Current (2019)
Beds	85	30
Hospital beds per 1,000 of city population	2.6	9.9

Figure 8.6: Operational bed capacity¹⁵⁰

	 Pre-conflict (2010)	 Current (2019)
Public	55	0
Private	30	30
Overall	85	30

Staffing / supplies

Prior to the conflict, the city was served by ample numbers of healthcare professionals. However, as a result of heavy fighting, most of Al-Qusayr's medical staff emigrated or were displaced internally. The drop in staffing numbers is alarming. Prior to 2011, there were 60 physicians serving in the city. Today, less than 10 are reported. Only fifteen nurses and midwives are available in the city or from surrounding villages, whereas over 400 were previously counted.

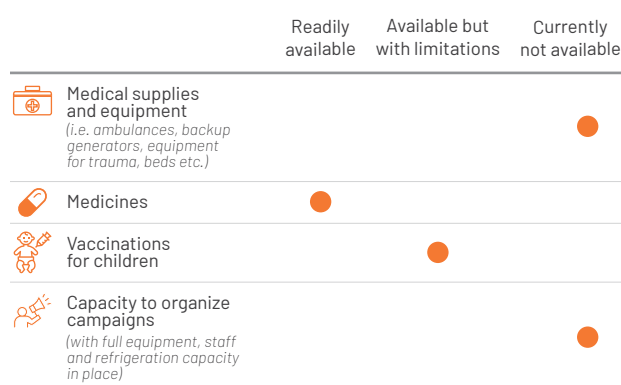
Five doctors currently reside in the city. Reports indicate that four specialists remain, practicing in the fields of Gynecology, Dentistry, Endocrinology, and Pediatrics. Emergency cases, however, must be transferred to Homs City.¹⁵¹

A number of challenges inhibit restoring adequate staff levels. Indeed, as the city is limited in its medical facilities, there is little space for physicians to practice. Staff, along with many others, have not been able to return, as entry to the city requires a permit and they are dissuaded by security concerns.¹⁵²

There are shortages in basic medical supplies and equipment, including backup generators, automated external defibrillators, fully equipped hospital beds, and refrigerated areas to store medicines and supplies.¹⁵³ Moreover, only four ambulances and 30 hospital beds are currently operating in the city. Transportation to healthcare is a reported concern, as the health centre's capacity (including proper equipment) is limited.

Table 8.1: Medical staff and facilities ¹⁵⁴

	Pre-conflict	Current (2019)
Doctors	67 (including dentists)	8
Nurses	407 (Male and female nurses and midwives from Al-Qusayr and surrounding villages)	15
Mobile clinics	0	0
Hospital beds	85	30
Ambulance cars	4	4

Figure 8.7: Access to medical supplies and healthcare ¹⁵⁵

Current health interventions

According to local sources, no major government-sponsored projects to rehabilitate the city's health infrastructure are currently underway. Government support is generally limited to small-scale aid for the Al-Jamrok primary health centre.

Since GoS control, a limited number of government-approved NGOs and CSOs have begun to provide some health services.¹⁵⁶ One UN implementing partner has provided aid to repair and rehabilitate the city's health centre. In addition, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (in partnership with the World Health Organisation) has carried out a polio vaccination campaign targeting children.¹⁵⁷ Church associations are also known to provide aid to all groups within the community, regardless of religious beliefs. This includes health services for the elderly and the wounded, supporting patients with surgeries, prostheses, and medicines. Other notable aid foundations include the Al Bustan Association, Syria Trust for Development, and Zeinab Charity. Each of these organizations are noted to have strong ties to the Government of Syria

Table 8.2: Healthcare interventions ¹⁵⁸

Project type or name	Organization	Location (area, citywide, neighbourhoods)
Anti-Polio vaccination campaign for children	Syrian Arab Red Crescent in cooperation with the World Health Organization	Citywide
Facility rehabilitation (the "Al Qusayr Al-Ahli Hospital" (Private Hospital))	Unknown source	Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhood
Facility rehabilitation – The Al-Hay Al-Qabli Neighbourhood Health centre and comprehensive clinic	Ministry of Health and Premiere Urgence INGO	Al-Hay Al-Qabli neighbourhood
UNICEF programming in the city	Syrian Family Planning Association	Citywide

Sectoral Considerations

- Support investments that increase the availability of medical supplies and equipment. It is feared that chronic diseases will surge if proper supplies are not made available.
- Prioritize primary health facilities, programmes, staffing and supplies as well as enhancing the city's first-aid and ambulatory response in short-term programming. Indeed, the city's healthcare capacity has been devastated with the destruction of the National Hospital.
- Establish a station for medical emergencies for the city and neighbouring villages. With the lack of facilities, staffing, and equipment, life-saving resources are needed. This is needed to mitigate the travel required to seek medical care in Homs City.
- Initiate outreach to low-income, rural residents with preventative care (e.g. vaccines) and treatment of disease and injury. This can be advanced through the deployment of mobile clinics and emergency services.

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- 140 "Assault on medical care in Syria" *UN Human Rights Council*, 13 September 2013, <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/523c24704.pdf>
- 141 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019
- 142 Apo Abu Turab, "Short as it looks today" *almondonline*, 10 February 2017 <https://www.almodon.com/arabworld/2017/2/9/القصير-كما-تبدو-اليوم>
- 143 Interview with local health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 *UrbAN-S* Analysis. November 2019. (See city profile section 2, "Methodology")
- 146 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 147 Ibid.
- 148 Interview with local health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 Ibid.
- 151 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019
- 152 Interview with local health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 153 Ibid.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Interview with local health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 156 Local reporting indicates that major players providing aid are primarily organizations operating under Hezbollah such as the Martyr Foundation and the Orphan Foundation.
- 157 Interview with local health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 158 Sources: 1.) Asset inventory of Al-Qusayr conducted by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019, 2.) Interview with health specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2018, and 3.) "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019

9. Education

Overview

As a rural outpost, Al-Qusayr provides for the education needs of the local community as well as those in surrounding villages within proximity to the city.

Prior to the conflict, the city facilitated the learning of nearly 9,000 students in its 15 schools. According to sources, school attendance was high. Indeed, most of all children regularly attended schools. The Ministry of Education was reported to have provided sufficient staffing, supplies, and support. School facilities were in working order.

However, as the conflict ensued, most of the city's schools (and families) were affected. As a result, students were displaced with families, some resuming their education in other locations.

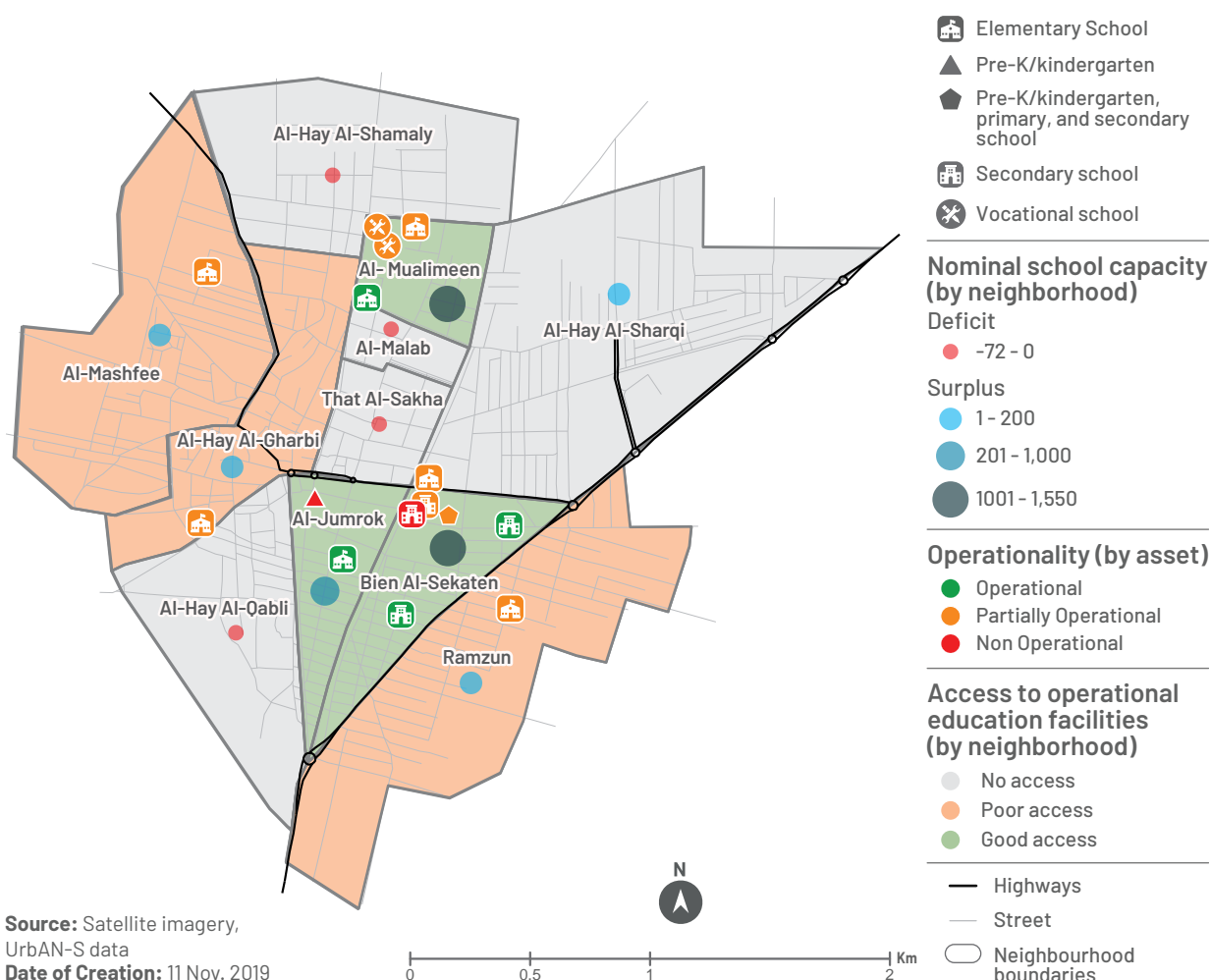
In 2014, the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) first report on the situation of children and armed conflict in Syria noted Al-Qusayr as an area of concern. Indeed, during active fighting, armed groups occupied

three of the city's schools, using them for military bases and weapon storage. This alone disrupted the education of over 2,000 of Al-Qusayr's students. The UNSC documents conscription of school aged children into armed opposition groups. This included one 17 year-old boy from Al-Qusayr trained in combat and weaponry. According to the report, he assisted fleeing, trapped, and wounded civilians during shelling, and was made to bury the dead.¹⁵⁹

Nearly 90 percent of the city's population has been displaced or emigrated since 2011. Only an estimated 700 school aged children (ages 5-19) remain. (see *city profile section 2, "Demographics and population movement"*). Reports indicate some local students have suspended and dropouts are noted. However, as armed groups no longer inhabit schools, those choosing to continue education are able to at one of the remaining operational facilities.¹⁶⁰

Education infrastructure and operational capacity

Map 9.1: Operational status of education institutions and capacity deficit by neighbourhood

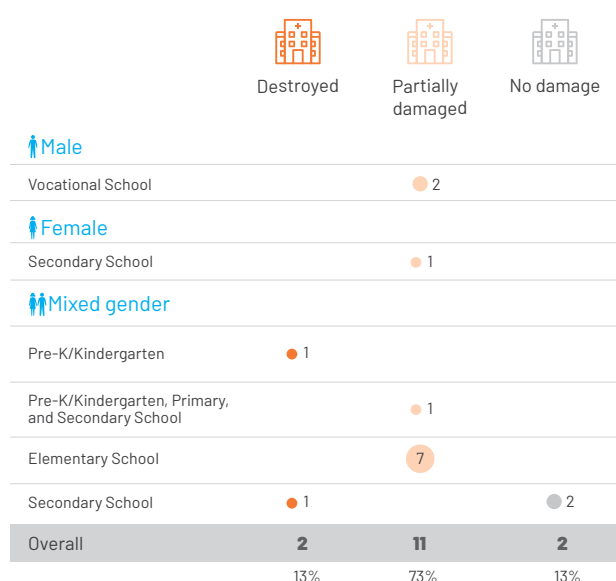


According to local sources, the 'catchment area' for education services mirrors that of prior to the conflict. However, as the city's northern neighbourhoods are effectively uninhabited, access to education in these areas remains poor.

An inventory of assets in early 2019 revealed that 87 percent of the city's schools have been affected by the conflict. 13 percent were totally damaged, while 73 percent were partially damaged. Four out of the city's 15 schools were unharmed and remain fully operational. Nine are reportedly partially operational while the two totally damaged schools remain non-operational. Operational schools are concentrated in the old city, centralized and mostly within the Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhood. An additional cluster of school facilities are located in Al-Mualimeen neighbourhood.

Non-damaged school buildings are reportedly in good condition and their restrooms have been maintained.¹⁶¹

Figure 9.1: Damage to education institutions by type and gender



At the regional level, UNICEF and the Syria Response Education Cluster reported in 2016 that the Al-Qusayr District had lost 51.2 percent of the total number of schools between 2011 and 2014.¹⁶² The district also lost 19,485 of its pre-conflict students, representing enrollment of only 45.4 percent of pre-conflict levels.

Capacity of schools

According to current analysis, the physical capacity of school buildings vastly exceeds the number of school aged children presently residing in the city.¹⁶³ In four neighbourhoods (Al-Hay Al-Qabli, Al-Malab, Al-Hay Al-Shamaly, and That Al-Sakha), a slight nominal deficit exists, as these neighbourhoods do not contain schools. Although, in each of these, the student-aged population is currently less than 100. These minor deficits are generously made up for in the city's seven remaining neighbourhoods. Five of which contain a surplus of over 100 seats, while two neighbourhoods (Al-Mualimeen and Bien Al-Sekaten) show a surplus of over 1,000 seats when accounting only for neighbourhood population.

The reality of Al-Qusayr's school capacity should also factor in its service to surrounding villages. Reports indicate that city schools serve areas outside of city limits, including Tell al-Nabi Mando, Arjoun and Al-Mouh.¹⁶⁴ Although the exact number of surrounding village students are unknown, one can presume that is significant, in the range of 500 - 1,000, as the design capacity of Al-Qusayr's school greatly surpasses the student population within city limits. Even prior to the conflict, surplus capacity exceeded city needs by nearly 2,000 seats.¹⁶⁵

Only two schools in the Bien Al-Sekaten and Al-Mualimeen neighbourhoods are reported to be operating double shifts. All others report operating only one morning shift.

Figure 9.2: Operational status of education institutions

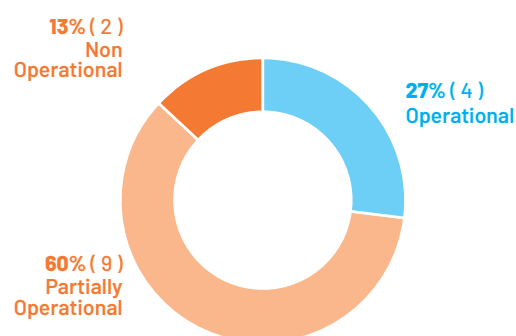




Figure 9.3: The “Rural School” in Al-Hay Al-Qabli Neighbourhood (Mixed elementary). Although the school was partially damaged, it is now operational and recipient of government funded restoration. Photo by UrbAN-S (Jan. 2019)

Staffing and materials

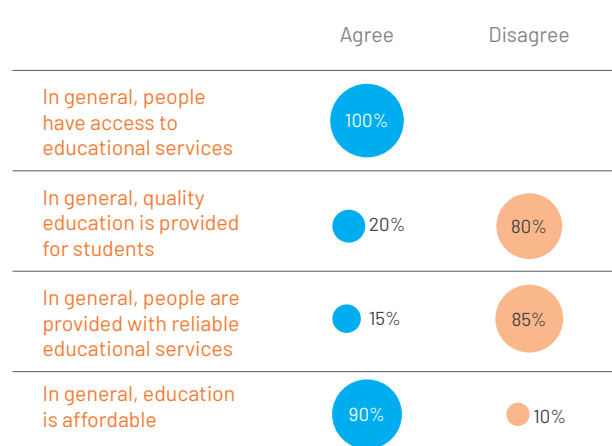
Al-Qusayr’s schools suffer a shortage of staff, materials and supplies. According to local sources, the necessary educational supplies and materials (including fuel, stationary, water, etc.) are available but with limitations. Even with low enrollment, the need far outweighs the resources available. Local sources blame this an overall lack of support for education and the country’s deteriorating economic conditions.¹⁶⁶

As living conditions in the city deteriorated, reports indicate the majority of educational staff were internally displaced or emigrated to neighbouring countries. Analysis also suggests that monthly teaching salaries are regarded as insufficient. With currency inflation, rising prices for household expenses has created an ever-increasing cost of living, especially for public employees paid in Syrian Pounds.¹⁶⁷

The exact number of education staffing is unknown. However, based on the current capacity of education facilities, the number of teachers likely ranges between 75–100. This number appears sufficient, given the low enrollment numbers. Most of the current teaching staff / cadre are locals from neighbouring villages.¹⁶⁸

Current education needs

Figure 9.4: Local area experts perceptions of education barriers in the city¹⁶⁹



In general, people have access to educational services

Although access is generally perceived to be available, local area experts report that the quality and reliability of education in this city is low. Local sources blame the education system’s poor quality and stunted recovery on a number of factors. These include:

- Slow population return and low school enrollment;
- Overall deterioration of services and living conditions in the city;
- Shortage of education staff affecting most schools;
- Shortage of education materials; and
- A lack of interest, attention, and resources provided by the government.

As noted, education in the city suffers from the highly securitized nature of the city, prohibiting any meaningful returns. (See city profile section, 3, “Demographics and population movement”) Until community members are given the opportunity to return home, the health of the education system remain at risk. Low enrollment, insufficient resources and the lack of qualified staff will continue be a challenge.

Interventions and restorative works to education infrastructure

Table 9.1: Education interventions ¹⁷⁰

Project type or name	Organization	Location (area, citywide, neighbourhoods)
Distribution of stationary and educational materials	Arab Syrian Red Crescent	Citywide
School rehabilitation (general)	Ministry of Education	Citywide
Free additional courses and psychosocial support to children	Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD)	Citywide (Community center in the Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhood)
School rehabilitation (the "Rural School" Elementary School)	Ministry of Education	Al-Hay Al-Qabli neighbourhood
School rehabilitation (El Shaheed Ali Saadia Elementary School)	Ministry of Education	Al-Mualimeen neighbourhood

The government is responsible for all 13 public kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Sources suggest that the city, however, continues to suffer from a lack of education investment. Although government-led works previously rehabilitated some damaged schools, there remains damaged and partially damaged schools throughout. Some neighbourhoods lack any education services, including Al-Hay Al-Shmaly neighbourhood and further to the north.¹⁷¹

Two private secondary schools are currently operational. Neither NGOs nor charities are active in managing the city's schools. However, reports suggest that they provide some support, such as distribution of materials or providing financial support to students.¹⁷² In 2018, the Syria Trust for Development was said to be providing support to university students who had successfully completed their academic year.¹⁷³

Figure 9.5: Martyr Ali Alsaadiyeh mixed elementary school in Al-Mualimeen Neighbourhood. The school is operational and has received some rehabilitation. Photo by UrbAN-S (Jan. 2019).



Sectoral considerations

- Continue the restoration of the city's damaged schools and grounds. This includes those occupied by armed opposition groups during fighting. If necessary, reconstruct schools in alternative locations as to mitigate the psycho-social and historical trauma of hardships faced by the conflict. Prioritize neighbourhoods where education services are not available.
- Allocate resources to secure additional qualified staff to the city as meaningful returns begin to occur over the long term. In the short term, programming should be designed to develop the capacity of current educational staff through training, technical and administrative support and certificate programmes.
- In conjunction with confidence building measures (and other consensus and community development discussions), prioritize the education sector as a common and basic need for all residents.
- Address students' gaps in education and facilitate the return of dropouts students through programme design. This could include revisions to the curriculum, adjusting school scheduling and/or home-based education programmes.

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- 159 "Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic" *United Nations Security Council*, 27 January, 2014, https://untso.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/report_on_children_and_armed_conflict_in_the_syrian_arab_republic.pdf
- 160 Interview with education specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 161 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019
- 162 SYRIA EDUCATION SECTOR ANALYSIS: The effects of the crisis on education in areas controlled by opposition groups, 2010-2015, *Whole of Syria Education Focal Point, Syria Response Education Cluster & UNICEF*, 2016
- 163 *UrbAN-S Analysis*, November 2019
- 164 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, July 2019
- 165 *UrbAN-S Analysis*, November 2019
- 166 Interview with education specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2018
- 167 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019
- 168 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019
- 169 Survey of local area experts, Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2018
- 170 Sources: 1.) Asset inventory of Al-Qusayr conducted by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019, 2.) Interview with education specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2018, and 3.) *Operational partners* in Al-Qusayr. October 2019
- 171 Interview with education specialist by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019
- 172 Ibid.
- 173 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019

10. Water and sanitation

Overview

Al-Qusayr City is part of the Orontes River basin. The region has large water and agricultural resources.

Availability and access to water resources affected the agricultural and industrial activities.¹⁷⁴ Prior to the conflict, a quarter of the agricultural country production, and a third of the industrial production was provided by the Orontes River basin. Currently, a decrease in agricultural output has appeared by nearly 30 percent¹⁷⁵ throughout the Orontes Basin. This happened due to many reasons; the forced, and ongoing, displacement of local farmers and the ongoing wells drilling.

Al-Qusayr City is part of the basin rural areas. 89 percent of rural households in the basin were connected to the public water supply system.¹⁷⁶ In 2010, The Ministry of Water Resources noted that the per capita share of water in most rural areas in the basin ranged from 50 to 75 litres per day.¹⁷⁷

The Orontes River basin public water supply system is composed of 1500 wells equipped with electric pumps. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) reported that Al-Qusayr City rainfall scheme is 250 mm/half year,¹⁷⁸ which affected the well density. The city has high well density of more than 10 wells/ 100 ha.¹⁷⁹ Two

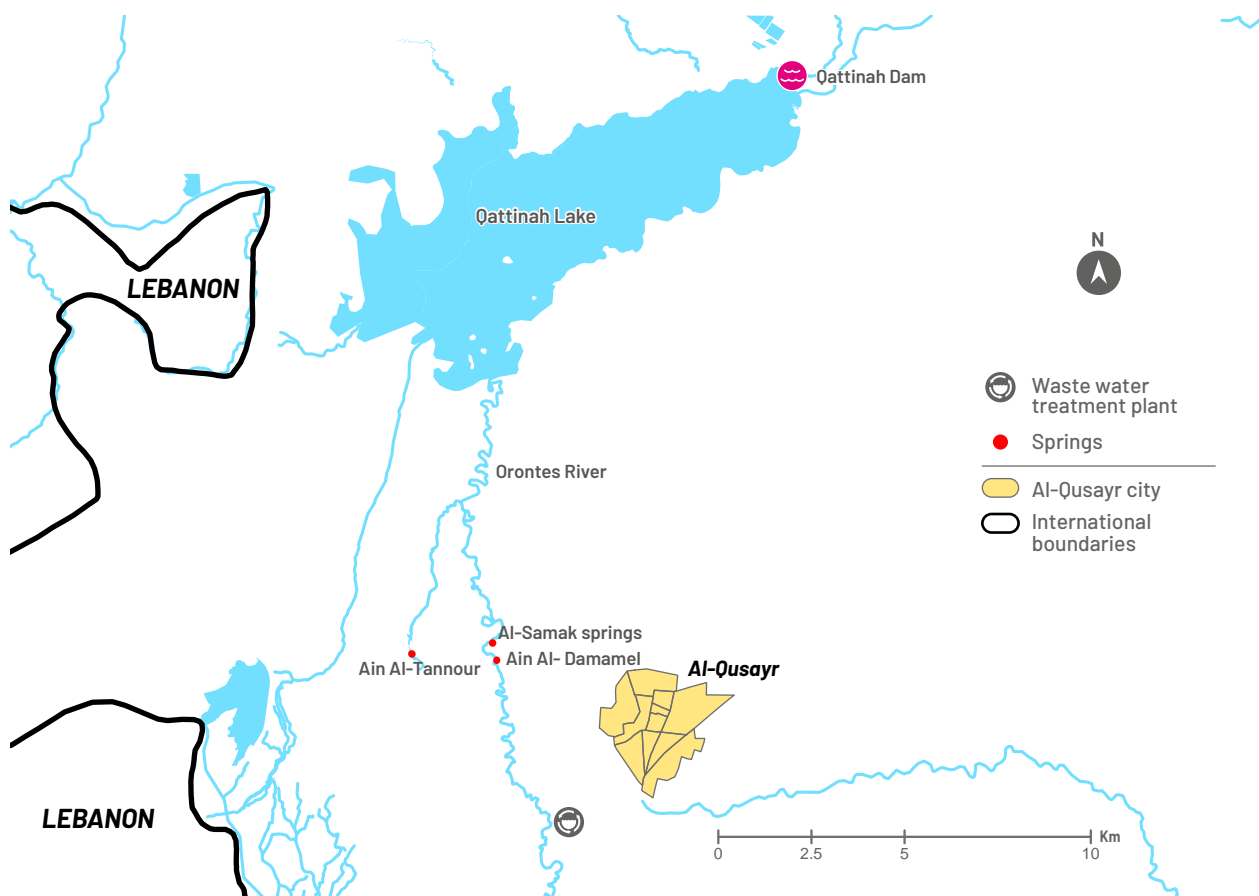
main pipe networks are supplying the main cities which includes Al-Qusayr. Indeed, the city is supplied by the Hama-Salamiyah pipe network. Water is being treated in the Sareco wastewater treatment plant, 11 km south of Al-Qusayr City (See map 10.2, “Operationality of water and sanitation infrastructure in Al-Qusayr City”).¹⁸⁰

There are also many fresh water springs in Al-Qusayr City including Ain Al-Damamil, Al-Sokhna, Al-Samak, and Ain Al-Tanour (See map 10.1, “Al-Qusayr natural water resources”).¹⁸¹ Many surrounding areas depend on Al-Qusayr for water supply, such as Hama.¹⁸² The Homs pipe network is also fed by Ain Al-Tanour and Al-Samak springs.¹⁸³

In Al-Qusayr, no restrictive measures were enforced restricting groundwater use.¹⁸⁴ This uncontrolled groundwater extraction caused a decline in the flow of the springs feeding domestic, industrial water supply networks and irrigation schemes. As a result, the flow of springs located in Al-Qusayr area including Ain Al-Tanour decreased by a third, from 2,300 l/s in the 1960's to 1,500 l/s in the 1990's.^{185 186 187} So, currently the government is working on a wide ban when it comes to new well digging.

Figure 10.1: Ain Al-Tanour water station, (credit: SANA, 2019)¹⁸⁸



Map 10.1: Al-Qusayr natural water resources ¹⁸⁹

In the late 2000s, urbanization and industrial expansion caused increasing water pollution in Al-Qusayr.¹⁹⁰ The contamination of the water in the Orontes basin can be linked to multiple reasons, such as (1) domestic

wastewater discharge which was aggravated by a large population, (2) fertilizer plants,¹⁹¹ (3) waste from food industries, and (4) high industrial production activities.¹⁹²

Figure 10.2: Sareco wastewater treatment plant (credit: Google Earth, April.2018) ¹⁹³

Impact of the conflict

In 2011, the water supply was interrupted in Al-Qusayr City as a result of the obstruction of the springs and the cutting of the main water channel. Moreover, during the Al-Qusayr battle of May 2013, Al-Qusayr water springs, wells, network, secondary channels and main tank were targeted by the GOS and severely damaged.¹⁹⁴ The insecurity in Al Qusayr has impaired operations at a major water pumping station. This station served 65 towns and cities in Homs and Hama Governorates.¹⁹⁵

It was reported in 2014 that 2,620 out of 6,342 agricultural wells were plugged. Half the pumps and motors were looted. 20,500 hectares of irrigated land have been dried off and are no longer cultivated, since nearly the entire populations of 23 cities and villages have been expelled. 5,565 pumping facilities, out of the 11,460 recorded in the area, were destroyed or looted.¹⁹⁶

The situation is heightened by the very frequent power cuts, which are known to cause damage to pumping stations in the area.¹⁹⁷

Safe water supply

Since the start of the conflict, there has been a shortage of safe drinking water in the city, which led to an acute increase in waterborne diseases.¹⁹⁸ Water contamination resulted from informal oil refining, unexploded ordnance (UXO), deforestation, and desertification.¹⁹⁹

It was reported in 2014 that safe water supply per capita from the public water network is less than the 20 l/d for over 50 percent of the population living in the basin including those in Al-Qusayr City,²⁰⁰ which is the short term survival requirement in emergencies as defined by the WHO.

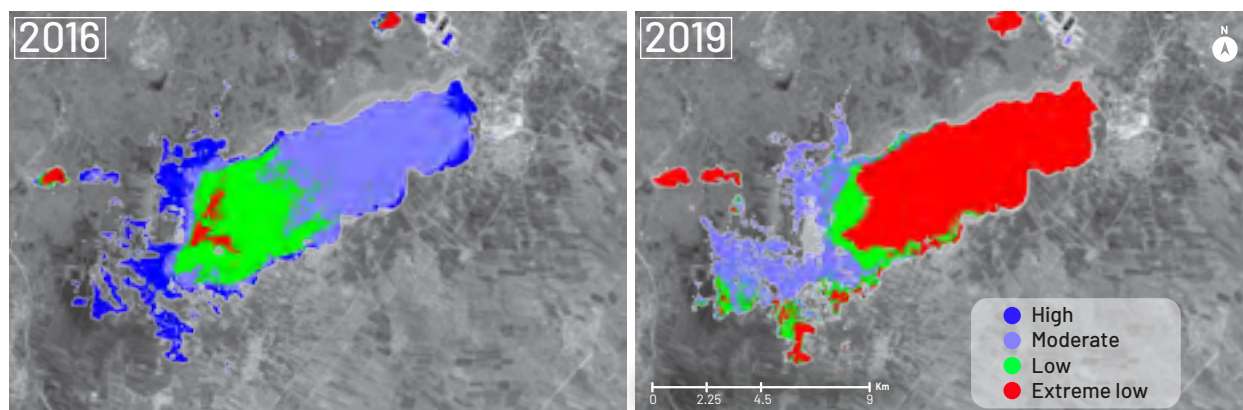
In 2018, the water from Al-Qusayr treatment plant was cut, and services removed to the Hama Governorate, as the water turbidity had risen above the permissible limits in Hama.²⁰¹

In areas where heavy fighting took place, numerous water stations were damaged with no water pumping to communities that are wholly dependent on them. This what happened for Al-Qusayr water station.²⁰²

Water and sanitation coordinator for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent.

Water Quality of Qattinah Lake

Figure 10.3: Trophic status²⁰³ in Qattinah Lake between 2016 and 2019²⁰⁴

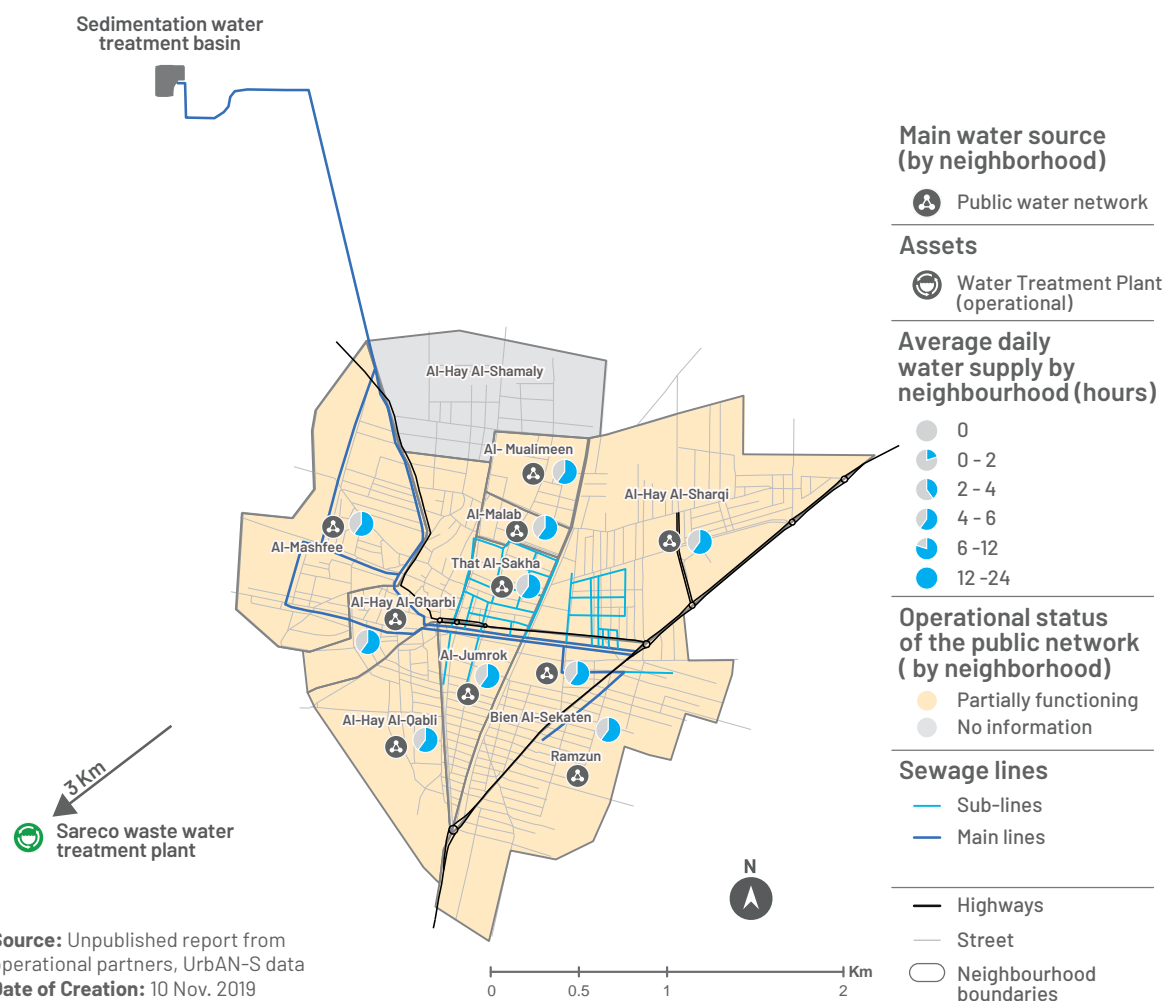


Trophic status of Ar-Rastan Lake has been measured by the Sentinel 2A satellite data for the years 2016 and 2019.

Decrease in the trophic status of the lake as a result of increased Chlorophyll-a concentration may indicate the presence of external pollutants.²⁰⁵

Operationality of Water and Sanitation Infrastructure

Map 10.2: Operational status of water and sanitation infrastructure in Al-Qusayr City



Residents rely on the public water network as the main water source. The public water network is partially damaged, and provides 4 to 6 hours of water supply. The main natural resource is Ain Al-Tanour.²⁰⁶ There was no access to data in Al-Hay Al-Shmaly neighbourhood as it has no population.

The level of infrastructure damage in the northern and western neighbourhoods was high. These were opposition areas during the height of the conflict. In Al-Hay Al-Sharqi neighbourhood, the level of damage was lower as it was under the government control.²⁰⁷

Sanitation

All neighbourhoods in the city reported that the sanitation network is partially damaged and partially operational. The sewer network in Al-Qusayr City consists of two main lines, the first with 80 cm diameter, and the other is 60 cm diameter. These lines cross the city horizontally from the main street and continues up north vertically. Both lines intersect in a 80 cm diameter collector line until it reaches the sedimentation basins northwest the city. The main lines has branches of sub lines with a diameter of 30 cm that cross the neighbourhoods (See map 10.2, "Operationality of water and sanitation infrastructure in Al-Qusayr City").²⁰⁸ Wastewater is being treated in Sareco treatment plant 11 km south from the city.

Current interventions

In March 2019, Al-Qusayr City Local Council confirmed ongoing maintenance of the sewerage network.²⁰⁹ According to local sources, the Government carried out repairs of the water network, allowing water to be connected for a maximum of six hours per day. The government has otherwise focused on small-scale repairs over the city, including reparation of damaged water pumps.

Table 10.1: Current government-led water infrastructure investments

Project type or name	Location	Implementor
Maintenance of all sewage lines ²¹⁰	City	Government
Restoration of the main sewage line ²¹¹	22 kilometers along the estuary	Government
Rehabilitation of the water networks	Eastern and city center neighbourhoods	The General Water Corporation

Sectoral considerations

- Advocate for the enforcement of restrictive measures on groundwater use to reduce groundwater abstraction in the short term. This will assist to curb the decline in both surface and groundwater availability.²¹²
- Support the maintenance of water network pipes, wastewater treatment plant and sewage pipes. Indeed, most of the water infrastructures in Al-Qusayr require maintenance.²¹³ This maintenance will help increase access to potable water, ensuring continuity of water access and ensuring the safety of drinking water with low contamination levels.
- Rehabilitate the electrical control panels and generators which affect the water pumping process.
- Install water tanks and fuel tanks for supplying the stations and ensure proper operationality.
- Develop a functional irrigation system to support the resumption of agricultural activities. This can be achieved by restoring the irrigation networks that should include rehabilitation of canals, wells, pumps and other tributaries. Redevelopment to coincide with an Orontes Basin water resources management plan.
- Advocate for the enforcement of restrictive measures related to organizing the land use near Qattinah lake to reduce the lake pollution. With ensuring to remediate adverse environmental consequences that caused the lake's trophic status degradation.

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- 177 Ibid.
- 178 "The Study On Sewerage System Development In The Syrian Arab Republic Final Report," *JICA*, March 2008, http://open-jicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/11879095_02.pdf
- 179 Myriam Saadé-Sbeih al., *Contemporary Water Infrastructure, e Atlas of the Orontes River Basin*, 2015, <https://www.water-security.org/article/contemporary-water-infrastructure>
- 180 Ahmed Haj Asaad, Ronald Jaubert, "Geostrategic stakes and the impact of the conflict in the Orontes River basin," *CARIN.INFO*, 2014, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-confluences-mediterranee-2014-2-page-173.htm>
- 181 "Context Assessment," *Urban-S*, 2019.
- 182 "Millions of Syrians remain dependent on support for water and sanitation," *ICRC*, July 2013, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/resources/documents/statement/2013/07-09-syria-sarc-icrc-joint-statement.htm>
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- 184 Saadé-Sbeih al., *Groundwater Balance Politics: Aquifer Overexploitation in the Orontes River Basin*, *Water Alternatives*, 2018, <http://www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol11/v11issue3/459-a11-3-12/file>
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- 206 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by UrbAN-S, February 2019.
- 207 "القصور تشهد عودة خجولة للنازحين السوريين تحت رقابة حزب الله" *aawsat*, November 2019, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1989286/القصور-تشهد-عودة-خجولة-لِلنازحين-السوريين-تحت-رقابة-حزب-الله>
- 208 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 209 "استكمال أعمال إعادة تأهيل شبكة الصرف الصحي في القصور بحمص" *Sham International*, March 2019, <http://sham.fm/ar/article/74500/استكمال-أعمال-إعادة-تأهيل-شبكة-الصرف-الصحي-في-القصور-بحمص.html>
- 210 Ibid.
- 211 Ibid.
- 212 Saadé-Sbeih *al.*, Groundwater Balance Politics: Aquifer Overexploitation in the Orontes River Basin, *Water Alternatives*, 2018, <http://www.water-alternatives.org/index.php/alldoc/articles/vol11/v11issue3/459-a11-3-12/file>
- 213 Myriam Saadé-Sbeih *al.*, Contemporary Water Infrastructure, e Atlas of the Orontes River Basin, 2015, <https://www.water-security.org/article/contemporary-water-infrastructure>

11. Energy and electricity

Overview

The primary source of power in Al-Qusayr City is the power plant located in the village of Jandar in the southern Governorate of Homs (See map 11.1, “Electrical power assets around Al-Qusayr City and electricity grid damage level”).²¹⁴ The power plant started working in the year 1995²¹⁵ in order to support Homs City and its rural areas and effectively use domestically produced natural gas.²¹⁶ Jandar station has a capacity of 700 MW²¹⁷ covering 100 percent of the need of Homs City and its rural areas, which include Al-Qusayr.²¹⁸

Impact of the conflict

During the conflict, the city’s infrastructure was mostly destroyed.²¹⁹ At the beginning of the conflict it was reported that electricity was connected for two hours and cuts for four hours afterwards. Currently, the daily electric power supply for the whole city is from 6 to 12 hours. The capacity of the electricity supply for the city is maximum 20 MW.²²⁰

Impact on the community

Due to the damage on electrical infrastructure, the remaining population in Al-Qusayr City started using energy storage batteries as an electrical supply alternative.²²¹

There are reported and frequent looting in the city where electrical wiring from houses have been looted and sold on the black market.²²²

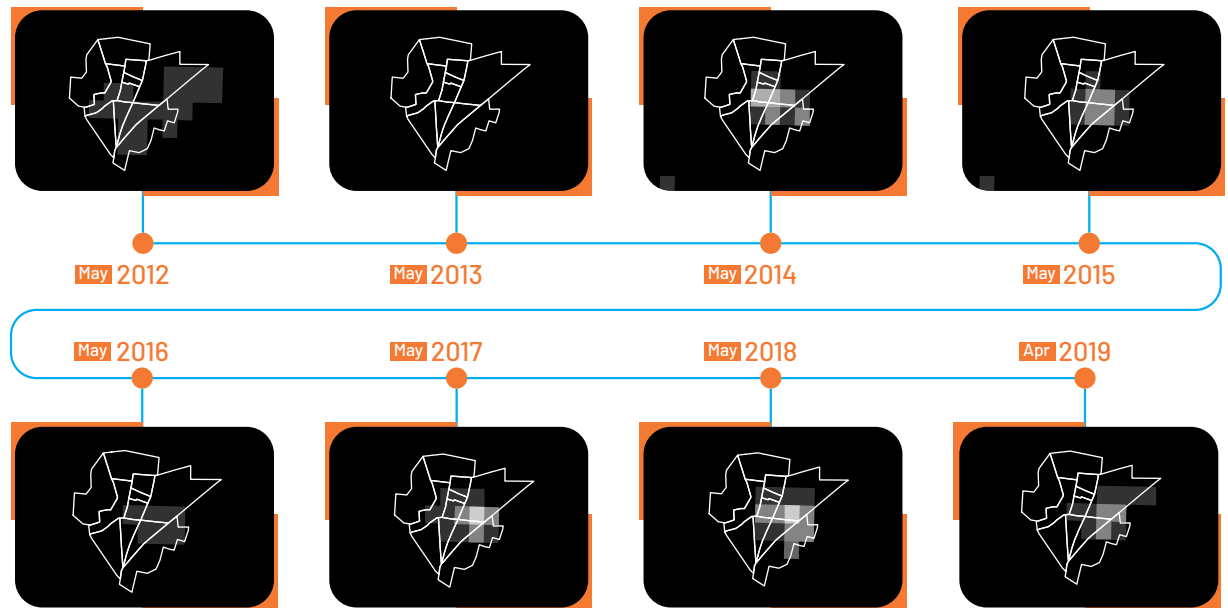
“The city is destroyed, with no services. The returnees will leave their city as long as this is the case with no proper level of services”²²³

- Al Qusayr City Resident

Figure 11.1: Jandar power plant with a capacity of 700 MW serving Al-Qusayr City (Credit: Jandar Power plant Facebook page, 2019)²²⁴



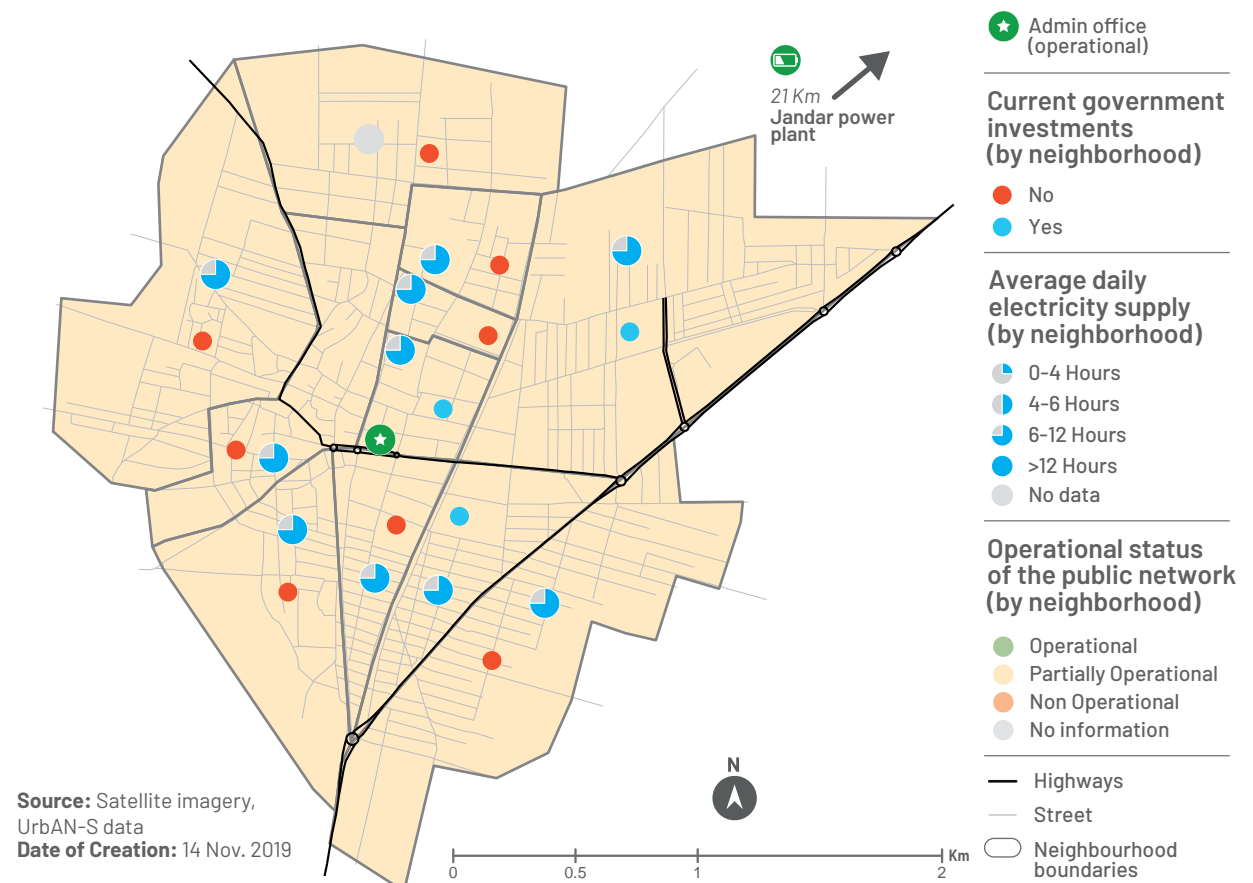
Figure 11.2: Night light in Al-Qusayr City over the years showing a virtual lighting concentration on the south-eastern neighbourhoods from 2012-2019



Operational capacity

Electricity assets and damage level

Map 11.1: Electrical power assets around Al-Qusayr City²²⁵ and electricity grid damage level²²⁶



The electricity grid and the street lighting infrastructure all over the city is partially damaged and partially operational. Al-Hay Al-Gharbi, Al-Jumrok, and That Al-Sakha neighbourhoods are using alternatives for street lighting such as electricity generators, solar energy and energy storage batteries.²²⁷ As reported in other chapters of this profile, there is no data available for Al-Hay Al-Shmaly as it has been completely depopulated.²²⁸

Electricity sector interventions

In 2017, 90 percent of the neighbourhoods on the western side of the railroad have not undergone any rehabilitation and reconstruction projects.²²⁹ In 2019, it has been reported that the Ministry of Electricity repaired the electricity network in neighbourhoods that are currently inhabited. As a result, 35 percent of the city's electricity grid and 65 percent of the city's countryside electricity grid have been rehabilitated.²³⁰ This rehabilitation thus excludes the neighbourhoods that are off limits to residents, such as Al-Hay Al-Shmali neighbourhood.²³¹

The Government has focused on small-scale repairs across the city of Al-Qusayr. These repairs include street lighting on main streets.²³² Also, electricity grid rehabilitation projects took place in Al-Hay Al-Sharqi neighbourhood, Bien Al-Sekaten neighbourhood, and the city centre (That Al-Sakha).²³³

The rehabilitation of electrical grid in the city aids in building legitimacy for the local administration, allows the growth of the local economy, and can aid in the decrease of crime in areas currently unlit or unrehabilitated.²³⁴

Sectoral considerations

- Ensure all programmes and projects are distributed evenly throughout the city. Starting with the high populated areas in the city (city centre and eastern parts). Then, focusing on the western, northern and southern parts of the city.
- Support and empower the local council to start maintaining the electricity grid infrastructure, as it is partially functional.
- Develop a programming system to ensure that all neighbourhoods are receiving a sufficient amount of electricity during the day from the main electricity grid. So, they will not be forced to find alternatives for electricity.

"All measures have been taken to ensure that more people return to the city. The governorate institutions will work based on a clear plan to accelerate the provision of basic services, including electricity"²³⁵

- Homs City Governor

- 214 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.
- 215 "محطة توليد جندر صديقة للبيئة," *esyria*, Jan 2010, <http://esyria.sy/sites/code/index.php?site=homs&p=stories&category=business&file-name=201001101555021>
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- 220 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.
- 221 Interview with local energy expert by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 222 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 223 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.
- 224 "عودة 1000-سوري إلى-القصر بعد 7 سنوات من التهجير," *aawsat*, July 2019, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1802781/-إلى-1000-سوري-إلى-القصر-بعد-7-سنوات-من-التهجير>
- 225 Asset inventory of Al-Qusayr conducted by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
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- 230 "مئات الأسر المهجرة تعود إلى منازلها في مدينة القصر المحررة من الإرهاب," *alnour radio*, July, 2019, <http://www.alnour.com.lb/news/politics/374795/مئات-الأسر-المهجرة-تعود-إلى-منازلها-في-مدينة-القصر-المحررة-374795>
- 231 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.
- 232 Ibid.
- 233 Ibid.
- 234 Ibid.
- 235 "عودة 1000-سوري إلى-القصر بعد 7 سنوات من التهجير," *aawsat*, July 2019, <https://aawsat.com/home/article/1802781/-إلى-1000-سوري-إلى-القصر-بعد-7-سنوات-من-التهجير>

12. Solid waste management

Overview

Prior to the conflict, there was a low level of service and standards for solid waste management in Al-Qusayr City.²³⁶ There was reportedly 22 tons of municipal waste generation per day, with only one open waste dumping site.²³⁷ Currently, the municipal waste generation is 1 ton per day.

As a result of the conflict, the neighbourhoods located to the west of the railroad, including southern, northern and western neighbourhoods faced 90 percent of the destruction. There are currently no projects or interventions that are conducting rehabilitation or reconstruction projects, including solid waste.²³⁸ With no assistance to remove the rubble or collected solid waste.

Currently, the collection of waste is taking place in all inhabited neighbourhoods such as the city centre. After that waste is being transferred to Al-Qusayr sanitary landfill.

Impact of the conflict

In Al-Qusayr City, the conflict has significantly changed the type and quantity of solid waste to be managed. Indeed, municipal solid waste generation has declined due to lower consumption and depletion in commercial activity. The estimated municipal waste generation is now of 1 ton per day. This shows a 96 percent decrease in waste generation as compared to before the conflict.²³⁹

At the same time, the conflict has led to large-scale generation of debris all over the city. The amount generated is higher than both the construction and demolition waste which was generated prior to the conflict. The estimated debris accumulation is 246,575 tons.²⁴⁰

In 2018, the WASH Cluster reported that there is an ongoing phenomenon of informal dumping sites that appeared as a result of leaving 9.47 percent of the total municipal waste in public spaces. The governmental free waste collection covers all the neighbourhoods with 93.68 percent of the total waste collection.²⁴¹

Figure 12.1: Solid waste informal dumping area in Al-Qusayr (Credit - Alessio Romenzi, 2012)



Operational capacity

Table 12.1: Operational capacity of the solid waste sector in Al-Qusayr City²⁴²

	Population ²⁴³	No. of waste collection workers	Waste collection workers (per 1,000 population)
Pre-conflict	33,313	80 ²⁴⁴	2.40
Current	3,038	62 ²⁴⁵	20.41

Currently, the catchment area that is being served in Al-Qusayr City is the same as prior to the conflict. Due to the drastic decrease (91 percent) of the city's population, there has been no need to increase the sector's capacity (numbers of vehicles, trash compressors, compactors and labourers).²⁴⁶

Prior to the conflict, the city exceeded twofold the national standard of one waste collection worker per 1,000 of population. Currently, due to the significant decrease of population, the city's ratio has highly increased from 2.40 to become 20.41 waste collection worker per 1,000 of population (see table 12.1, "Operational capacity of the solid waste sector in Al-Qusayr City").

There is thus a high weekly frequency of waste collection which is noticeable in the city's cleanliness. Indeed, 100 percent of the inhabited neighbourhoods reported that their neighbourhoods are "somewhat clean".²⁴⁷

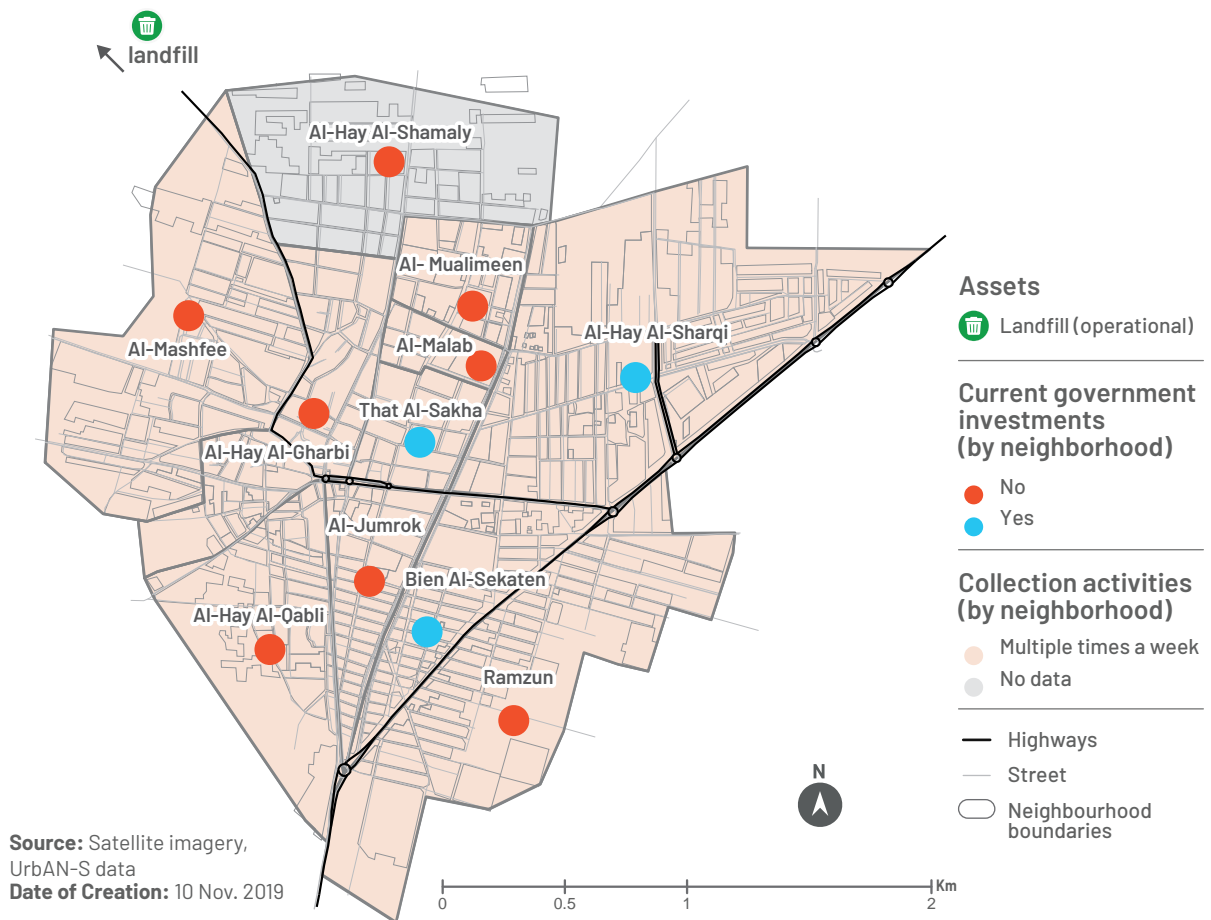
Prior to the conflict, local sources reported that there were 3 waste collection vehicles, 3 trash compressors and 3 compactors. Resources decreased post-conflict, where there are now two waste collection vehicles and 2 trash compressors. The number of people employed in the solid waste sector decreased by 18 workers (see figure 12.2, "Pre-conflict and current solid waste management resources in Al-Qusayr City").

Figure 12.2: Pre-conflict and current solid waste management resources in al-Qusayr City^{248 249}

	 Pre-conflict	 Current
Trash collection workers	80	62
Trash collection vehicles	3	2
Trash compressors	3	2
Compactors	3	-
Overall	89	66

Solid waste management

Map 12.1: Solid waste collection activities in Al-Qusayr City²⁵⁰



Collection of waste is taking place multiple times a week all over the city. Governmental interventions are taking place in Al-Hay Al-Sharqi, Bien Al-Sekaten, and the city centre (That Al-Sakha) neighbourhoods. No interventions are being done in neighbourhoods located west of the railroad (southern, northern, and western) as these areas are militarized²⁵¹ and their entry requires security approval.²⁵²

Current interventions

According to local sources, Government projects in the waste management sector are currently focused on the collection of waste throughout the inhabited neighbourhoods in the city. There are reportedly low-scale governmental interventions in Al-Hay Al-Sharqi, Bien Al-Sekaten and the city centre (That Al-Sakha).²⁵³ No NGOs are currently working on waste management projects due to need for security approval.²⁵⁴

In 2019, the Technical Services Directorate in Homs completed the rehabilitation and operation of the Al-Qusayr sanitary landfill project. This project had been suspended for seven years due to the crisis. The landfill is located in the western countryside of the Governorate, with an area of 2,000 square metres. Waste is collected and buried, which reduces the pollution from toxic gas emissions.²⁵⁵ Landfill cells are isolated by geotextile

and polyethylene. Waste is being added in layers, and waste leachate is being collected and treated to prevent leakage to the underground water.²⁵⁶

“The re-operation of Al-Qusayr sanitary landfill has significantly reduced pollution in the area especially the pollution that might affect Orontes River”

- Resident of the western countryside of the Governorate

It was reported by the Technical Services Directorate in Homs that the design capacity of the landfill is 400 tons per day of municipal waste generated by the residents and administrative units in Al-Qusayr City. The value of the landfill rehabilitation contract amounted to approximately 104 million Syrian pounds.²⁵⁷

There is a planned composting project for Al-Qusayr municipality, based on the Salamieh experience, where the development of a pilot plant for composting and mecano-biological treatment is set up prior to landfilling.²⁵⁸

Sectoral considerations

- Support the development of a holistic and systematic waste collection policy, that includes a complete waste management cycle, to ensure sustainability in the solid waste collection process.
- Ensure equal services are available in all areas of the city, particularly when planning future or potential projects. Indeed, there is currently a discrepancy between the western part of the city which lacks services due to accessibility issues and the city centre which is excess in service availability due to its location near the N4 highway.
- Ensure the continuity of the environmental precautions and best practices which are utilized in managing Al-Qusayr landfill. In order to maintain the service quality provided by the Technical Services Directorate in Homs.
- Support the development of local programmes related to raising awareness in the solid waste issues for al-Qusayr City residents.
- Advocate for the facilitation of development interventions and rehabilitation projects all over the city, starting from the highly populated neighbourhoods in the city centre and continuing with the neighbourhoods located west of the railroad.
- Increase the capacity to manage debris by removing the high debris amount, as it was reported that the amount generated is higher than both the construction and demolition waste which was generated prior to the conflict.

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- 237 "The mobility of Displaced Syrians, An Economic and Social Analysis," *The World Bank Group*, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/9781464814013.pdf>
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- 242 *UrbAN-S*, November 2019.
- 243 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.
- 244 Interview with local solid waste expert by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 245 Personal interview with local solid waste expert by *UrbAN-S*, November 2019.
- 246 Interview with local solid waste expert by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 247 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 248 Interview with local solid waste expert by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 249 Personal interview with local solid waste expert by *UrbAN-S*, November 2019.
- 250 Survey of local area experts in Al-Qusayr by *UrbAN-S*, February 2019.
- 251 ستة أعوام على سقوط مدينة القصير.. كيف تبدو المدينة اليوم؟ /مدينة-القصير-كيف-تب
SY-24, July 2019, <https://www.sy-24.com/issues-24/>
- 252 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019
- 253 Ibid.
- 254 Ibid.
- 255 "الانتهاء من مشروع تأهيل مطمر القصير الصحي," *SANA*, May 2019, <https://www.sana.sy/?p=948990>
- 256 "حمص-بعد-الأضرار- /المادي-التي-لحقت-به-إعلاء-محلي
Athr Press, May 2019, <https://www.athrpress.com/>
- 257 "الانتهاء من مشروع تأهيل مطمر القصير الصحي," *SANA*, May 2019, <https://www.sana.sy/?p=948990>
- 258 This project was done at Salamieh municipality near Hama with support by GTZ. "Country Environmental Profile for the Syrian Arab Republic," Delegation of the European Commission to Syria, April 2009, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/287800599_Country_Environmental_Profile_for_the_Syrian_Arab_Republic

13. Transportation

Contextual overview

Al-Qusayr lies on the N4 highway, to the south-west of Homs City. The N4 meets the M5 highway on the southern outskirts of Homs City and runs to the Jousiya – Qaa border crossing between Syria and Lebanon. Al-Qusayr is positioned strategically as a transit point for the transfer (both legal and illicit) of goods and people between the neighbouring countries, along the busy artery between Homs City and Chtaura in the Lebanese Beqaa Valley. Its proximity to the border crossing and a porous Lebanese border in general is surely an asset.²⁵⁹

Transportation and mobility during the conflict

Mobility within the city of Al-Qusayr was severely curtailed during the conflict. Siege conditions imposed by Government forces during opposition control in the city put strong limits on people's ability to move in and out.

On the outskirts, the Jousiya – Qaa border crossing was officially closed in August 2012, after opposition forces took control of the town of Jousiyeh, south of Al-Qusayr.²⁶⁰ This limited the regular flow of goods and people, however the border crossing continued to play an important role as the conflict unfolded in the area. Initially, as opposition forces took control of much of the Al-Qusayr sub-district in 2012, the route allowed the mobilisation of opposition troops and supplies arriving from Lebanon.²⁶¹

The strategic transportation linkage with the Lebanese Beqaa Valley was an important factor that prompted Hezbollah to become more heavily involved in the conflict and support the Syrian Government in retaking control of Al-Qusayr. The control of the area that Hezbollah managed to assume gave better access to Damascus, while also cutting off the supply routes that had fed the opposition in the Homs Governorate. It also gave Hezbollah better control over illicit trade routes in the area.²⁶²

Post-conflict transportation dynamics

The Jousiyeh – Qaa border crossing was reopened in December of 2017. A primary aim of this was to facilitate the return of displaced people back into Syria. Indeed, approximately 350,000 Syrian refugees and asylum seekers live in the Beqaa Valley region alone. Supporting the normalization of relations between Lebanon and Syria, particularly after the terrorist attacks that occurred in Al-Qaa in 2016, was also seen as an important objective of the crossing's reopening.

Since the crossing has been reopened, traffic through the region has picked up, according to Syrian State media. During 2018, 11,500 passengers transited through the border, while in a little more than the first half of 2019 (until August), that annual total had grown to more than 22,000.²⁶³

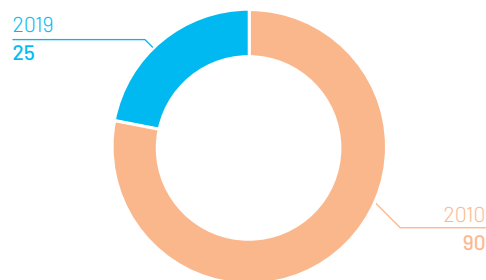
Despite the open border, mobility in the region remains highly controlled and only supporters of the Syrian Government have freedom of movement. Movement in Al-Qusayr sub-district is strictly controlled by Hezbollah which continues to have a large presence and liaison with Government forces; and no refugee or IDP returns are currently permitted. The group also continues to control smuggling routes and all trade activities in the region.²⁶⁴

As of March 2019, access to the city of Al-Qusayr remains highly securitized. There are barriers and checkpoints at the entrance of the city that require residents to have a security clearance in advance from the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) in order to enter. In order for civilians to visit family members and friends in the city they are required to leave their identity cards with the checkpoint officers for the duration of their stay in the city. Local sources also claim vehicles are searched at checkpoints entering the city.²⁶⁵ Additionally, road networks connecting the city of Al-Qusayr with the Homs Governorate, the Tartous Governorate, Rural Damascus, and Al-Qalamoun in Lebanon are all under strict jurisdiction of the Government of Syria through checkpoints.²⁶⁶

Current capacity and interventions

Damage to the road network and public transport infrastructure due to the conflict was extensive. The World Bank reported that in 2018 approximately 78.5 km of road had received some level of damage.²⁶⁷ The public transport capacity was also affected by damage to the city's public transport garage and a large number of the public buses.²⁶⁸ Prior to the conflict the city had 90 buses running, of which only 25 functional, as of June 2019.

Figure 13.1: Number of functional public transport vehicles, pre-conflict and current (June 2019)²⁶⁹

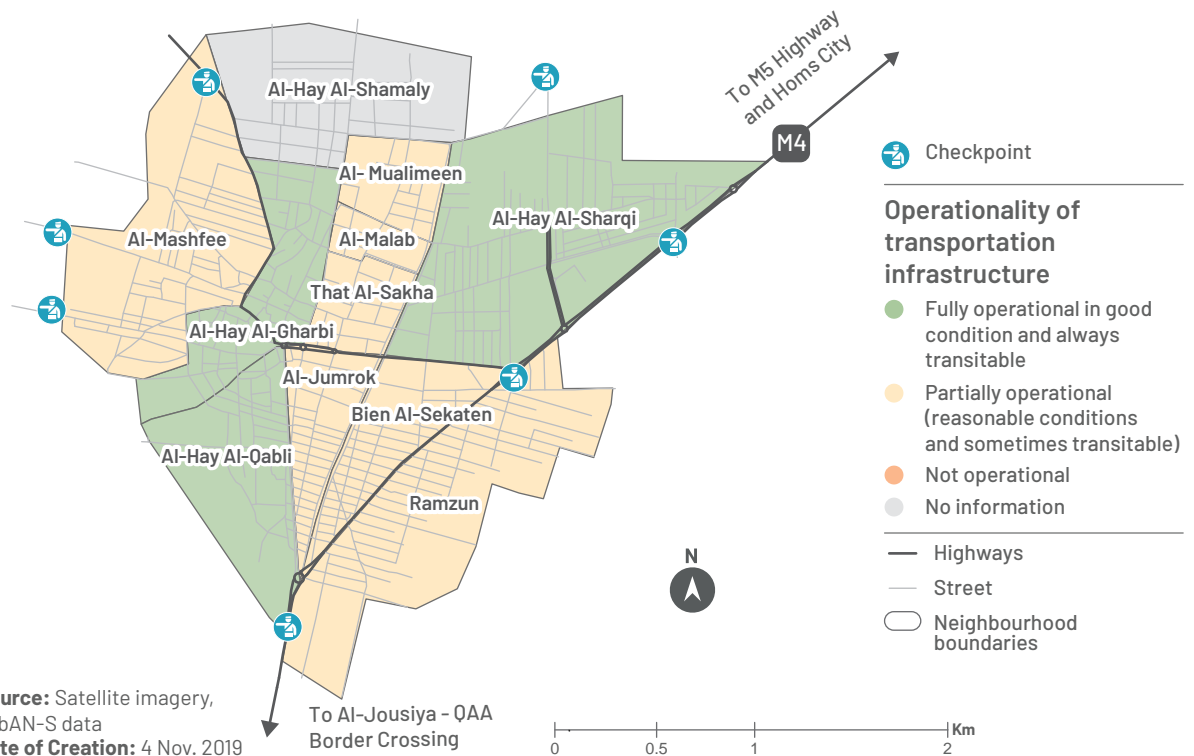


The municipality of Al-Qusayr carried out road cleaning services to remove rubble that had accumulated from the destruction of buildings due to the conflict. Further repairs and resurfacing of road inside the city are also in process by the municipality.²⁷⁰ These repairs have been an ongoing process since the Government of Syria took back control of the city in 2013 and include the inhabited neighbourhoods in the east and centre of the city; and in the 'Security Square' around Al-Qusayr Hospital.

Local sources report that some of the regional network roads on the outskirts of the city have been repaved by the local government.²⁷¹ Repairs to a major bridge between the city and the rural agricultural area to the west of the city were also carried out, in an effort to assist agricultural workers traveling in and out of the city.²⁷²

Figure 13.2: Restoration of Roads in Al-Qusayr, August 2018 - Photo Credit- Al-Qusayr Local Council Facebook Page



Map 13.1: Transport infrastructure in and around Al-Qusayr

Particular concerns to the rehabilitation of the transport sector reported by local experts include the lack of a publicly presented plan for the implementation of an integrated public transportation project for the city. There is also reportedly a move to privatise and control public transport routes in and around the city which is seen as adversely affecting the provision of this service.²⁷³

Sectoral considerations

- Advocate for and facilitate a reduction of security check-points in and around the city to increase freedom of movement and access.
- Introduce a comprehensive plan for an integrated public transport project that will benefit movement between Al-Qusayr, Homs, and outlying rural areas.
- Ensure the ongoing and regular functionality of the Jousiyeh – Qaa border crossing, which will continue to be a much needed transit point for goods reaching the Al-Qusayr region, as well as returning displaced people from Lebanon.
- Orient strategically Al-Qusayr within the regional transport network in the longer term, as cross-border trade increases with the import of goods and materials necessary for the continued recovery of the region affected by the conflict.

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- 259** "All official Syrian-Lebanon border crossings now open," (*Al-Monitor*, December 2019) <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/fa/originals/2017/12/lebanon-syria-border-crossing-qaa-reopen-refugees.html>
- 260** "Lebanon, Syria reopen border crossing after five years," (*Middle East Monitor*, December 15 2017), <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20171215-lebanon-syria-reopen-border-crossing-after-five-years/>
- 261** "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 262** Ibid.
- 263** "22 thousand passengers and 5 thousand cars have passed Jusiya crossing border since the beginning of this year," (*The Syria Time*, August 21, 2019), <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/43256-22-thousand-passengers-and-5-thousand-cars-have-passed-jusiyah-crossing-border-since-the-beginning-of-this-year>
- 264** "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 265** Ibid.
- 266** Ibid.
- 267** "The Mobility of Displaced Syrians: An Economic and Social Analysis," (*World Bank*, 2019).
- 268** Interview with transportation sector specialist by *UrbAN-S*, June 2019.
- 269** Ibid.
- 270** Ibid.
- 271** Ibid.
- 272** "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 273** Interview with transportation sector specialist by *UrbAN-S*, June 2019.

14. Urban functionality index

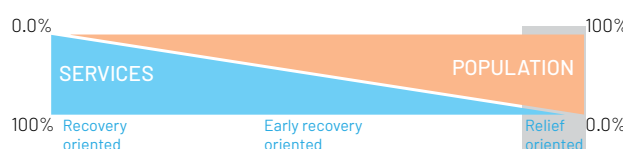
Overview

The Urban Functionality Index is a measure to inform spatial prioritization for short, medium- and long-term interventions. While this tool presents a useful starting point for spatial analysis, it is limited in that it cannot identify specific kinds of interventions.²⁷⁴ It provides a snapshot of the functionality of essential services coupled with demographic dynamics on a neighbourhood level in order to provide spatial comparisons. The index consists of the following three components:

- **Functionality of essential services** provides a metric for the cumulative functionality of services essential for the neighbourhoods' livability; namely health, WASH, solid waste management, electricity, markets, education, transportation and safety. The index considers functionality in terms of the community's perceived accessibility, reliability and quality of those services.
- **Population index** provides a metric for the impact of the conflict on neighbourhoods' population. The index factors in all affected people who either stayed in, returned to or moved to cities in conflict. The tool considers neighbourhood population relative to city population, IDPs and returnees population, as well as resident population to neighbourhood population.
- **The response continuum** provides the starting point for short, medium, and long-term interventions. It offers three types of response strategies. The diagrams below display the proportional combination of services and demographics indices.

1.1 Relief-oriented response: emphasizes immediate humanitarian response and basic services restoration. Interventions target caseloads and aim at alleviating the strain on host communities.

Figure 14.1: Relief oriented response



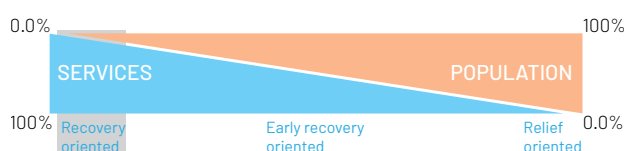
1.2 Early recovery-oriented response: emphasizes medium-term interventions to restore services functionality and infrastructure, with less emphasis on short-term basic needs.

Figure 14.2: Early recovery-oriented response



1.3 Recovery-oriented response: emphasizes long-term spatial interventions aiming at creating a conducive living environment.

Figure 14.3: Recovery-oriented response



The index adopts a three-point scale to weight each component, where (0) reflects the worst-case scenario: poor functionality if at all functional. Hence, the neighbourhood's overall UFI score is derived from the cumulative score of the components; the score interpretation is shown in the table below:

Table 14.1: UFI Score with interpretation / indication

UFI Score	Interpretation/Indication
0.00 – 0.69	Poorly functional (if at all)
0.70 – 1.39	Partially functional
1.40 – 2.00	Functional

Functionality of essential services in Al-Qusayr

Figure 14.4, "Services index" below reflects the functionality of city services by neighbourhood. The table points to the largely homogeneous effects of the conflict on all neighborhoods in the city. As a result, the perception of residents surveyed suggests that 10 out of 11 neighbourhoods can be considered as partially functional when all sectors are aggregated in the index. Only one neighbourhood (Al-Hay Al-Shmali) has no available data related to it as it is completely depopulated.

Between the services sectors themselves, a slightly wider range of functionality is seen. WASH and solid waste services perceptions reported that all neighbourhoods are considered functional. Perceptions of transportation services point to a higher level of functionality in some neighbourhoods (Al-Hay Al-Gharbi, Al-Hay Al-Qabli, Al-Hay Al-Sharqi, Al-Jumrok) with poor functionality level in other neighbourhoods. Electricity, markets, education and safety services mostly rate partially functional all over the city.

Figure 14.4: Services index

Neighbourhood	Services								Services INDEX
	Health	WASH	Solid Waste	Electricity	Safety	Markets	Education	Transportation	
Al-Hay Al-Gharbi	0.67	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.17	1.33	1.33	1.83	1.29
Al-Hay Al-Qabli	0.50	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.00	2.00	1.27
Al-Hay Al-Sharqi	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.33	2.00	1.29
Al-Hay Al-Shmali	No data								
Al-Jumrok	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.67	1.17	1.23
Al-Malab	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.17	1.33	0.67	0.33	0.98
Al-Mashfee	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.42	1.33	1.33	0.33	1.09
Al-Mualimeen	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.17	1.33	0.67	0.33	0.98
Bayn alssakataun	0.67	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.00	0.33	1.08
Ramzun	0.50	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.33	1.00	0.33	1.06
That alssakha	0.33	1.50	1.50	1.00	1.17	1.33	1.67	0.33	1.10

Map 14.1: Functionality of essential services by neighbourhood

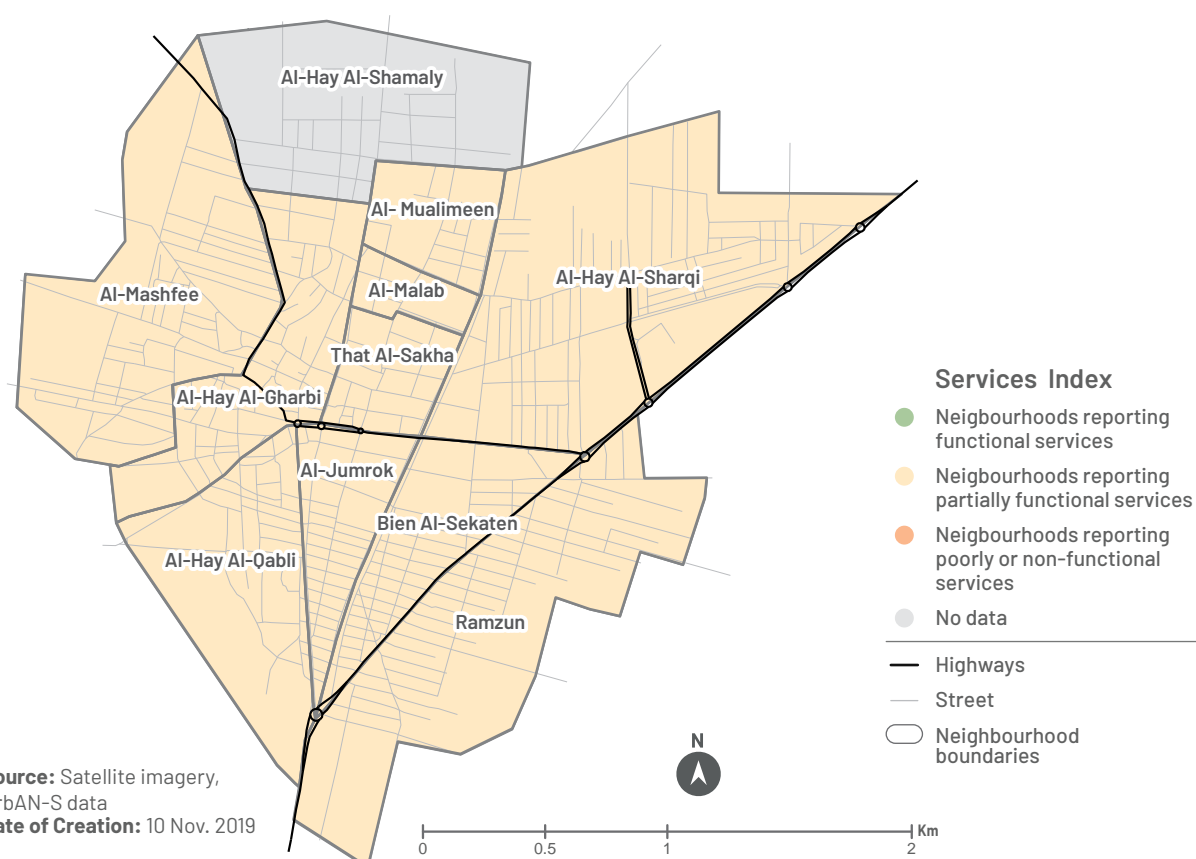
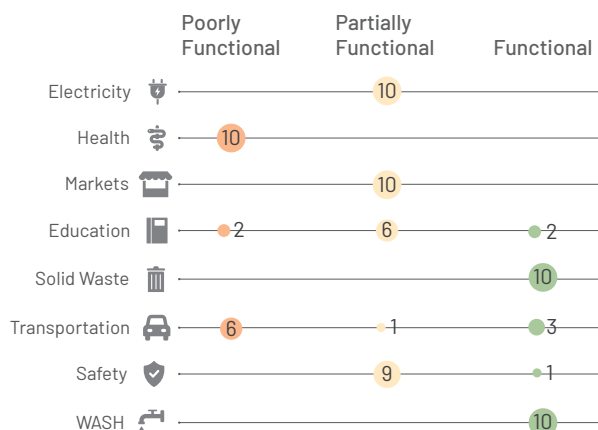


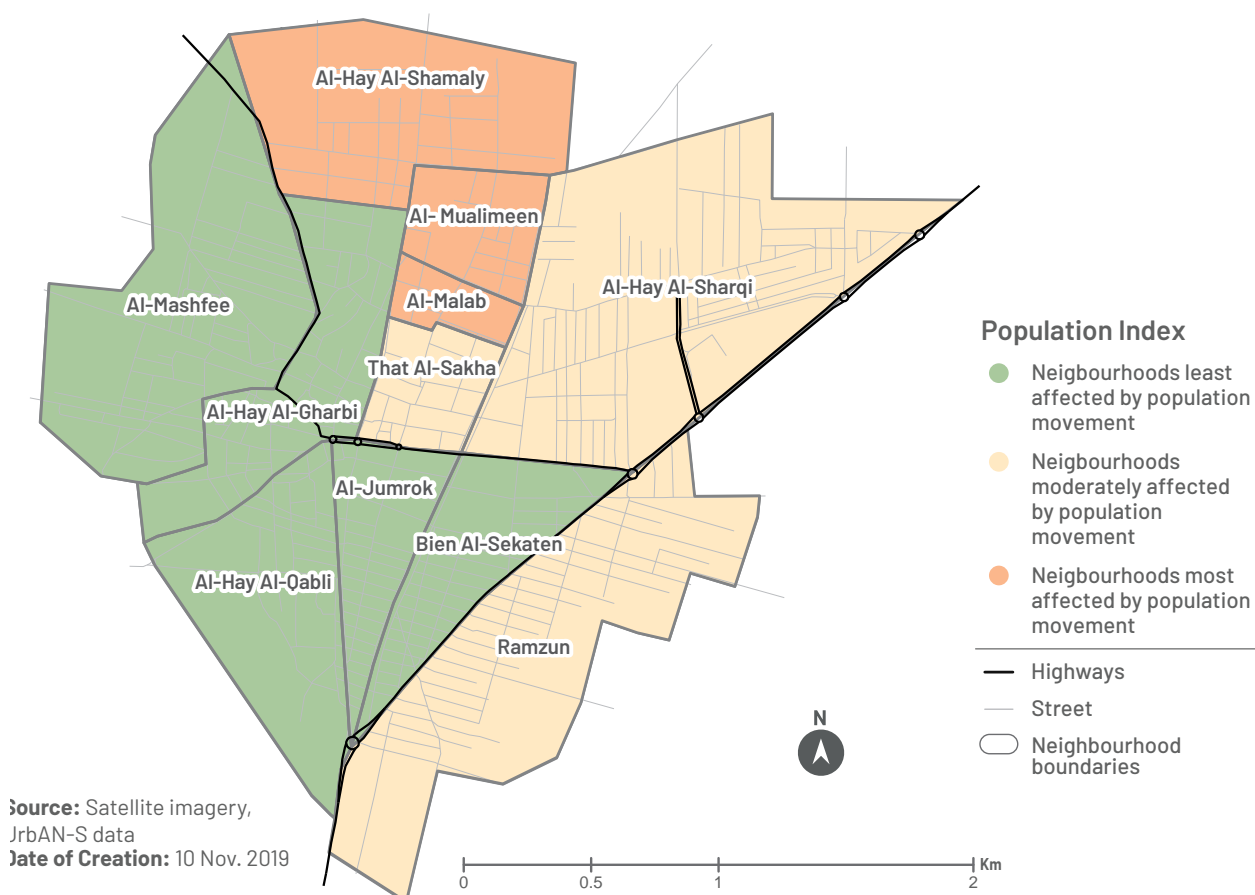
Figure 14.5: Functionality by number of neighbourhoods by sector ²⁷⁵



Al-Qusayr population index

Al-Qusayr experienced significant population movement at various points during the conflict in the city (see *city profile section 3, "Population and Demographics"*). The population of Al-Qusayr City drastically decreased after the conflict from 33,313 to 3,038.²⁷⁶ It has not been possible, given the access constraints in the city to accurately estimate the numbers of affected population (IDPs and returnees) at a neighbourhood level. However, based on a comparison of each neighbourhood's population to the city average, the index identifies three neighbourhoods (Al-Hay Al-Shamali, Al-Mualimeen, Al-Malab) with the lowest average of population presence, which will specifically affect these neighbourhoods ability to recover.

Map 14.2: Population index by neighbourhood ²⁷⁷

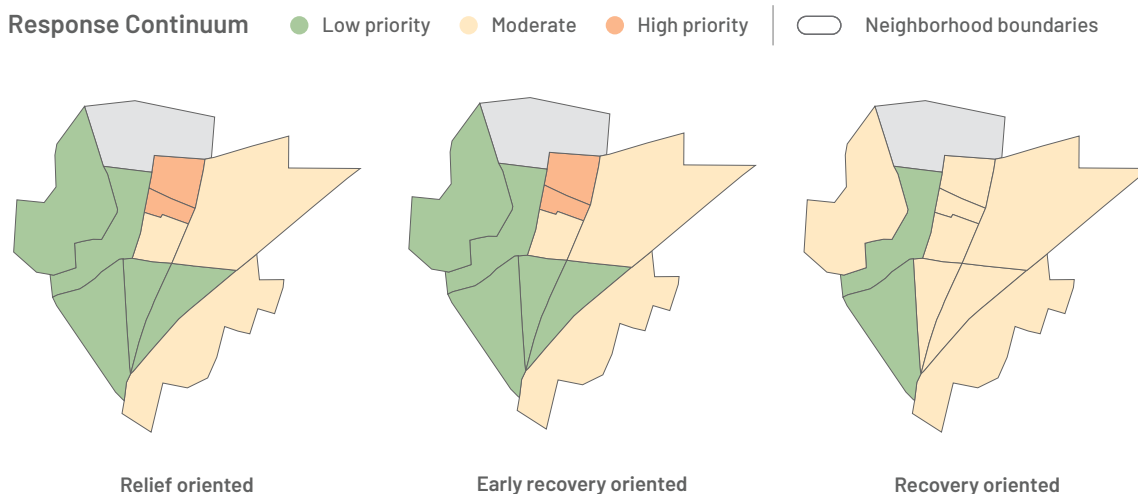


Al-Qusayr response continuum

The response continuum offers findings to inform joint programming across the relief, early recovery and recovery continuum. It allows for actors to prioritise and phase their interventions while ensuring coordination and complementarity of efforts from the different involved actors. It identifies neighbourhoods most affected in

all three stages of the continuum; neighbourhoods that require investment in services to restore functionality as well as neighbourhoods with severe humanitarian needs (vulnerable populations). It provides considerations to guide programming specific to relief, early recovery and recovery needs.

Map 14.3: Response continuum by type and neighbourhood



The response continuum offers findings to inform joint programming across the relief, early recovery, and recovery continuum. It allows for actors to prioritise and phase their interventions while ensuring coordination and complementarity of efforts from various involved actors. It identifies neighbourhoods most affected in

all three stages of the continuum; neighbourhoods that require investment in services to restore functionality as well as neighbourhoods with severe humanitarian needs (vulnerable populations). It provides considerations to guide programming specific to relief, early recovery, and recovery needs.

Considerations for programming across the continuum

Based on index, two neighborhoods (Al-Mualimeen, Al-Malab) should be prioritized for relief and early recovery oriented response. These neighbourhood demand the highest priority of response based on accumulated impact (see Map 14.3: “Response continuum by type and neighbourhood”). Due to low quality of services, a significant investment in infrastructure is required. These areas require immediate response as well as medium term interventions.

The eastern part of the city needs moderate relief, early-recovery and recovery oriented response. Whereas Al-Hay Al-Shamali neighbourhood has been completely depopulated, so it is considered in need for relief, early recovery, and recovery response in order to repopulate it.

No interventions were done in neighbourhoods located west of the railroad (southern, northern, and western) as these areas are militarized²⁷⁸ and their entry requires security approval.²⁷⁹


Relief-oriented response

The index suggests that relief-oriented response is needed for two neighbourhoods (Al-Mualimeen, Al-Malab) which should be prioritized for programming (see Map 14.3: “Response continuum by type and neighbourhood”). Both neighbourhoods with the lowest index score (0.98) should be prioritized for immediate and ongoing humanitarian relief, with a focus on health, education and transportation services.

However, due to limited access of necessary population breakdown data, the population index and response continuum factor-in the overall population weight only. Therefore, the index falls short of prioritising neighbourhoods for relief response based on concentration of population groups (residents, IDPs and/or returnees). Therefore, population and density analysis were used to support the UFI findings.

When density estimates were applied to Al-Qusayr neighbourhoods, analysis found that Al-Malab, That Al-Sakha, and Al-Jumrok, have the highest population densities with the highest needs to serve residents (See Figure 14.6, “Neighbourhoods population, density and change”). When aggregating data reported by the index and the one reported by the analysis Al-Malab neighbourhood marked as the priority for relief-oriented response and interventions. Also, programming should be prioritizing That Al-Sakha and Al-Jumrok neighbourhoods.

Figure 14.6: Neighbourhoods population, density and change



Population	Population density (ind./ha.)	Population change
Al-Hay Al-Gharbi	Al-Malab	Al-Hay Al-Shmaly
Al-Hay Al-Qabli	That Al-Sakha	Ramzun
Bien Al-Sekaten	Al-Jumrok	Al-Hay Al-Sharqi
Al-Jumrok	Al-Hay Al-Gharbi	Al-Mashfee
Al-Mashfee	Bien Al-Sekaten	That Al-Sakha
Al-Hay Al-Sharqi	Al-Mualimeen	Al-Hay Al-Gharbi
Ramzun	Al-Hay Al-Qabli	Al-Malab
That Al-Sakha	Al-Mashfee	Al-Jumrok
Al-Mualimeen	Ramzun	Al-Hay Al-Qabli
Al-Malab	Al-Hay Al-Sharqi	Bien Al-Sekaten
Al-Hay Al-Shmaly	Al-Hay Al-Shmaly	Al-Mualimeen

Early-recovery oriented response

During the early recovery oriented response the city’s services and infrastructure needs to be prioritised, in order to support the population’s ability to initiate its own recovery. According to practitioners, early recovery can last any number of weeks or months-even years. Those affected may not have yet recovered fully, but they have begun to adapt to a new normal.²⁸⁰

The pattern of index severity is similar for the relief response stage on the continuum. Al-Mualimeen and Al-Malab neighbourhoods should continue to be prioritised for increasing access to functional services.

Recovery-oriented response

The medium to long term view captured in the recovery response shows a more homogenous situation. This recovery phase should start to prioritise locating public services and rebuilding the city's necessary infrastructure.

Based on the response continuum, eastern part of the city should be a priority for the recovery oriented response. In this area essential services struggling the most include health and transportation. Facilities which remain physically intact are reported to provide unreliable and poor quality services.

Based on neighbourhoods population, neighbourhood densities and population change analysis (See Figure 14.6, "Neighbourhoods population, density and change"), Al-Hay Al-Shamali neighbourhood marked as the lowest population, lowest density with the highest population change value. This gives it an intervention priority in order to repopulate it. Also, the highest population density can be seen in three neighbourhoods (Al-Malab, That Al-Sakha, Al-Jumrok) which should be receiving continuous support to serve the population residing in the area.

274 Further explanation of the Urban Functionality Index can be found in the technical note at the *UrbAN-S web-portal*, <https://urban-syria.org/#toolkit>.

275 There's no data for Al-Hay Al-Shamali neighbourhood so it hasn't been included with the functionality of neighbourhoods by sector.

276 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019.

277 The population index measures three main indicators: 1.) The number of IDPs and returnee population to total population, 2.) The current remaining resident population to pre-conflict original resident population, and 3.) Each neighbourhood's population relative to average neighbourhood population across the city.

Each neighbourhood's situation is calculated based on the cumulative score of these three indicators. Neighbourhoods most affected by population movement will be those presenting a higher percentage of IDPs and returnees, meaning more caseloads and additional pressure on existing public services and infrastructure. In some cases, this may reflect neighbourhoods which have been depopulated or abandoned, suggesting potential risks relating to housing and tenure. Neighbourhoods least affected by population movement suggest a higher percentage of original residents, hence with less possibilities of risks related to HLP and hosting stressors.

Due to limited access of necessary population breakdown data in Al-Qusayr, the population index and response continuum factor in the overall population weight only. Therefore, the index falls short of prioritising neighbourhoods for relief response based on the vulnerability population type (residents, IDPs and returnees concentrations).

278 ستة أعوام على سقوط مدينة القصير.. كيف تبدو المدينة اليوم؟ SY-24, July 2019, <https://www.sy-24.com/issues-24/-سقوط-على-مدينة-القصير-كيف-تبدو>

279 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, 2019

280 "Early Recovery: Global Cluster for Early Recovery," *UN-OCHA*, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/clusters/early-recovery>

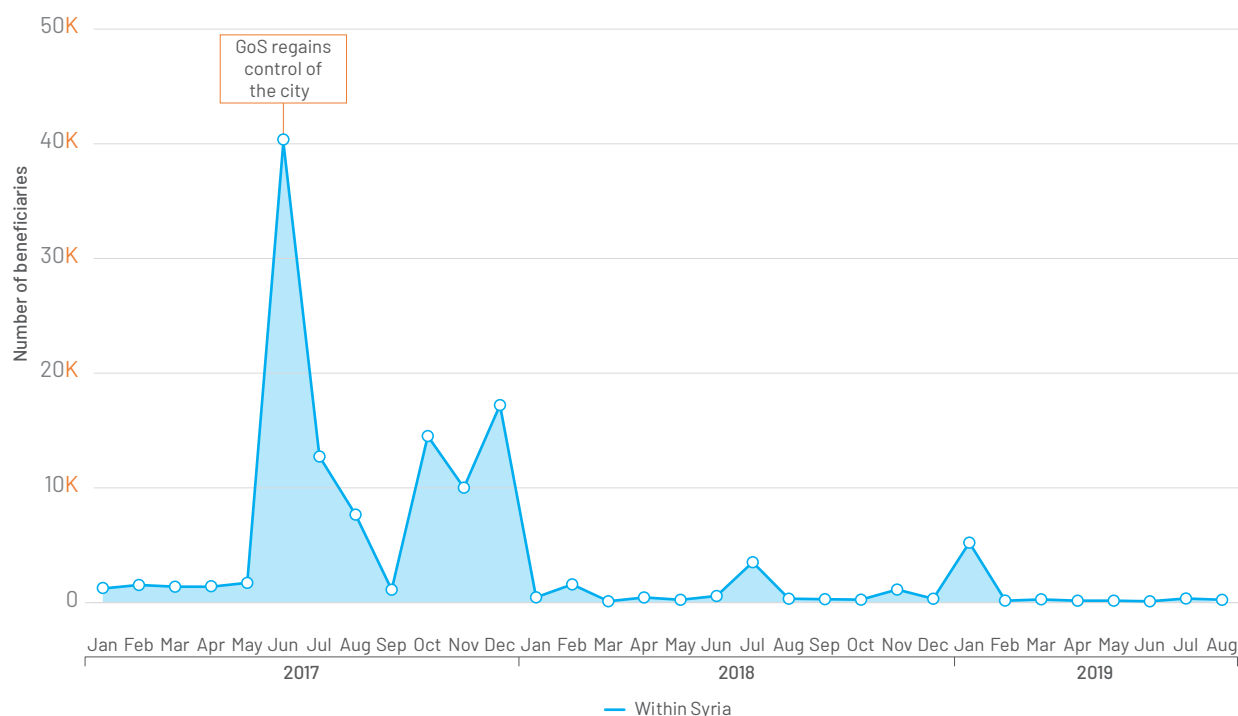
15. 4W Analysis

Scale of programming

There has been a steep decline in programming in Al-Qusayr since June 2017, when the GoS retook control of the city (see Figure 15.1 to 'Response programming in Al-Qusayr by number of beneficiaries'). Prior to June 2017, programming averaged approximately 77,000 beneficiaries per month, while in 2019 they averaged

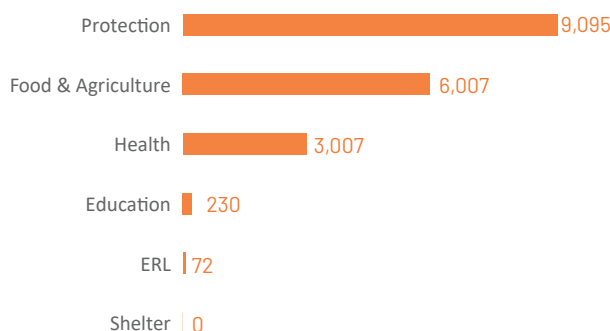
approximately 32,000 beneficiaries, almost a 60 percent decrease.²⁸¹ This is likely due to GoS restrictions on programming in Al-Qusayr, as well as the decreased caseload, as there has been a large population decrease following the GoS takeover.

Figure 15.1: Response programming in Al-Qusayr by number of beneficiaries²⁸²



Types of programming

Figure 15.2: Sectoral reach in Al-Qusayr based on number of beneficiaries served²⁸³



The largest share of programming between January and August 2019 related to protection. This includes general protection, child protection, and gender-based violence.²⁸⁴ As of August 2019, protection programming in Al-Qusayr sub-district was funded by UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFPA, and implemented by a myriad of national organisations, including Syrian Society for Social Development, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA), Al-Raja' Charity, Al-Mawadda Charity Association, Childhood Care Society, Monastery Saint James the Mutilated, and SARC.

Food security programming in Al-Qusayr sub-district included food, agriculture, and nutrition projects. Food and agriculture programming was funded by WFP and implemented by Kareem Charity and SARC.²⁸⁵ Nutrition programming was funded by UNICEF and WFP and implemented by the Ministry of Health, Kareem Charity, Al Birr Association, and Syrian Family Planning Association.²⁸⁶ In addition, an unspecified UN agency funded the rehabilitation of the municipal bakery in Al-Hay Al-Sharqi.²⁸⁷ SARC and Al-Bustan Association reportedly provide food rations in Al-Qusayr City. Several church associations also reportedly provided food assistance as of March 2019.²⁸⁸ Al-Bustan Association provides food rations.

Health programming between January and August 2019. in Al-Qusayr sub-district was funded by UNICEF and UNHCR and implemented by the Ministry of Health, the Syrian Family Planning Association, and Syrian Society for Social Development.²⁸⁹ The Ministry of Health is currently providing vaccinations and small-scale medical assistance to health centres.²⁹⁰ SARC is also reportedly undertaking vaccination campaigns, presumably in coordination with the Ministry of Health. An unspecified INGO was reportedly rehabilitating health centres.²⁹¹ In addition, several GOPA and Monastery of St. James the Mutilated reportedly provide health services for the elderly and those wounded during the war such as medical surgeries, prostheses, and medicine.²⁹² Zeinab Foundation also provides medical assistance.²⁹³ The Syrian Society for Social Development is providing psychosocial support.²⁹⁴

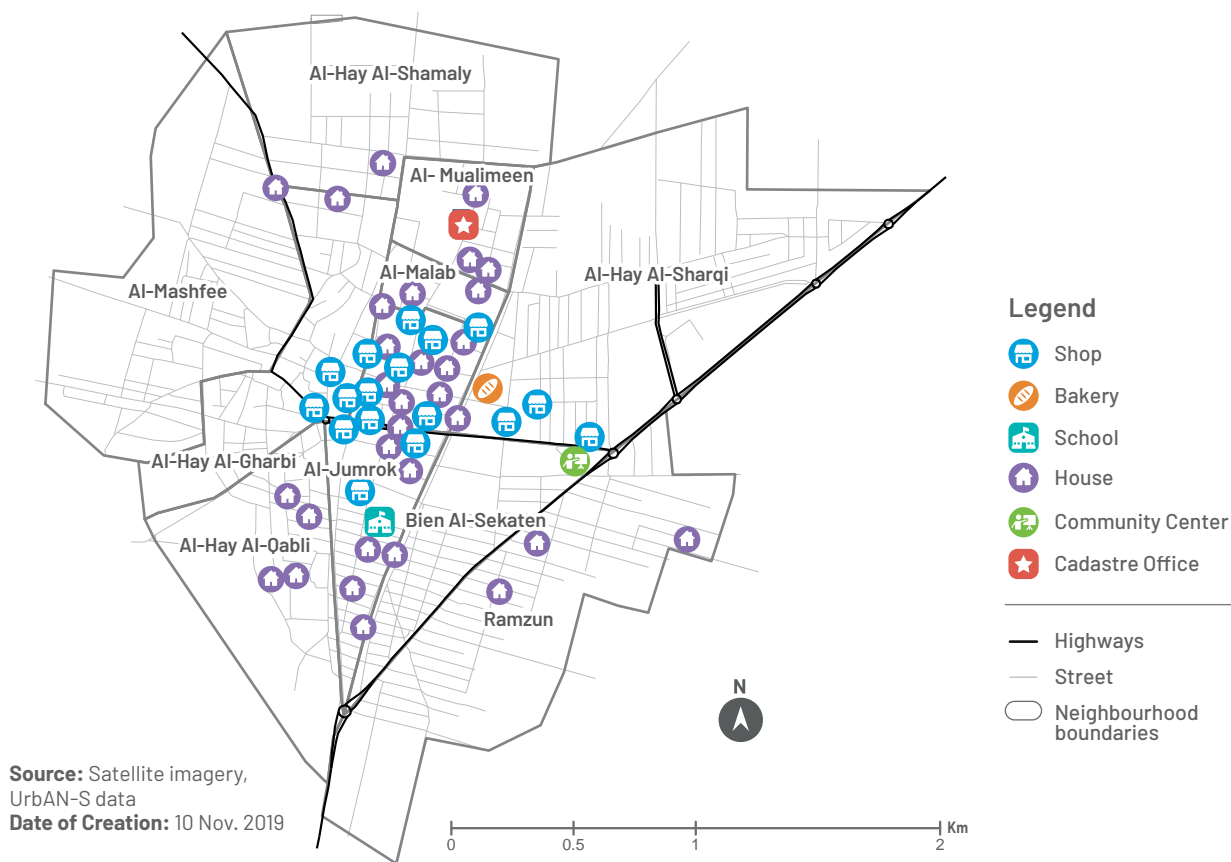
WASH programming in Al-Qusayr City has been funded by an unspecified UN agency and implemented by an INGO. This has included garbage removal and maintenance of the sewage system.²⁹⁵ In addition, the government has reportedly carried out repairs of the water network, allowing for running water for more than six hours per day. The General Water Corporation has been working on rehabilitating the water networks in the city centre and the eastern neighbourhoods. This, however, leaves a large swatch of the city without access to potable water.²⁹⁶ The Syrian Society for Social Development has promised to provide a water tank and a gas cylinder to every newly returned family.²⁹⁷

Early recovery and livelihoods programming has been funded by an unspecified UN agency and implemented by an INGO. Projects have included the rehabilitation of 25 shops, as well as livelihoods projects for 25 small businesses.²⁹⁸ The rehabilitated shops are concentrated in the city's commercial centre in the central neighbourhoods, namely That Al-Sakha (see *Map 15.1 Response programming in*). An unspecified UN agency also funded the rehabilitation of the cadastral office in Al-Mualimeen neighbourhood.²⁹⁹ In addition, the installation of solar-powered street lighting at the main entrance of the city and the market area is planned, as of October 2019. The Syrian Society for Social Development has provided support to small businesses, including grocery, car repair and barber shops.³⁰⁰ Zeinab Foundation provides financial aid for small projects.³⁰¹ The Syria Trust for Development provides funds to support up and coming small projects in the city amounting to around 400 USD each. They also provide around 100 USD for university students who completed their academic year successfully.

However, their presence is limited. Unlike other cities where they are active, they do not have any offices or distribution centres, and as such rely exclusively on convoys. In addition, Al-Shahid Social Association (Martyr's Foundation) covers basic living expenses for the families of Hezbollah soldiers who died in battle. The Orphans' Foundation allows individuals to sponsor orphans of Hezbollah fighters who have died in battle through a monthly allowance.³⁰² The General Union of Syrian Women (GUSW) provides support for women through education, livelihood trainings, and political awareness initiatives.³⁰³

Shelter programming in Al-Qusayr sub-district was funded by UNHCR, UNDP, and UN-Habitat. It is implemented by PUI and Aoun for Islamic Relief.³⁰⁴ In Al-Qusayr City, this has included the distribution of shelter kits by SARC with funding from UNHCR, as well as the rehabilitation of 30 damaged residential units by an INGO with funding from an unspecified UN agency (see *Map 15.1 Response programming in Al-Qusayr (October 2019)*).³⁰⁵ The Al-Qusayr Local Council has performed rubble clearance. This has been an ongoing process since the Government of Syria retook control of the city in 2013 and has included inhabited neighbourhoods such as the eastern neighbourhood, Bein Al-Sekaten, and the city centre. In 2017, UNDP funded rubble clearance operations.³⁰⁶ The Local Council has also carried out some rehabilitation and repairs, such as in the security square around Al-Qusayr National Hospital.³⁰⁷ They have also included repairs conducive to the provision of electricity up to 2 hours a day, street lighting on the main roads, and repairing the previously bombed water pumps. Western neighbourhoods have reportedly not yet undergone any rehabilitation and reconstruction projects to date due to ongoing access restrictions.³⁰⁸

Meanwhile, education programming has been virtually nonexistent in Al-Qusayr City, with the exception of the rehabilitation of a school in Al-Jumrok neighbourhood by an unspecified UN agency.³⁰⁹ In addition, GUSW reportedly provides education support to women.³¹⁰

Map 15.1: Map of programming (October 2019) ³¹¹

Implementing partners

UN agencies and INGOs are required to work through organisations approved and registered with Damascus. Government-authorised organisations active in Al-Qusayr include SARC, Syria Trust for Development, Al-Bustan Association, Kareem Charity, Al-Birr Association, Aoun for Islamic Relief, Al-Raja' Charity, Al-Mawwadda Charity,

Childhood Care Society, Zeinab Foundation, General Union of Syrian Women Syrian Family Family Planning Association, Ahl Al-Sham Initiative, Al-Mabarrat Charity, Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD), Monastery of St. James the Mutilated, and GOPA.

Programming challenges

Severe depopulation, demographic change, HLP issues, and the presence of Hezbollah make Al-Qusayr one of the most complex locations in Syria for rights-based programming. Without in-depth contextual understanding and due diligence, implementers incur the risk of exacerbating HLP issues, reinforcing demographic changes, and benefiting armed actors. The highly militarised environment in Al-Qusayr represents a significant barrier to programming. Movement restrictions imposed by the security forces have hindered access both to and within the city. As of October 2019 PUI was the only INGO active in the city, while all national organisations remained under the tight control and oversight of the security apparatus.³¹² All registered organisations are required to coordinate closely with the government and many are directly affiliated with the government or armed actors. For example, GUSW is affiliated with the Ba'th Party and Syria Trust for Development was founded by the President's wife Basma al-Assad. Al-Bustan Association was founded by the President's cousin Rami Makhoul and is linked to pro-government militias, while Al-Shahid Social Association and the Orphan's Association are affiliated with Hezbollah (see city profile section 5, 'Governance and stakeholder analysis' for more information).

As in other GoS-controlled areas, projects are subject to screening and approval by the security/military forces and government. Consequently, projects are at risk of being implemented based on approvals rather than needs alone.³¹³ Furthermore, staff members and beneficiary lists are subject to the scrutiny of the local authorities and security apparatus, thereby generating protection risks. Implementers are required to share sensitive and sometimes confidential information on beneficiaries that can facilitate the abuse or detention of individuals at the hands of the security/military forces.³¹⁴ Unlike NNGOs and INGOs, faith-based associations (particularly those associated with churches) have preferential status in Syria and are not required to follow the same registration or project approval. This has likely allowed for active church associations in Al-Qusayr, such as GOPA and the Monastery of St. James the Mutilated, to overcome several of these challenges.

Figure 15.3: 4W matrix of programming in Al-Qusayr sub-district³¹⁵

	Food & Agriculture	Nutrition	Education	Shelter	Health	WASH	ERL	NFIs	Protection
UN agencies									
UNDP									
UNFPA									
UN-Habitat									
UNHCR									
UNICEF									
WFP									
INGOs									
Premiere Urgence Internationale									
NNGOs									
Al-Bustan Association									
Al-Mawadda Charity Association									
Al-Raja' Charity									
Al-Shahid Social Association									
Al Birr Association									
Aoun for Islamic Relief									
Childhood Care Society									
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch (GOPA)									
General Union of Syrian Women (GUSW)									
Kareem Charity									
Monastery Saint James the Mutilated (MSJM)									
Orphan's Foundation									
Syrian Family Planning Association									
Syrian Society for Social Development (SSSD)									
Syria Trust for Development									
Zeinab Foundation									
GoS									
Ministry of Health									
Other									
Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC)									
Total	6	6	3	7	8	2	9	0	10

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- 281 Unpublished data from *UN-OCHA*, November 2019.
- 282 Unpublished data from *UN-OCHA*, November 2019. Note: The data reflects government-authorised organisations and does not account for programming conducted by unregistered organisations.
- 283 Ibid.
- 284 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>.
- 285 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria (August 2019)," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>.
- 286 Ibid.
- 287 Unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 288 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 289 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria (August 2019)," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>.
- 290 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 291 Ibid.
- 292 Ibid.
- 293 Ibid.
- 294 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 295 Unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 296 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 297 Unpublished report from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 298 Unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 299 Ibid.
- 300 Ibid.
- 301 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 302 Ibid.
- 303 Ibid.
- 304 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria (August 2019)," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>.
- 305 Unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 306 Ibid.
- 307 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 308 Ibid.
- 309 Unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.
- 310 "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019.
- 311 The map is not comprehensive of all programming in the city in October 2019. It is based on information *UrbAN-S* was able to obtain from select *operational partners*.
- 312 Ibid.
- 313 "Rigging the System: Government Policies Co-Opt Aid and Reconstruction Funding in Syria," *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/06/28/rigging-system/government-policies-co-opt-aid-and-reconstruction-funding-syria>, June 2019.
- 314 Ibid.
- 315 "Organizations Implementing Humanitarian Activities Based Within Syria (August 2019)," *UN-OCHA*, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://www.ocha-sy.org/4wspresence2019.html>; "Context Assessment: Al-Qusayr," *UrbAN-S*, March 2019; unpublished data from *operational partners*, October 2019.

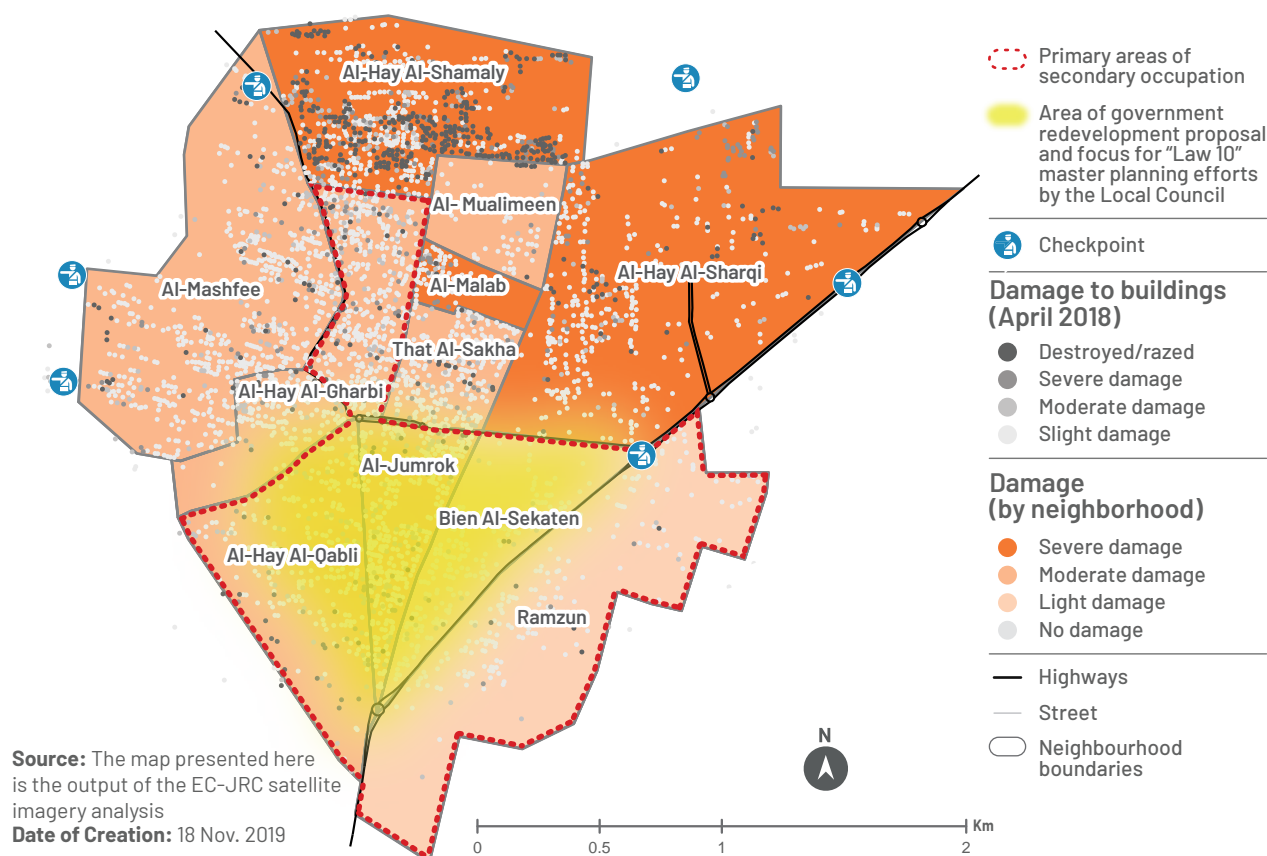
16. Risks, return and response considerations

The city's recovery is predicated on a coordinated response from local government, civil society, the private sector, as well as national and international NGOs together with their partners. It is imperative that initiatives developed for recovery response are holistic, inclusive, practical, and embrace an inter-sectoral approach.

The following considerations have been developed based on research, analysis, and interviews with stakeholders and key informants during the profile development. Considerations are meant to inform local organizations and the international community in their policy and programme development.

1. Risks and safeguards for programming

Map 16.1: Risks and safeguards for programming



1.1 Recovery programming has the potential to exacerbate HLP violations and reinforce demographic changes, if not properly designed.

As such, implementers should adopt a context-sensitive approach and conduct rigorous research to understand the impact of proposed interventions.

1.2 Secondary land occupation is a pervasive HLP issue in Al-Qusayr.

Implementers should identify civil society leaders (both inside and outside of the city) with the ability to mediate instances of secondary land occupation. Coordinating with civil society leaders, such as religious authorities, will provide important leverage and backing for international implementers.

1.3 UN agencies and INGOs face severe programming restrictions in Al-Qusayr.

Access is severely restricted by security actors and INGOs are required to conduct programming through local partners. As such, implementers should conduct rigorous vetting of local partners to ensure they are not affiliated with armed actors. Over the long-term, they should advocate for unhindered access and direct implementation.

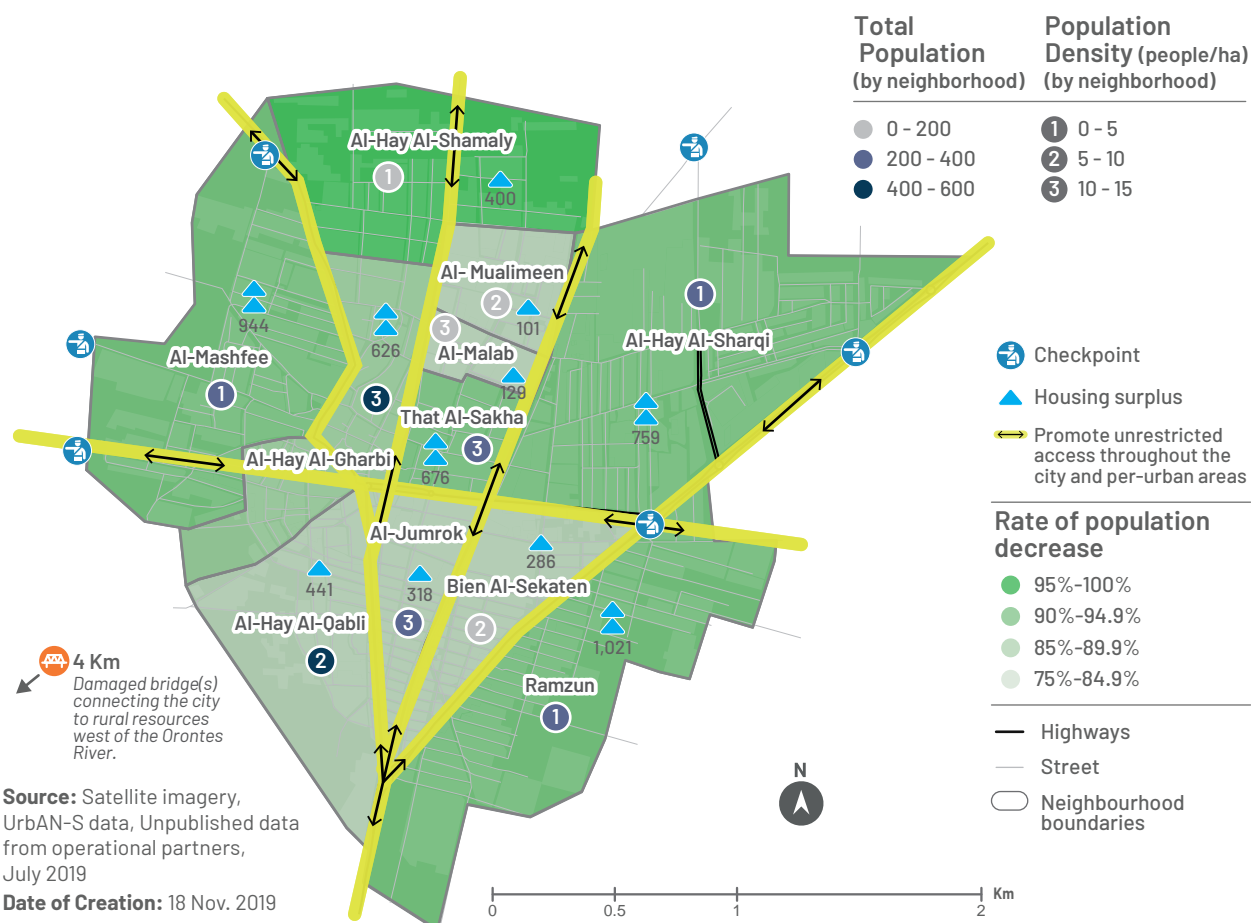
1.4 The southwestern portion of the city has been designated for redevelopment under the auspices of “Law 10”. Although the proposed plan is unlikely to be implemented, the council’s unilateral announcements exposes the lack of local participation in urban planning processes. It also reinforces the perceived government pursuit of demographic changes, thereby deterring returns. Policy-makers and implementers should advocate for establishing minimum standards for future redevelopment planning. Standards should respect human, civil, and property rights, as well as greater local participation (of both current and displaced residents) in all levels of municipal decision-making. (See map 16.1, “Risks and safeguards for programming”)

1.5 Any community engagement efforts risk excluding a majority of the city’s population in light of severe depopulation and continued barriers of return. As a result, implementers should engage with current and displaced residents, including IDPs and refugees. This will increase local buy-in and ensure programming is responsive to the needs of all of the city’s residents, both current and former.

1.6 In addition to direct programming risks, international organisations may incur reputational risks by operating in a context as politicised as Al-Qusayr. Organisations should carefully manage visibility and messaging to ensure programming is not perceived to be benefiting certain actors and agendas.

2. Return conditions and limitations

Map 16.2: Return conditions and limitations



2.1 Returns continue to be restricted for the majority of the city’s former residents. For five years, the GoS has banned returns to Al-Qusayr. In July 2019, the GoS began issuing security approvals for IDPs to return. However, government-organised IDP convoys have largely been symbolic and failed to yield sustainable returns. Policymakers and implementers should advocate for, and facilitate, unrestricted access for displaced residents who wish to return.

2.2 Security actors have imposed restrictions for recent returnees and residents currently in the city from accessing and returning to certain neighbourhoods. Restrictions should be lifted and residents allowed to move freely through the city. (See map 16.2, “Return conditions and limitations”)

RISKS, RETURN AND RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

2.3 Chronic insecurity presents a continued deterrence to meaningful return. The prevalence of armed actors and pervasive illicit activities, such as drugs and weapons smuggling, present barriers for large-scale returns.

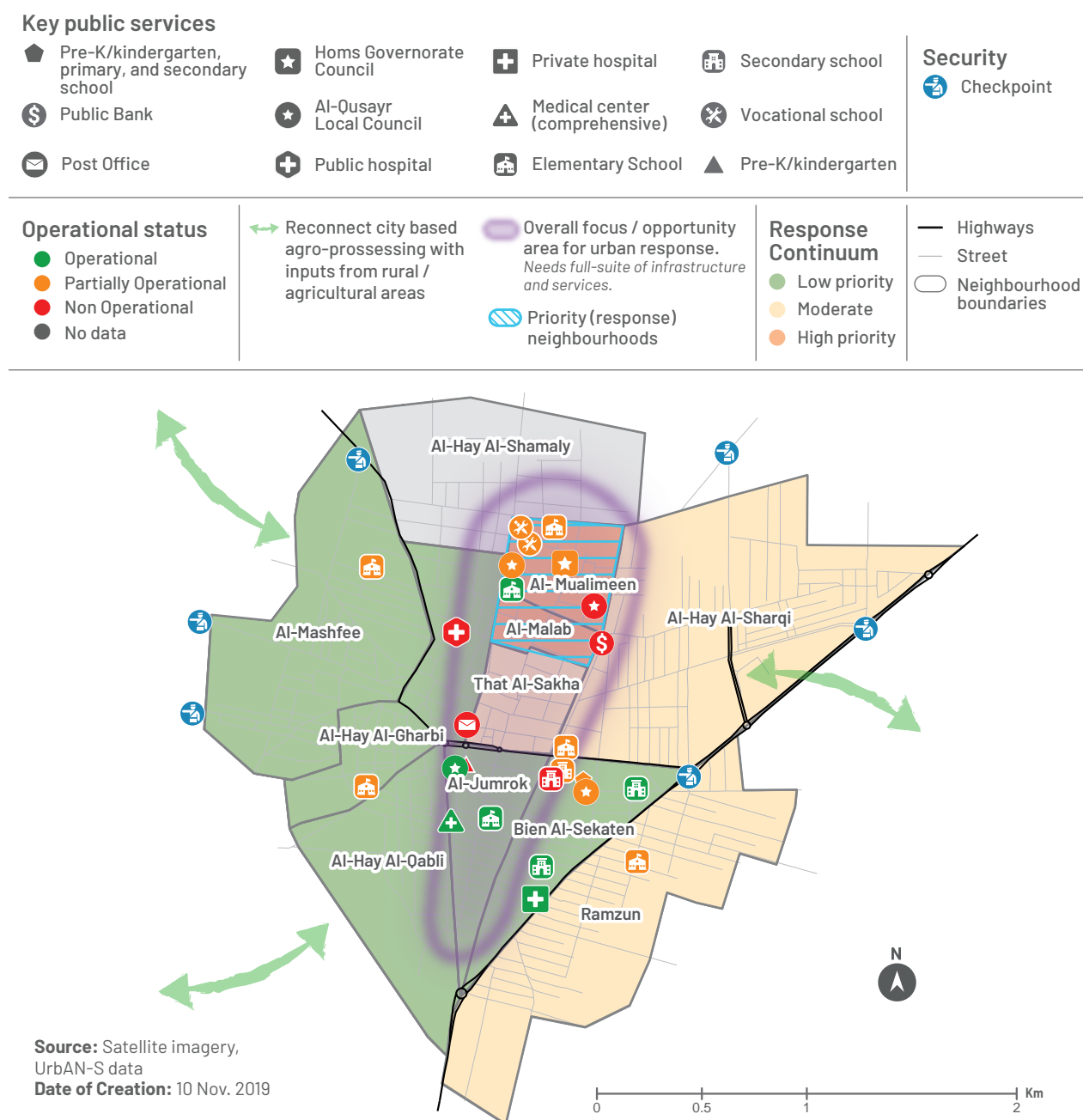
2.4 Agricultural land on the periphery of the city has been left unoccupied during and in the aftermath of the conflict. In some cases land has come under secondary occupation. A programme of interventions should be considered, including:

- Facilitated returns to agricultural land through cash support and targeted individual-based programming. This may support agricultural rehabilitation and housing infrastructure in rural areas.
- Adequate vetting of beneficiaries to protect against reinforcing HLP violations.
- Incentive to and support for dispute mediation and resolution around secondary land occupation. Multiple stakeholders should be involved, including property owners, local governance actors (such as Advisory Agricultural Units), religious institutions and other civil society actors. Mediation should also provide alternative livelihood opportunities to those occupying land.

2.5 There is significant accommodation capacity for returns in the near-term. However, severe damage to housing and other urban infrastructure presents a barrier to those who wish to resettle over the long-term. There are currently more available housing than individuals wishing to return. A due process should be considered to address secondary occupation (see map 16.2, “Return conditions and limitations”). However, as the bulk of the fighting and damage occurred in the western and northern portions of the city, these areas will likely remain uninhabited in the near future. Programming should focus on repairing facilities and infrastructure in the centre of the city. Investments might also encourage returnees to refurbish privately owned properties (see map 16.3, “Guidelines for short and medium-term response”).

3. Guidelines for short and medium-term response

Map 16.3: Guidelines for short and medium-term response



Short-term

- 3.1 Focus programming on the city's centre neighbourhoods where population and economic activity is concentrated.** As these areas are most likely to attract returnees, a full-suite of response and recovery is needed, including water utilities, public parks, street lighting and paving, debris removal, shelter and housing, educational facilities and health. (See map 16.3, "Guidelines for short and medium-term response")
- 3.2 Develop livelihoods programming that links the town to its rural periphery.** Agricultural value-chains originate in rural areas and supply the city's dairy and agro-processors. Livelihoods programming should support this integral relationship and develop solutions to support rural-urban linkages. (See map 16.3, "Guidelines for short and medium-term response.")
- 3.3 Prioritize infrastructure improvements for internal connectivity.** Transportation improvements (and recovery) should address roadway circulation within the city. This includes focusing rubble removal in areas of existing population and community services. Removal should be strategically employed support recovering neighbourhoods. (See map 16.2, "Return conditions and limitations")
- 3.4 Initiate livelihood assistance to encourage and support sustainable returns.** Livelihood programming should be correlated to sustain voluntary returns to the city. As all economic sectors recover (and begin to offer further employment opportunities) reliance on outside assistance will wane.

Medium-term

- 3.5 Encourage growth in industries which facilitate transportation and cross-border trade and offer alternatives to illicit smuggling.** Al-Qusayr's lies within a key transportation corridor location in the region. Its proximity to Lebanese border positions it along a major route from Lebanese ports to Homs and other important cities. The city is presented with an opportunity to play a key role as a hub for logistics, transport, and trade as the recovery of Syria progresses. Regional recovery should create an enabling environment which improves transportation infrastructure and removes arbitrary barriers and restrictions.
- 3.6 Ensure equal services are available all over the city when planning for potential projects, prioritizing neighbourhoods with the highest densities and most pressing needs.** Indeed, there is currently a discrepancy between the western part of the city which lacks services due to accessibility issues in which it needs a security approval; and the city centre part which is excess in service availability. (See map 16.3, "Guidelines for short and medium-term response")
- 3.7 Advocate for the transition towards greater civilian control of governance and the economy.** Currently, armed actors exercise full control over the city. Public servants - including the President of the Local Council - are not allowed to reside in the city. The dominance of armed actors over decision-making undermines local governance and the rule of law.



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