

AR-RAQQA

City Profile

May 2019



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Acronyms

AA	Autonomous Administration	PYD/SK	Democratic Union Party/Syrian Kurds
AoT	Army of Tribes / Jaysh Al-Asha'ir	RCC	Ar-Raqqa Civil Council
CS	Civil Society	RISF	Ar-Raqqa Internal Security Forces
CT	Counter-Terrorism	RMC	Raqqa Military Council
CVE	Counter Violent Extremism	RPBA	Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment
EC JRC	European Commission's Joint Research Centre	SAA	Syrian Arab Army
EFS	Functionality of essential services	SARC	Syrian Arab Red Crescent
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War	SDC	Syrian Democratic Council
FSA	Free Syrian Army	SDF	Syrian Democratic Forces
GAFTA	Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement	SFP	Security Focal Point
GDCA	Governorate's Department of Cadastral Affairs	SRTF	Syrian Recovery Trust Fund
GIS	Geographic Information System	SYP	Syrian Pound/Lira
GoS	Government of Syria	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
HAT	Humanitarian Access Team	UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
HLP	Housing, Land and Property	Urban-S	Urban Analysis Network for Syria
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	USD	United States Dollars
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices	UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization	WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	WHO	World Health Organization
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government	YPG/J	People's Protection Units Women's Protection Units
KSA	Kurdish Self Administration		
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs		
MOE	Ministry of Education		
NDVI	Normalized Difference Vegetation Index		
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization		
NSAG	Non-State Armed Group		
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party		
PYD	Democratic Union Party		

Acknowledgment

The Urban Analysis Network for Syria presents its gratitude to the European Union Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations for providing financial support to develop the city profiles, which present a comprehensive analysis of affected cities and humanitarian needs. Inputs were also received from the EC JRC, which is an UrbAN-S associated partner. Special thanks and acknowledgment to the field teams and facilitators for conducting the assessments.

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 based on UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, is firmly under way.

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 the transition of the Syrian 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?

Executive Summary

Ar-Raqqa is a crossroad for key internal and external trade routes spanning from Iraq, through Deir Ez-Zor, and northwards to Turkey. Trade and agriculture were strong during the pre-war years, though this never translated to local wealth. The economic benefits of these endeavours mostly profited Aleppo and Damascus.

Ar-Raqqa City has been severely impacted by the conflict: from the initial protests in 2012, through a takeover by armed groups in 2013, which gave way to the city being occupied by ISIL, and becoming the capital of their so-called 'state.' In 2017, a heavy military campaign to wrest control of the city from ISIL decimated the physical structures of the central city.

Ar-Raqqa, due to its rural-urban population flows, was one of the country's fastest growing urban areas by the time the conflict began, which impacted the city's urban morphology. There are a few historic neighbourhoods within the old city walls, and an offshoot of formal neighbourhoods where urban population and migrants settled. The rest of the city is mostly informal settlements/neighbourhoods, each mirroring a certain tribal population segment from the north-east and central parts of Syria. As the tribes conducted themselves differently vis-à-vis the conflict and the various forces in control, population movement and return were impacted by those alliances.

Today, under the governance of the Ar-Raqqa Civil Council (RCC), devised by the Kurdish populations of the north-east, around 160,000 people have returned to the city. The RCC has led subcommittees and local communes which has piloted a more inclusive and ground-up process than has historically been seen in Syria. A comparatively low level of control on returns has allowed residents to settle across the city, leaving no areas devoid of population or services of some kind.

Using an area-based approach, each section of this profile paints a picture of the current needs of residents through data and analysis to support future prioritization of investments. It also provides a historic context to different social, HLP and economic aspects, as well as root causes of conflict and escalation, to be considered in future response programming.

Key themes

- The extensive damage of Ar-Raqqa's central city has gravely impacted public services and administration. In addition, ISIL extensively mined the city and demining has been slow.
- Each change in control of the city came with new systems of governance and a new wave of displacement. Further violence and instability will be devastating for Ar-Raqqa, as will an extensive and unruly change in governance and service provision.
- To ensure longstanding stability, it will be important to invest in assets for the city, social cohesion, and push back against a potential ISIL resurgence, particularly noting that the city has a skewed gender structure as it is presently serving as a sanctuary city from government conscription.

Findings

- Prioritize civilian protection and stability for recovery and assistance in Ar-Raqqa in the short and medium term.
- Pilot an all-inclusive transition from SDF governance to a development and good governance nexus, responding to recovery, reconciliation and reconstruction needs.
- Support a dialogue process with all relevant actors as well as a community outreach strategy to engage all communities, including women and youth. Engaging the youth particularly in the context of Ar-Raqqa in independent monitoring and community engagement systems, resilience programming and in decision making should be explored as part of the generic governance reform required.
- Support the existing pattern of returns across Ar-Raqqa city to help to avoid Housing, Land and Property crisis seen in other areas that have changed hands.
- Preserve trade links and boosting agriculture and livestock sectors will help to maintain the economic recovery of Ar-Raqqa.

Methodology

The methodology for city profiles will be regularly refined in line with improving the analysis process. Moreover, the introduction of new tools for data collection, changes in context depending on the city, as well as data availability will also affect the methodology. The following briefly describes the methodologies adopted and utilized in development of the Ar-Raqqa City Profile. Further description of these methodologies are available upon request.

Coverage

The Profile covers 23 neighbourhoods as described by the 2006 municipal boundary, all of them located north of Euphrates River.

Data Compilation

The methodology for the data collection followed a mixed-methods approach. The synthesis of one holistic area-based analysis utilized the following methods:

Secondary data review

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

Primary data collection

Key informant interviews

A series of interviews with experts and knowledgeable people from a variety of sectors. Interviews were conducted across Syria, and beyond, in Damascus, Hama, and Al-Hasakah. Beirut and Turkey with the expatriate community. Interviews were conducted with education officials, health care professionals, officials from the municipal and governorate services, ex-government officials with local knowledge in the city and the region, local stakeholders and community leaders including representatives of the business community, as well as response actors including NGO staff. They also include those aware of the security situation and conditions of civil and cadastral records. Most of the interviews took place from August to December. Several telephonic interviews with local government representatives were also conducted.

Asset Survey

Trained field teams rapid quantitative survey of assets in September and October 2018. The survey's primary objective focused on information gathering for a variety of public assets. This information was used to understand the operational status of municipal services and public infrastructure through formulating measures of their functionality. Asset classes inventoried include governance, health, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), solid waste management, energy, and transportation.

Remote sensing

Satellite imagery and analytics were captured in October 2017 at a resolution of 0.3 meters. This was provided as part of the European Commission's regular monitoring of damage of the city since April 2015. Satellite imagery was analysed to obtain the level of damage of buildings and infrastructure. Definitions for damage categories have been defined by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre.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 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 – Less than 10 percent of the neighbourhood is affected
- Moderately damaged – Between 10 percent and 50 percent of the neighbourhood is affected
- Severely damaged or destroyed – More than 50 percent of the neighbourhood is affected.

Population Estimates

Historical and current population estimates conducted for the profile consists are derived from two main sources:

1. 2010 estimates from the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics.
2. 2018 estimates relied on analysis of the Raqqa Civil Council's 'Bread Committee' tabulations of neighbourhood population.

Infrastructure and Services Functionality Analysis

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Index

The HLP security index is produced for the purpose of the city Profile by Urban-S, through a synthesis of a range of experts' opinions, as well as three different kinds of cadastral recording: 1.) permanent, 2.) temporary and 3.) informal with permanent land records. The index considers the central tendency measures of the following four key components.

1. Types of cadastral recordings
2. Housing damage analysis
3. Informal settlements
4. Risk of looting

A score of 1 to 3 is given to each component and then a simple arithmetic average is taken to grade each neighbourhood.

Access to Health

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

1. Location and catchment area of functional facilities; in other words, distance to the nearest functional facility.
2. Presence of medical staff
3. Functional 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 the pre-conflict population pyramid 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 per each neighbourhood.

Access to functional education facilities has also been calculated based on 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.

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:

1. Number of supply hours per day.
2. Reported water quality.

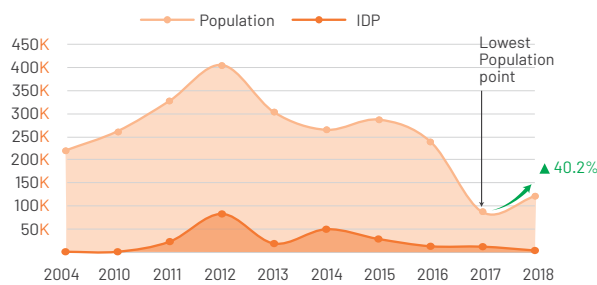
¹ The original damage data points were provided by JRC and classified in four categories of damage. To comply with damage needs assessment, this layer was in some instances grouped into two categories.

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

³ Vulnerable groups include: lactating women (calculated as 70 percent of children aged below one), population below 5 and above 65 of age, people with chronic disease (calculated as 5-10 percent of the population)

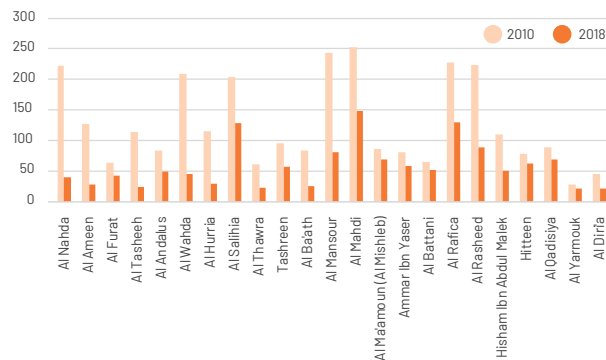
1. Demographics and Population Movement (Including Return Trend Analysis)

Figure 1.1: Population and IDP Estimates (2010-2018)



Sources: CBS and RCC Bread Committee.

Figure 1.2: Overall Change in Ar-Raqqa Population by Neighbourhood (2010-2018)



Sources: UN Operational Partners and Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC).

Population Growth prior to the Conflict

In the two decades prior to the conflict, Ar-Raqqa was one of the country's fastest growing urban centres. The Euphrates basin south of Ar-Raqqa City historically sustained bountiful agricultural outputs, but wealth from the sector did not reach Ar-Raqqa and the agricultural sector declined due to droughts between 2006 and 2011, which in turn caused decline in the government's agricultural programming and prompted a nationwide trend toward rural-urban migration.⁴ From 2004 to 2011, the city's average annual growth rate reached 5.8 percent, almost double that of the country rate of 2.8 percent during the same period. By 2012, the city's population exceeded 400,000 residents and IDP's as a result of urbanisation and the nascent conflict. This represented an increase of over 150,000 new residents from the pre-conflict level.

Migration destination and pre-conflict internal displacement

Changing local administrative status

During the 1960s Ar-Raqqa City became the centre of a newly formed governorate of Al-Rashid (later changing its name to Ar-Raqqa), when the existing Al-Furat (Euphrates) Governorate split to become Al-Rashid and Deir Ez-Zor.⁵

Regional infrastructure development

Towards the late 1960s and into the first half of the 1970s, a large-scale infrastructure project to dam the Euphrates was carried out with the building of the Tabqa Dam. The project formed part of agricultural reform policy of the government at the time, together with the establishment of hydro-electric energy plant at the dam. Construction activities and attendant investments in the area caused a spike in the region's wealth and resulted in a rise in migration to the area. Both Ar-Raqqa and the nearby town of Al-Thawra expanded dramatically.

Maghmooreen (Drowned People)

Al Maghmooreen, literally meaning 'the drowned people', refers to people who were moved from settlements along the banks of the Euphrates River when the Euphrates/Tabqa Dam was being constructed. Their property, and the fertile lands that it occupied, were flooded by the new dam in the early 1970s. With the loss of their agriculture-based livelihoods, many were forced to move into urban centres. As a large regional centre, Ar-Raqqa attracted many families who established informal settlements within the city.⁶

Changing Social Structure

The migration and internal displacement prior to the conflict affected the social and demographic composition of the city, along with its growth. As a result of the factors described in the previous section, key shifts in communities include:

Bedouin tribes

Bedouin tribes were forced to settle during the 1960's, as the Ba'ath Party came into power and instituted land reforms across the country. The reforms sought to constrain tribalism and nomadism, among other issues. As the Bedouin traditional ways of life began to shift, an increasing number of people moved into bigger urban centres like Ar-Raqqa, seeking new economic opportunities.

Iraqi Refugees

Following the 2003 occupation by the U.S.-led coalition, a massive population displacement from Iraq was absorbed by Syria. This mass influx was facilitated by historic relations between the two countries and non-burdensome entry requirements. By the beginning of 2007, UNHCR estimated that 1.2million Iraqis were living in Syria. While the majority settled in and around Damascus, significant populations migrated to other Syrian centres, including Ar-Raqqa. The impact of this population increase was felt across a wide spectrum of services, resources and economic activities.⁷

Kurds from Al-Hasakah

Droughts across Syria between 2006 and 2011 had a large impact on agriculture in the area around Ar-Raqqa and drove rural-to-urban population movements across the country, with the north-east being no exception. While a portion of the province's Kurdish population migrated to major cities like Damascus and Aleppo, others migrated to Ar-Raqqa City, where they comprised some 7 percent of the pre-conflict population by the beginning of the uprising in 2011.

A large youth population

The youth population in Ar-Raqqa prior to the conflict was 44.5 percent.⁸ This was a full five percent higher than the national average of 39.5 percent. The significance of this youth presence in Ar-Raqqa, and Syria more generally with a median age of just 22 in 2015, contributed to setting conditions susceptible to intrastate conflict and the rise of extremist groups such as ISIL.⁹ For any meaningful return to stability for the city, an understanding of youth dynamics will be required, including special attention to the devastating effects of conflict and displacement.

Women Headed Households

In 2008, there were 2254 female headed households in the city, representing seven percent of all households. This was a slightly lower rate than the national average of nine percent.

Figure 1.3: Resident to IDP Ratio (2018)

Source: UN Operational Partners.

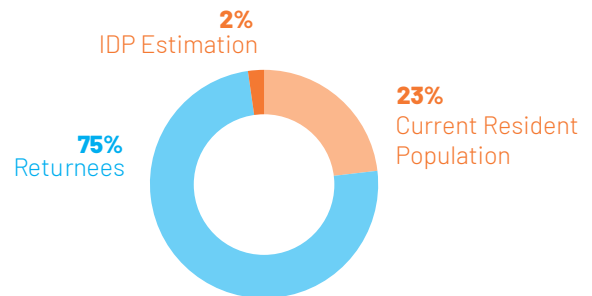
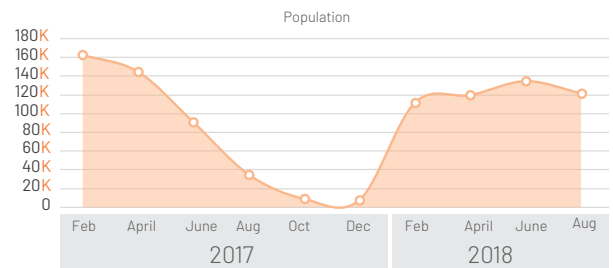
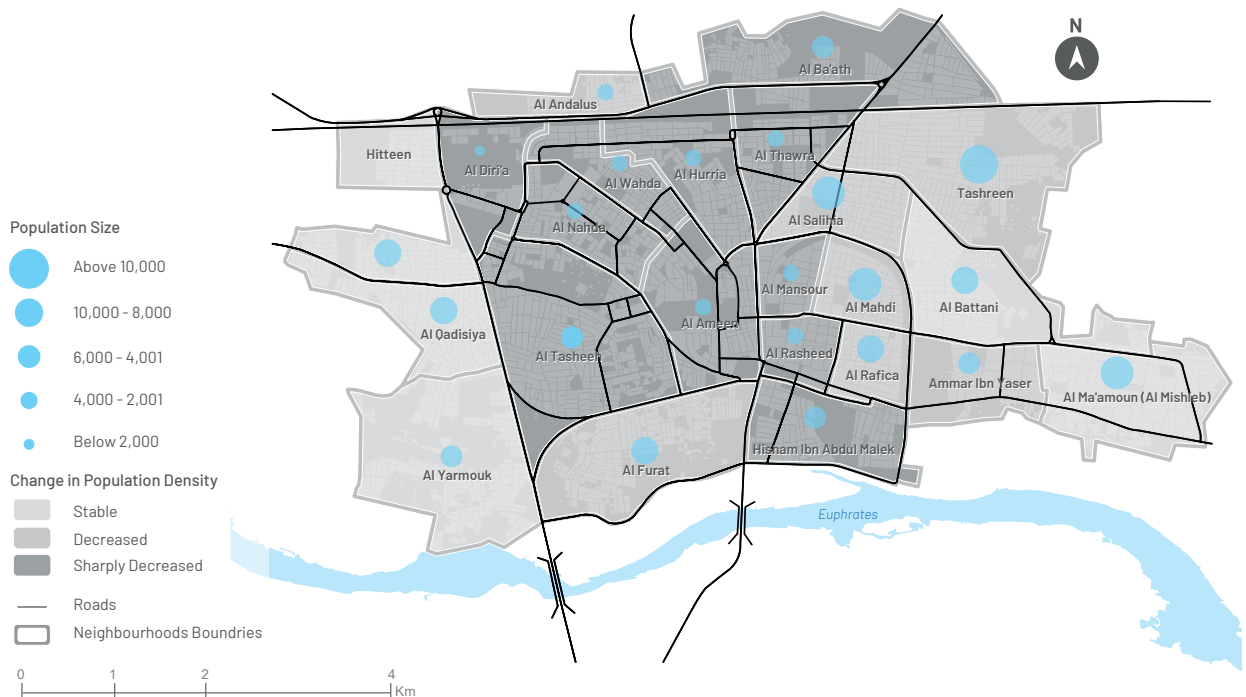


Figure 1.4: Return Estimates since the city's Liberation

Source: CBS and RCC Bread Committee.



Map 1.1: Population Size and Density Change, by Neighbourhood



Source: Satellite imagery,
CBS and RCC Bread Committee
Date of Creation: 13 Nov. 2018

Estimating the population

It is difficult to estimate or monitor the current population in the city leading to a multiplicity of population estimates originating from different sources. The total population figure, however, in itself is not as critical to the objectives of the urban profiling process as it might be to humanitarian operations. However, a “planning” baseline figure is used throughout this document. While this profile relies predominantly on the distribution of population across the inhabited neighbourhoods, population estimates are also used for sectoral capacity assessments and can be useful for recovery planning and understanding the economics of reconstruction. As population movement remains largely fluid, due to the constant changes in the national and regional context, key trends will be highlighted to observe essential frameworks and understand within a dynamic environment.

Population during the Conflict

The city's population during the conflict went through several stages. This was mainly due to dynamics in other parts of the country which influenced IDP movements, as well as conflict patterns and the shift of control between different actor groups in Ar-Raqqa.

A description of phases related to the movement of population and significant displacement events can be found in the context timeline.

Key Population Estimates

Most recent population estimates at the time of drafting this Profile range between 100,000 people and 147,000.¹⁰ The UN OCHA led Population Task Force estimates the population to be approximately 160,000. As of December 2018, UrbAN-S urban population estimates stand at 153,120, which represents approximately 38 percent of the total governorate population of 671,386. Of this total current urban population, the existing population that remained throughout the various phases of conflict is estimated of 28,234 residents. As of August 2018, the returning displaced population is estimated to be 90,959.

The city's current population density has dropped to 5,800 capita/km² from a pre-conflict high of 12,600 capita/km². This present density average is very low across the city. When looking at the neighbourhood level, density in most neighbourhoods has sharply decreased, while in only a handful of neighbourhoods was the decline slightly more moderate (map 1.1). The range of population densities by neighbourhood is still relatively large – between 2,100 capita/km² in Al Yarmouk and Al Din'a, and 14,700 capita/km² Al Mahdi.

Hosting of Internal Displacement (IDPs) in the city

In 2012, the city's IDP population reached a high of approximately 83,000. This was primarily due to an influx of people displaced from Al-Qusayr and Deir Ez-Zor. In 2014, the number of IDPs dropped to fewer than 50,000 as ISIL assumed control of the city. The number has steadily declined since then. The present IDP level is approximately 2,700 (August 2018), representing only two percent of the current total population.

Return Observations

Several observations have been made regarding return trends to Ar-Raqqa City, since the fall of ISIL control in late 2017:

- Access and population movement in to Ar-Raqqa City is currently restricted. According to one key informant familiar with the city, only registered residents of Ar-Raqqa can freely enter the city without prior approval and authorization. In order to travel, visitors and non-residents must apply for entry which can take up to 10 days for entry issuance.
- Ar-Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) doesn't declare whether neighbourhoods are secured for return but cannot prevent people from returning to their homes when they choose to do so.
- Although rubble is being cleared in various parts of the city, this factor still presents barriers to movement in some parts of the city and therefore preventing return to some central neighbourhoods.
- The primary reason for people returning is to check on property and belongings. Some of these people choose to stay while others return to camps. Most returnees that do stay are moving back into the residences they occupied before being displaced.
- Poor conditions in IDP camps are driving people to return to their homes in the city.
- Improved access to basic services (water, electricity, education, health) in the city is supporting higher levels of return.
- Higher levels of returns to central neighbourhoods, indicate that these areas are becoming increasingly habitable. Main neighbourhoods accommodating returns include the Yarmouk, Ma'amoun, Tishrine, Batani, Qadessiyeh, Tas-heeh, and Furat neighbourhoods.
- A spike in returns was seen in the third quarter of 2018, as families tried to return in time for the start of the new school year in September.

- Inward movement to the worst affected neighbourhoods in the centre of the city have increased slowly. Households initially moved to peripheral areas in the city while they prepared their homes in central areas for their return.

Continuing Barriers to Return

Significant barriers continue to impact peoples' decisions to their homes in Ar-Raqqa and their ability to rebuild their homes and lives in durable and lasting ways:

- Significant remaining contamination of Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)/Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) planted by ISIL and the slow rate at which decontamination is occurring. This has affected the rate at which returns can take place. 618 blast wound casualties due to ERW were reported between November 2017 and June 2018.¹¹
- Although there is an improved access to basic services (water, electricity, education, health) in the city which is supporting higher levels of return, overall lack of livelihoods and essential services hampers return.
- Return is hampered by the lack of adequate supplies and housing conditions to deal with the winter season.
- Residents that previously cooperated with ISIL are poorly regarded and are prevented from returning or arbitrarily subject to screening and interrogation under the suspicion of affiliation with ISIL.

Future impact of demographic dynamics in the city

Future demographic and return dynamics in Ar-Raqqa are largely dependent on the outcome of current territorial control and governance discussions prompted by the announcement of potential future U.S. withdrawal from Syria. Some initial points can be considered specifically around demographics which will impact lasting redevelopment of the city in any configuration of power and territorial control.

Ar-Raqqa City's social dynamics are tribal and clan based, with predominantly Arab origins. The tribes in Ar-Raqqa City have, to date, maintained a mostly harmonious relationship, in which notables and key figures resolve disputes among tribe members, and cooperate to maintain and conserve traditional customs. However, the tribal structure of the city has suffered several setbacks and challenges throughout the war and the alternation of several armed groups on the control of the city.

Tensions between Arab and Kurdish groups have persisted throughout the history of eastern Syria; however, throughout the conflict Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)¹² have further exacerbated these tensions, despite its recent intentions to mitigate these tensions.

In fact, the common perception of SDF among Ar-Raqqa's population as a Kurdish entity aiming towards altering the Arab identity of the area have strengthened these tensions. Other factors contributing to these tensions include the following:

- The Kurdish representation in the Ar-Raqqa civil council remains higher than that of Arabs.
- SDF imposes Kurdish curriculum on schools in Ar-Raqqa.
- Forced and detainment in the event of community mobilizations and demonstrations against SDF, specifically Asayish Forces.¹³
- Additionally, the assassination of Omar Alloush in March 2018, a Kurdish member of the People's Protection Units (YPG), and the main intermediary between Kurdish and Arabic YPG units, can also be considered as a manifestation of these Arab Kurdish tensions within YPG structure itself. Indeed, signs of people's discontent with the current control of SDF have been prominent throughout the previous months. Local sources have also indicated that people in Ar-Raqqa governorate often advocate for Government of Syria return to the governorate.

As Ar-Raqqa is a historically Arab-majority city being controlled through Kurdish-majority governance structures, maintaining the current balance requires United States (U.S.) presence. The demographics and sustainability of Arab-Kurdish relations in Ar-Raqqa under the current configuration will largely depend on another large power providing a security backstop in place of the U.S. should they fully withdraw in the future. Maintaining some version of the status quo, even with a recalibrated back-stop, presents the best opportunity to stabilize and maintain present levels of both the outflow and inflow of population levels in and around Ar-Raqqa.

The overtly sectarian nature of ISIL's rule, including their targeting of minorities and the destruction of Christian and Shia religious sites, as well as the enduring suspicion of Sunni Arab residents, provides fertile ground for future sectarian strife in Ar-Raqqa if a power vacuum forms. For Iran, this, combined with the recent U.S. presence in the area, asserting control in Ar-Raqqa will be a priority, which may be achieved by mobilizing militia and politically aligned tribal groups they have been bolstering in neighbouring Deir Ez-Zor through to the Euphrates.

Relative stability has encouraged returns to Ar-Raqqa. Instability will halt returns and may even result in an outflow of IDPs from Ar-Raqqa City. A change in territorial control is also likely to generate significant population shifts, both into and out of the city—the scale and nature of which are dependent on the controlling actor. Turkish control would see an increase in Kurdish IDPs from the city, while a significant return of the cities refugees from Turkey could be expected as seen in so-called Euphrates

Shield areas. Meanwhile, unrestrained Government of Syria control would also prompt a significant outflow of IDPs, while encouraging returns from government-controlled areas of the country and enabling Iran and Iranian-backed tribal entities to expand into the city as seen in east-Aleppo and Deir Ez-Zor.

The RCC's non-proscription in areas of return has allowed individuals to return to their homes and neighbourhoods organically. This has occurred even despite the enormous destruction of property in the city and high incidence of residual explosives. Turkey, Iran, and the government of Syria have all exhibited policies that dictate where and how populations in territories under their control can return. This has the potential to interrupt or reverse the somewhat organic population dispersion currently seen in Ar-Raqqa City may drive IDP flows out of the city or into particular neighbourhoods.

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- 4 Discussed in 'An Urban Network Dominated by Four Metropolises', Atlas of the Near East: State Formation and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Fabrice Balanche .
 - 5 <http://www.statoids.com/usy.html>, retrieved on 26/12/2018
 - 6 p.163, ed. J.G. Jabbara, et al., Challenging Environmental Issues: Middle Eastern Perspectives, 1997
 - 7 The youth population comprised of children under 15 years of age.
 - 8 FMR Iraq Special Issue: Iraq Refugees in Syria, Faisal Al-Miqdad, <https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/iraq/almiqdad.pdf>, retrieved on 26/12/2018
 - 9 Political Demographic theory suggests that: 'states with younger populations are often more prone to experience political violence. Thus it is not surprising when we look across a region where people have many of the same grievances – governments that favor economic elites or particular ethnic groups, few opportunities for educated young people, and widespread corruption – that countries with the youngest populations are most likely to have the most violent and severe state breakdowns.' This accurately describes the situation that transpired in Syria as the beginning of the conflict in 2011. <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org/2015/02/youth-bulge-exclusionary-regimes-islamic-states-big-mistake/>, retrieved on 16/12/2018
 - 10 OCHA: Syria Crisis: Northeast Syria, Situation Report No.25 (15 May 2018 – 15 June 2018)
 - 11 Population figures from UN-OCHA, July 2018 and UN-IA Mission, April 2018
 - 12 The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) are an alliance of Kurdish, Arab and Assyrian/Syriac militias, militarily led by the People's Protection Units, a mostly Kurdish militia. They are based in north-eastern Syria and have been operating as the primary group forcealigned with the US and the anti-ISIL coalition.
 - 13 'Asayish forces' is the local name referencing the Raqqa Internal Security Forces (RISF). The RISF are a police unit that was formed in 2017 by the SDF to manage security in the areas they control, including Raqqa city.

2. Context Timeline

Figure 2.1: Context timeline

AR-RAQQA City Conflict Timeline

Phase 1

Start of conflict (2011 – mid 2012)

The Ar-Raqqa area's agricultural sector was nationally significant in the pre-war period, with the Euphrates River feeding vast arable lands. Despite this, Ar-Raqqa city remained impoverished in comparison to other cities in Syria such as Aleppo and Homs. Additionally, the 2006–2010 drought gravely affected local livelihoods and agricultural production. Ar-Raqqa city was home to a few small protests at the beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011, but these quickly subsided. Small-scale protests continued throughout the beginning of 2012; however, these mobilizations culminated in March 2012, on the anniversary of the Syrian uprising, when Ar-Raqqa city witnessed the largest protest against Government of Syria to date near Al-Rasheed park in the center of Ar-Raqqa. The protest was met with a heavy Government of Syria crackdown, using live bullets that injured dozens of protesters. Amongst the injured protesters was Ali Al-Babinsi, a young activist died. His death triggered massive demonstrations and further escalated the conflict, as more than 200,000 participated in his memorial and funeral. Following the funeral, protesters headed towards the statue of Hafez Assad, in order to destroy/demolish it, triggering massive Government of Syria crackdown on the protestors which resulted in several deaths and dozens of injuries, mostly among youth. Nearly a half million IDPs from elsewhere in Syria took shelter in seemingly stable Raqqa, leading President Bashar al-Assad to visit the city for Eid al-Adha in June 2012.

BEGINNING OF CONFLICT 2011

2011

Civilians in Ar-Raqqa city demonstrated against the Government of Syria. Protests remained peaceful and were spared a violent crackdown by Government of Syria forces.

April 2012

Several FSA groups and the Nusra Front were formed in Ar-Raqqa governorate, to include Ar-Raqqa city.

March 2012

Massive demonstrations broke out in the city on the anniversary of the Syrian uprising near Al-Rasheed Park. A severe Government of Syria crackdown killed one protestor and injured several others. These events triggered further demonstrations, and marked a shift from peaceful demonstration to organized armed opposition.

Population impact:

The first wave of IDP arrivals occurred in 2011 as protest against the government across the country gave way to the first waves of armed struggle. People displaced from the most intense conflict areas including Homs, Hama, Al Qusair, Tal Kalakh arrived in Raqqa. In 2012, IDP's from Al Qusair came to be hosted in Raqqa. In 2012, an additional 15,000 IDPs from Deir Ez-Zor arrived and were hosted by families (numbering around 15 000) in the city. A small number of people of Raqqa origin started leaving the city as the number of IDPs continued to increase.

March 2013

FSA groups (predominantly Ahrar Al-Sham), as well as Nusra Front (which was partly comprised of former Iraqi ISIL members) secured Ar-Raqqa city after clashing with Government of Syria forces. Ar-Raqqa city subsequently became the first administrative center to be captured by armed opposition forces. The Government of Syria's military control in the governorate then became limited to Division 17, Al-Tabqa Air-Base, and Sub-division 139.

April 2013

Nusra Front and ISIL's cordial relationship is disrupted, and their separation is officially announced. The split was concurrent with the increased presence of ISIL in Ar-Raqqa, and its control over Mosul, Iraq.

August 2013

ISIL engages in intense clashes with Nusra front and FSA groups.

Phase 2

NSAG Infighting and Consolidation (August 2012–March 2013)

Despite Ar-Raqqa city enjoying relative calm, in the countryside the opposition-led "Raqqa Military Council (RMC)"—formed of predominantly Free Syrian Army groups—was formed in August 2012, before overseeing an armed take over of Tal Abyad. In December, the RMC was restructured to form a coalition with more Islamist-leaning armed groups, before beginning to work with Jabhat al-Nusra and then Ahrar ash-Sham for military operations in the vicinity of Ar-Raqqa including the Ar-Raqqa-Deir Ez-Zor highway and Tabqa. Meanwhile, in November 2012, the FSA launch an offensive on the Kurdish-majority town of Ras al-Ayn from Turkey before a truce was negotiated between the two groups.

January 2014

Armed opposition groups and Nusra Front launch failed attempt to remove ISIL from the area. After a confrontation lasting 12 days, ISIL secures Ar-Raqqa city.

August 2014

Following clashes with Government of Syria, ISIL secures the Al-Tabqa Airbase, further solidifying its presence in the area.

Phase 3 Opposition and NSAG Control (March 2013–January 2014)

At the start of March 2013, armed opposition groups led by Ahrar ash-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra launched an offensive on Raqqa from their positions around the city itself. Between March 3 and 5 NSAG's, comprised primarily of fighters from outside of Raqqa, launched a surge into the city. Their advance was rapid and they targeted high level Syrian government officials as hostages. By March 6, Raqqa was declared to be under armed opposition control, while the Syrian government consolidated their forces at the strategic Tabqa Military Airbase. Residents of Ar-Raqqa feared armed opposition presence would bring airstrikes, which it did initially, with air raids on the city and the frontlines around it continuing through summer of 2013. ISIL increased their presence and influence in the city through 2013, and in September 2013 they destroyed a number of Christian churches and Shia shrines, including the Uwais Al-Qurani shrine, creating sectarian grievances which endure. They executed Alawite citizens and prompted the Christian community--which had comprised up to 10 percent of the pre-war population--to flee. In Ar-Raqqa, as elsewhere, were not skilled at providing security and service provision, and the gap was filled by ISIL who pulled back from military positions in some areas to focus on service delivery as way of winning favour with the local population. INGOs and other aid actors were working illegally across Syria's north-east at the time, and were able to negotiate humanitarian access with NSAG's and even ISIL in their early formations within the city but this became increasingly difficult as time drew on and unreasonable conditions were placed on implementers.

Population impact:

Non-Government Allied Groups took control of the city from the government in June 2013 and began a period of in-fighting for ultimate control. Ar-Raqqa residents moved out en masse, mostly towards Deir Ez-Zor, but later started to return. At this time there was a decrease in middle class population, while hosted IDPs also fled the city as it ceased to be a safe harbour. Minorities, including the majority of a large Christian population, fled the city for safety.

January 2014–mid 2016

The control of ISIL over the area is uncontested by Government of Syria or U.S.-led coalition.

June 2015

ISIL is increasingly forced to withdraw from northern rural Ar-Raqqa governorate by the advance of YPG forces and in receipt of FSA support. This marked the first major loss of ISIL territory in Ar-Raqqa governorate and a precedent for ISIL future setbacks in the area.

Phase 4 ISIL control

(November 2013– November 2015)

ISIL had gained control of Raqqa city by November 2013, but the armed opposition--to include Islamist groups through to the Al-Qaeda-linked Jabhat al-Nusra--had grown weary of the group's brutal tactics and launched an offensive against them across northern Syria including in Ar-Raqqa city. Armed opposition groups briefly pushed ISIL out of Ar-Raqqa city on January 6, but they had regained control of it by the 14th, after which they strategically withdrew from Syria's north-west and much of Aleppo to consolidate their presence in Ar-Raqqa. In June 2014, ISIL declared their territories in Iraq and Syria to be an "Islamic State" or Caliphate, with Ar-Raqqa city as its capital. ISIL then ruled all aspects of life within Ar-Raqqa within their extreme ideological version of Sunni Islam, metering out severe punishments for perceived deviations from their rules. During this time the local population of Ar-Raqqa was subjected to severe suppression, to include kidnappings, public executions, and assassination of activists and others who opposed its reign; bombings of government buildings, mosques, and transportation centers; and the destruction of infrastructure throughout the city. This resulted in the displacement of around 200,000 civilians, with a majority of them fleeing towards Turkey and Europe. Humanitarian access and response became impossible under ISIL, who sought to control their territories and viewed any external influence or service provision as a threat to their ideology and state-building ambitions. ISIL took control of service provision and governance within their territories, including Ar-Raqqa.

Population impact:

An increase in displacement after ISIL took control in early 2014, accounted for mostly by families with school age children together with public servants who were relocated to Hama and Damascus. After the initial outflow of population when ISIL assumed control, the remaining population stayed at relatively stable numbers through 2016 and into 2017 prior to the beginning of counter-ISIL operations. The City also saw an increase in the number of IDPs from Rural Aleppo due to work opportunities and investments in retail and trade businesses. Families of foreign fighters also began to settle in the city, the number of which began to increase following the start of the coalition campaign. Ar-Raqqa also saw an increase of IDPs from Deir Ez-Zor in 2015, due to the ISIL siege on that city. There was also a significant increase in the number of foreigners, mostly coming through the Iraqi borders due to Turkey closing its main entry point with Ar-Raqqa governorate in March 2015.

October 2015

The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) was established with U.S. support to consolidate the YPG and its allies into a credible anti-ISIL force. At this time, the SDF primarily comprised YPG/J forces and a smaller Arab-tribal and Christian component. Announcement of the SDF followed several U.S. statements affirming the U.S. military's willingness to provide arms to fight ISIL.

November 2015

ISIL imposes a siege on Ar-Raqqa city forbidding civilians to leave, ahead of an imminent SDF offensive.

Phase 5

US-LED Intervention Coalition

(September 2014–October 2017)

The United States intervention in Syria began in September 2014, as an extension of their aerial campaign against the group in Iraq. For the following years, the US targeted specific locations within the city. Heavy French airstrikes against Ar-Raqqa followed the ISIL attacks in Paris in November 2015. During this period, the US developed a relationship with the Kurdish YPG armed group, to whom they had provided air cover to during the battle for Kobane in late 2014. This strategic support continued and on the 10th October 2015, the SDF was established with U.S. support as a broader framework to bring together the YPG and allied forces as a credible anti-ISIL force. At this time, the SDF primarily comprised YPG/J forces and a smaller Arab-tribal and Christian component, including, most notably, the Sutoro and the Shammar tribe. The SDF's announcement came subsequent to several US official statements affirming the US's willingness to offer arms in aims to fight ISIL in Syria. In light of the major setback that ISIL had suffered, ISIL forbid civilians from leaving Ar-Raqqa city, as of November 2015, in hope of utilizing civilians as human shields in defense of assaults on the City. In March 2016, the PYD announced the formation of a federal region for Northern Syria, known as the Kurdish Self Administration (KSA), in areas under Kurdish control as a part of a Kurdish initiative for autonomous rule. This included electing a local federalized government, demanding separate representation in the ongoing Geneva talks, and closing the Peshabour border crossing between Iraq and Al-Hasakeh for Syrian civilians who do not have residency in the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq. This was a major point of conflict with the Government of Syria, which now viewed the Kurdish Self Administration as a major threat to Syrian state sovereignty. In November 2016, the U.S. led SDF coalition announced the beginning of its preparations for an anti-ISIL operation dubbed 'Wrath of Euphrates Operation' in Ar-Raqqa governorate with the aim of capturing Ar-Raqqa city. During the following six months, SDF forces would go on to capture several towns and villages around Ar-Raqqa city. In early March 2017, the SDF resumed its military operations in Ar-Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor Governorates, as part of the third phase of 'Wrath of Euphrates Operation'. Subsequently, SDF advanced in eastern rural Ar-Raqqa, and managed to cut the key ISIL supply road

between Deir Ez-Zor and Ar-Raqqa, and established control on several villages east of Ar-Raqqa. By the end of March, the SDF had established full control over the Al-Tabqa Air-Base and the surrounding lands to reach the Tabqa/Ar-Raqqa road, thus effectively cutting access between the ISIL-held cities of Al-Tabqa and Ar-Raqqa. Also, during late March 2017, and in light of U.S. President Donald Trump stated intentions to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria, SDF created the Future Syria Party in Ar-Raqqa. The founding conference included Arab, Kurds, Assyrian, as well as representatives from other governorates in Syria, and was established to act as the political facade of YPG, and subsequently deter Turkish military or political offenses on northern Syria. However, the general upsurge of communal rejection of SDF control and the proliferation of anti-SDF groups indicated that the Future Syria Party had failed to alter the general perception of SDF in Ar-Raqqa. In April, the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced the start of the fourth phase of their U.S.-backed anti-ISIL military operations in Ar-Raqqa governorate. The fourth phase of the operation would target territories in northern rural Ar-Raqqa City, in order to further tighten their control over rural Ar-Raqqa and cut ISIL supply routes into Ar-Raqqa city. By May 2017, SDF had established control over Al-Thawra (Tabqa) city and the Al-Tabqa Dam, western Ar-Raqqa governorate, after approximately six weeks of their U.S.-backed anti-ISIL offensive in the area. The fall of the dam facilitated the subsequent attack on Ar-Raqqa city. In June 2017, SDF forces began their battle to capture Ar-Raqqa city as a part of the fifth phase of 'Operation Euphrates Wrath', advancing from northern Ar-Raqqa governorate. By mid-October 2017, SDF took full control of Ar-Raqqa city following four months of continuous fighting against ISIL. The battle ended by an SDF-ISIL agreement to evacuate the remaining ISIL combatants to Deir Ez-Zor. Yet, SDF high reliance on U.S.-led coalition air support had left approximately 80 percent of the city completely destroyed and inhabitable, and resulted in the death of thousands of civilians.¹⁴

Population impact:

Massive displacement of population began as the SDF coalition commenced its offensive against ISIL in the city. Almost the entire population drained from the city, mostly into the surrounding areas.

Phase 6

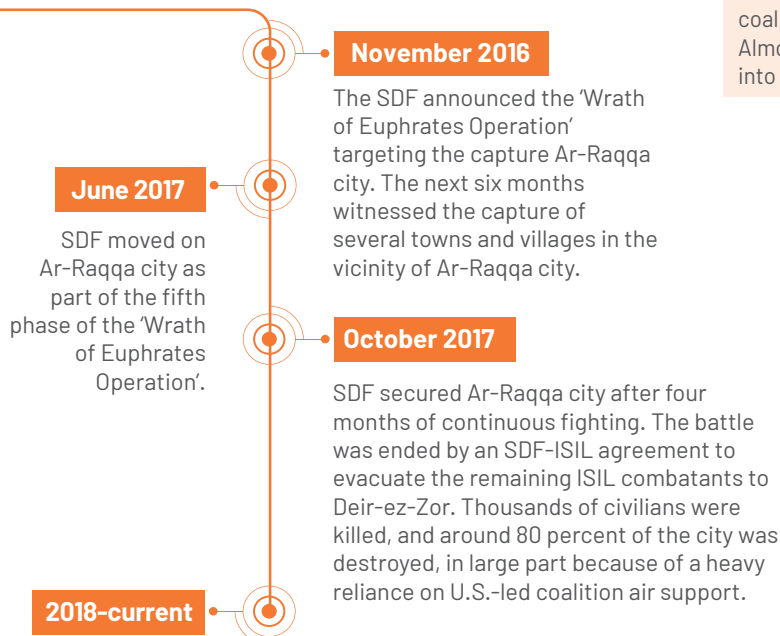
SDF/RCC Control

(October 2017–Present)

Since ISIL was driven out of Ar-Raqqa it has ostensibly been under the control of the SDF supported by US stabilization programmes, and the Coalition. Tensions between the predominantly-Kurdish SDF and RCC/PYD structures and the Arab communities in Ar-Raqqa and surrounds have been strained at times and their control has remained contested by the local communities in Ar-Raqqa subdistrict. Indeed, several local armed groups in eastern Syria, to include Ar-Raqqa, believed to be receipt of support from Government of Syria and Turkey, have announced their rejection to SDF control and the US. SDF remains in control of Ar-Raqqa as arrangements for US withdrawal are discussed, including who will control Ar-Raqqa in the future.

Population impact:

The trend of return to the city began following ejection of the remaining ISIL forces, as people went back to check on property. This trend has continued throughout 2018 with at a steadily increasing rate as access to parts of the city and basic services improve. Up to 100,000 people have already returned, hosting of IDPs is minimal.



Despite public dissent, the SDF retains control over Ar-Raqqa city. Several local armed groups in eastern Syria believed to be in receipt of Turkish and Syrian government support have voiced their opposition to the SDF's control over Ar-Raqqa and the presence of U.S. forces. These groups are allegedly responsible for the systemic assassination of a number of SDF-affiliated commanders and combatants.

¹⁴ Syria: Unprecedented investigation reveals US-led Coalition killed more than 1,600 civilians in Raqqa 'death trap' - 25 April 2019 - <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/04/syria-unprecedented-investigation-reveals-us-led-coalition-killed-more-than-1600-civilians-in-raqqa-death-trap/>

3. Governance and Municipal Services

Current Governance

Regional Governance

The Raqqa Civil Council (RCC), which focuses on the administration of Ar-Raqqa City itself, sits underneath a broader administrative framework in Syria's North-East. Indeed, at the regional level, the Syrian Democratic Council (SDC) and the Autonomous Administration of north and east Syria both play a role.

More importantly, the SDF and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) sit above the RCC, with both organizations proffering central figures with decision-making powers for Ar-Raqqa that outrank the local decision-making process. These central figures are: the SDF's 'Security Focal Point (SFP)' and the PYD 'cadro'. Ar-Raqqa has two 'Cadro' assigned to it, as does each city in Kurdish self-administration areas. The Cadro is Kurdish, with strong ties to the PYD. They oftentimes clash with the SDF and U.S.'s SFP as they did in Ar-Raqqa when the SFP wanted to increase Arab representation. After security threats against him, the SFP was replaced.

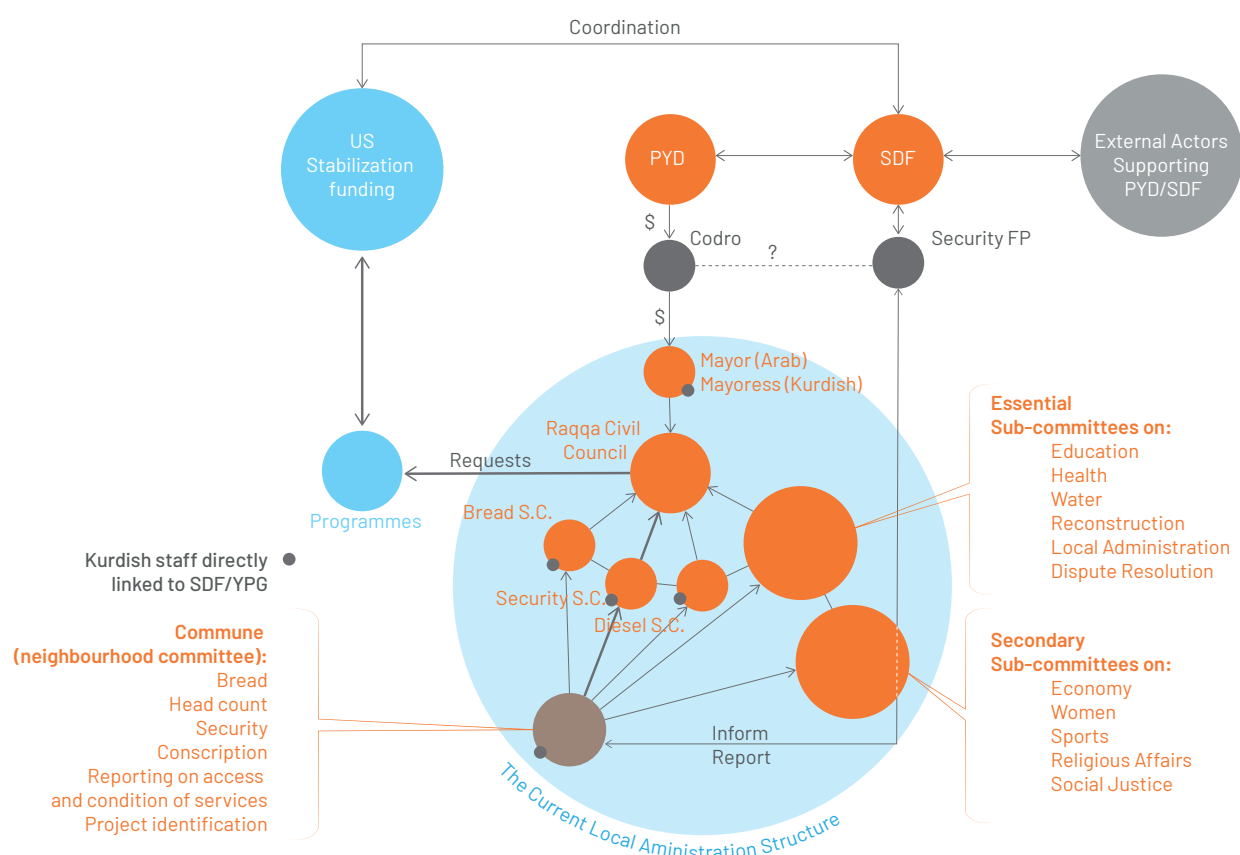
Ar-Raqqa Governance

In April 2017, the SDC played a role in establishing the RCC to manage the challenges of the dual threats perceived by Syrian Kurds--ISIL and the Turkish army. The RCC was initially comprised of seven members, with a small number of committees to tackle the administration of Ar-Raqqa. In May 2017, they created the Ar-Raqqa Internal Security Forces (RISF) with the backing of the U.S., in preparation to provide security to Ar-Raqqa after the imminent military offensive to take control of the city from ISIL. Following the successful campaign, the RCC moved to Ar-Raqqa City.

In January 2018, a legislative council was formed to provide checks and balances on the RCC Executive Council. In June 2018, following the review from the Council, the RCC was expanded and reformed. Candidates were elected through an informal voting process at the RCC conference.

Presently, the RCC has 17 members, while the legislative council is comprised of 350 members. 'Mayoress' Layla Mustafa and 'Mayor' Abdul Hamid Al-Muhbash lead the executive council of Raqqa's RCC, while Khalid Berkal and Nadia Hamada lead the legislative council of the RCC. Al-Muhbash has publicly expressed a desire to reconcile with the government of Syria in the period since U.S. President Donald Trump tweeted his desire to withdraw from Syria in December 2018.

Figure 3.1: Governance Structure and Decision-Making Tree



The RCC is comprised of seventeen subcommittees, each of which is responsible for an aspect of local administration. The subcommittees can be divided into two subcategories based on the importance of the services they oversee; essential and secondary. Eleven subcommittees are controlled by Kurds, primarily essential subcommittees including education, health, water, reconstruction, local administration, and dispute resolution. The secondary committees are primarily controlled by Arab residents, and include: economy, sports, women, and social justice.

Separately, the diesel, security, and bread subcommittees wield the most local power and are all Kurdish controlled. These three committees report directly to the SFP:

- **Bread.** The most important of these three is the Bread Committee. While their official mandate is distribution and supply of bread, in order to fulfil this task they own the list of names of the city's residents as everyone must register at the local bakery to receive their allocated bread. This process comprises the main security vetting mechanism at a local level.
- **Security.** The Security Committee is responsible for SDF recruitment, monitoring and identifying suspected ISIL affiliates, undertaking background checks, collecting information and intelligence, checkpoints, and collection of taxes.
- **Diesel.** The Diesel Subcommittee provides diesel and regulates prices for it. As Ar-Raqqa continues to have no functioning electricity grid, residents depend on diesel generators for electricity, every neighbourhood has approximately one generator per 25 buildings. Each generator is operated by an entrepreneur. The distribution and licensing of generators is controlled, as is the monopoly on the provision of cheap diesel to regulate electricity prices. Recently, the committee has been in discussions with the U.S. to repair the Tabqa Dam to allow for electricity generation, as a means of creating income by selling electricity to Damascus through Qaterji.

Underpinning the RCC are the local Communes, which are the lowest governance system in the city. Communes operate at a micro-neighbourhood level, designed to be a truly representative form of local administration. However, communes have not solicited complete community buy-in due to community dynamics. In addition to each commune including a Kurdish trainee, locals perceive communes as rewarding loyalty to the PYD and have become a way for localized disputes, loyalties, and grievances to manifest within the local governance system. Refugee and IDP returns at a neighbourhood level are controlled by the communes who also incubate and request humanitarian and reconstruction projects based on local needs. Despite some local reservations, the commune system isn't broken so much as needing of support to create more inclusivity and diversity and support their role as an important pillar of local council capacity.

Damascus

In September 2018, Syria held local council elections across the country but did not include Ar-Raqqa in these elections. Instead, after the local elections were over, they created a provincial council. No governor was appointed, and instead of the usual 100 members of a provincial council, 8 Ba'ath party representatives-- four from the civil community and four from tribal backgrounds-- were informed of their selection to form a council (or executive office) for Ar-Raqqa, and charged with representing the constituency of the governorate. Unlike in neighbouring Deir Ez-Zor, the eight are from traditional local administration families, rather than those who supported or funded armed groups or acted as warlords during the conflict.

The eight members of the provincial council are based in Damascus but have been allowed to travel to Ar-Raqqa and have often been consulted to give briefings to Government of Syria negotiators dealing with RCC or PYD negotiators, as well as providing feedback and opinions to the government negotiation teams. While they are not currently involved in the day to day administration of Ar-Raqqa city, the council represents a readily deployable local governance structure that can be deployed to the city ready to re-establish government of Syria control over administration in the event of a U.S. withdrawal.

The GoS is offering a decentralized system in an effort to keep the integrity of the Syrian territory and to regain authority in North-East Syria. The latest presidential speech (17 February 2019), reiterated that decentralization should be understood as a division of administrative responsibilities between the central and local authorities, as opposed to governance. This interpretation of decentralization is in line with the government's pre-conflict policies and Law 107. While Damascus is keen to restore these modalities of governance and security, it is cognisant of the fact that it must reward local leadership. However, sources with direct involvement in the negotiations between Damascus and the SDF have reported that this definition of decentralization is a point of contention, thus hindering progress on security arrangements and future regional governance.

Sources confirmed that Damascus has supported a role for the Syrian SDF leaders in the future governance of the region under a legal framework which ensures a Damascus presence, and through a power-sharing paradigm following the Ba'ath Party traditions in Syria. To the SDF, this option would hinder their ties with western donors, defeat its own governance system and fail to secure an authoritative role for the SDF foreign leaders.

Service Provision

Unlike traditional Local Council systems in Syria, whereby the municipal structures oversee service provision, regional budgets, and infrastructure, the RCC is responsible for all matters occurring in Ar-Raqqa, including infrastructure like dams and bridges, the economy and taxes, basic needs like bread and healthcare, as well as social issues like sports and religious affairs.

For stabilization work and assistance, the RCC liaises directly and horizontally with the U.S. coalition stabilization committee, which facilitates programming from the Syrian Recovery Trust Fund (SRTF) and other external stabilization funds as well as to humanitarian partners. Despite this, the RCC itself has not initiated much programming on their own, instead relying on communes to identify service provision needs which are then filtered through the RCC to the programmers and funders. To date, only around 3 million USD of reconstruction funding has been spent in the city. According to START, the funding comes from the US through the START programme, in addition to the multilateral funding through the SRTF.

Where strong communes exist to request services and reconstruction projects, they are processed quickly and easily by the RCC. Projects whose genesis is from an INGO or NGO rather than the commune itself, the process of approval through the RCC is slower and more cumbersome. As a result, there is a high population footprint across the city and services match this pattern, with no abandoned neighbourhoods or geographical holes in service provision. This makes Ar-Raqqa unique in Syria, where many war-ravaged cities and towns have neighbourhoods--if not whole towns or sub-districts--which are inaccessible to residents and/or service providers due to militia control and future redevelopment ambitions.

4. Stakeholder analysis including civil society

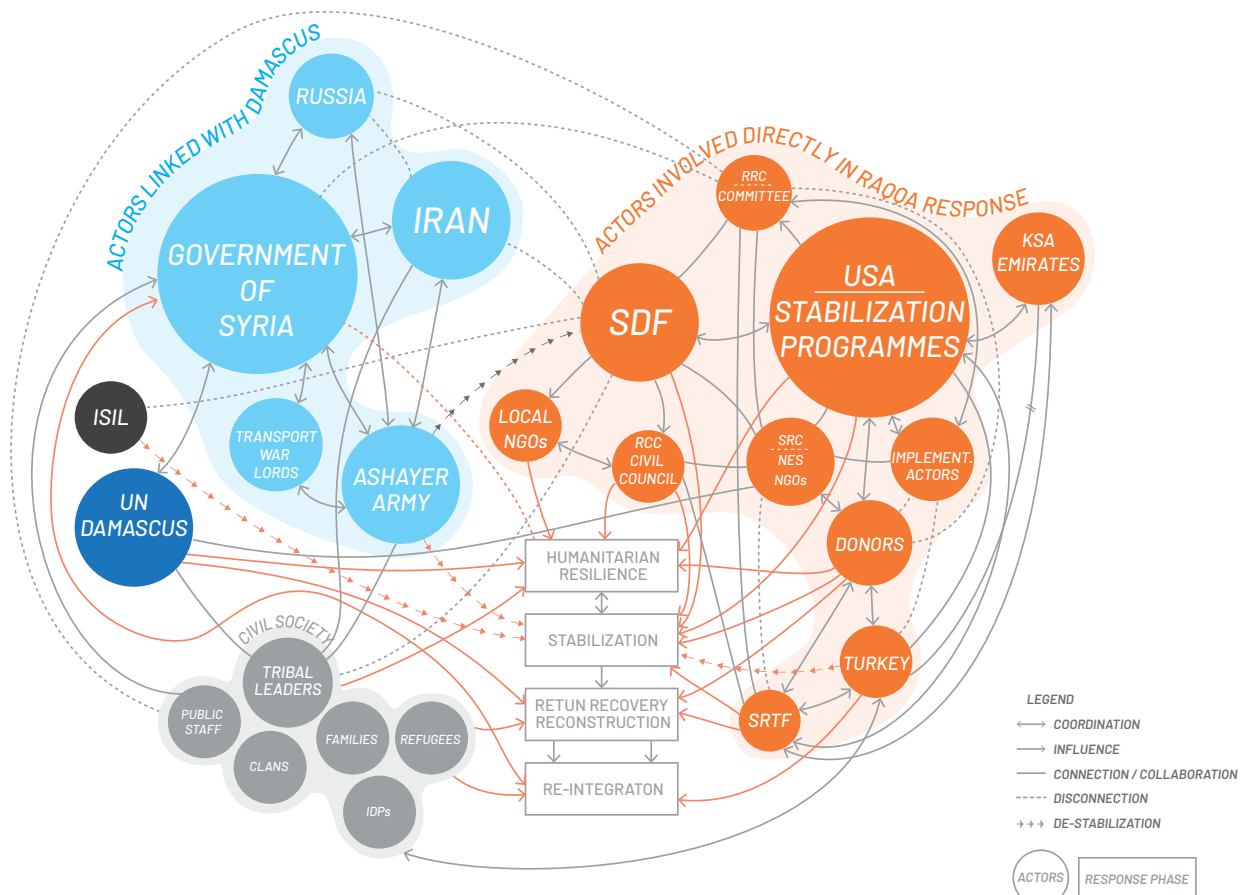
United States

From the Kurdish perspective, the U.S. presence in Syria's North-East has been a stabilizing force in both Ar-Raqqa and the north-east, providing an element of protection from hostilities from Turkey, the GoS, Russia and others. However, from the Damascus perspective, the US presence in the region has been a destabilizing element, extending the current political impasses.

The U.S. does not seek an involvement in long-term commitment in Syria, which justifies their lack of appetite for reconstruction. It currently seeks to support the establishment of a local force accepted by the population and to push-back against potential expansion plans from Turkey in the area, in order to prevent mass displacement and a potential resurgence of ISIL.¹⁵

The U.S. President's desire to withdraw isn't new, but it came as a surprise to many, including top U.S. officials working on the Syria file who have long been pursuing a parallel policy beneath the president's withdrawal agenda. While the U.S.'s long-term strategic interests would be best served through a continued military presence in Syria, albeit one with better articulated policy ambitions and greater resource, there would be risks involved in pushing to maintain a presence that is inherently unstable due to the President's express wishes. For this reason, the current U.S. President's December tweet is being read as the final word on the matter at all levels. The question is of when the U.S. withdraws its troops, how, and to whom it hands over the areas within its current territorial control. As no short-term withdrawal plan existed as of December 2018, this question is one that is being answered in real time.

Figure 4.1: Actor Mapping Diagram



In the current context, the U.S. seeks to pursue as rapid a withdrawal as possible, while continuing to assist local partners towards negotiations for a favourable and stable hand-over. Damage to the perception of how the U.S. conducts relations with partners and allies could be improved should their handover strategy be accepted by the SDF and PYD/YPG. This could be however complicated by the U.S.'s need to appease Turkish concerns about these same groups, while simultaneously leveraging the Syrian government and Russia's desire to use this fracture in their discussions with Turkey. The need for stability bleeds into an interest--shared with Turkey, Iraq, and coalition partners in Europe--of preventing large refugee outflows from Ar-Raqqa during a withdrawal. Given the large Kurdish population in Ar-Raqqa and the wider north-east, much of this out-flow would be into neighbouring Kurdish-Iraq (the KRG) which is still struggling with existing refugee populations from both Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. primary interest in Syria following the defeat of ISIL in Ar-Raqqa is one of countering Iranian influence in Syria, more specifically, interrupting the Iranian land-corridor, and mitigating Iran's threat to Israel. The Iran question will factor heavily into plans for withdrawal, particularly given the heavy Iranian presence south of Ar-Raqqa and in Deir Ez-Zor, the sectarian nature of the former ISIL presence in Ar-Raqqa, and the politicized nature of the subsequent U.S. operation from an Iranian point of view. Iran is certain to make attempts to score political and practical wins in the case of U.S. withdrawal. They are likely to emerge as the largest strategic winner in the current situation. Preventing this outcome will involve considerable efforts on the part of the U.S.

Having defeated ISIL militarily in Ar-Raqqa, the U.S. has an interest in ensuring the group in its current and future iterations do not re-emerge as a physical threat in the region, nor as an existential threat to the U.S. at home and abroad. The Iraqi example should provide a stark warning to the U.S. and others to avoid repeating a situation similar to the one which led to the formation of ISIL in its recent form and the takeover of Ar-Raqqa. To this end, maintaining stability is paramount as jihadi-groups thrive in unstable environments and expand rapidly into power vacuums. Indeed, two suicide bombings in previously-stable Manbij in recent weeks suggest that ISIL is keen to exploit and create disorder.

The U.S. also has an interest in countering the influence of the GoS, albeit one that has reduced from aspirations of regime-change to one of containing the use of chemical-weapons which the government of Syria is believed to still possess. The U.S. is currently attempting to pass legislation which would further restrict economic activity in government-controlled Syria. The U.S. has resisted calls to increase humanitarian aid funding into Damascus, as they do not want to be perceived as providing financial support to the Syrian government nor Iran, through any agencies or institutions. Despite this, prior to the announcement in December the U.S. was planning a slow and managed handover of Ar-Raqqa to a UN-led Damascus operation. The plan did not attempt to solve the larger Syria question or ensure long-term stability outside of this.

In short, the U.S. seeks to withdraw its military forces from Syria in a way that preserves alliances with both the PYD and Turkey, prevents Iranian ascendancy and an ISIL resurgence, avoids instability and a refugee or IDP outflow, as well as limits funding or economic activities that benefit the government of Syria.

PYD/Syrian Kurds

The primary interest for the PYD and the Syrian Kurds that support them, is to create a semi-autonomous area in the north-east of the country, governed under the political system favoured by the SDC (and PYD), such as what is currently seen in Ar-Raqqa. This singular interest informed their alignment to the U.S., and agreement to lead the ground operations against ISIL in Raqqa and across the north-east of Syria. Their governance role in Ar-Raqqa and beyond is hard won, therefore it is unlikely they will relinquish power easily. Trump's U.S. withdrawal announcement came as a shock to them, significantly undermining their previously strong negotiating position.

The PYD/SK's greatest fear in the current situation is a Turkish incursion into Syria. Animosity between Turkey and the PKK has been the source of violence between the two. The PYD presence in north-eastern Syria has presented an ongoing concern to Turkey. The Turkish take-over of previously Kurdish-held Afrin has stoked Kurdish fears about Turkey's willingness to undertake military campaign into Kurdish territories and displace Kurdish residents. For this reason, the PYD/SK's have pivoted toward Damascus and Russia in their efforts to strike a deal in the wake of U.S. withdrawal.

Syrian Kurds have historically been denied recognition of their culture and ethnicity, which has led them to believe that the Syrian government is incapable of adequately protecting and fostering minority communities. While there has historically been a large Kurdish population in Hassakeh province in the north-east of Syria, there has not been one in Ar-Raqqa. Without the U.S. presence, maintaining majority-Kurdish rule in Ar-Raqqa it may be unlikely for the local Arab and tribal communities to accept the Kurdish minority rule. Indeed, the Kurdish negotiation position may be more tenable in relation to areas with historically majority Kurdish populations.

The PYD's original negotiation position with Damascus prioritized a degree of devolved administration to the 'Autonomous Administration (AA)' areas, including the right to fly an AA flag and the recognition of Kurdish as an official language in these territories. Their offer to maintain the territorial integrity of Syria as a country and to fold the PYD's military forces under the Syrian Arab Army (SAA) are likely to marry with the position of Damascus. The PYD/SK's original negotiating position is optimistic at best though they are likely to continue to prioritize their power and governance structures and Kurdish interests over the long-term stability of Ar-Raqqa. In any case, the Kurds interests are likely to be best protected, advanced, or guaranteed by Russia rather than Damascus alone.

Damascus

Damascus aims to retake all areas of Syria and bring them back under government of Syria control. Ar-Raqqa is no exception. However, the fact that Ar-Raqqa is severely damaged, and that a power vacuum is likely to induce instability and infighting, could should be a significant negative consideration to be considered prior to consolidating territorial control.

Economically, the government of Syria cannot afford to take over Ar-Raqqa and maintain the monthly salaries of government workers and cost of service provision that has been reaching the area, which is currently being funded through remittances from Kurdish diaspora and western stabilization funding. Both funding streams are contingent on the area remaining outside of government of Syria control. Even with the increased trade and agricultural resources the region offers, Ar-Raqqa will cost more than it will earn for them in the short to medium term, particularly if instability interrupts trade routes and reduces humanitarian access. However, government aligned actors, such as Mohammed Qaterji, are already jostling for position and influence in the coming phase. Qaterji, who has been making a profit from the transportation monopolies and “taxes” on checkpoints, has hosted talks with Iranian-backed tribal groups and the government to help solidify his role in the coming phase. He would be likely to benefit from contracts associated with the government and humanitarian actors re-entering Ar-Raqqa from Damascus due to his monopolies on certain sectors, as well as being able to invest his spoils of war into redevelopment projects as other newly elite war economy actors have done. In this regard, the economic interests of the government of Syria are entwined with others whose fortunes may be more favourable.

Damascus is unlikely to give the PYD/SKs a favourable deal in a negotiation process when compared to other areas that have returned to their control. The Damascus negotiating position allows for no constitutional reforms to recognize the north-east’s devolved administration and no recognition of the Kurdish language, but makes concessions allowing the PYD and the SDF to remain living in Syria rather than facing expulsion or forced displacement and to fold their armed groups under the SAA umbrella.

While Damascus is willing to engage with Turkey on a deal, especially one brokered through Russia, it will only do so under the terms of the 1998 Adana agreement—or thereabouts—which indicates they will use Turkey’s desire for a ‘safe zone’ or buffer between their border and any Kurdish presence in north-eastern Syria as leverage to reduce, if not remove, the Turkish presence in the country.

Russia

Russia is consistently more pragmatic than their impetuous client state, which, in Ar-Raqqa, manifests as a marked indifference toward the prospect of the practical considerations of controlling Ar-Raqqa after U.S. withdrawal. While U.S. withdrawal itself is seen by Russia as a political and military ‘win’ which advances their own interests—both tangible and perceived—they have not taken a strong position on how it should be done in order to avoid being left with the poisoned chalice that Ar-Raqqa presents. Despite their reluctance to take a firm hand in Ar-Raqqa, their desire to see stability maintained in the north-east necessitates it.

Russia initiated the Shawaya army; funding and vetting the core components of the army to push ISIL from Palmyra up to Deir Ez-Zor. This model involved multiple tribal leaders who tied their economic and war economy relationships to Damascus and Iran. Simultaneously, Russia became increasingly convinced of the need to reform the SAA rather than creating and empowering militias that have the potential to change allegiances. As such, Russia has an interest in securing an orderly transition of PYD and tribal fighters under the umbrella of the SAA flag as they have done in other areas of Syria. This puts Russian interests in direct confrontation with Iran’s militia-based approach, which may result in infighting similar to that seen in neighbouring Deir Ez-Zor where tensions between the SAA and Iranian militias have been a core driver of instability.

Russia’s dependence on a working relationship with Turkey in order to maintain the Astana agreement and with it the situation in Idlib is a key consideration for them, and one which complicates the choices available to them in dealing with the PYD/SK’s. That said, Russia is hesitant to allow a Turkish military incursion into the north-east as it is likely to incite significant instability and disorder, which Russia hopes to avoid. A deal which allows for a stable and carefully-managed return to government of Syria control over a transitional period in agreement with the PYD/SK and Turkey, is likely to best advance Russia’s interest in allowing Damascus to benefit from U.S. withdrawal, without a return to violence and instability in a large area of the country. Economically, a transitional period, which unlikely, may allow for continued stabilization funding in Ar-Raqqa and a predominantly peaceful environment which would not interrupt trade routes and supplies of basic goods, and would serve Russia’s interests well.

Iran

For Iran, a Turkish military incursion into the country is undesirable, while a continuing PYD/SK presence is seen as more palatable. Iran stands to gain much from the U.S. withdrawal, although this is almost exclusively dependent on capitalizing on the inherent instability of the situation. The U.S. presence in north-eastern Syria and Tanf has given Iran a political and ideological focal point. Iran's heavy presence in neighbouring Iraq has made their consolidation in eastern Syria simple, which is why Deir Ez-Zor has a heavy Iranian presence, as does the eastern desert through to the Iraqi border. While U.S. withdrawal would remove this flashpoint, Iran is unencumbered with the strategic political calculations that Russia must make and can expand into a political and military vacuum which a withdrawal may present.

In both Iraq and Syria Iran maintains a preference for militias. The tribes south of Ar-Raqqa city are serving under the Iranian-backed army of the tribes and they have been encouraged to meet with the government of Syria and Iran in talks backed by Qatarji. For Iran, these militias will be critical in ensuring their position in Ar-Raqqa following U.S. withdrawal. To date Iran has supported the creation of shrines along the south of the Euphrates and will likely mobilize militias to control neighbourhoods of Ar-Raqqa to enable them to reconstruct Shia shrines destroyed by ISIL such as the Uwais al-Warni Mosque in Amr Ibn Yasser neighbourhoods, as well as to control returns and habitation of areas they would seek to redevelop as they have in east Aleppo. In Deir Ez-Zor, Iran has shown they are not opposed to pitting their militias directly against the SAA when it is expedient to do so. In this regard, Iran is both willing and able to pursue their own ideological and political ambitions in Ar-Raqqa and constraining them to maintain stability will take concerted efforts on all sides.

Turkey

Turkey has learned to be careful what they wish for with Trump's announcement of withdrawal from Syria's north-east. Increasing Turkish discomfort with the U.S. presence in Syria and their ongoing alliance with the PYD--who Turkey believes to be intrinsically linked to the PKK--had led Turkey to the verge of military action against the north-east. Turkish President Erdogan's military posturing and ongoing complaints prompted Trump to announce the U.S. withdrawal. While Turkey was keen to restrain and contain the PYD/SK's military and political ambitions, they were less keen to be left controlling the region themselves.

The Turks primary motivation is to neutralize the military threat presented by the PYD/SK and their governance structures. Their appetite for a military incursion is limited, given the likelihood it would prompt a complicated and unpredictable response from both the PYD/SK and Iranian-backed militias, not to mention the Syrian government and Russia should a deal not have been reached in advance of such action. Turkey will be keen to broke a deal with Russia and/or Damascus that

pushes the PYD/SK back from the border and dismantles or displaces their political leadership.

Turkey currently depends on Ar-Raqqa as a trading route, through which a large amount of Turkish goods are transported for sale in areas of Syria under government control. Turkey will be reluctant to interrupt this route. However, they also see an opportunity to strike a deal with Russia and the government to allow Turkish influence in the Council of Ministers and a trade to dominate the economic opportunities in Syria.

Civil Society and Population

Ar-Raqqa cities population has different ties to external actors which may be leveraged to build alliances, garner support, or maintain stability. Having undergone four changes in control already, it is hardly surprising that Ar-Raqqa's community has split allegiances with economic, political, and social ties. Many residents of Ar-Raqqa are not strongly or ideologically affiliated with any one external actor, or the current governance structure, they are simply maintaining good-relations with a defacto authority.

Kurds/PYD

Syria's Kurdish population have strong relations with the Kurdish diaspora in neighbouring countries and beyond. Diaspora funding proves a portion of the payroll for salaries within the Autonomous Administration areas. They also maintain ties with the Kurdish populations in Iraq and Turkey, and, presumably, Iran. As the U.S. primary military ally in the fight against ISIL in northern Syria their ties are strong, though the relationship is complicated by the Kurdish-Turkish relationship. Throughout the conflict, Syria's Kurds have maintained a middle-ground in relation to the Government of Syria. A power-sharing arrangement is present in parts of the north-east and areas like Aleppo's Sheikh Maqsoud neighbourhood or Afrin, areas that were not in active military conflict with the SAA for most of the conflict. In this regard, an eventual return to state control is less problematic for Syria's Kurds than other NSAG's from a security perspective, though their ambitions for greater autonomy politically complicate this.

Middle Class

Ar-Raqqa's Arab middle class is primarily attached to Turkey, maintaining economic dependence on the country and the goods it exports into Syria. Many of their families are living as refugees in Turkey, some of whom send remittances. Maintaining an economic link between this population and Turkey will continue to aid Ar-Raqqa's economic recovery and ties a portion of the refugee returns from Turkey to the fate of the city. This link to Turkey provides some assurances against a Turkish military incursion as far south as Ar-Raqqa.

Tribes

Ar-Raqqa's tribes are currently split between those that support the SDF and those that are aligned to Iran. Meetings have already taken place on both sides, with external actors aware of the need to garner the support of the tribes in any future arrangements. Allowing economic agency through agriculture and livestock programming and maintenance of trading routes and exports in the area is likely to be a major selling point for the tribes, along with an increased sense of involvement in the affairs of the city.

Civil Society (CS) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Under the RCC governance structure, local engagement is possible through the 106 NGOs working in the area, or through the local commune system. In this regard, Ar-Raqqa's NGO and CS community present an opportunity, while facing risks themselves. The widespread nature of involvement in relief and local governance provides a large amount of capacity for future work. It also offers the possibility of increased local accountability and potential involvement in local administration. The group of NGO and CS works with INGOs and donors, as well as local governance structures and will need to leverage these to ensure they are able to stay in the area with some kind of security guarantee or formal status in the event of a change in control.

15 Hard Truths in Syria, Brett Mc Gurk - Foreign Policy May/June 2019 Issue: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/syria/2019-04-16/hard-truths-syria>

5. Housing

Damage and Its Impact on the urban environment

Damage to buildings and infrastructure are perhaps the most observed feature following war. Ar-Raqqa is one of many cities throughout Syria which has been severely impacted (Map 5.1), with some reports noting damage levels as high as 80 percent.¹⁶ Remote sensing analytics, coupled with the spatial analysis of land-uses and building patterns can be utilized to assist researchers, planners and decision makers in understanding the needs of future urban and land readjustment, as well as programming.¹⁷ This includes the formation of durable solutions, economic impact studies, capacity assessments, needs identification, debris quantification, and urban planning.

Damage level by neighbourhood

The level of damage in Ar-Raqqa City following extensive air-strike campaigns by coalition forces is both vast and intense. In its wake, the city was left with the highest density of damage during the Syrian conflict.¹⁸ Urban-S Remote sensing exercises show that approximately 60 percent of housing structures in Ar-Raqqa have sustained

either moderate or severe levels of damage. The impact of damage on public facilities has also been severe.

The Old City neighbourhoods of Al Mansour, Al Ameen, Al Mahdi and Al Rasheed are most severely affected. This is due to some of the heaviest coalition air-strikes and fighting between SDF and ISIL forces between June and early September of 2017.¹⁹ Neighbourhoods to the north and north-east experienced similarly high levels of damage. Lower levels of damage were sustained by the neighbourhoods further west and east.

Damage to housing stock, by number and level of damage

Of the approximately 45,500 housing units in the city prior to the conflict, about 16,532 were damaged severely or destroyed (36 percent) and 10,954 sustained moderate damage (24 percent). In the lower damage level categories, 6,084 units were damaged only slightly (13 percent) while 11,942 received no discernible damage (26 percent). These two lower damage categories are considered habitable for returning families.

Figure 5.1: Extensive damage to residential stock in Ar-Raqqa City



Impact of looting and theft

Looting in Ar-Raqqa city has not been seen at the same high levels as other post conflict cities such as Deir Ez-Zor. There were however claims of looting by SDF forces immediately following the liberation of Ar-Raqqa city from ISIL forces.²⁰ Reports suggest that government buildings including the Agriculture Directorate as well as the Baath Party headquarters were demolished and looted of the construction steel, despite not being badly damaged during the conflict.

Reports also indicate that for a time gangs of looters operated in the city stealing wide range of goods (from pharmaceuticals to household goods and cars)²¹ as well as SDF-connected business people who could strip construction materials (especially steel) and sell it in informal markets on the periphery of the city. Markets for the stolen goods were set up around the city including one for construction metal in the north east of the city where a ton of steel was sold for 190,000 SYP (around \$425 USD).

The extensive mining of Ar-Raqqa city by ISIL prior to their expulsion left a situation where residents could not easily or quickly return to secure their homes (also at the orders of the newly in control SDF forces). This lack of human presence offered an opportunity for looters to operate. (See Map 1.1 : Population size and Density)

Impact on Community Housing Stock

The impact of the conflict and the damage caused by it on housing stock in the city is immense. The estimated total number of housing units in Ar-Raqqa before the conflict was 45,500.

The worst affected neighbourhoods in Ar-Raqqa are in the Old City and the other central neighbourhoods surrounding the city. (See Map 5.1)

Occupancy of existing housing units prior to the conflict was approximately 90 percent. The remaining 10 percent of units were split between those that were vacant and those still under construction. Based on current return population numbers, current occupancy is outstripping habitable housing stock (based on an average pre-conflict family size), pointing to a growing housing crisis as more people return to the city.

The city's capacity for return accommodation

The supply of sufficient housing is one of the greatest challenges facing Ar-Raqqa and the city's ability to accommodate the durable return of its displaced resident population. Through a neighbourhood-level study of the housing stock, the following observations regarding the city's accommodation capacity are drawn:

There's currently a deficit in housing stock of approximately 860 units. The accommodative capacity deficit is approximately 5,500 persons.^{22, 23}

The greatest risks involved with existing housing units that limit the ability to return are damage to buildings, unstable structures, and the lack of capacity to properly inspect structural integrity. The overwhelming presence of remaining contamination of explosive remnants of war (ERW) and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) is equally prohibitive for human habitation.

The overall housing capacity in Ar-Raqqa is already stretched beyond sustainable levels, showing the need for housing to be rehabilitated and replaced to allow for further sustainable returns. Based on analysis conducted for this profile, the neighbourhoods with the greatest capacity for return²⁴ are Al-Ameen, Al-Mansour, Al-Tasheeh and Al-Nahda. The neighbourhoods facing the most severe shortfall in housing capacity are Al-Ma'amoun, Hiteen, Tashreen and Al-Qadisiya.

Interviews with local authorities together with recent reports from UN OCHA suggest that initial return was mostly to outer-lying neighbourhoods that experienced lower levels of damage. Return to more central neighbourhoods (those most affected) is beginning to increase as returning residents are allowed access to rehabilitate damaged residential units.

Impact of ERW contamination on housing and return

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) pose the largest ongoing barrier to return in Ar-Raqqa. These include unexploded ordnances dropped during the numerous coalition air raids and artillery strikes, as well as the overwhelming number of mines and booby-traps or Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) planted and rigged during the conflict (chiefly by ISIL forces).

IEDs have been employed to deliberately target civilians caught up during the conflict. Reports indicate that many thousands have been planted in fields, streets and homes of the civilian population.²⁵ These have all had an ongoing and devastating effect on those returning to the city.

The clearance of ERW contaminating large parts of the city is an on-going and longer-term priority project that will also have a significant impact on levels of access for civilians. Early in the return to the city, official mine-clearance organisations have prioritised essential services and public facilities.

Housing recovery for returnees

Return by residents to the city is being facilitated by the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC), itself mandated by the SDF. Priorities indicated by RCC which will foster returns in the short-term focus around access. The removal of rubble from destroyed buildings which are blocking streets, to designated areas outside of the city, will increasingly allow for greater movement and access in the city.

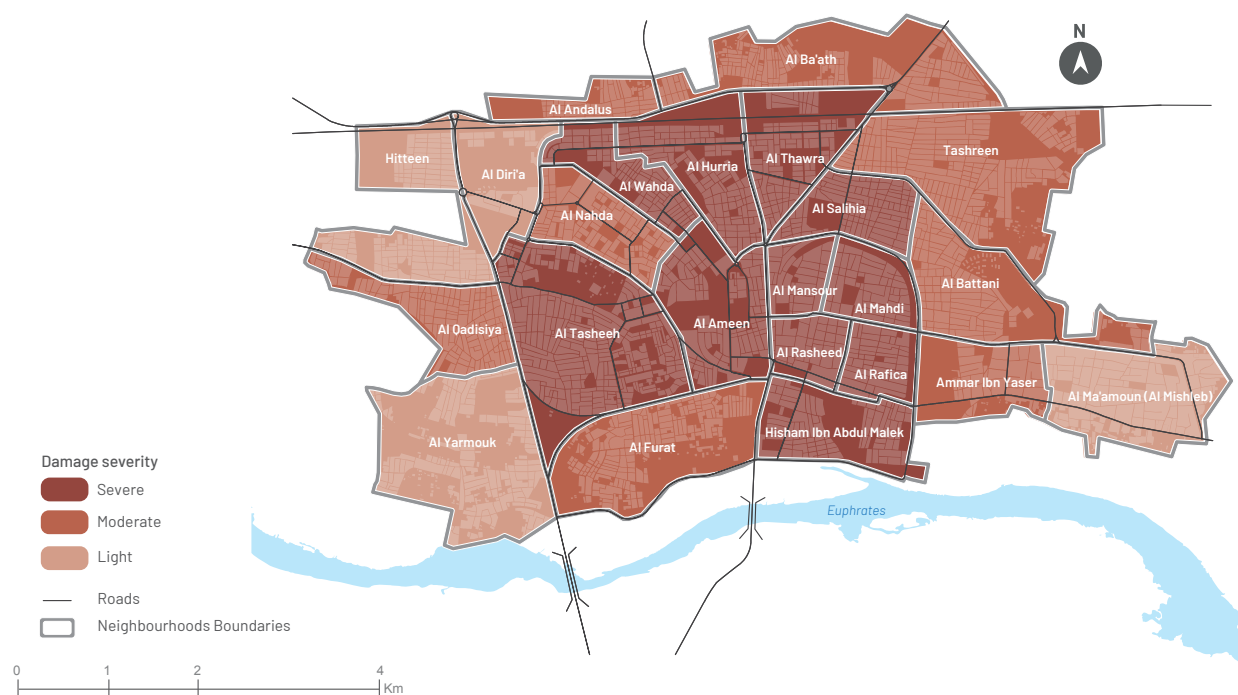
Local authorities do not impose restrictions on people returning to their homes. Rehabilitation to housing is proceeding, often with assistance from NGOs operating in the city, as safe access is made possible. Where housing needs greater levels of resources to rebuild and rehabilitate, interim emergency shelter kits are distributed to make them safe for temporary habitation, especially to deal with the cold winter months.²⁶ NGOs are also working in cooperation with the RCC in the rehabilitation of bulk service connections to housing including water, sanitation and electricity.

Resources for Housing rehabilitation

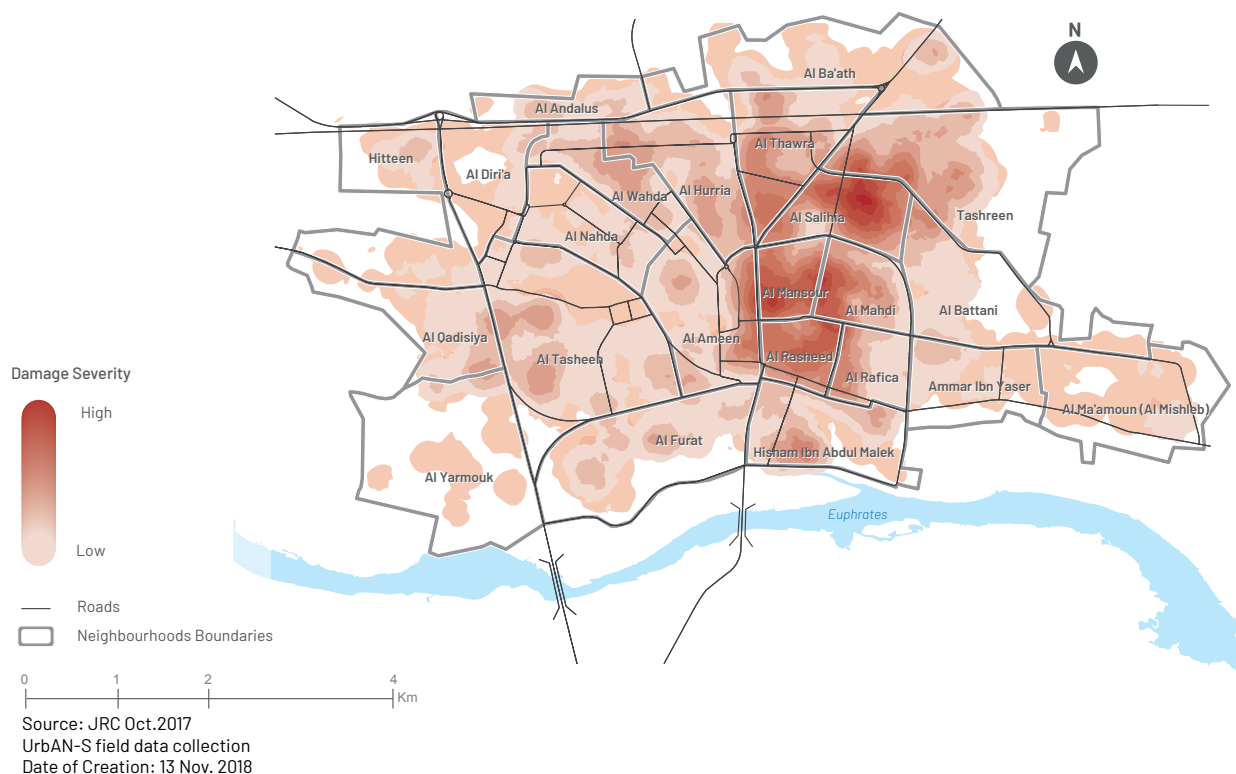
Resources, both materials and human resources, for rehabilitating housing are available in Ar-Raqqa city. Local authorities confirm the presence of local skilled workers who are undertaking building operations. Building materials are arriving from a variety of sources, including GoS held areas and directly from Turkey. Steel is seen to be the most important material required at present. New steel brought in from elsewhere is very expensive and in limited supply.²⁷ Consequently steel is reused from demolished buildings where possible and private workshops have been set up to recycle steel to be used in new building works. Conflicting reports have been given as to the cost of building materials relative to those available elsewhere. The RCC claims that materials are slightly cheaper than elsewhere based on the depressed purchasing power of Ar-Raqqa residents, while other key informants interviews suggest that prices are higher due to import and transport costs.

The costs associated with the above-mentioned material resources and hiring of professional builders represents a primary barrier to housing recovery.²⁸

Map 5.1: Severity of damage, by neighbourhood



Source: JRC Oct.2017
UrbAN-S field data collection
Date of Creation: 13 Nov. 2018

Map 5.2: Damage heat map, by level of severity

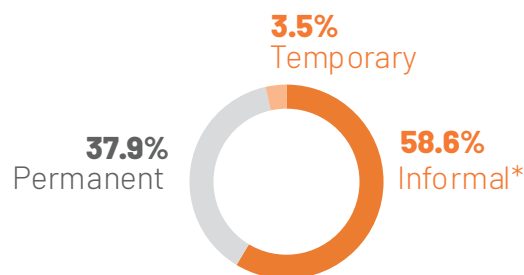
HLP Overview in Ar-Raqqa

HLP rights in Ar-Raqqa are not the central issue faced in other (mostly GoS controlled) cities throughout Syria. Most official documentation was digitised and is still available in digital form or available for retrieval in Damascus, including permanent land records and provisional municipal (temporary) records. These two record types number approximately 25 000 (permanent records) and 17 000 (temporary records), within Ar-Raqqa. While the city remains out of the control of the government, land realignment initiatives and expropriative redevelopments do not currently pose a major risk.

Administrative services that pertain to the assistance of residents with their HLP concerns are not directly available in Ar-Raqqa. For most requirements such as courts, civil service and permanent records, residents must go to Hama where services are operating normally. Property disputes in the city (i.e. fraudulent documentation, secondary occupation) is generally resolved in the Hama court, although the Social Justice Committee and police in Ar-Raqqa are also consulted. All of this points to the RCC (and SDF by extension) accepting, if not directly enforcing, existing government of Syria endorsed HLP rights and evidence types.

Figure 5.2: HLP Cadastral Evidences

Source: UrbAN-S field data collection



*with permanent land record

Categories of HLP record evidence

A variety of official and semi-official forms of HLP record evidences exist in the city. These generally correspond to those in other Syrian cities. The following categories generalize evidences by legal hierarchy of secure tenure.

The permanent record

Managed by the Governorate's Department of Cadastral Affairs and connected technically to a Damascus-based general administrative body (GDCA). These records cover both agricultural lands and urban lands developed before 1979 (the year when the Temporary Record was created). The record registers land demarcations, features and physical assets, as well as the chain of history of transactions (including inheritances).

The temporary record

Managed by the city municipality. These records branch from the permanent record and carry its legal strengths. Since it was initially designed to register sub-divided urban parcels and building descriptions, the temporary record provides a higher level of security and precision of ownerships.

Informal settlement (with permanent land record)

Recognizing informal areas that were built over privately-owned land, these housing areas have permanent land records (thus land ownership evidence is solid) but lack building descriptions (i.e. permits) or any recognition of physical structures. Owners of these houses hold land-share deeds, but evidences do not connect them to a specific sub-division within the larger property.

Squatted lands (no land record)

Squatting is minimal in Ar-Raqqa. Squatters do not possess any form of tenure evidence, except for utility bills, and in some cases police reports or court orders.²⁹

HLP security and risk index

Four indicators classifying the level of risk and security of HLP at the neighbourhood level are described below.³⁰ These four components combined make up an HLP Security and Risk Index and provide a basis to guide protection programming, do-no-harm analysis and support to overarching policy dialogue. Based on the analysis, six neighbourhoods have been ranked very low in security, thirteen are ranked medium in security, and six are shown as secure. The index includes analysis of cadastral evidences, the impact of looting, housing damage and areas with a larger presence of informal settlement.

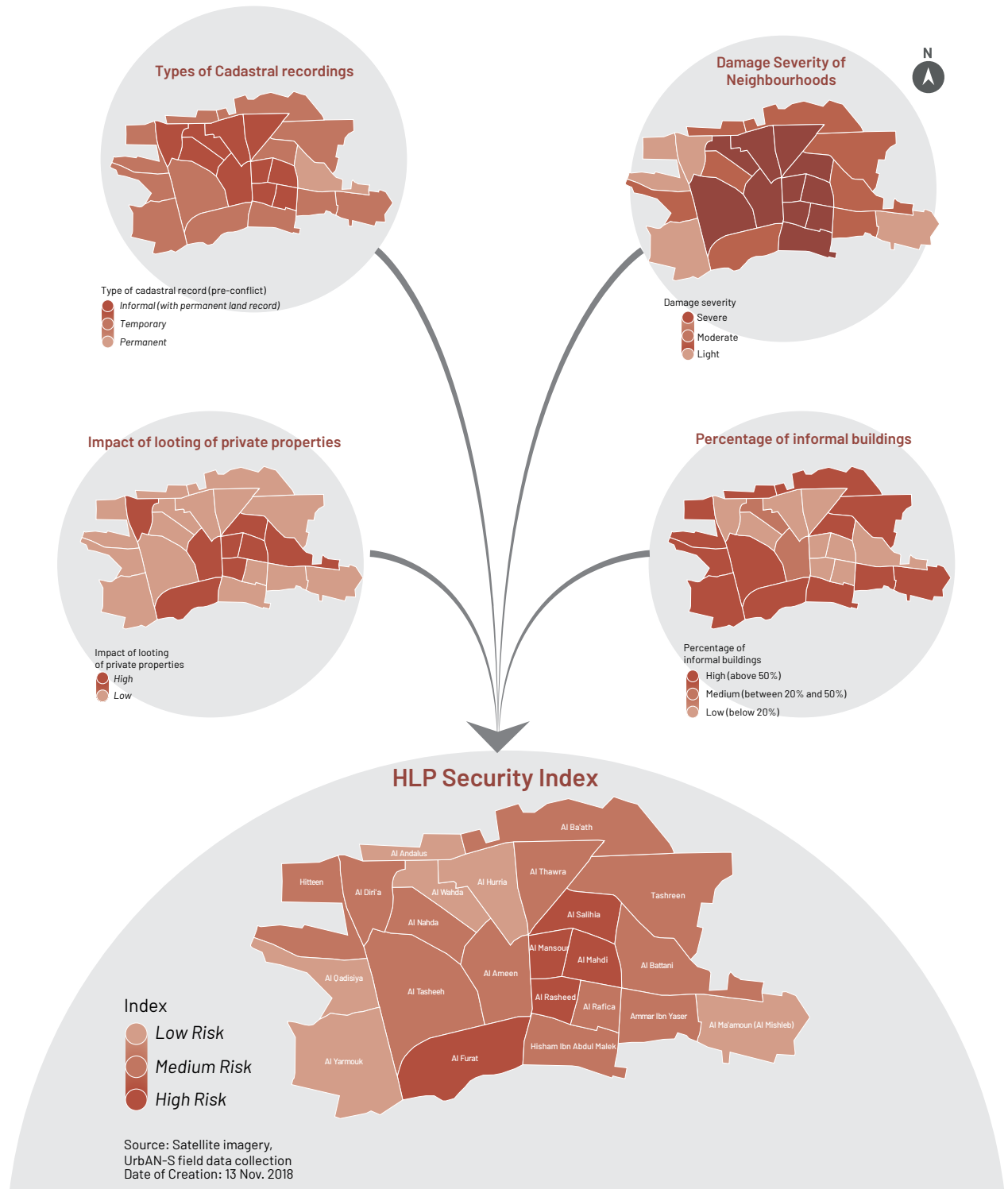
Cadastral evidences

The legal status of the majority of the residential or commercial stocks in the neighbourhood is manifested by the typology of the HLP evidences. Both temporary and permanent records are given a higher ranking when compared to other forms of informal evidences. Squatting on public land was ranked the least secure, but is not extensive.

The impact of looting on private properties

The looting of private property for both construction materials constituting the buildings themselves and the contents of buildings (furniture, appliances, etc.) limits the ability for people to return safely and sustainably.

Map 5.3: HLP security index



Sectoral considerations

- Maintain the policy of locally-led reconstruction priorities as it allows for the reconstruction of homes and services evenly across the city with the local priorities as the focus. Access to all areas of the city helps to preserve the rights of returnees to return to their properties.
- Try to ensure displaced persons from Ar-Raqqa are able to preserve or assert their property rights and are able to participate in reconstruction and stabilization discussions at a local level, even from afar.
- Address documentation issues, in particular, the fact that property records made under the RCC, ISIS and the armed-opposition before that are not recognized. Ensure that individuals have access to documents and that those documents can be recognized across all territories.

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- 16 Daryl Grisberger, Refugees International: 'Ar-Raqqa: Avoiding Another Humanitarian Crisis'
 - 17 Damage estimations have been provided as a part of this area-based planning exercise. See methodology summary for mapping exercise the used to estimate damage.
 - 18 Conclusion of study done by Towards Data Science, based on UNOSAT images captured in 2013 and 2017. <https://towardsdatascience.com/damage-caused-by-the-syrian-civil-war-what-the-data-say-ebad5796fca8>
 - 19 HAT context analysis report on Ar-Raqqa for UrbAN-S
 - 20 Northern Syria Observer, 'SDF leading a systematic looting campaign in Ar-Raqqa and the stolen items re-sold to the locals', 24 June 2018, fetched at <https://www.nso-sy.com/Details/1085/SDF-leading-a-systematic-looting-campaign-in-Ar-Raqqa-and-the-stolen-items-re-sold-to-the-locals/en>, on 24/12/2018
 - 21 Ayn Al-Madina, Half a Year After SDF took Ar-Raqqa, How Does the Scene Look Now?, The Syrian Observer, 25 April 2018 – Fetched at https://syrianobserver.com/EN/features/20608/half_year_after_sdf_took_Ar-Raqqa_how_does_scene_look_now.html on 17/12/2018
 - 22 Accommodative capacity deficit = The number of people living in the city beyond the present theoretical housing capacity, representing overcrowding
 - 23 Population calculations and numbers quoted here are based on UrbAN-S estimates from August 2018 of approximately 122 000. The population has since risen to approximately 160 000 according to UNOCHA
 - 24 UrbAN-S defines 'capacity for return' as the level to which a given neighbourhood can accommodate population, based on the theoretical volume habitable housing units. This is represented at average pre-conflict resident per housing unit or household size of 6.5.
 - 25 MSF report: Set To Explode, April 2017
 - 26 Reports distributed by the NES Forum
 - 27 Interviews with authorities within the RCC
 - 28 NES Forum Update, November 2018
 - 29 Squatters often resort to law enforcement or courts to make false claims against each other then drop their claims before any court proceedings. This provides the squatter with a police or court notification, which in turn can be used as a proof of occupancy or can be a subject to a bilateral transaction.
 - 30 It is important to note that many risks may impact units lower than the neighbourhood (e.g. uneven level of damage, or concentrated secondary occupation of properties, etc.). The neighbourhood level of generalization was used nevertheless as this is in line with the other sectoral assessments included in this City Profile. These indicators are considered initial, as a comprehensive analysis of HLP needs a level of data penetration that was still in the piloting stage when this Profile was prepared.

6. Health

Overview

Devastation to Ar-Raqqa from the fight against ISIL has been enormous. Estimates of suffering has put the death toll at more than 1,500 lives³¹. The suffering endures even as active fighting has ceased. Both inhabitant and returnees now deal with the consequence of widespread contamination from Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). According to doctors on-site, the healthcare infrastructure in Ar-Raqqa has “collapsed” and the mortality rate is currently five times higher than prior to the conflict. By the second quarter of 2018, 200 patients were being treated monthly due to injuries sustained from land mines and ERWs.³²

With the severe shortage of medical facilities, personnel, medicines, and equipment, almost quarter of Ar-Raqqa’s current inhabitants remain vulnerable to health concerns.³³ (see Map 7.1)

Prior to the conflict, Ar-Raqqa was served by 26 health facilities including two regional hospitals with a combined total capacity of 250 beds. 12 public health centres and nine private hospitals or specialty clinics were distributed throughout the city’s 23 neighbourhoods. Private health facilities were concentrated in the eastern portion of the city. By the summer of 2018, only one regional hospital and approximately half of the pre-conflict clinics were available to support health needs in the city.³⁴ A variety of international organizations have begun providing health care services and assessments.³⁵

Current health needs in the community

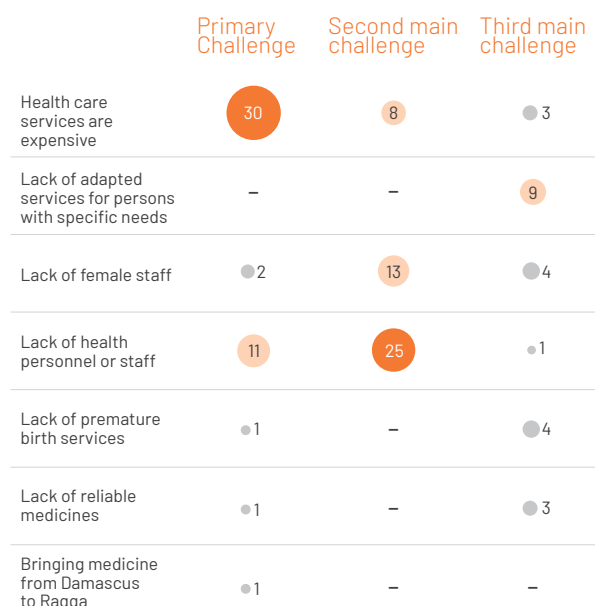
The dangers posed from ERW contamination as returnees and inhabitants seek to restore their homes, businesses and lives is one of the most critical risks on the healthcare system. In addition, consumption unsafe water due to lack of public water treatment is a cause for concern and has resulted in high numbers of cases of acute diarrhoea.

A shortage of doctors, nurses, medicines, and medical equipment compound these concerns.

Outbreak of communicable disease has been reported by health providers, researchers and epidemiologists in both Ar-Raqqa city and the governorate. In October, 74 new cases of acute bloody diarrhoea were reported.³⁶ Due to consumption of unsafe and polluted water, diarrhoea has been the most commonly reported ailment infirmity in Ar-Raqqa City. 200 cases reported in September 2018 alone.³⁷ However, the number of total monthly cases are seen to be in decline. In addition, 36 cases of measles amongst school-aged children were reported as well as 162 cases of leishmaniasis.³⁸ Other common problems in the city include respiratory infections, gynaecological disorders, hepatitis, and typhoid.^{39, 40} Reporting also indicates malnutrition, addiction, skin diseases, and intestinal infections are widely spread afflictions.⁴¹

Figure 6.1: Healthcare challenges faced by people in Ar-Raqqa City (October 2018)

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



By far the greatest concern of community members has been the high cost of healthcare. Access to low-cost or free services provided by government or international organizations are limited. As a result, many have had to rely on private health facilities, including the Al-Teb Al-Hadeeth “Modern Medicine” hospital, which was reopened at the end of July 2018 after being closed for six months.⁴² By the summer of 2018, all hospital bed capacity in the city was available solely by private providers.

The high cost of procedures and medicines relative to household incomes in Ar-Raqqa is a major source of frustration by community members. Both major and minor medical procedures offered in the city’s five private hospitals are prohibitively expensive. Due to high costs, community members report going untreated or resorting to self-medicating to alleviate pain.⁴³

Several environmental and service-related factors have been identified as primary contributors to community health risks. The sheer limitation of the health care system to handle the number of patients needing treatment is of equal concern.

The availability, proper handling, and dispensing of medicines has been identified as a public health concern. Needed and high-quality medicines are in limited supply. In the absence of available and affordable health care, those suffering from ailments have resorted to painkillers or illicit drugs.

Current health interventions

In the wake of the months of ground fighting and aerial bombardments five of Ar-Raqqa's 26 facilities were severely damaged and 18 suffered moderate damage. Most of the city's structures and infrastructure suffered, leaving only a few neighbourhood medical facilities untouched. Only three facilities remained without disruption. Current capacity is ill-equipped to meet all the community's needs. Neither facilities nor staffing are equipped in the event of a surge in cases due to a severe emergency or natural disaster.

In December 2018 several healthcare interventions were underway. Under Kurdish Administration, many international donors and implementing partners have been able to operate in the city. Current interventions include restoration and rehabilitation of healthcare facilities, deployment of mobile care units and disease treatment campaigns. Along with private medical providers, reconstruction and services at public facilities are being facilitated by the Kurdish Red Crescent with the support and assistance of the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) and international health partners and donors.

Table 6.1: Healthcare interventions in Ar-Raqqa City. ^{44 45}

Rehabilitation works – Hospitals (Public and Private)	Rehabilitation of the Raqqa National Hospital in West Central Raqqa. This includes activation of the maternity ward and establishment of an outpatient clinic offering paediatric and internal medicine.
	Rehabilitation of RaqqahNational Hospital's emergency and general surgery wards.
	Rehabilitation (planned) of the general surgery ward.
	Ongoing rehabilitation of the hospital of modern medicine and the hospital of the Euphrates. (private)
	Rehabilitation of Mashhadani hospital. (private)
	Rehabilitation of the obstetrics hospital.
Rehabilitation works – Clinics	Rehabilitation of the Saif Addawla Clinic and vaccine centre.
	Kurdish Red Crescent Centre at Al-Jazra junction (internal medicine, women and children services, blood bank).
Mobile services	Three mobile units in North, North East and South West Raqqa.
	One mobile unit followed by an ambulance in rural areas North and North West Raqqa.
	One mobile unit soon to be activated to cover other urban areas.
	Mobile teams were deployed into the countryside to provide mobile clinics in order to treat cases of measles as well as campaigns against leishmaniasis.
Campaigns	In October 2018, the RCC's health committee of the RCC Civil Council began polio vaccination campaign in Saif Addawla Health Centre.

INGO representatives report that there is currently a high level of coordination amongst international actors. These providers offer a limited amount of free public services. This includes a health working group and, a reproductive health working group which manages a system of referrals and daily communication amongst local health-care providers.⁴⁶

The RCC's health committee requires registration of all INGO's and local charities. The committee plays a monitoring role and supports the work of these groups notably its primary partner, the Kurdish Red Crescent. They are tasked to organize health campaigns, open

clinics and dispensaries, as well as provide other free health services.⁴⁷

In August 2018, the committee issued a decree setting the rate which health providers were authorized to charge for medical services and medicines. "For-profit" private providers have taken advantage of the dire needs in the region, establishing prices unaffordable to many of the community's inhabitants. Even despite the imposition of price controls, residents still feel prices are too high. The decree, according to residents, had little effect on affordability.⁴⁸

Health infrastructure

The extensive damage to healthcare facilities is one of the most atrocious characteristics from the conflict. This also includes much of the health infrastructure providing staffing, medicines and specialty services needed. The fight to take Ar-Raqqa from ISIL destroyed and damaged buildings and facilities in almost every portion of the city.

During the final stages of fighting, Ar-Raqqa National Hospital became one of the last ISIL occupied holdouts. A negotiated retreat in October 2017, allowed a convoy of fighters and their family passage out of the city.⁴⁹ As the largest and primary regional public health facility, the facility was thoroughly damaged and rendered un-operational during the conflict. During the summer of 2018, the facility was still being cleared of unexploded ordinances and landmines and rehabilitation works had begun.

Despite the support of international donors, the hospital offers only a modicum of services. Health actors estimate that less than five percent of the facility has been restored.⁵⁰ Additional repairs are being made and a second treatment wing is currently undergoing rehabilitation. This will increase the healthcare capacity and allow a decreased reliance on private providers.⁵¹

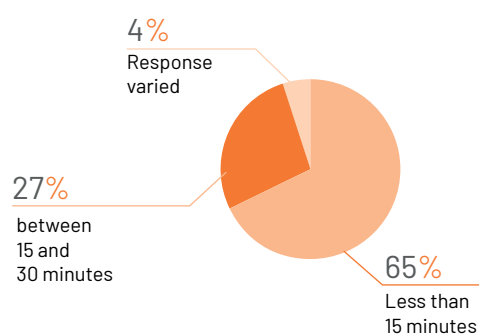
Figure 6.2: Damage to health care facilities

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

	Severe	Moderate	None
Private	1	15	1
Public	4	3	2
Overall	5	18	3

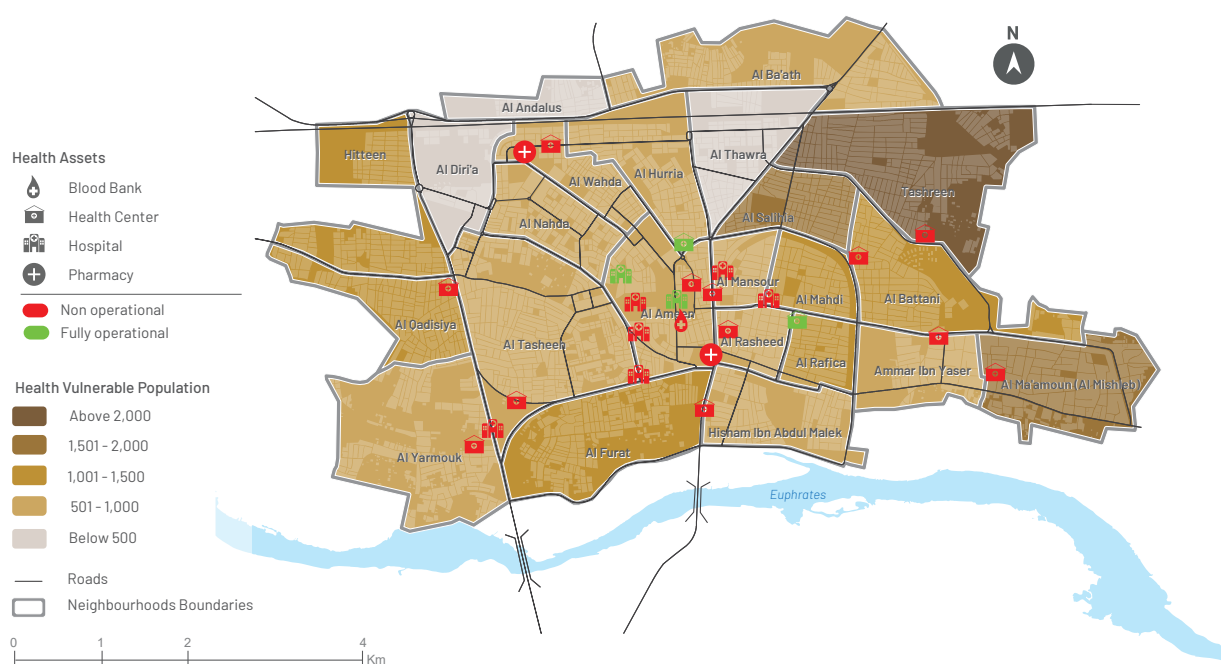
Figure 6.3: Average time needed for patient to travel to operational health facility (minutes)

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Based on interviews with 46 neighbourhood representative (2 per neighbourhood)

Map 6.1: Distribution of health-vulnerable population groups and the state of health infrastructure

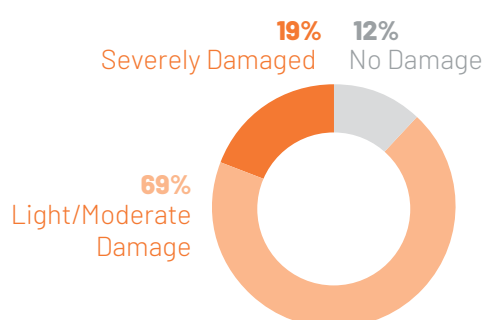


Source: UrbAN-S field data collection
Date of Creation: 13 Nov. 2018

Three facilities are fully operational in the Al Rafica, Al Ameen, and Al Hurria neighbourhoods, two of which are private providers. These neighbourhoods, however, experienced heavy fighting and a decrease in population numbers. Neighbourhoods along the city's periphery where return primarily occurred lack necessary facilities, making their residents more vulnerable and less able to access medical services. The highest numbers of health vulnerable population can be found in the Tashreen, Al Ma'amoun (Al Mishleb), Al Salihia, and Al Mahdi neighbourhoods.

Figure 6.4: Damage to health care facilities (city-wide)

Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Caption: Almost 90 percent of health facilities in the city suffered damage. This represents almost a complete breakdown of the health infrastructure.

Restorative works to healthcare infrastructure

The city's nine private hospitals and clinics, including the 50-bed Al-Teb Al-Hadeeth Modern Medicine hospital, suffered extensive damage. Restoration of these privately owned facilities have come at the expense of their owners.⁵²






No major Government of Syria or RCC health investment initiatives are underway. Rehabilitation work has either been in private sector facilities or through humanitarian assistance. A number of international organizations and donors have supported some restorative works in the public facilities. The Government of Syria's involvement in the city is minimal. According to local sources, GoS employees from the ministry of health for Ar-Raqqa Health Directorate were reassigned to Hama.⁵³

Operational Capacity

The capacity of the healthcare system is lacking. Health experts in the city have expressed challenges with limited resources, inadequate supplies and equipment, unavailability of skilled doctors and specialists. Accessing high quality medicines is also difficult.

Figure 6.5: Access to medical supplies, staff and organizational mechanisms

Source: Key informant interview, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

	Available	Limited Availability	Unavailable
 Medical supplies and equipment (eg ambulances, standby generators, trauma equipment, beds, etc.)		●	
 Medicines		●	
 Vaccinations for children		●	
 Ability to organize campaigns with full equipment, staff and refrigeration capacity in place.			●
 Employees (doctors and nurses...)		●	

Hospital beds

Figure 6.6: City-wide hospital bed capacity per 1,000 population

Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Figure 6.7: Operational bed capacity

Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

	Pre-conflict (2010)	Current (2018)
Public	330	83
Private	224	0
Overall	554	83

The city's total hospital bed capacity has sharply decreased. Only 15 percent of the pre-conflict capacity remains. With only 0.7 beds per 1,000 of Ar-Raqqa's population, the city finds itself with less than half of the country's national average⁵⁴. Immediately following cessation of active fighting there was no remaining bed capacity in Ar-Raqqa's public health facilities. However, health experts state that since October 2018, rehabilitation works have allowed the maternity hospital to operating 42 beds. Due to international support, 15 beds are now operating at Ar-Raqqa National Hospital with additional capacity forthcoming.⁵⁵

Medical personnel

Prior to the conflict, the city was served by 388 doctors and over 1,400 registered nurses. One hundred and sixty doctors were employed under the national Ministry of Health.⁵⁶

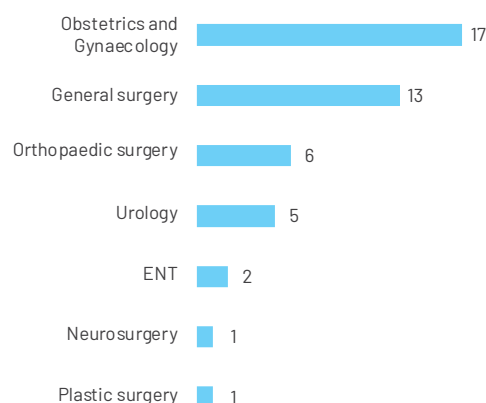
Due the conflict, many of Ar-Raqqa's doctors and nurses have emigrated to Turkey, European countries or elsewhere in Syria under the Government of Syria presence.⁵⁷

The City, however, continues to be served. Local sources put the current total number of doctors at around 230 including midwives.⁵⁸ NGO reports indicate doctors have begun working in public facilities as they come back online. This includes eight doctors at the national hospital, four at the maternity hospital, five in neighbourhood clinics, and four in mobile clinics. Many doctors also work in private clinics spending only a few hours per day in public health facilities.⁵⁹

In September 2018, the World Health Organization's assessment of the healthcare situation in the city identified 45 of specialists currently working in the city. Their mission identified a host of staffing needs including additional surgeons and staff able to treat injuries (See Figure 7.8 below) related to land mine injuries. Nursing and other specialist and support staff are deficient.⁶⁰

As of mid-2017, records maintained by the GoS' Health Directorate responsible for Ar-Raqqa reported that there were 262 medical personnel.⁶¹ This included 209 staff in Ar-Raqqa national hospital, 53 staff in the city's maternity hospital. However, by July of 2018, the Ministry of Health reported no medical staffing in either public facility as each were designated as being out of service.⁶²

Figure 6.8: Availability of specialist doctors in Ar-Raqqa city⁶³

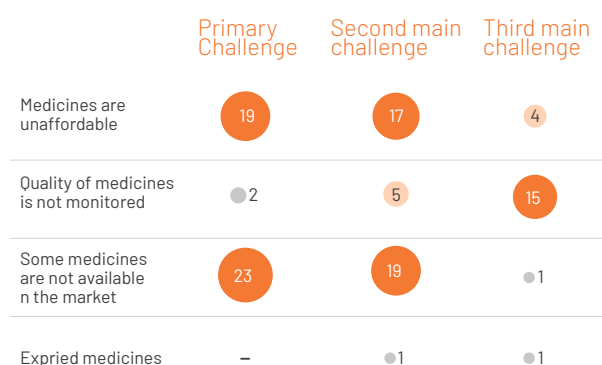


Source:
World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment mission to
Ar-Raqqa governorate (September 2018)

Medical supplies, equipment and materials

Figure 6.9: Main challenges faced in accessing medication in the past month (October 2018)

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Although pharmacies are operating in 10 neighbourhoods, the supply of medicines is very limited. Medicines are delivered to pharmacies from “Damascus”. Shortages in diabetes medications, treatments for Asthma, IV fluids, antibiotics, and ORS⁶⁴ are widely reported. Delivering regular immunization services to the city is still a challenge.

Efforts to scale up the health response in Ar-Raqqa city have been challenged by irregularities in accessing supplies. The breakdown of supply distribution from the national government has been the leading factor in inaccessibility. The collapse of the domestic pharmaceutical industry and costly supply chains have made shortages of medicines and medical material a common occurrence. Sanctions have worsened the situation.

Cross-border imports of medicines and supplies at the Turkish border at Qamishli have been stifled due to needed approvals from the Government of Syria. Transportation costs add to the dilemma of high prices for medicines. Lack of coordination amongst NGOs and local authorities was also cited as an obstacle for access to medicines and equipment. In addition, security concerns and challenges in scaling up demining activities in the city continue to impede an effective health response.

Local authorities operate four ambulances. An additional four are being operated by international organizations and the Kurdish Red Crescent. Pre-crisis, the public hospital maintained a fleet of 19 ambulances.⁶⁵ Reports also cite medical teams transporting patients in non-equipped “ordinary” vans and vehicles.

Five mobile clinics are now operating by the RCC’s Health Committee in order to reach surrounding villages.⁶⁶ They offer first aid, vaccinations and treatment of the high cases of acute diarrhoea, and leishmania⁶⁷.

Sectoral considerations

- Invest in health facilities, supplies, and programs to improve the quality and accessibility of health care in the city, as per the World Health Organization’s assessment (September 2018). Indeed, Ar-Raqqa suffers from a severe lack of medical supplies, equipment and distribution of essential medicines such as anaesthetics. There’s also a lack of specialized and qualified medical staff.
- Address primary health issues currently felt in the community, notably a. access to clean water, b. injuries from ERW contamination, and c. unaffordable health care. The WHO’s recommendations include subsidizing the costs of treating civilians in Ar-Raqqa’s private health facilities. This could make affordable treatment more accessible and affordable.
- Consider eastern neighbourhoods, as well as along the city’s periphery where much of the return has occurred, and where there is a concentration of health vulnerable population.

- 31 <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/uk-syria-Ar-Raqqa-ISIL-civilian-casualties-raf-air-strikes-deaths-a8584876.html>
- 32 Medicine Sans Frontiers. April, 2018 <https://www.msf.org/syria-Ar-Raqqa-hidden-deadly-threat>
- 33 Based on analysis of the city's Health Vulnerable Population (HVP), 22.5 percent of inhabitants are considered "vulnerable".
- 34 World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment mission to Ar-Raqqa governorate (September 2018)
- 35 North East Syria NGO Forum – Ar-Raqqa city response overview (December 7, 2018)
- 36 Syria Relief. Medical Needs Assessment. September 2018
- 37 Syria Relief. Medical Needs Assessment. September 2018
- 38 OCHA. Syria Crisis: Northeast Syria. Situation Report No. 29 (1 October 2018 – 31 October 2018)
- 39 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 40 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 41 Syria Relief. Medical Needs Assessment. September 2018
- 42 World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment mission to Ar-Raqqa governorate (September 2018)
- 43 <https://syriadirect.org/news/Ar-Raqqa-residents-unable-to-afford-healthcare-as-private-hospitals-operate-with-percentE2percent80percent98no-oversight-percentE2percent80percent99/>
- 44 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 45 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 46 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 47 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 48 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 49 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idx-sh/Ar-Raqqa_dirty_secret
- 50 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 51 Interview with Chief of Party of consortium of recovery actors operating in Ar-Raqqa City (December 2018)
- 52 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 53 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 54 The World Bank reports that in 2012, Syria averaged 1.5 beds per 1,000 on a national scale. (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.MED.BEDS.ZS?end=2012&locations=SY&start=2007&view=chart>)
- 55 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 56 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 57 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 58 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 59 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 60 World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment mission to Ar-Raqqa governorate (September 2018)
- 61 This includes 209 staff in Ar Ar-Raqqa national hospital, 53 staff in the city's maternity hospital
- 62 According to the Directorate of Health of Ar Ar-Raqqa – UrbAN-S interview (July 2018)
- 63 World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment mission to Ar-Raqqa governorate (September 2018)
- 64 ORS = Oral rehydration solution
- 65 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 66 Provided via correspondence with Un ponte per (UPP), a non-governmental organization currently working with the Kurdish Red Crescent providing health care services in Ar-Raqqa. (December 2018)
- 67 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)

7. Education

Overview

The education system in Ar-Raqqa, like other public services, has been devastated by fighting and damage. Schools were effectively closed by the Government of Syria in 2013 when fighting erupted in the city.⁶⁸ During ISIL occupation, schools were required to teach a strict form of religious doctrine, disregarding any secular components of the national curriculum. Subjects like art, music, social studies, physics and chemistry were banned altogether.⁶⁹

In the early period of ISIL occupation, local home-education initiatives were developed in the absence of formal education. They did not, however, have the financial support of the Government of Syria's education department and were not able to sustain themselves.

Over the past five years, education in Ar-Raqqa was heavily disrupted. Estimates place the number of school-aged children deprived of formal schooling from 50,000 to 80,000.⁷⁰ In fact, lack of education has been cited as one of the major reasons for displacement. Almost all educational facilities were damaged during the ISIL control and inhabitants had very little access to education. Many families fled to neighbouring Hama so their students could continue their education.⁷¹

Damage was extensive. Analysis indicates that 93 percent of the community's 89 schools have been affected. Five

were completely destroyed. As many schools were used by ISIL, they succumbed to extensive damage during the battle to retake the city. Many are still considered unsafe due to the presence of ERW contamination.

However, Raqqa Civil Council's education committee asserts that more than 40 schools are open in the city and 45,000 students are currently enrolled.⁷² These numbers suggest that schools and classrooms are likely overcrowded.

Despite reported repairs to more than 30 facilities, commensurate investment has not been made to provide the necessary staffing and supplies. There are 2,700 teachers on salary with the RCC.⁷³ Reports indicate that many had not completed sufficient trainings and lacked experience.

Some families returned to Ar-Raqqa at the beginning of the 2018 academic year to enrol their students. But, dissatisfied with the city's offerings, many left again.⁷⁴

In addition, an important amount of the rehabilitated schools are not located in areas where population is concentrated. There is also a mismatch with the numbers of teachers present. Some areas are over-served, while other neighbourhoods with a significant number of students lack both facilities and sufficient teachers to support them.

ISIL's failed education-as-propaganda initiative

During ISIL's rule of Ar-Raqqa, they initiated a religious educational system especially targeting enrolment of children between the ages of 10 to 15. In 2015, two schools were created for that purpose of enrolling dozens of children (primarily from foreign fighters' families).

The initiative was later abandoned by ISIL, and the two schools were permanently closed.

According to local sources, there are two potential reasons why the initiative was put to an end. One would be that the curriculum was not accepted by the Syrians living in Ar-Raqqa, and the other that as the initiative was a propaganda manoeuvre, more than an attempt to install an actual system. After abandoning the schools, ISIL opted instead to use the buildings as collective shelters to host newly arriving Iraqi families.

Current education needs in the community

A variety of barriers exist, affecting attendance of Ar-Raqqa's students. Physical barriers such as damaged roads and buildings make transportation difficult. Due to this fact, over the past five years, many families have resorted to taking their students out of school.

A survey of community members asked which solutions are needed for students to return to schools. Respondents identified the top three priorities as 1.) Improving the learning environment, 2.) Rehabilitation and enhancement of schools, and 3.) providing additional resources and support to students and their families.⁷⁵

No secondary or college / university education is currently available in Ar-Raqqa City. Primary schools are mostly reliant on humanitarian organizations and local initiatives in the governorate.⁷⁶

One study of the education system in Ar-Raqqa identified the top three challenges as being: 1.) damage to infrastructure, 2.) lack of staff, and 3.) lack of access to education materials and supplies.

School buildings and grounds themselves are in severe need of repairs and rehabilitation works. Contamination from ERW creates unsafe schools and routes to neighbourhood facilities. Some buildings lack proper heating, lighting and water systems. According to local authorities, the dilapidated state of many of Ar-Raqqa's school buildings are causing students to miss class due to the cold.⁷⁷

Staffing is limited. Adequate staff including teachers, trainers and support positions are needed to support the reopening of schools.⁷⁸



Figure 7.1: RCC Handing out school supplies (August 2018)

The debate over curriculum in Ar-Raqqa's schools

As many schools have resumed in Ar-Raqqa and throughout the Governorate, the subjects being taught have come under question.

As schools in the area formerly were governed by the national Ministry of Education, the new Kurdish dominated Raqqa Civil Council initially sought out to change its school curriculum. Initially, the RCC required schools to teach Kurdish curriculum instead of Government of Syria curriculum, even going so far to effectively close down a school (Nama) due to its reluctance to adopt the Kurdish curriculum.

However, many teachers and students come from Arab families. The question of which language and which Syrian identity would be taught is at the core of the issues being debated. According to reports, the prior education system forbade student from speaking their native Kurdish language. The prior system taught and championed Baathist ideologies of pan-Arab identity; disregarding the Syria's cultural mosaic of other ethnicities and minorities.

This policy, however, was subsequently altered. The RCC has lately refrained from strictly enforcing the Kurdish curriculum due to the community's rejection. Schools are only symbolically adhering to the Kurdish curriculum and parents have become more accepting of sending their children to the RCC (and SDF) managed schools.

In the end, a compromise was reached in determining what would be taught. According to reports, the new curriculum will retain old Ministry of Education textbooks as its core material but removes the components promoting the Baathist ideologies of the Assad regime.⁷⁹

Current education interventions

The work of the international agencies, organizations, and local authorities is helping to bring students (and, subsequently families) back to the city. Although, more needs to be done. According to the RCC's education committee, some 78 percent of schools in the governorate have resumed classes for the 2018 -2019 academic year.⁸⁰ 50 schools, however, remain non-operational.

In Ar-Raqqa City, only primary-level educational services are available. Schools are usually run by humanitarian organizations or local initiatives.⁸¹ According to UN reports, eight humanitarian partners are working in the education sector. This includes UNICEF, three international NGOs and four local NGOs⁸².

UNICEF's program distributed textbooks to over 120,000 children throughout the governorate⁸³, and has promoted students to follow a self-learning program while school buildings are being rehabilitated.⁸⁴ The UNICEF curriculum also seeks to help students catch up from years of dropout. The program combines two years curriculum in one.⁸⁵

Restorative works to education infrastructure

The Raqqa Civil Council, with support of several humanitarian organizations, have begun working over the past few months to restore the city's education facilities.

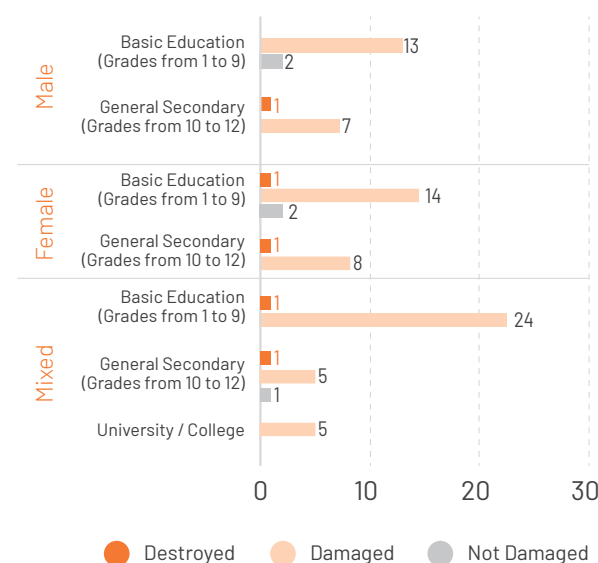
Local sources indicate that 32 of Ar-Raqqa City schools are functioning. This includes five restored to their former condition, and 23 were only partially rehabilitated.

According to reports, functioning schools are in "safer" neighbourhoods, meaning areas that saw less severe damage, such as in the south-east portion of the city.

Education infrastructure

Figure 7.2: Damage to education institutions

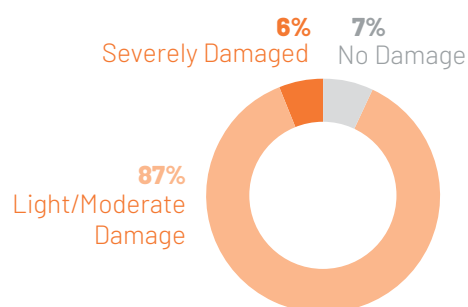
Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Caption: A detailed survey of 89 schools shows only five which remained unaffected. 76 schools are moderately damaged and five schools totally damaged

Figure 7.3: Severity of damage to all education institutions

Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

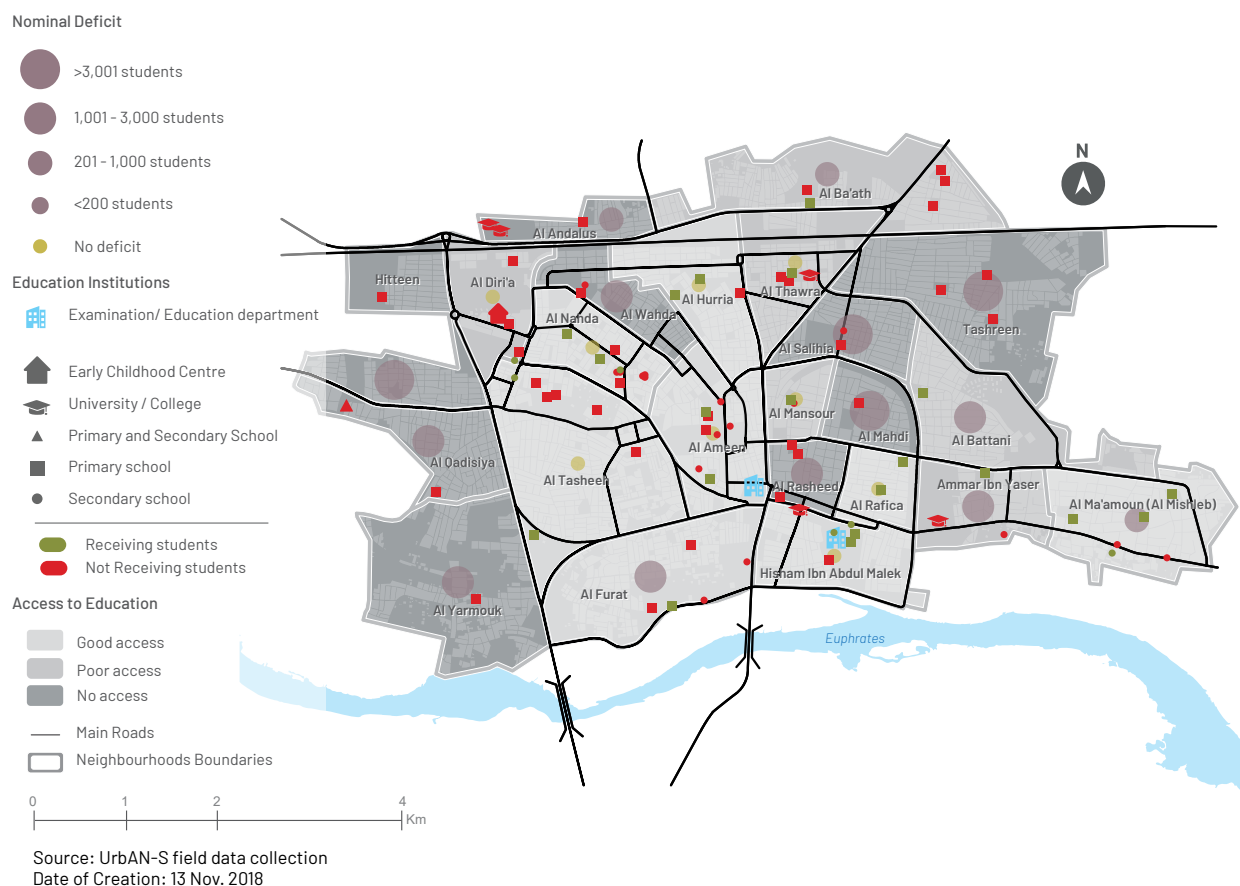


Damage to school buildings and their infrastructure was extensive in Ar-Raqqa City. Reporting from numerous sources detail how ISIL occupied schools and converted them into military bases. These made far well-defined targets for coalition strikes with limited (in theory) civilian casualties.⁸⁶ In the ensuing battle to reclaim Ar-Raqqa, school facilities were amongst the hardest hit. 76 facilities have been partially damaged. Five schools are reported to have been severely or totally damaged.

Functionality of education services

Accessibility, reliability and quality of operational education facilities

Map 7.1: Operationality of education institutions and capacity deficit by neighbourhood*.



This map provides the relative distribution of student seat deficit based on a nominal calculation of school-aged children. Quality of education access has been analysed by three levels. If no schools are operational in the neighbourhood, then it is characterized as having "no access". If one school is operational, then the neighbourhood is considered "poor access". If two or more schools are operational, then the neighbourhood can be considered as having "good access" to educational services.

***Operational status has been determined based on whether schools are reporting receiving or not receiving students for the 2018 academic year.**

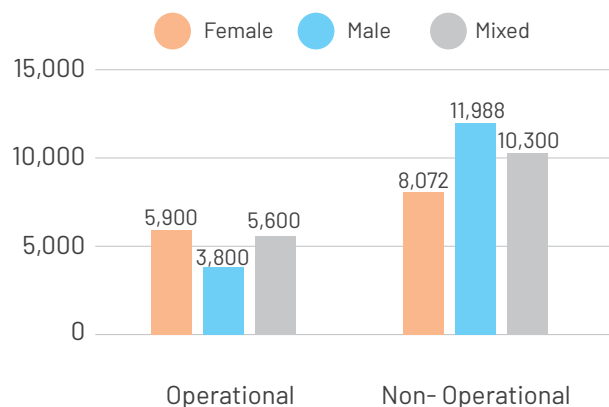
The Ar-Raqqa Civil Council, with support from several humanitarian organizations, have begun working over the over the past few months to restore the city's education facilities. According to inter-agency mission reports, the RCC's education committee has rented an additional six schools in order to serve grade-school students.⁸⁷

The City will need an extra 26 schools rehabilitated to allow the remaining number of students to return to school. No education facilities exist all the students of age to attend secondary school and university. This is currently a major gap in the education system in Ar-Raqqa. No services are currently available to allow students to carry forward their studies. One community representative noted that last final examination for graduating students had not taken place since December 2017.⁸⁸

Operational Capacity

Figure 7.4: School capacity: number of students by gender

Source: UrbAN-S population analysis (2018).

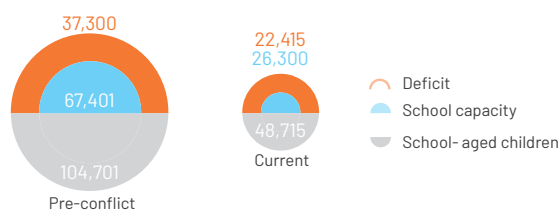


The city's schools are only operating at one-third of their original seating capacity. If schools offered only one-shift, only 15,300 of the approximately 49,000 current students could be accommodated. By programming the school-day in order to offer two shifts, (both morning and afternoon class) the seating capacity effectively doubles. According to analysis, however, this still leaves over 224,000 students unaccommodated for.

One education expert interviewed suggested only 23 schools (out of 89) meet basic standards in order to conduct classes.⁸⁹ This suggests that there are nine schools operational yet un-registered (or ill-prepared) to accommodate students due to damaged facilities, lack of adequate staffing, or lack of other necessary materials.

Figure 7.5: School capacity deficit

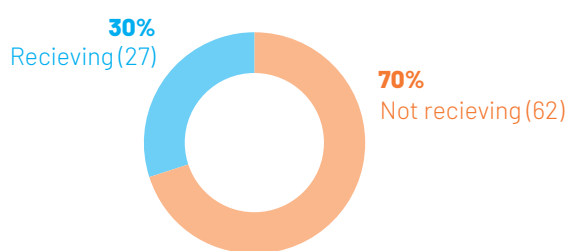
Source: UrbAN-S Community asset inventory and population analysis (2018).



Caption: *The current number of operational schools can accommodate seating for approximately 13,150 students. Operating with two shifts doubles the capacity and could facilitate 26,300 students.

Figure 7.6: Operational status of education institutions

Source: Community asset inventory, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Caption: At the time of data collection, it was reported that 32 percent of Ar-Raqqa City schools were operational and 68 percent non-operational.

Education supplies and materials

Reports indicate that schools lack the necessary materials and utilities to operate. Consumable items such as fuel, stationery, and drinking water are in short supply.⁹⁰

Currently most materials are being provided by humanitarian organizations. These include bags, seats, stationery and other simple items. Textbooks and curriculum, however, are not readily available. These are only issued by the Syrian Ministry of Education.⁹¹ In a

media interview, the Ar-Raqqa Civil Council's education department suggested that they had requested 95,000 books, but by November, 2018, only 57,000 had been provided.⁹²

Education staffing

Although the MOE's education directorate reports 8,000 registered teaching staff, only 2,400 (or 30 percent) are currently working in Ar-Raqqa City. After ISIL took control of the city, most teachers left the city and the directorate "reallocated" them to other provinces. After a brief period in Damascus, the education directorate was moved to Hama. Many of Ar-Raqqa's teachers and staff also moved and begun work in Hama.⁹³

Current reports note that there are approximately 5,000 total teachers working either in the city and the countryside.

There are reported concerns regarding the quality of teacher's experience level. Many have only primary or secondary education⁹⁴. Teaching staff who relocated to Hama were prohibited from returning to teach in Ar-Raqqa. If they did, they would risk being removed from government payrolls and forfeiting their salaries.

Sectoral considerations

- Prioritize areas with the highest concentration of population return for education facility rehabilitations.
- Restore education opportunities for secondary and higher levels of education.
- Further develop curriculum and relevant materials to expedite learning, which in return support students in making up for lost time in their learning.
- Implement recommendations outlined in the interagency strategic response plan, including establishing safe and protective learning spaces, providing psychosocial support to students and staff, providing educational outreach to at-risk students, and further professional development for teachers.⁹⁵

- 68 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018
- 69 <https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2014/11/18/a-teacher-in-Ar-Raqqa-living-under-ISIL-rule>
<https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2016/01/19/syrias-warring-parties-teach-separate-curriculums>
- 70 Ar-Raqqa City Strategic response Plan, July (2018).
- 71 Ar-Raqqa City Profile. UN-HABITAT. December, 2016
- 72 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/photo-gallery/2018/12/02/School-in-the-ruins-of-Ar-Raqqa.html#slide=2>
- 73 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018
- 74 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018
- 75 Ar-Raqqa Needs Overview. Al-Ameen (July 2018)
- 76 Ar-Raqqa Context Assessment. Humanitarian Access Team (HAT). August 2018
- 77 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-Ar-Raqqa-education/with-little-aid-syrias-Ar-Raqqa-struggles-to-revive-schools-idUSKCN1NV1I7>
- 78 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 79 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-kurds/some-syrian-schools-erase-assad-but-tensions-rise-over-kurdish-idUSKCN1BI1X6>
- 80 <https://syriadirect.org/news/Ar-Raqqa-pupils-and-teachers-prepare-for-new-school-year-after-percentE2percent80percent-98pitch-black-darknesspercentE2percent80percent99-of-is-rule-amman-more-than-100000-students-are-expected-to-return-to-schools-across-northern-syria/>
- 81 Ar-Raqqa Context Assessment. Humanitarian Access Team (HAT). August 2018
- 82 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018
- 83 <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/perspective/photo-gallery/2018/12/02/School-in-the-ruins-of-Ar-Raqqa.html#slide=2>
- 84 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-Ar-Raqqa-education/with-little-aid-syrias-Ar-Raqqa-struggles-to-revive-schools-idUSKCN1NV1I7>
- 85 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.
- 86 Ar-Raqqa City Profile. UN-HABITAT. December, 2016
- 87 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.
- 88 UrbAN-S Community Focal Point Survey (September 2018)
- 89 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018
- 90 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 91 Ibid
- 92 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-syria-Ar-Raqqa-education/with-little-aid-syrias-Ar-Raqqa-struggles-to-revive-schools-idUSKCN1NV1I7>
- 93 Ar-Raqqa City Profile. UN-HABITAT. December, 2016
- 94 According to THE force report, "some 60 per cent of teachers are university graduates, while 40 per cent are graduates from institutes or secondary schools. It is unknown how many of them hold teacher licenses and/or have teaching experiences." (Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018)
- 95 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018

8. Drinking Water and Sanitation

Overview

Prior to the crisis, Ar-Raqqa's water system provided residents with a sufficient and dependable source of drinking and household water. In 2007, the governorate provided 94 percent of its population with an "improved" source of drinking water. Water experts report that city's public water system functioned well.⁹⁶

Access to clean water continues to be priority concern for many residents and returnees. Concerns over availability and quality of Ar-Raqqa's drinking water poses one the most significant public health risks. Residents without a publicly available ("improved") source of drinking water are using untreated well or river water. In September 2018, medical workers reported upwards of 200 cases of waterborne illnesses in the city due to consumption of unsafe water.⁹⁷ This challenges the already weakened health care system.

Even despite its location along the Euphrates, extensive damage to Ar-Raqqa's water network present major challenges to the city's recovery. Fighting damaged much of the city's water infrastructure. This has led to the city losing up to half of its water pumping and distribution capacity during the conflict.^{98 99}

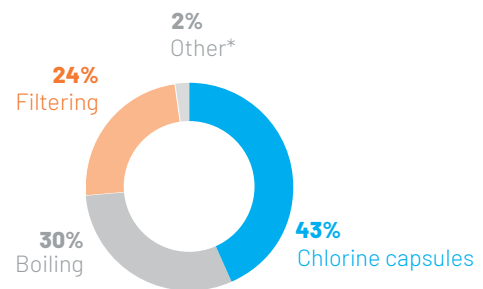
Households are often forced to forfeit purchasing other basic needs in order to pay for water. Hygiene has also suffered due to the lack of clean water, further exasperating the risks of exposure to illness.¹⁰⁰

In order to cope with the current insecurity of unsafe water, many households have resorted to treating water. Even with these additional measures in place, illness due to hazardous water consumption persists.

In the past six months, the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) and its international partners have improved capacity of the water system, though many improvements are still necessary.

Figure 8.1: Most common forms of water purifying methods used at home

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



*Other forms of water purification include the ancient method of storing and filtering impure water through clay pottery.

Current water / sanitation interventions

As a result of the inadequate public water supply, much of the city's residents rely on water trucking services. Over a third of residents reported to rely on trucking as either the primary or secondary source of household water. Many others rely on trucking as their tertiary source (see map 9.1).¹⁰¹ Transportation of water has become a source of income for some residents.¹⁰² However, reports indicate that trucks are unable to access the entire city due to damaged or blocked streets. There are also reports that delivered water may not be treated, contributing further to public health concerns.¹⁰³

There has been active coordination amongst humanitarian and recovery actors, along with the RCC. Earlier in the year, humanitarian services prioritized trucking of water to residents. However, once facilities were cleared of ERW contamination, repair of critical water infrastructure could commence. Two international NGOs have taken the lead in this work and have initiated repair of the city's treatment facilities and water mains. According to the North East Syria NGO forum, the following services and rehabilitation works were reportedly completed or ongoing in November, 2018.¹⁰⁴

Table 8.1: Service rehabilitation conducted or ongoing (November 2018)

Source: NES NGO forum

Service / rehabilitation works	Description	Neighbourhood / location beneficiaries
Water trucking / delivery	Humanitarian delivery of water to households and neighbourhood reservoirs	Al Mishleb, Al Tashreen, Hettin / Ad Dari'yeh Intifada (outside of Ar-Raqqa City) Jazraa (outside of Ar-Raqqa City)
Ar-Raqqa Main Water Station	Repairs of station, including piping network and putting in place purification and protection measures	City-wide
Water - Network lines	2,000 meters of drinking water network service lines rehabilitated. Work initiated on water main.	Al Tashreen
Water - Pumping stations	Water pump rehabilitated to pump 500 cubic meters per hour. Chlorinator installed.	Tsfya pumping station
	Water pumps rehabilitated to pump 1,000 cubic meters per hour. Chlorinators installed.	Hisham Ibn Abd Al Malek pumping station Soq Al hal pumping station
Sanitary sewer - Network lines	Rehabilitation of 3,010 meters to the sanitary sewage network	Al Tashreen, Rafqa 23rd of February St, Hisham Ibn Abd Al Malek, Al Mishleb Benurama, Batani Qadessiyeh, Basel St.
Sanitary sewer - Latrines	40 emergency latrines units constructed	City-wide

Managing the city's Water System

The RCC's "Committee for Municipalities and Local Administration" is the responsible local authority for rehabilitation and maintenance of water utilities; both potable and sewage. The committee currently manages the city's water treatment and storage facilities, pumping stations, and distribution network. A priority of the committee has been to install additional chlorinators to ensure chlorine sterilization in pumping stations. An "Early Intervention Team" has been established to deliver water to neighbourhoods which are not connected to the public system. It also delivers water in the case of outages or disruptions.

Damage

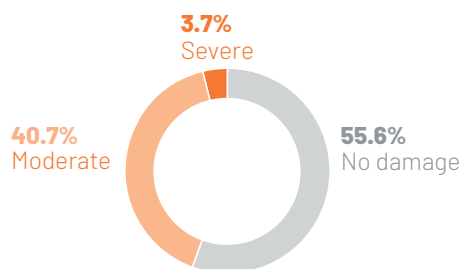
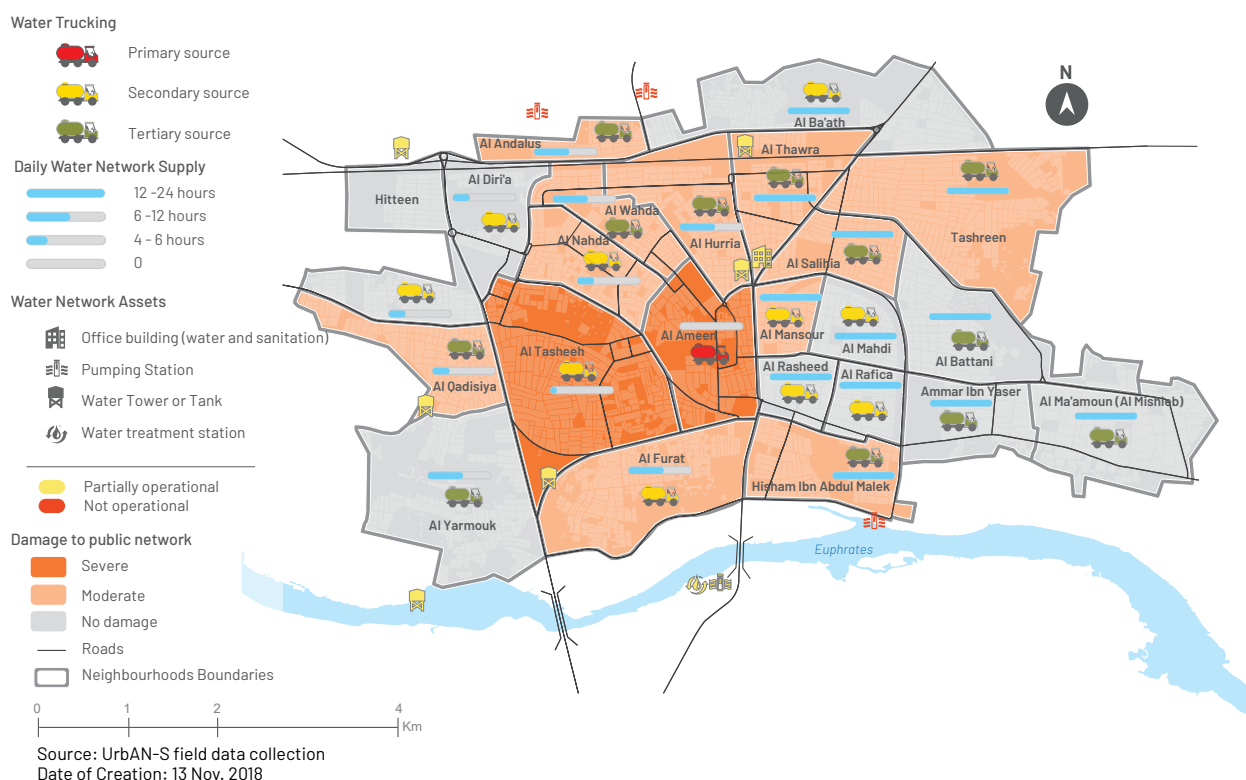
According to neighbourhood analysis, 44 percent of Ar-Raqqa's water network has been moderately or severely affected by damage sustained to the city's infrastructure. Some facilities also fell victim to explosive ordinances. Damage has left over 27,000 people (approximately 23 percent of residents) with less than six hours of daily water availability from the public network.

Two of Ar-Raqqa's central neighbourhoods, Al Ameen and Al Tasheeh, report severe damage to the public water infrastructure. They are completely reliant on other means for their source of water, both for drinking and other uses. These neighbourhoods are home to approximately 8,700 residents.

Physical damage, however, only presents one side of total impact. Illnesses, education and other community services are also constrained due to inadequate water supply.

Figure 8.2: Damage to public network

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

**Map 8.1: Water system functionality. Facilities, daily supply, damage analysis and reliance on trucking services.**

Ar-Raqqa's primary water pumping station is located on the south side of the Euphrates River. Two water treatment facilities are located at the Ar-Raqqa Water Station. The facility is currently only partially operational and thus underperforming. Several factors have been reportedly affecting the plant's functionality, although rehabilitation work is ongoing, and obtaining sufficient fuel for the plant's required electrical generator has also been reported as an operational challenge.¹⁰⁵

The station feeds a number of storage facilities, tanks and towers located throughout the city, including tower storage facilities just to north of the city. At least three pumping stations are currently non-functional. This includes the Bir al-Hashim station (outside of City), al-Asadiya station, and an additional pumping station near the slaughterhouse. The effect is very low-pressure in some areas. The Tashreen neighbourhood currently reports very low pressure.¹⁰⁶

Operationality

Community representatives report that household connection is available in neighbourhoods throughout the city. However, connectivity to public water network does not necessarily guarantee water provision, and hence functionality of the system varies. Cleanliness, not quantity, is reported as the primary concern. All neighbourhoods report water contains impurities. Water is reported to have a tinted colour, and must be boiled and/or have filters applied to purify. Most neighbourhood continue to rely on purchased water.

Two neighbourhoods, Al-Ameen and Tasheeh neighbourhoods, although connected to the network, reported no water supply. In those neighbourhoods, residents require water trucking and purchased bottled water as their primary sources.¹⁰⁷

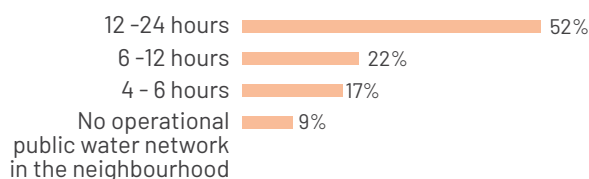
It's been estimated that the city's water capacity dropped by 10,000 cubic meters. Current provision is estimated at 20,000 cubic meters compared to a pre-conflict capacity of approximately 30,000 cubic meters per day.

Sixty percent of the city has reportedly low pressure in the network¹⁰⁸. The RCC reports that issues of low pressure in the system emanates from the functionality of city's main water station¹⁰⁹. The station reportedly provides less than four bars of pressure, while six bars is necessary to effectively feed the city's network. The council reports major breaks in both water mains and network service lines. This also affects the ability to test the entirety of the network. A total of 383 breaks have been identified.¹¹⁰

One expert interviewed lamented that it will take a long time for the water system to return to operational capacity existing prior to the conflict.¹¹¹

Figure 8.3: Tap water supply available through public network. City-wide average hours per week over the previous four weeks.

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Sanitary Sewer

Households in all neighbourhoods, excluding Al-Mansour, are connected to the public sanitation network.

It has been reported that five to ten percent of the sanitary sewerage network needs rehabilitation and repairs.¹¹² This presents a concern to public health with the likelihood of waterborne pathogens.

Sectoral considerations

- Continue both emergency repairs and network capacity improvements to all areas of the city.
- Continue rehabilitation of the Ar-Raqqa water station and treatment facility. The community should study whether a new emergency water treatment station, or stations, should be constructed to serve northern areas of the city. Develop an operations and maintenance plan for water facilities and secure resources in order to implement the plan.
- Continue to provide emergency water trucking to areas of the city not served by the public network. Verify whether trucked water is safe for household consumption. Provide chlorination and disinfectants for installation and operations at water treatment facilities, pumping stations, and water sources used by water trucking providers.
- Develop and implement public health campaign targeting water safety and usage. Raise awareness through functioning schools and religious centres. Communicate water distribution channels, directing the public to available water at government centres, schools, local councils, mosques and military points.
- Construct additional localized communal water storage facilities for storage of household water. Ensure delivery of sufficient amounts of potable, treated water delivery to communal facilities. Implement a planned distribution location and delivery schedule to all neighbourhoods.
- Prepare and implement a Water Safety Plan, providing local authorities with support to develop institutional capacity.
- Activate water conservation programming to promote proper use of potable water resources. This may include installing water subscriber counters and / or an education campaign promoting water conservation.

- 96 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 97 Syria Relief. Medical Needs Assessment. September 2018
- 98 Interview with Chief of Party of a consortium of recovery actors operating in Ar-Raqqa City (December 2018)
- 99 UrbAN-S analysis. December 2018
- 100 Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018
- 101 UrbAN-S Community Focal Point Survey (September 2018)
- 102 HAT Ar-Raqqa context assessment. August, 2018
- 103 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.
- 104 North East Syria NGO Forum – Ar-Raqqa city response overview (December 7, 2018)
- 105 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.
- 106 Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018
- 107 UrbAN-S Community Focal Point Survey (September 2018)
- 108 Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018
- 109 The interagency situation report and strategic plan also identified an additional City water treatment plant: the “Sok Al Hal” plant in the eastern portion of the city. It suggests that this plant also decreased in functionality due to the conflict. Although, rehabilitation was also underway as early as December of 2017.
- 110 RCC Reconstruction Committee. Water network repair work. December 2018
- 111 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)
- 112 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.

9. Energy and Electricity

Overview

Before the Syrian conflict commenced in 2011, Ar-Raqqa City was in a good situation with regard to electricity supply, due to its proximity to the Euphrates River and the nearby Tabqah Dam (approximately 50km to the west of the city). The Tabqah Dam (also known as the Euphrates Dam) was one of the primary electricity generators for the country. Its eight generators produce a cumulative 800 megawatts of power.¹¹³ A battle for control of the dam took place between ISIL and coalition forces in 2017, during which the generators sustained damage that rendered them non-operational.¹¹⁴

Conditions of electricity provision under ISIL control

The initial occupation by ISIL and infighting with other opposition groups led to electricity supply being cut off for some time in late 2013. Following the total control of the city by ISIL, governing forces rehabilitated the electricity network (along with other infrastructure services) in early 2014, and set up an electricity office responsible for monitoring consumption, setting prices,

and repairing electricity infrastructure. Energy supply was given freely to inhabitants of the city; however, demand was significantly less than pre-ISIL control. Energy supply from Tabqah Dam (then held by ISIL) fluctuated between 2014 and 2016 due to various reasons. This included the reported selling of power back to GoS rather than directing it to the city. It was also reported that water supply to the dam was shut off in September 2016 reducing the hydro-electric generating capacity. Studies suggest that ISIL focused much of its electricity capacity on hospitals when compared to other critical infrastructure and commercial activities.

Damage to infrastructure

Severe damage was sustained to the Al-Firousiya power station in the west of the city due to attempts by ISIL to destroy it as they were forced out. Damage to other energy assets is also significant and widespread. Grid connection is still not available to any neighbourhood at present and communities must rely on various diesel-powered generators.¹¹⁵ Prioritizing transformer repairs in Mashbal and Al Sena Districts will lead to reconnection with the grid in the short term.

Figure 9.1: Diesel generators providing localised electricity supply

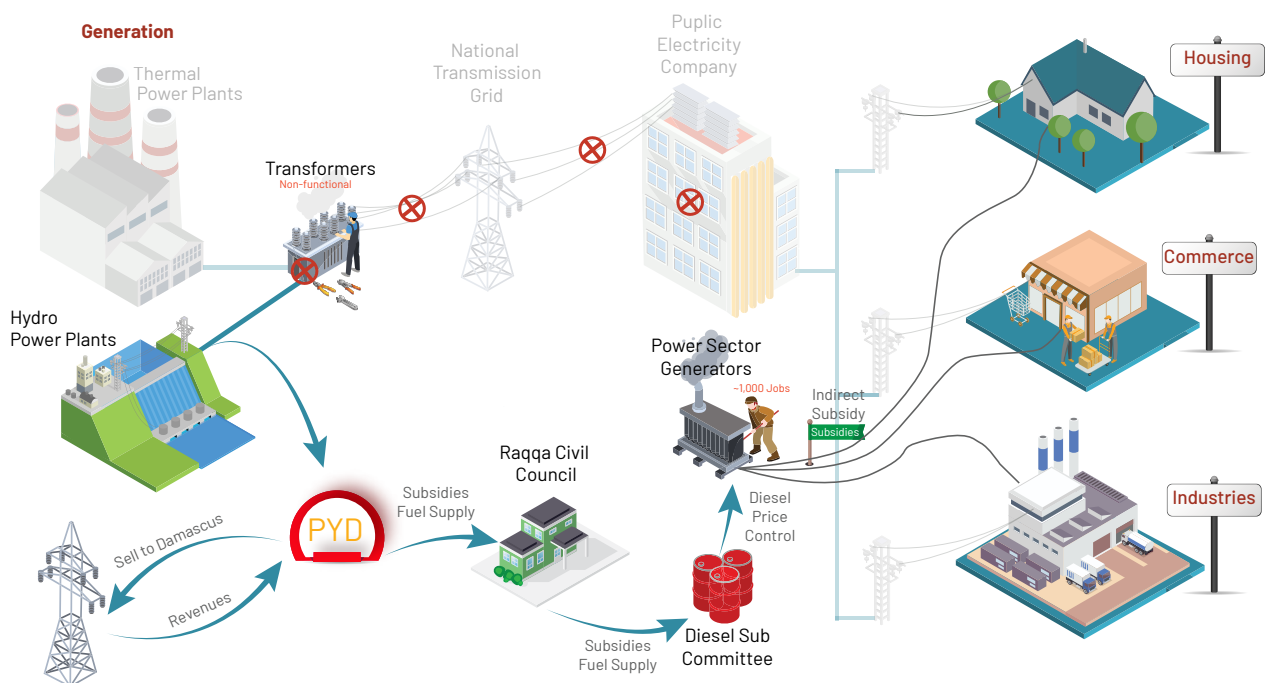




Figure 9.2: Installation of new transformers by the RCC

Impact on the population & current interventions

As the electricity grid serving neighbourhoods is currently non-functional, generators are being operated by various communities as well as private investors. These operators are required to register with the RCC. The cost to access this supply ranges between 5,000 and 8,000 SYP per month. Daily access time is also variable, between 8 and 12 hours per day. (Fig. 10.3) This capacity is still limited and is often only sufficient to power a single household appliance at any one time.

Ar-Raqqa's Civil Council established the Energy and Communications Committee in early 2018 to oversee repairs and reconnection of grid capacity. Other local organisations have formed to make repairs to the electricity network. These organisations receive limited funding and support from various international non-governmental organisations.¹¹⁶

Initial efforts were made to rehabilitate the network on the outskirts of the city. This purposed to connect the city with the Al-Firousiya station which supplies the western neighbourhoods including Al-Jazra junction, Al-Khatouniya, Al-Jazra and Al-Hokoumiya. Another project commenced in September 2018 to restore electrical grid services in the area of Al-Karama east of Ar-Raqqa City. This will provide electricity to an estimated 46,450 individuals.¹¹⁷

Additionally, the Energy and Communications Committee reports ongoing work to rehabilitate switching stations and high-tension lines between the following sub-stations: Tal Abyad station, Bir al-Hashim, AL-Frosya and Ar-Raqqa. Smaller villages on the outskirts of the city have had power reconnected including, Khnezat, Kalata, Al-Abbara, Al-Rahiyat, and Mezila. The Energy and Communication Committee reports the need for heavy machinery such as cranes, tower cranes, large trucks, cables to continue with restoring power across the city.¹¹⁸

Figure 9.3: Daily Electricity Access

Source: Situation Overview: Area-based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa city. REACH (October 2018)

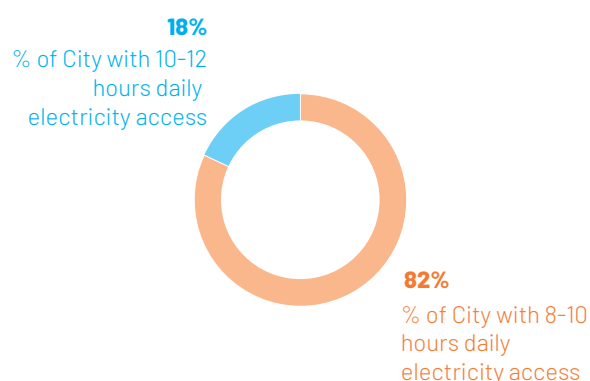
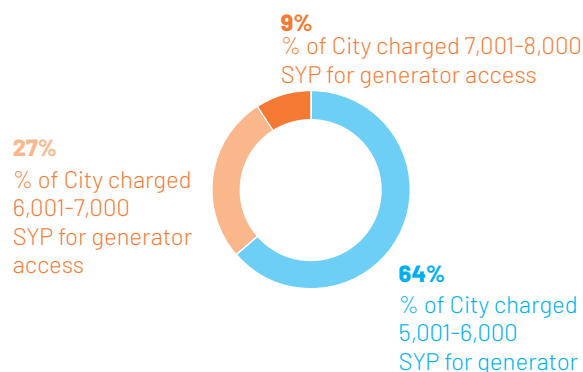
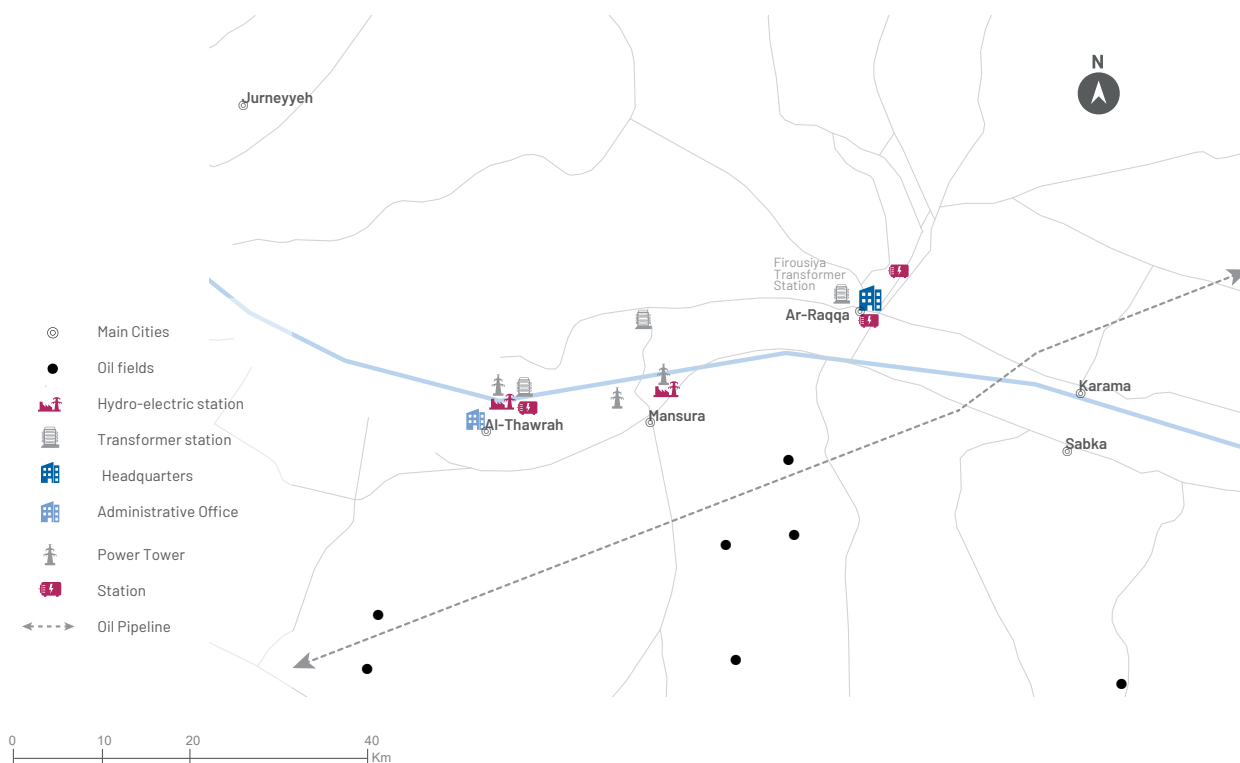


Figure 9.4: Generator Access Cost

Source: Situation Overview: Area-based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa city. REACH (October 2018).



Map 9.1: Electrical Power Assets around Ar-Raqqa

Source: Satellite imagery, UrbAN-S field data collection, OSM, OCHA, US Energy Information Administration
 Date of Creation: 13 Nov. 2018

Sectoral considerations

- Support local efforts, such as the RCC Energy and Communications Committee, in managing the rehabilitation of electricity grid infrastructure to the city.
- Prioritise rehabilitation of electricity to neighbourhoods where other conditions for safe return have been sufficiently met.
- Support the rehabilitation of damaged generators at the Tabqah Dam hydro plant to ensure sufficient generator and grid capacity, as the grid network comes back on-line to supply Ar-Raqqa and other areas in the country more generally. Strategic oversight of the parties involved in the managing of this facility is important.

113 <http://interactive.acharicenter.org/syria/rebuilding-Ar-Raqqas-electrical-grid/>, retrieved on 30/12/2018.

114 <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/under-pressure-the-effect-of-conflict-on-the-euphrates-dam>, retrieved on 30/12/2018

115 Reach Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City, October 2018

116 <http://interactive.acharicenter.org/syria/rebuilding-Ar-Raqqas-electrical-grid/>, retrieved on 30/12/2018.

117 Idib

118 'Al-Ar-Raqqa deprived of electricity for lack of potential', 13 May 2018 – fetched at <http://hawarnews.com/en/haber/al-Ar-Raqqa-deprived-of-electricity-for-lack-of-potential-h1368.html> on 20/09/2018

10. Solid Waste Management

Overview

Rubbish and war debris are still a profound reality for residents of Ar-Raqqa City.

The damage sustained to the city has produced hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of rubble from destroyed homes, commercial buildings, streets and other structures. As a testament to devastation, human corpses continue to be recovered as debris removal commences.¹¹⁹

As most of the city was impacted, work to clear rubble and debris is an enormous task and will likely continue for many years. Residents lament over the lack of cleanliness. When asked, 93 percent of survey respondents felt their neighbourhood continued to be “very dirty”. No respondents felt their neighbourhoods had been sufficiently cleaned of war debris and rubbish. Additionally, there are reports of rodents and pests amongst the rubbish,¹²⁰ creating concerns over the risks of disease and other illness.¹²¹

Current solid waste interventions

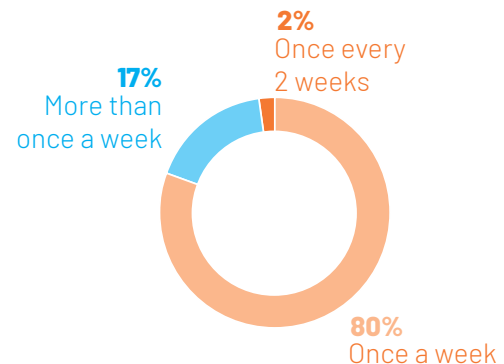
The RCC’s municipality committee oversees garbage collection and management. Their responsibilities also include recruitment of trash collection workers and supervising progress of rubbish collection. Key informants interviewed suggest that the committee is performing adequately.¹²²

Local organizations, civil society groups and NGO’s are also supporting the city in efforts of rubbish and debris removal. This includes a local youth organization¹²³ as well as an early recovery team working to remove rubble from numerous locations throughout the city at the request of residents.¹²⁴

Operationality

Figure 10.1: Frequency of garbage collection

Source: Community focal point survey, UrbAN-S (September 2018).



Most neighbourhoods report collection occurring on a weekly basis. Garbage collection occurs more than once a week in some neighbourhoods (Al- Ba’ath, Tashreen, Mahdi, Rafica, Furat, Battani). There is no collection in the Al-Mansour neighbourhood. There appears however to be some improvement in the performance of rubbish collection in the city. As a sign of progress, some neighbourhoods previously reported trash not being collected on a regular basis. These include Fardous, Magaf, and Tawasuya neighbourhoods.¹²⁵ Nevertheless, residents continue to complain that garbage is not being collected adequately from streets and public spaces.¹²⁶

Prior to the conflict, the city’s main landfill was located eight kilometres to south and roughly 3.5 kilometres south of “regional road 4”. Not to impact agriculturally productive lands, the site was in an arid, non-irrigated area. With river crossings damaged, a new landfill site has been developed. The RCC has developed a specialized waste disposal area about two kilometres northeast of the city in an area called “Tal Albeah.” This may have a negative impact to agriculturally productive lands as its near irrigated farming areas.

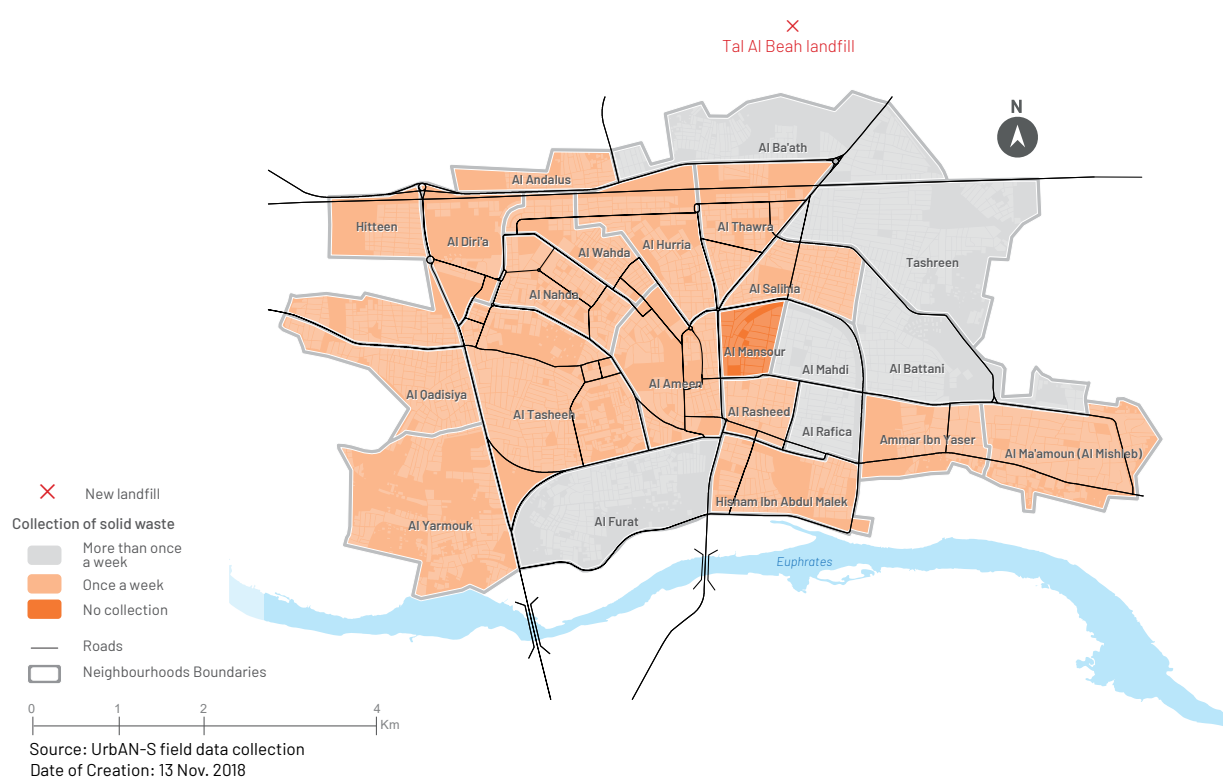
Figure 10.2: Solid waste collection activities in Ar-Raqqa City



Figure 10.3: Solid waste management resources in Ar-Raqqa. Pre-conflict and current.

Source: Key informant interview, UrbAN-S (September 2018).

	Pre-conflict	Current
Trash collection workers	260	90
Trash collection vehicles	17	4
Trash compressors	7	2
Compactors	2	—

Map 10.1: Collection of Solid Waste in Ar-Raqqa

***Note:** Reports differ whether solid waste collection is occurring in Al Mansour neighbourhood. As one of the most devastated areas, collection may be constrained.

Sectoral considerations

- Ensure that garbage collection, rubbish removal and solid waste management is occurring consistently throughout the community. This should include areas of the city heavily impacted, including Al-Mansour neighbourhood.
- Ensure all environmental precaution and best practices are utilized in managing in the new, temporary, "Tal Albeah" landfill. Due to its proximity near agriculturally productive and irrigated lands, its presence may increase risks to public health and local and regional food security.
- Local leadership and their partners should ensure that a solid waste management plan has been developed in order to appropriately manage the city's waste. This includes sourcing necessary resources such as laborers, trash collection vehicles, trash compressors and compactors.

119 <https://syriadirect.org/news/Ar-Raqqa-sees-gradual-return-of-civil-society-amid-widespread-destruction-political-uncertainty/>

120 UrbAN-S Community Focal Point Survey (September 2018)

121 Interagency Strategic Response Plan. July 2018.

122 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)

123 "Oxygen Shabab", a local organization provides a number of services including rubbish clearing, tree planting, painting, work restoring school facilities and providing drinking water.

124 Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018

125 https://twitter.com/CSP_ERT

126 UrbAN-S Key Informant Survey (September 2018)

11. Transportation

Overview

Ar-Raqqa city is located at the centre of four regions in Syria: the Euphrates River basin; oil-rich Deir Ez-Zor Governorate; Kurdish-populated Al-Hassakeh Governorate; and western Syria, primarily Aleppo city. It is therefore considered a crossroad for key internal and external routes which span from Iraq, through Deir Ez-Zor, and northwards to Turkey.¹²⁷ Ar-Raqqa City lies to the south of the east-west M4 highway between Aleppo and the Iraqi border at Rabia. Regionally, it's connected by the Regional Road 4 (connecting Aleppo to the west with Deir Ez-Zor and Iraq); and to Homs and the north-south M5 by the Regional Road 42.

While under ISIL control, it was very difficult to travel to and from Ar-Raqqa. Permission was required before leaving the city and people were only allowed to travel within ISIL controlled areas. Bus terminals were closed, including the regional mini-bus garages in the north and south of the city. Illicit travel outside of these areas carried high costs.

The river crossing bridge at Ar-Raqqa is the only operational crossing point between GoS and PYD/SDF controlled areas. Access to the North-East from Deir Ez-Zor City and other places is across this bridge.¹²⁸

Ar-Raqqa's rail connection

Transportation via the rail network was suspended in 2012. Previously, Ar-Raqqa was connected by rail to Deir Ez-Zor and Iraq to the east; and the main Damascus-Aleppo line, across the Euphrates to the west.¹²⁹ Other parts of the network (Damascus to Aleppo) have reopened in mid-2018. Restoring the rail network in the region is critical for movement of bulk goods.

Damage to transport infrastructure

Damage and large amounts of debris have affected the entire road network in Ar-Raqqa, limiting free movement throughout the city. The careful removal of UXOs and the hundreds of dead bodies found in amongst the rubble has made the process of clearing and restoring the streets laborious.

Major transport infrastructure assets in the city were hardest hit by damage due to the conflict, including the bridges that serve the city. As primary access points, a number of bridges were destroyed by ISIL as combatant forces were pushed out of the city in late 2017. The repair of these bridges is essential for access to the city, especially from the south.

Regional routes from Ar-Raqqa (to Qamishli via Tal Tamar; and to Homs via Al-Tabqah) are reportedly in generally good condition. However, limited road damage closer to Ar-Raqqa City was noted.¹³⁰

Impact on the population & current interventions

The conditions of the transport infrastructure in Ar-Raqqa following the recapture of the city from ISIL impacted all aspects of the socio-economic life. Neighbourhood streets are considered by residents to be partially operational. They are still in a general state of disrepair but are reportedly safe and cleared sufficiently for driving and commuting by foot. The Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) recognizes that road access to all parts of the city is an important factor in rebuilding process and will catalyse return and the rejuvenation of homes and businesses in the city. Since the recapture of the city from ISIL, an Emergency Response Team has been established (directed by the RCC) and has been tasked with clearing debris and repairing road networks. The team has prioritised making streets accessible as quickly as possible through initiatives such as the 'Future Makers' workshops and coordinated with the Reconstruction Committee and Early Intervention Organisation which continue to rehabilitate neighbourhoods.

The Internal Transport Committee, under the RCC, has been set up to respond to the public's transport requirements within the city.¹³¹ A public bus service is in operation daily, running through all inhabited neighbourhoods and surrounding countryside villages. Additional buses are available as pieces of the road network in the city are repaired and made trafficable. The cheaper bus fares being charged by the public bus service save residents from paying very high taxi fare prices for transport within the city.¹³² A traffic police force has been established to bring further order to the roads of Ar-Raqqa as more people return and the volume of traffic increases.

Further interventions by the Internal Transport Department have included the regulation of river-boat traffic on the Euphrates River. Boat traffic has been moved to the eastern side of the Old Bridge (by RCC circular) to where a new port has been established. This is anticipated to improve safety and limit the risks of damage to water-craft due to submerged debris. This is also viewed as an important step as the returning population puts further pressure on access points into the city. Existing rehabilitated bridges are currently not able to adequately handle the influx at this stage, necessitating further reliance on water-borne transport.¹³³

Rehabilitation of major assets

A number of key transport assets have been the subject of major restoration activity. The Silo Bridge, the main entrance to the city that was destroyed by ISIL, was rebuilt by the Rehabilitation Committee, a sub-committee of the Ar-Raqqa Civil Council. The rebuilding of the bridge will relieve traffic congestion into and out of the city via other routes.¹³⁴ The rehabilitation of the Old Bridge, in the south of the city, began in June 2018 and by mid-October was nearing completion. Its restoration will likewise assist traffic movement in and out of the city.¹³⁵ The Al-Sawmah Garage, a mini-bus terminal in the north of the city was reopened in March 2018 by the Ar-Raqqa Municipality. This has allowed easier transit to other regional centres including Qamishli, Amouda, Al-Hasakah, Ras Al-Ain and Tal Tamar.¹³⁶

Please refer to map 6.2 in the Economy section for location and current status of transport assets.

Sectoral considerations

- Restore operation to the rail network to support the regional transportation of bulk goods.
- Continue to support local efforts by the various RCC committees that are involved with the rehabilitation of transport infrastructure, including the Emergency Response Team and the Internal Transport Committee. Major elements of infrastructure rehabilitation that demand focus include:
- The rehabilitation of bridges to resume function as primary entry-points to the city and alleviate traffic congestion in and out of the city.
- Debris clearing and road reconstruction within the city's neighbourhoods.

¹²⁷ Mercy Corps Humanitarian Access Team Context Analysis – Ar-Raqqa, August 2018

¹²⁸ Idib

¹²⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Railways – retrieved on 19 September 2018

¹³⁰ UN Internal Mission Report – Ar Ar-Raqqa City, 1 April 2018

¹³¹ <http://www.hawarnews.com/en/haber/internal-transport-reduces-burden-on-al-Ar-Raqqa-residents-h5217.html>, retrieved on 31/12/2018

¹³² “Emergency Response Team” Rehabilitating Ar-Raqqa City – Al Sahid Witness, 16 February 2018 – Fetched at <https://alshahidwitness.com/Ar-Raqqa-public-transport-services-return/>, 19 September 2018
<http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/transportation-in-Ar-Raqqa/>, retrieved on 31 December 2018

¹³³ <http://sdf-press.com/en/2018/11/transport-of-large-boats-from-bridges-west-to-its-east/>, retrieved on 31 December 2018

¹³⁴ Reconstruction Committee: A Few Days And We Finish The Silos Bridge Rehabilitation’, 23 May 2018 – fetched at <https://sdf-press.com/en/2018/05/reconstruction-committee-a-few-days-and-we-finish-the-silos-bridge-rehabilitation/>

¹³⁵ ‘Ar-Raqqa Civil Council Begins The Project Of Rehabilitating The Old Bridge In Ar-Raqqa City’, 21 June 2018 – fetched at <https://sdf-press.com/en/2018/06/Ar-Raqqa-civil-council-begins-the-project-of-rehabilitating-the-old-bridge-in-Ar-Raqqa-city/>, 19 September 2018

¹³⁶ “Rehabilitation of Northern Garage in Ar-Raqqa City”, 28 March 2018 – fetched at <https://sdf-press.com/en/2018/03/rehabilitation-of-the-northern-garage-in-Ar-Raqqa-city/> on 19 September 2018

Figure 11.1: River ferry traffic on the Euphrates south of Ar-Raqqa City



12. Functionality of Essential Services

Essential services index

An index of essential services has been developed to provide a high-level indication of functionality throughout the city. As a critical assessment tool with numerous applications, the index explores the functionality of infrastructure and services. It assesses the neighbourhood's ability to cater to the needs of residents. The index monitors functionality changes over time using numerical values which are formulated mathematically. The resulting 'scores' can then be then verified by residents and community stakeholders.

Accordingly, three levels of functionality were identified to determine an essential services index "score": 1) functional, 2) partially functional and 3) non-functional. In determining each neighbourhood's score, the algorithm utilized five key functionality measures: 1) access to health facilities 2) access to local markets 3) daily electrical supply and 4) daily water supply and 5) the frequency garbage collection.

1. Functional	Even despite some damage sustained, these neighbourhoods are fully operational and providing services to residents. They are the primary destination for returning inhabitants and characterized by overcrowding due to their functional status. A special focus on public services and basic infrastructure should be directed in these areas to improve quality of life for current residents and accommodate return migration.
2. Partially functional	Partially functional neighbourhoods are to a certain extent operational yet face a variety of challenges. Basic services and infrastructure may be unavailable and / or heavily damaged. Access in and through these neighbourhoods may be constrained due to explosive remnants and damage to roadways. These areas may recover over a longer period time, and additional care should be afforded to residents and returnees locating here. Neighbourhoods are characterized by additional risks and hardships.
3. Non-functional	These are the hardest hit neighbourhoods, and ones which sustained the most severe damage during periods of conflict. Most are completely abandoned and currently provide no means of liveability or habitability. These neighbourhoods, however, are often the historic urban centers and contained many culturally significant sites. Communities and residents must determine for themselves how these areas will be reconstructed for future generations.

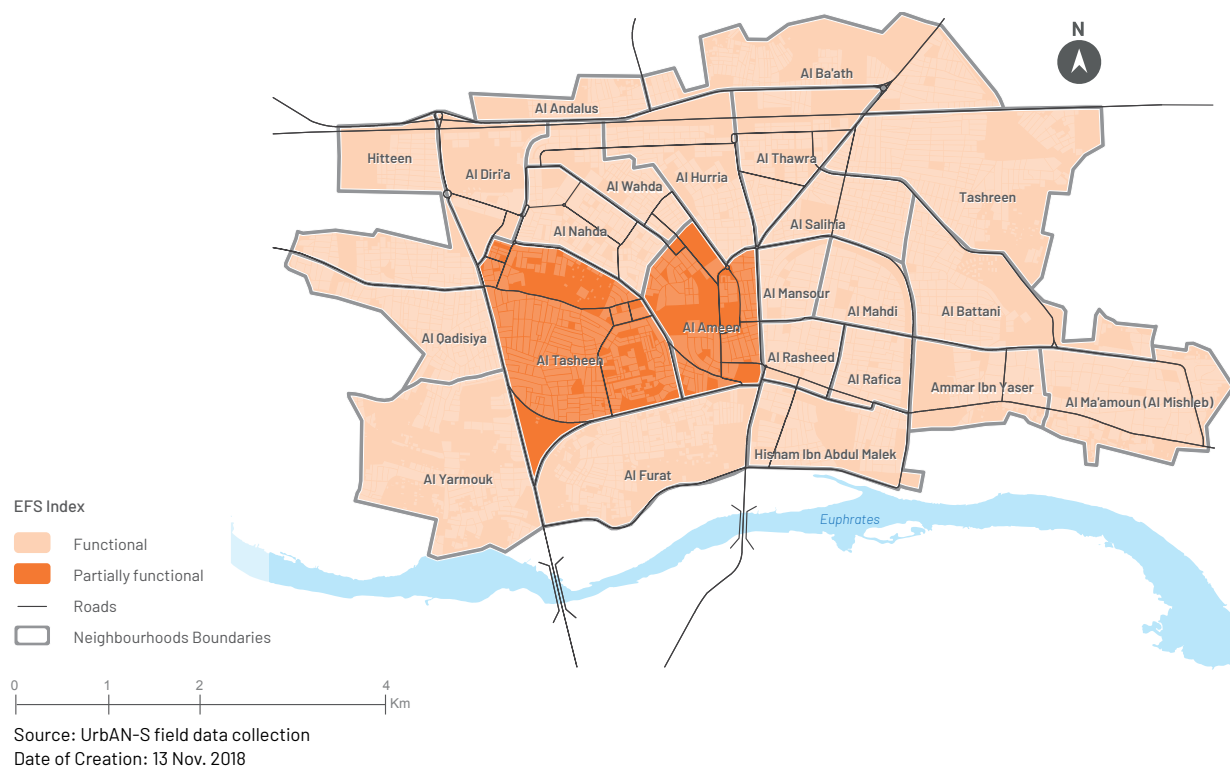
Neighbourhood functionality in Ar-Raqqa City

Despite the city's reported high level of damage during the conflict, data solicited from community focal points rendered all neighbourhoods functional. Specifically, of the 23 Ar-Raqqa neighbourhoods, 21 (91 percent) are fully functional in terms of the basic services factored in the index of essential services. The remainder two neighbourhoods are considered moderately functional, mainly due to the lack of electricity and poor public water services.

Residents, in all neighbourhoods, reported good accessibility to markets and healthcare facilities, as well as good solid waste collection services. The provision of water seems to be relatively problematic in some neighbourhoods (8 out of 23), and is completely inaccessible in Al-Ameen and Al-Tasheeh. However, the poor quality of water is widespread. Lack of electricity remains a great challenge across all Ar-Raqqa neighbourhoods. People are fully dependent on the

private sector's energy generators, with very limited access to electricity.

There was no direct correlation between population figures and functionality. The return movement to Ar-Raqqa which had peaked in February and June of 2018, started to relatively decrease since July 2018 despite the alluded to functionality of the neighbourhoods.

Map 12.1: Functionality of essential services (FES)

13. Economy

Economic overview / Pre-conflict dynamics

Ar-Raqqa's economy is historically tied to the Euphrates River basin, and its role in providing much of the region's agriculture. Due to its system of irrigated canals and rich 'Fertile Crescent' soils, Ar-Raqqa's rich agricultural sector made it a major source of grain and cotton production¹³⁷ and helped to make Syria – prior to the conflict – the only self-sufficient, food-secure country in the region.¹³⁸

Geographically, the city connects four significant regions: the Euphrates River basin; oil-rich Deir Ez-Zor governorate; Kurdish-populated Al-Hasakah governorate; and western Syria, primarily Aleppo city. Ar-Raqqa is considered a crossroad for key internal and external trade routes spanning from Iraq, through Deir Ez-Zor, and northwards to Turkey. Ar-Raqqa has traditionally maintained advantaged socio-economic connections, including trade, with their Turkish neighbours in southern Anatolia.¹³⁹

Prior to the conflict, the city hosted a population of over 260,000 residents and supported over 200,000 jobs throughout the governorate. Over half of these were in the agriculture, and building and construction sectors, (34 percent and 33 percent respectively). By 2015, 56 percent of all jobs had vanished.¹⁴⁰

Poverty has been endemic in the region. In 2007, Ar-Raqqa governorate reported lowest in Syria on the human poverty index.¹⁴¹ Climatic drought from 2006 – 2011 further exasperated economic hardship in the region, as well as affecting over half of the country's entire agricultural production.¹⁴²

This unprecedented climatic change had dramatic effects on traditional incomes and livelihoods, forcing many into urban centres or abroad in search of employment.

Ar-Raqqa bore the brunt of rural-urban migration caused by the drought, with many rural communities from the north-east migrating to Ar-Raqqa before Aleppo or Damascus – in particular Arabs, unlike Kurds who tended to migrate further south in the pre-war years. This made Ar-Raqqa one of the country's fastest growing urban centres. From 2004 to 2011, the city's annual growth rate reached to 5.8 percent, almost doubling the country's annual rate of 2.8 percent during the same period¹⁴³. The city's population would top 400,000 residents and IDP's by 2012 as a result of the conflict, internal migration, and the climatic displacement. An increase of over 150,000 from pre-conflict population. [see 'Demographics and Population Movement']. The next five years would see a rapid out-migration of the city due to control by the Islamic State (ISIL). By 2017, only 87,000 people remained.

Since the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF's) defeat of ISIL and taking control of the city in October 2017, over 138,000¹⁴⁴ people have returned. Returnees have encountered enormous difficulties due to extensive damage, insufficient housing, and risks associated with Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) contamination. Over 80 percent of the city having been affected.¹⁴⁵ Notwithstanding the city's physical pressure on community infrastructure and services damaged throughout the city's economy is also limited in providing sufficient employment opportunities for returning residents.

The case of the LaFarge Cement Plant

Approximately 80 kilometres north of Ar-Raqqa City lies one of the most modern Cement Plants in the region. Operations of the Lafarge Cement Plant commenced only one year prior to the beginning of the conflict. In that year, the plant produced three million tons. Their output far exceeded government enterprise plants throughout the country with a reported ability to produce total of only 5.3 million tons per year.¹⁴⁶ Now defunct, the plant has been embroiled in litigation since French prosecutors began investigating the company's leaders in 2016. The commission believed that the firm was complicit in providing finances to members of a sanctioned terrorist organization.¹⁴⁷

In September 2014, ISIL took forceable control of the property and sought to re-establish plant operations in order to fund their imposed "state". Prosecutors have charged company leaders with making payments to ISIL and others in order to maintain operations, even during the most intense periods of fighting. In October 2015, Kurdish forces, with the support of American air-support, re-took the plant. Media reports and satellite imagery sourced from social media now assert that the site currently operates as a base for British and American forces.¹⁴⁸

Cement is one of the most foundational construction materials used in the region and will be imperative in the recovery of damaged cities in northern Syria and throughout the country. As communities seek to rebuild their damaged infrastructure, provide housing for returnees, and improve their decimated economies, any urban economic strategy will require sourcing of basic construction materials. Cities in northern Syria should incorporate a regional strategy in supply of materials. Re-establishment of the Lafarge plant (and restructuring ownership under proper relationships with civil authorities) may support urban recovery while providing employment to local workers.

“As communities seek to rebuild their damaged infrastructure, provide housing for returnees, and improve their decimated economies, any urban economic strategy will require sourcing of basic construction materials.”

Urban growth policy

Ar-Raqqa was only separated from within the Deir Ez-Zor governorate in the early 1970s, prior to which Ar-Raqqa was a minor settlement on the Euphrates. The decision to develop Ar-Raqqa in its own right followed the decision to develop the Tabqa dam and create a major hydro-electric project on the Euphrates. The relocation of communities affected by the dam project necessitated a new city plan and to manage migration toward the new central city, driven by the large number of employees required to undertake the hydro project. The project's scale was so large that they developed an entirely new city. Tabqa city, also known as Al-Thawrah, was developed as a regional peer to Ar-Raqqa. Tabqa, on the western side of the Euphrates river, was presented as a model of a government designed urban centre that knitted social and cultural differences together through the development process.

However, this proactive government policy to accommodate urban growth did not consider the local tribal dynamics. These destinations became a lightning rod, with every local tribe wanting a foothold in Ar-Raqqa city; where each occupied a new informal residential neighbourhood around the planned formal urban centres. This meant that 50 percent of residential property in Ar-Raqqa was zoned as informal by 1995.

Between 1995 and 2005, Ar-Raqqa city witnessed very slow urban growth, except for a neighbourhood accommodating the Busaraya tribe which was created around the cities Shia shrine in 1998 after Assad allowed Iran to restore it.

From 2005, two major dynamics affected Ar-Raqqa city; one being the drought in the north-east, which drove rural-urban migration and decimated local agriculture; the other stemmed from Syria signing the Greater Arab Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA). Following the free trade agreement, exports of sheep to gulf countries rose exponentially and transformed Ar-Raqqa into a major hub for livestock exports. Ar-Raqqa's increased role as a centre of trade further tied tribal interests to the city.

National and regional economic factors

In order to understand the city's current situation and issues affecting its future, the economy has been analysed by comparing pre-conflict issues and trends to those of the present. These can only be adequately understood in the context of regional, national and international dynamics. Many larger factors play a significant role in Ar-Raqqa's economy now and will into the future.

Regional imbalances in public spending has led to migration to urban centres. Rural to urban migration in Syria is a result of both climatic changes and investment policies aimed at larger cities. National government spending in specific urban areas has been a major driver of economic development and employment.¹⁴⁹ During the first half of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010), over 80 percent the State's investment spending was concentrated in only 5 percent of the country.¹⁵⁰ This “trickle-down” economic policy was unsuccessful at improving rural areas and secondary cities.

This spending imbalance affects both rural communities and urban areas unprepared for growth. A lack of investment in rural areas has increased migration to employment centres. As a result, the agricultural sector in Ar-Raqqa alone lost an estimated 40,000 jobs between 2010 and 2015.¹⁵¹

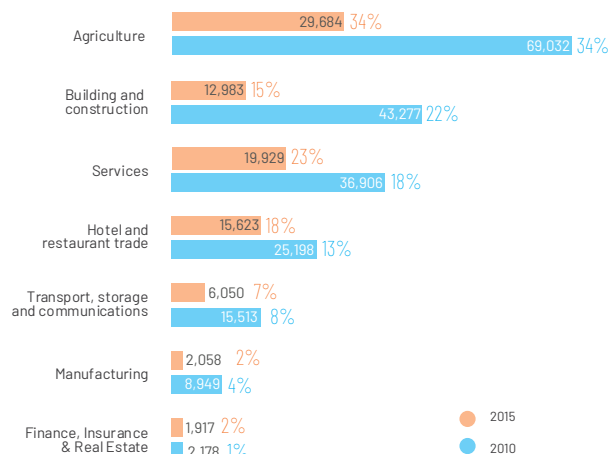
Economic Profile

As a regional agricultural hub, the city relies on connectivity to surrounding rural areas and the region. Ar-Raqqa City is also a historic centre for markets and the administrative centre for the province.

In 2010, agriculture, building and construction made up 56 percent of the governorate's employment. This percentage correlates nationally, as 46 percent of country's economy relied on the agriculture sector.¹⁵² The services sector (combining public administration and commerce) made up 18 percent of total city employment. Also noteworthy, the restaurant and hotel sector comprised 13 percent of the city's economy, reflecting its importance as a regional thoroughfare for trade. Employment in manufacturing and agro-processing comprised 4 percent of the city's employment.

Figure 13.1: Number and percentage of total employment by economic sector. Ar-Raqqa Governorate (2010 & 2015)¹⁵³

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics (2010) and IMF's working paper, "Syria conflict economy" (2016)



Agriculture and construction both incurred huge losses in employment. Nationally, estimates put the decrease in these sectors by up to 70 percent.¹⁵⁴ The effects of the conflict and severe drought from 2006 – 2011 created unprecedented displacement and demographic changes. Building and construction also suffered dramatically due to the almost total loss of real estate demand.¹⁵⁵ In Ar-Raqqa, the effects have been profound. Even prior to the conflict, the government in Damascus provided little, if any, in the way of economic development to cities in the eastern portion of the country. Farming and trade were controlled by the state. Investment was insufficient to assist in developing manufacturing, agro-processing, and other value-added improvements providing higher skilled, better paying employment. Raw materials were transported to the provinces for processing. The result stifled the economy and constrained most workers to agriculture labour or public sector roles.¹⁵⁶

Commercial activity prior to the conflict was also limited, "very simple", and did not provide sufficiently for every day needs.¹⁵⁷ Current reports from the city suggest that commercial activity and life in the markets is returning. The recent increase in the number of returnees to the city has revitalized the local market. An emergence of new economic activities and businesses such as heavy machinery, car repair workshops, fuel trade, rubble removal have emerged in response to local challenges.¹⁵⁸ Small markets shops, workspaces, services and retail are popping up in areas where population has returned.¹⁵⁹ These commercial activities, entrepreneurialism and renewal provides an indication of the sense of empowerment felt by local businesses, which didn't exist under ISIL control. Due to heightened security by SDF forces and Raqqa Internal Security Forces (RISF), reports of theft, looting, expropriation and extortion are less frequent than in other parts of the country.¹⁶⁰

Seeing new commercial activity (and the support it provides to individuals and families) is encouraging.

However, the occupants of previously uninhabited, damaged or vacated commercial units (typically first floor retail) may risk infringement on property rights. Care and concern should be taken to ensure commercial investment does not create an environment for further disputes and marginalization. Oversight should be put in place to advocate for vulnerable community members, including the displaced currently outside of Ar-Raqqa.

The displacement of qualified workers has created a challenge to restoring the quality of life to the community. The loss of human capital and skilled labour resulting from massive displacement has had a grave impact on the local economy and restoration of services. The current workforce is largely uneducated and non-professional.¹⁶¹

This has been especially felt in education and health sectors. Both areas severely lack requisite staffing and personnel. As the 2018-19 school year began, there was a shortage of teachers to serve the roughly 49,000 students ready to attend classes.

Regional supply chains and beneficiaries

Due to its location along the M6, Ar-Raqqa's main supply routes include trade with Turkey to the north, Iraq and Kurdistan to the east and regime areas to the south. Historically, the city has been connected to the region via "Regional Road 4" to Aleppo to the west and Deir Ez-Zor (and Iraq) to the south-east; and to Homs and the north-south M5 via "Regional Road 42".

Trade in northern Syria is subject to a variety of challenges and ramifications due to the volatility of the region, ongoing fighting and geo-political tensions. At the local city market, this results in creating high priced commodities, making some essential household items unaffordable to community members. The source of goods is often unknown. The quality of goods has also been identified as concern by local authorities. Due to little oversight, they're seeing many poor-quality imports originating from China, India and Iran entering the market.¹⁶²

Trade restrictions and price gouging is also hindering agriculture development and production, as there is lack of available agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizers.¹⁶³

War Economy dynamics

Following the fall of ISIL, Ar-Raqqa has become a hub for trade and transport. Syria's primary sources of products and goods are in the north east (in the case of cotton, oil, wheat, barley, and meat) and from Turkey (in the case of processed food, appliances, and car parts, for example). Trade between both Turkey and the Kurdish Administration with the government of Syria was hampered by instability in Deir Ez-Zor and Idlib and the inaccessibility of Euphrates, leaving Ar-Raqqa as the most practical route.

Major transporters emerged from the war as proxies

between the conflict actors and have been able to broker quite efficient, sustainable, and reliable trade agreements. This has also ensured the rapid recovery of markets in Ar-Raqqa, where shops have been able to stock produce and enable population return.

Enabling access to trade routes in eastern Syria necessitates that transporters have origins Ar-Raqqa to garner the support of the tribes and the PYD to allow their trucks safe passage. By using a local agency to secure access through Ar-Raqqa, goods find their way from Turkey to Damascus, and oil from the east has made its way to the coast. Despite political and military tensions between the various actors involved in facilitating these transport routes, trade has been accepted by all players as a tacit stabilizer, which it has proven to be.

As the trade grew, conflict parties have started to levy official taxes on goods travelling in all directions by creating an official border where taxes are collected

and accounted for. 'Damascus' has a crossing south of the Euphrates, led by a militia leader named 'Ghawar'. The 'Ghawar checkpoint' levies taxes on any passage of goods except from the major transporters who hold semi-monopolies on transport, such as the Al Qaterji family, based in Hama, who maintains substantial control of the commercial routes and transactions into Ar-Raqqa.

Any military escalation or instability in Ar-Raqqa in the near future, would impact these trade routes and have major shocks across the country, impacting the economic fortunes of all parties and severely impacting access to basic goods across Syria

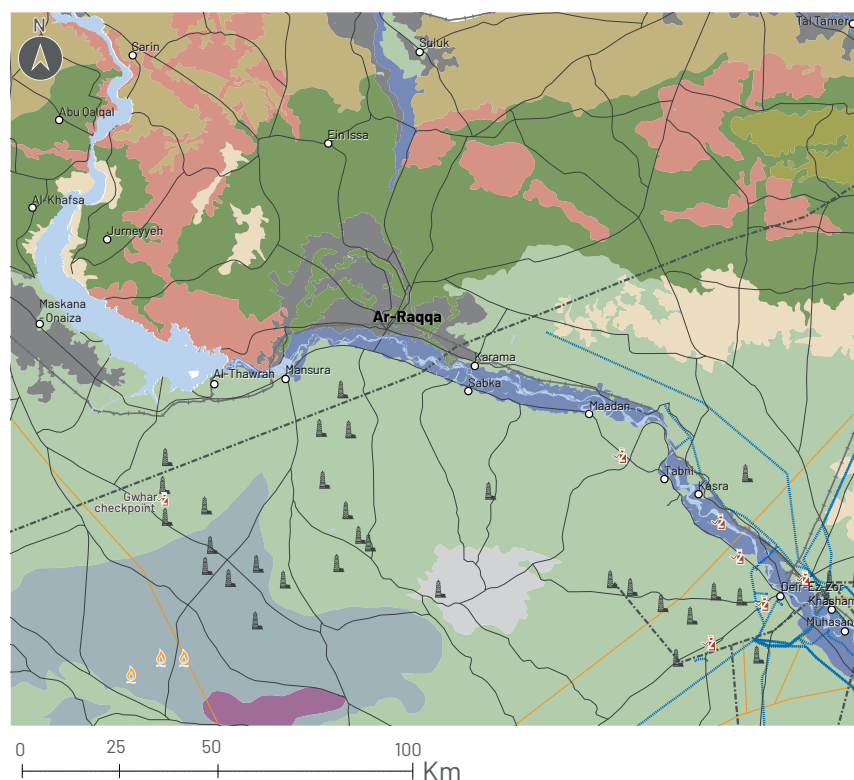
There continues to be informality in some economic sectors. These operate unregulated and without oversight. Most notable informal activities include garbage collection, commercial sales, and stolen furniture and stolen money.¹⁶⁴ The latter items indicate the continued existence of looting and black-market profiteering.

Map 13.1: Key regional connections in Ar-Raqqa Governorate

- Administrative centre
- Main Roads
- +— Railway
- Water Bodies
- 🛢️ Oil fields
- 🔥 Gas fields
- 🚧 Checkpoint
- Oil Pipe
- Electricity Powerline
- Gas Pipe

Agricultural Regions

- Arid plains, groundwater-supplemented agricultural systems
- Arid plains, jebel bishri
- Arid plains badia
- Euphrates basin, irrigation extension areas
- Euphrates basin, river plain
- Palmyrean hill-plain system, hill- pediment association
- Palmyrean hill-plain system, outwash plains
- Semi-arid plains, barren lands
- Semi-arid plains, predominantly barley-based cropping systems
- Semi-arid plains, predominantly wheat-based cropping systems
- Semi-arid plains, jebel abdel-aziz



Source: Satellite imagery, Urban-S field data collection, OSM, OCHA, ICARDA, US Energy Information Administration
Date of Creation: 02 Dec. 2018

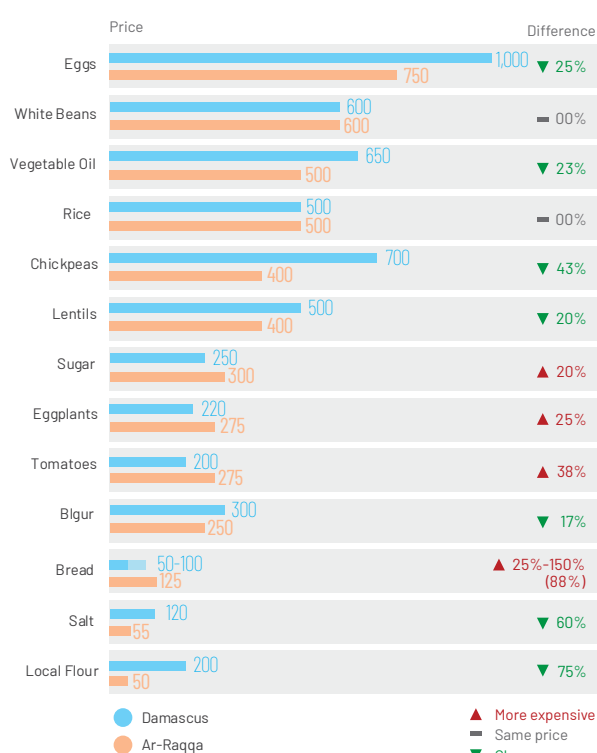
Key Economic challenges in Ar-Raqqa City

Unemployment

The current unemployment rate is difficult to measure, though discussions with community members and government officials have characterized unemployment as “extremely high”. Unemployment has been reported as the main obstacle for livelihoods in the city. Other challenges for economic development and business include labour costs and the high price of raw materials.¹⁶⁵

Figure 13.2: Comparison of prices of essential household food-related commodities in Damascus and Ar-Raqqa in Syrian Pounds (April 2018)

Source: UN Inter-Agency Mission Report (2018)



Political, civil service, and humanitarian salaries are one of the key livelihoods in Ar-Raqqa presently. INGO workers number over 1000, with Syrian NGOs and CS groups rivaling these numbers in addition to public sector salaries, SDF, and RCC structures, whose combined payrolls reach the tens of millions (USD) each month. Additionally, several new businesses have emerged in Ar-Raqqa throughout the war. These include: heavy machinery owners working on rubbles removal, fuel trade, portable water trade, as well as workshops for fixing vehicles. Though these businesses are incapable of replacing the traditional livelihoods in the city and its vicinity, they represent income sources for a good portion of the working force in the city in the near future and are highly dependent on the current control situation and funding streams.

Outside of these roles, the present workforce in the city is mostly uneducated and challenged with lack of job opportunities. Ongoing challenges in the agricultural sector throughout the war, include the destruction of irrigation canals and pumps, and the displacement of most workers from the area, as well as a lack of access to necessary supplies (seeds, pesticides, etc). Additionally, access to markets outside Ar-Raqqa governorate remains highly restricted due to the destruction of roads and challenges to mobility as well as the proliferation of checkpoints on frontlines. Local sources indicated that farmers are currently reliant on water from wells for irrigation, which is usually mildly salty and thus harmful for soil and plantations. Though the lack of informal oil in the area means the land is less contaminated than the agricultural areas closer to Deir Ez-Zor.

Because of the relative stability and the organized security force provided by U.S. police force creation, local Shawaya farmers were not inclined to join armed groups, but instead to go back to their farms. Some stabilization funding has supported agriculture in these areas. This return to agriculture livelihoods near Ar-Raqqa, is unlike neighbouring Deir Ez-Zor where return to agrarian ways had been almost impossible, or on the western side of the Euphrates in government of Syria controlled areas where there are no investments to support the farmers or to restore land and irrigation systems, at least in part due to the need to draw from these agrarian communities for military service. Ar-Raqqa has seen the recovery of the sheep trade and has become a major sheep market, due to exports of sheep.

Family expenditure

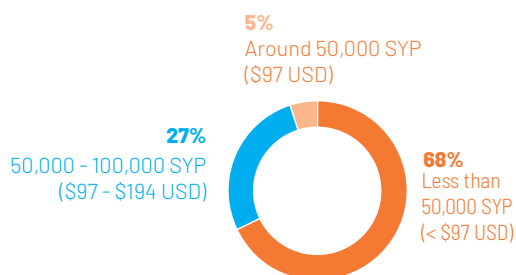
The cost of living is currently a major challenge for residents and returnees to the city. Although prices of food commodities are reported to be lower than other locations and cities, household earnings are insufficient for many community members to afford many basic necessities. For income, many rely on distribution services such as fuel sales. Others require remittance support from family members hailing from outside of the country.¹⁶⁶ In a recent report, 68 percent of city households admitted earning less than 50,000 Syrian Pounds (USD \$97) per month. More than half of City residents are unable to meet basic needs through household income alone.¹⁶⁷

The United Nations reports that up to 95 percent of the city's residents are food insecure.¹⁶⁸ Based on a recent survey of neighbourhood representatives, 90 percent of respondents expressed discouragement and felt that city's economic situation had not improved over the past six months.¹⁶⁹ This is a major challenge, and one that will affect the community's social cohesion and security. Forebodingly, residents note that staple food items such as bread was more affordable during the

period under ISIL.¹⁷⁰ Families unable to earn sufficient incomes, support themselves, and afford basic household necessities continues to be a source of anger, frustration, and anxiety. It also poses a major risk to returnees who may be unable to secure employment upon arrival.

Figure 13.3: Monthly household income in Ar-Raqqa City (August 2018)

Source: Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018



Source: Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City. REACH. October 2018

A detailed survey is required to determine the exact impact of the economic situation on poverty levels, and to show how other sources of income generated from humanitarian aid, remittances, liquidation of assets or use of savings are enabling families to survive this economic hardship.

Damage

The damage to Ar-Raqqa's neighbourhoods, buildings and markets is extensive. An estimated 80 percent of the city has been affected which has been devastating to the market infrastructure and production outputs for necessities such as wheat.^{171, 172} Key transportation and trade routes have been altered due to damage to roads and bridges. Prior to conflict, the national railroad network transported agricultural commodities to regional markets. However, the rail line has been defunct since the onset of the conflict. The train station, located in the northern part of the city, also suffered damage and currently is non-operational.

The City and adjacent vicinity contain heavy industrial facilities, including a cement plant, grain mill / processing facility, sugar factory and a cotton center.¹⁷³ A variety of roadside markets exist along primary transportation corridors, including the M6 which cuts through the centre of town. In addition, the city contains 34 bakeries and several grain storage silos.

The largest concentration of small shops is in the city's centre, in the Al Mansour, Al Rasheed, and Al Ameen neighborhoods. All three of these neighbourhoods have been classified as severely damaged. Analysis indicates that 25 percent of the city's industrial areas and 15 percent of its commercial areas have been either totally damaged or razed to the ground.

Map 13.2: Markets, Storage Facility, and Bakeries by damage level

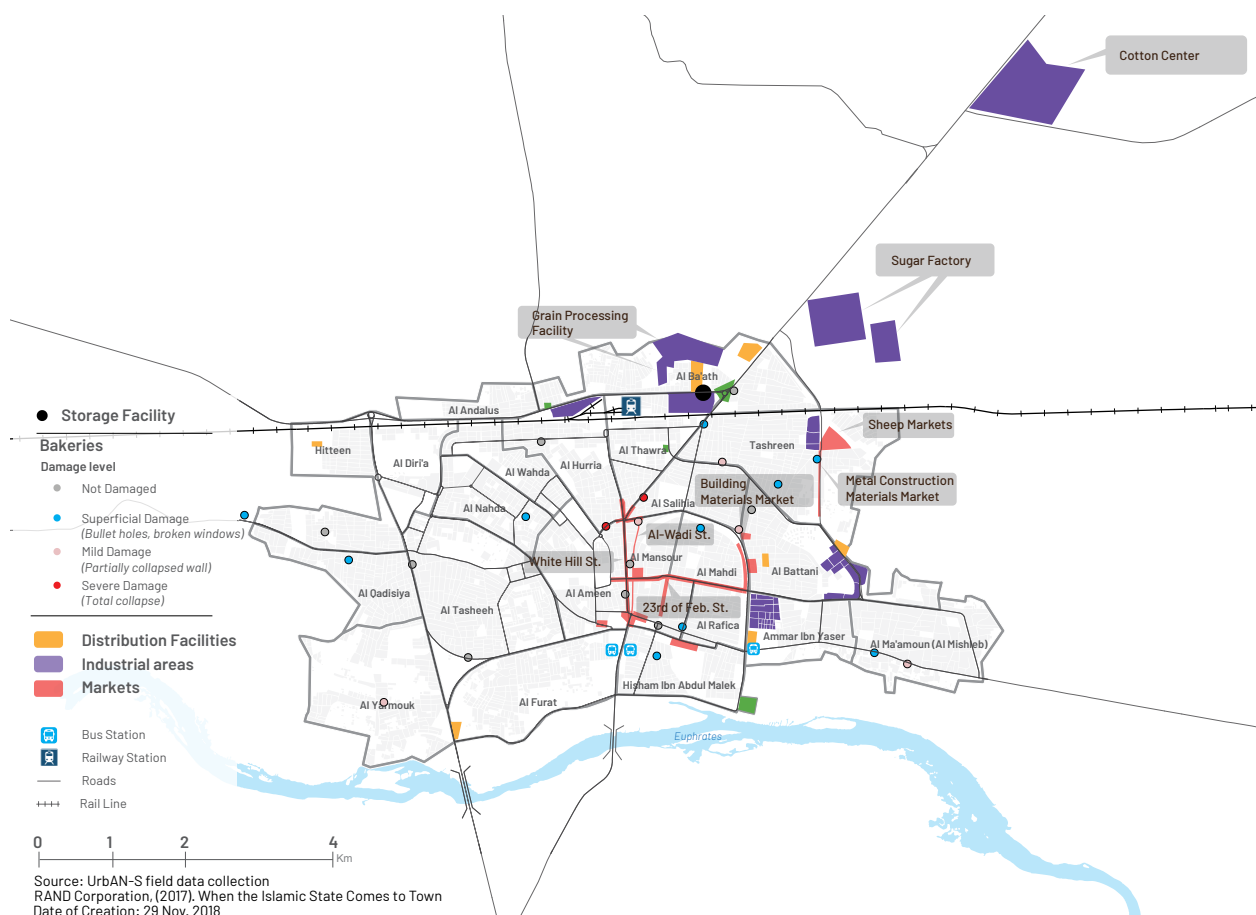
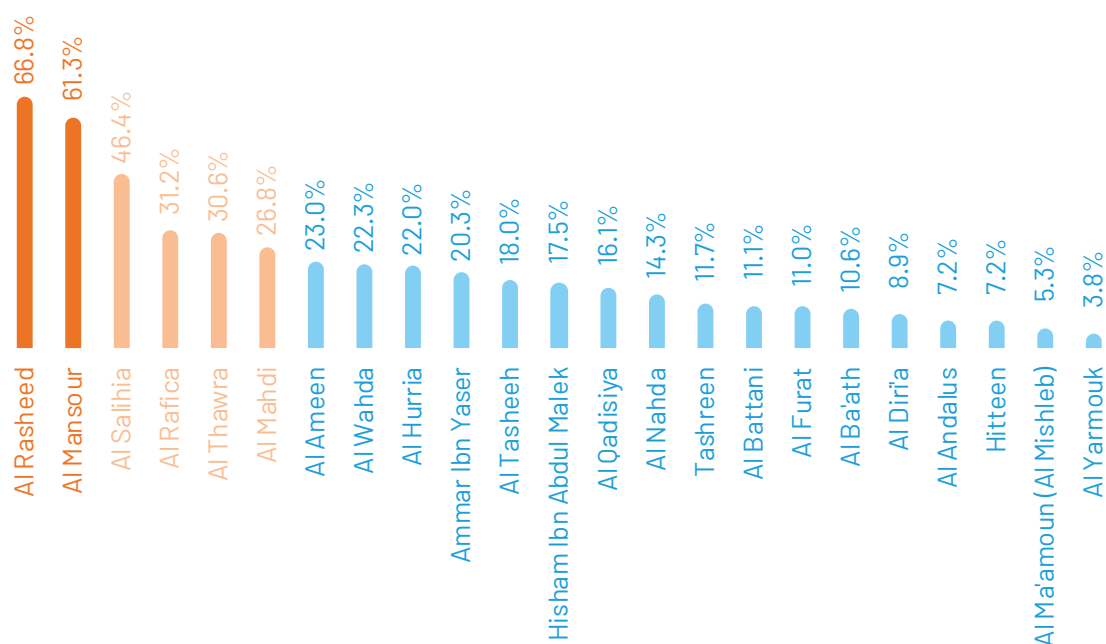
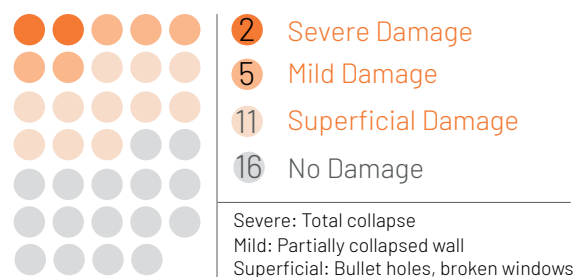


Figure 13.4: Percentage of services damaged, by neighbourhood

Source: UrbAN-S damage analysis



Of the city's 34 bakeries, most escaped damage altogether or suffered only superficial damage to windows and walls. Except for four neighbourhoods without bakeries (Hitteen, Al Dir'a, Al Tasheesh, and Al Ameen), bakeries are currently reported as functional throughout Ar-Raqqa.¹⁷⁴ Ownership of these bakeries vary, but it has been reported that 66 percent of bakeries in the governorate are privately owned, while the remaining are publicly owned or in some other form of ownership.¹⁷⁵

Figure 13.5: Status of Bakeries (Ar-Raqqa City)**Source:**

Wheat to bread assessment report.
Whole of Syria. Food security cluster. December 2018

Figure 13.6: Grain storage facilities (Ar-Raqqa City)**Source:**

Wheat to bread assessment report.
Whole of Syria. Food security cluster. December 2018

Impacts of damage to agricultural assets and infrastructure have affected the economic functions of key agricultural linkages. The loss of productivity in agriculture has been an enormous shock to the region. It's estimated that the governorate's loss in annual production is between USD \$400-550 million and the cost of repairing or replacing agricultural assets to pre-war functionality is estimated in the range USD \$350-\$500 million.¹⁷⁶

Local authorities report the biggest challenge faced by businesses is an inadequate (and insufficient) power supply. Though most neighbourhoods are reporting electricity from 8-12 hours per day, household electrical sources originate primarily from community generators.¹⁷⁷ The public electrical grid network is still non-operational, limiting the ability for homes and businesses to enjoy full-time electrical power. The availability of backup generators and servicing of the generators has also been reported a challenge.¹⁷⁸ Limited supplies of fuel oil and diesel also hinder access to electricity. This affects basic services as well as other infrastructure such as water pumps.

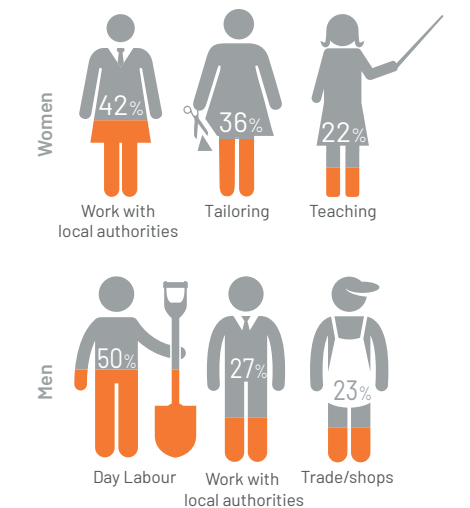
While many small shops have been restored or newly opened, limited electricity supply is a challenge to business operations. It also limits the ability of more energy intensive economic activities to operate, including larger commercial, manufacturing and industrial operations. Increasing electrical capacity has been identified as an urgent priority of the RCC in its capital investment planning.¹⁷⁹

Figure 13.7: Grain Silos to the north-east of Ar-Raqqa City

Economic development under administration of the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC)

As Ar-Raqqa City has come under the control of Kurdish and SDF forces, the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) was established to institute local governance, restore public basic services and engage in reconstruction.¹⁸⁰ The RCC contains 16 divisions and one overarching "reconstruction committee" (See governance section for analysis of the RCC).¹⁸¹ Funding from international humanitarian and stabilization donors, namely the United States, has played a large part in the restoration of basic services and infrastructure. They are also in the process of clearing neighbourhoods and critical infrastructure of unexploded ordinances and ERW contamination.

Figure 13.8: Most commonly reported employment type and gender (October 2018)



Source: Situation Overview: Area-Based Assessment of Ar-Raqqa City, REACH, October 2018

With 27 percent of men and 42 percent of women reporting finding employment with the local public authority, making the RCC is currently one of the largest employers in the city. As of December 2018, the Raqqa RCC is employing 7,230 persons amongst all divisions (committees) of the municipality, which includes contractors under each sub-committee.¹⁸²

The city's capacity for overall recovery has largely been driven by the resilience of commercial sector and entrepreneurial business. The RCC has taken 'light-touch' approach to oversight of businesses, allowing for more commercial activity and business. However, their official line is to encourage investment, either locally or from international sources, as it relates to reconstruction and economic development in the city. Businesses need to apply for licensing and be authorized by the RCC "ministry of municipalities" in order to have their legal status ensured, and to review property contracts.¹⁸³

It is not made clear how many businesses in the city are operating under RCC-issued licences, yet the RCC currently reports that 86 non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and local charities are currently registered. These organizations operate in various sectors and provide varying services throughout the city, including de-mining, health, education, housing recovery, food / cash distribution, water trucking, and infrastructure development. These programs are also significant drivers of economic development by providing basic services and humanitarian support to households. Stabilization investments are also funding major repairs and reconstruction of critical infrastructure. This includes the city's water and sewer network, rehabilitating irrigation canals and restoration of some public open space and parks. These, along with ongoing support to public services such as health and education, will help sustain operations of some business and commercial activities. They are, however, only covering a fraction of the devastation incurred to life, property, and capital (public) facilities. Major investments in the transportation network (including bridges), water network, power grid and other economic infrastructure are all required to improve the city's productive capacity and increasing base employment.

Business registration requirements under the Ar-Raqqa Civil Council

According to the Ar-Raqqa Civil Council, businesses and organization are required to apply for licensing. The RCC suggest this bureaucratic requirement has been set up to avoid “overlap” of activities, effectively operating a coordination mechanism for the city. Though seemingly benign and appropriate of a local authority’s role, this presents two concerns by would-be businesses, investors, and organizations (e.g. humanitarian, stabilization, and civil society). 1.) The transparency and equity of the registration, licensing and authorization process should be clearly provided under an internationally recognized legal framework. The process should support inclusivity and consider vulnerable members of the community, and 2.) Organizations wishing to operate and provide services in Ar-Raqqa are often subject to donor policies and requirements of international governments. Due to the current geo-political dynamics and regional tensions, these requirements may prohibit the appearance of “working with” or acknowledging the legitimacy of the RCC. This may result in additional informality of commercial activities and restrict humanitarian organizations from operating at maximum capacity.

Economic development services

There are currently no banking or formal financial institutions available in Ar-Raqqa. The RCC encourages investment of financial services. However, due to the city’s devastation, the community’s focus is on essential services and the humanitarian response.¹⁸⁴ However, private money transfer services, exchange shops, or “Hawala” lenders, do exist. These currently serve as the main financial services provider and mechanism for receiving remittances. Reports state that hawala shops are concentrated along the commercial corridor between Old Ar-Raqqa and Rasheed neighbourhoods.¹⁸⁵

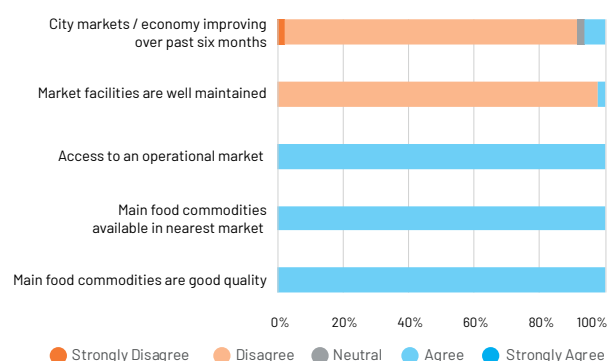
Additionally, no formal or technical training is currently being offered for labour skills and workforce development. However, this has been also recognized as a priority by the local authorities and the RCC intends to program trainings once emergency response measures are completed.¹⁸⁶

Access to markets, fresh food and commodities

As reported by neighbourhood representatives, basic “main” food items and commodities are available and in good quality in the nearest neighbourhood market¹⁸⁷, including in the areas where most population have returned. In addition, all neighbourhoods report not having challenges in reaching the markets. Some staples such as meat and flour are not available in some neighbourhoods.¹⁸⁸

Most residents (89 percent of respondents) acknowledge that the purchase power of households is insufficient, despite products available in the market throughout. This is especially evident in three of the poorest neighbourhoods, Rasheed, Yarmouk and Qadissiya. In these neighbourhood community focal points report that they are either unable to afford basic household needs or cannot reach the market due to financial challenges.¹⁸⁹

Figure 13.9: Community focal point perceptions of markets

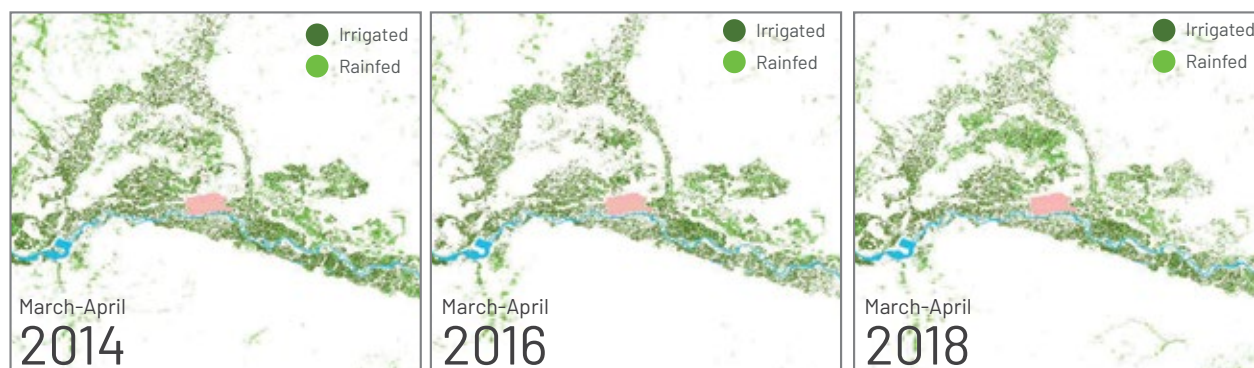


Source: Community focal point survey, Urban-S (September 2018).

Impact of drought and other environmental factors on the economy

Figure 13.10: Vegetated canopy in the Ar-Raqqa region

Source: Joint Research Center of the European Commission (2018)



In the early-mid 2000's Syria was hit by the worst drought in over five decades, which peaked between 2006 and 2008.¹⁹⁰ As an agriculturally-dependent region, climatic changes on patterns of precipitation impacted approximately 60 percent of Syria's lands. This resulted in wide-spread food and economic insecurity.¹⁹¹ Cuts to subsidies on diesel further impacted tenuously-positioned farmers in cash-cropping areas. Over 35,000 families left their lands and went to seek employment in urban areas.¹⁹² 2007 and 2008 witnessed a drop in the combined wheat and barley production to 47 percent and 67 percent respectively.¹⁹³ As a result, Syria imported wheat for the first time in its history. This period coincided with escalation of tensions in the region and beginning of the crisis.

Remote sensing analysis of regional vegetation

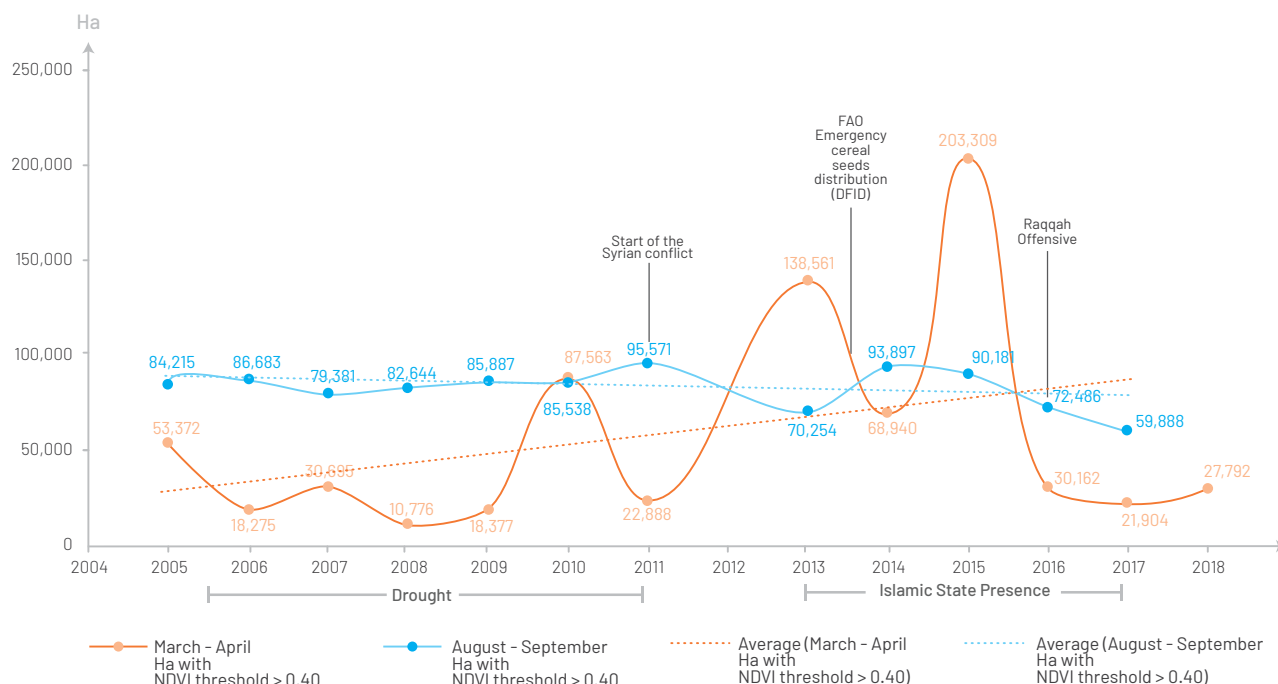
One of the ways agricultural activity on the ground can be monitored and analysed, using objective and consistent metrics, is the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) method. In simple terms, the NDVI registers the spectral signature of chlorophyll, and therefore the vegetation canopy, on a satellite sensor over time using a sequence of images over time. Combining this information with precipitation and evaporation indices, it is possible to make inferences on the climatic effects on a region's vegetation.¹⁹⁴

Analysis in the agricultural areas of the Ar-Raqqa governorate along the Euphrates river basin found that vegetation, over the period studied, fluctuated primarily due to seasonal rainfall. In 2011, the area was still affected by drought. However, heavy rainfall in October and November of 2015 dramatically improved farming conditions. Even despite barriers from ongoing fighting, reports indicated a 50 percent higher wheat harvest over the previous year.¹⁹⁵ An emergency distribution of cereal seeds in October of 2014 provided 4,500 hectares of additional planting.¹⁹⁶ From 2016-18, a drop in agricultural output was evident and likely as a result of heavy military operations in the area, especially during the late summer irrigation season. Current reports indicate a lack of materials and agricultural inputs such as fertilizer and seed.

It is useful to note the consistency of the irrigated crop coverages over the period studied. This can be interpreted that the water feeding Lake Assad and Tabqa dam in neighbouring Turkey has not dramatically altered during the conflict.

Figure 13.11: NDVI – Representation and impact on the region's agriculture¹⁹⁷

Source: Joint Research Center of the European Commission (2018)



The NDVI also indicates that the area's agricultural productivity is currently underperforming¹⁹⁸. Low agricultural productivity affects the workforce throughout the region. It represents a loss of employment and income for rural residents, and negatively affects employment in food processing, trade, transportation, and other related industries. Wheat production in Ar-Raqqa and surrounding governorates has as direct impact on national food security and the region's role as Syria's 'food-basket'.

Sectoral considerations

- Restore agricultural trade networks and linkages to rural satellite towns in Ar-Raqqa and surrounding Governorates. (Re)-establish Ar-Raqqa as the preeminent grain and cotton processing centre in northern Syria. Ensure sufficient access to agricultural input such as seed, fertilizers, and machinery. Work with agricultural cooperatives to monitor seed types in order to prevent invasive species and unsustainable practices.
- Prepare a regional strategy for sourcing of construction materials such as cement, steel, additives, electrical, plumbing, appliances, and other finishing materials.
- Restore critical infrastructure and public services to sustain returnees. Re-develop the electrical grid network to support businesses and energy intensive economic activities.
- Ensure that establishment / re-establishment of commercial businesses, market location(s), and small shops do not infringe on property rights. Put measures in place to protect the property rights of vulnerable community members, including those currently displaced outside of Ar-Raqqa.
- Assess and evaluate the local authority's business organization licensing and registration program to promote formalized trade and commercial activity. Ensure registration follows international standards, is transparent, and supports vulnerable members of the community. Modify registration requirements for humanitarian and charitable entities by authorizing oversight of separate, non-governmental entity such as local alliance of civil society organizations.
- Make efforts to ensure the current organic return pattern, which is gradually allowing for ground-up rebuilding and reconstruction, is not destabilized. If examples of other Syrian cities like Deir Ez-Zor were followed (where the old city is to be completely redeveloped), it will devastate Ar-Raqqa for generations. Additionally, a resourceful return programme should look for ways to restore the middle class of the city. Many of refugees are in Turkey. These middle-class residents run the real estate sector and other professions. Their contributions are imperative in revitalizing commerce and industry in Ar-Raqqa.

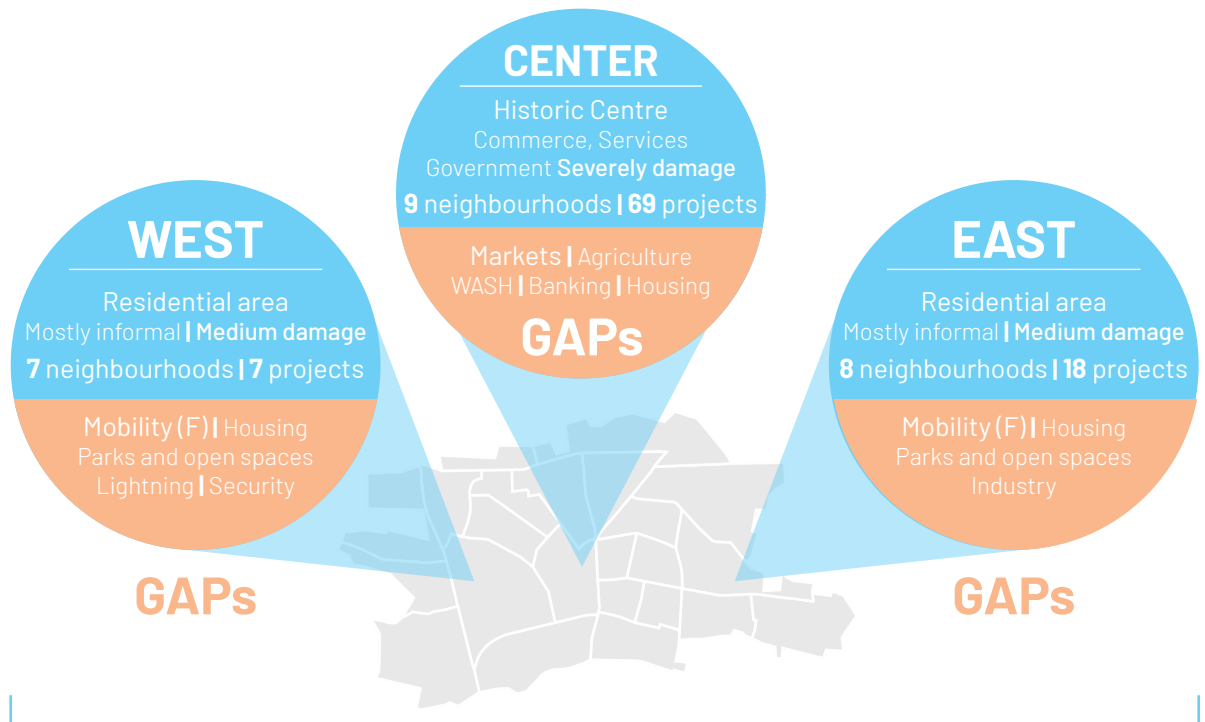
- 137 It's also been reported that the governorate is the primary source of Syrian wheat, producing 600,000 tons in 2005 alone. Source: <https://www.raqqa-sl.com/en/?p=2127&>
- 138 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/fri-fao-official-agriculture-in-syria-remarkably-resilient-but-needs-major-rebuilding-effort/>
- 139 https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/syria_crisis_common_context_analysis_june_2014.pdf
- 140 Based on analysis of CBS labour force statistics (2010) and national sectoral employment loss from the IMF 's working paper, "Syria conflict economy" (2016)
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- 144 <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syria-crisis-northeast-syria-situation-report-no-25-15-may-2018-15-june>
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- 170 <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/26/658142688/u-s-plan-to-stabilize-raqqa-and-stop-return-of-ISIL-doesnt-appear-to-be-working>
- 171 Wheat to bread assessment report. Whole of Syria. Food security cluster. December 2018
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14. 4W Analysis

Who's doing What, Where and When

Figure 14.1: Sectors effectively progressing



Sectors Effectively Progressing Solid waste collection | Policing | Civil Defence | Electricity

Because of the high levels of local participation in service provision and relief, there are over 106 NGOs operating in and around the city. Humanitarian actors are coordinating the activities with the RCC, who approve projects. Returns are gaining momentum due to improvement of services and predictable stabilization factors inherent in the improvement in conditions.

Stabilization funding has enabled improvement in community services in line with population return. The laissez-faire approach to governing the city's diverse community has yielded credible bottom-up recovery, and a general sense of optimism, but the basic capacity of this model to move the response beyond basic restoration of services is limited.

Ar-Raqqa City is broadly divided into three areas, the west, the centre, and the east.

West

The west is primarily a residential area comprised of informal housing which sustained medium damage. 39 percent of the current population is based in the seven western neighbourhoods where seven projects are being run. Residents reported that the gaps in service provision were mobility (transport), parks and open spaces, streets and lighting, houses, and security.

Centre

The centre is comprised of the historic old city, commerce, services, and government buildings. This area was severely damaged in the conflict. Therefore, in its nine neighbourhoods, it houses only 20 percent

of the current population in Ar-Raqqa. However, 69 projects are being managed in this area due to its central location. Residents reported that gaps in service provision included markets, housing, wash, banking, and agriculture.

East

The east is also a residential area comprised of mostly informal housing stock which sustained a medium level of damage during the conflict to date. Eight neighbourhoods house 41 percent of Ar-Raqqa's current population and 18 projects are being conducted there. Residents reported that gaps in service provision included mobility (transport), housing, parks and open spaces, and industry.

City-wide

According to residents and respondents, sectors which are progressing well for the whole city include solid waste collection, policing, civil defence and electricity provision.

Informal housing neighbourhoods on the east and west outskirts of the city have the most stable population density, with the west being more highly populated, and the majority of service and projects being in the centre. Respondents in both the east and west highlighted the lack of transport around the city, which is severely limited, as a major gap in service at the present time as they have difficulties travelling in order to access education opportunities and markets as well as other key services.

Sectoral response

Education is primarily located in the central neighbourhoods around the old city. The neighbourhoods—most of which are informal and on the outskirts of the city—of Al-Yarmouk, al-Qadisiya, Hitteen, al-Wahda, al-Andalus, al-Mahdi, al-Salihia, al-Rasheed, and Tashreen, have no access to education although they have only a handful of non-functional schools between them suggesting they have traditionally not enjoyed access to education. Secondary schools are clustered in the eastern part of the central city, while functioning primary schools are evenly distributed throughout the community. School curriculums have been a point of contention, with Kurdish authorities occasionally cracking down on schools that do not teach their curriculum, though this has not been consistently enforced.

Medical institutions in Ar-Raqqa City were severely destroyed during the conflict. Medical services are clustered primarily in the central neighbourhoods and are mostly small privately-owned medical points or clinics. However, private medical services are generally unaffordable for residents of Ar-Raqqa City. The main challenges of medical services in the city are shortage of necessary medical equipment, and professional medical staff. Efforts implemented by the health committee in RCC (such as: free vaccinations in Saif Al-Dawla clinic; equipping the maternity and paediatrics hospital and started equipping the national hospital), remain at slow pace and fall short of meeting the needs of the residents of the city, especially with the outbreak of epidemics and diseases in the governorate. (see map 6.2)

The city's major markets are in the central city areas, in al-Rasheed, al-Rafica, al-Mahdi, and al-Mansour, while sheep markets and construction material are mostly available in Tashreen. Markets are growing in line with the improvements in livestock and agricultural sectors. Water is available in Hisham Ibn Abdul Malek near the Euphrates, in al-Ba'ath in the north of the city, and al-Hurria and the city.

For INGOs and NGOs, a slow start has given way to expanded operations, staffing, and capacity to deliver over time. Projects they select can take longer to approve than those initiated from the ground up, though this encourages local buy-in to project design.

Looking forward, a potential US withdrawal could remove the international staff from INGO operations but extensive capacity building over time means these programmes can be run remotely if governance remains static. However, maintaining service provision levels under the current model is contingent on access for goods through Fishkapour border crossing between north-eastern Syria and Iraq through which the north-eastern humanitarian operations depend. In the event of a major change in control (to Turkey or government of Syria), this implementation capacity would be lost for the most part.

15. Risks, Return and Response Considerations

As of January 2019, Ar-Raqqa has undergone four changes in control, all of which have involved violence and military operations, each change has come with completely new systems of governance. Further violence and instability will be devastating for Ar-Raqqa, as will a complete change in governance and service provision. Attempts to maintain stability and continuity where possible will aid community resilience as well as long-term stability.

ISIL has proven its capacity to resurge. As of now, the U.S. has opted to retain a symbolic presence in Syria which aims to subdue further new attempts to control territory. Several issues in the north-east influenced the U.S. decision, namely the number of ISIL detentions, the increasing risk of an Iranian influence dominating the city in a post-SDF control, the shortfall in the international's community's presence, as well as the risk of a Turkish intervention.

As of now, it is foreseen that there will be 1.5 years of fair stability in the area, where an increased UN role could support the consolidation of stability and ease a potential future transition. This timeframe provides an adequate period to invest in assets for the city, social cohesion, and push back against a potential ISIL resurgence. These initiatives should consider the urban and rural context and aim to mitigate intercommunity tensions (mainly Kurdish-Arab, and inter-tribal), support local governance and overall resilience, as well as security (through local policing). Humanitarian assistance through support of local NGO and coordination of humanitarian action will remain necessary during this crucial period.

While actors involved in Syria see a shrinking space for dialogue and a bottom up recovery in Damascus and the areas under its control, Ar-Raqqa, a predominantly Arab city with a functional governance system, remains a strategic location to pilot a transition from SDF governance to a development and good governance nexus. While the present governance model proved efficiency in terms of humanitarian relief efforts, it falls way short from responding to recovery, reconciliation and reconstruction needs. The transition would be all inclusive, allowing the Kurds to move beyond security and humanitarian coordination.

Going forward, the following initial initiatives should be considered:

- An inclusive dialogue joining all concerned parties, including the UN, to develop a meaningful area-based plan to secure a transition to a comprehensive governance model;
- A community outreach strategy to engage various communities, as well as women and youth, to create the foundations for social cohesion and dialogue.
- A strategic planning workshop under the donor coordination group, including actors involved in mediation/governance negotiations to discuss confidence-building measures and safeguards for Ar-Raqqa.

These initiatives and the overall transition would benefit from an increased UN role to mitigate tensions, assist with access into Ar-Raqqa, as well as preserve the integrity of the response and the engagement of actors, while supporting the handover process when appropriate.

To support the initiatives, the SRTF would be an appropriate funding tool due to its regional and western representation of donors, its mandate, as well as its flexibility in the allocation of resources.

1. Risks and Safeguards for Programming

Overall risks and safeguards are outlined in the text below. For more specific risks identified per neighbourhood, please refer to map 15.1 below.

Map 15.1: Risks and safeguards for programming per neighbourhood



1.1 Although HLP rights are currently being mitigated in Ar-Raqqa, local authorities have no current planning processes for the city. Therefore a change in control of Ar-Raqqa could create a vacuum in terms of city reconfiguration for the incumbent, which could offset HLP rights and affect potential returns.

1.2 A potential unruly transition could also ensue a new wave of displacements. This is of particular concern if the government were to take control of the city, as Ar-Raqqa currently serves as a sanctuary from government conscription.

✚ The degree of returns and recovery, as well as the method of transition process could ease the risk.

1.3 The capacity of the current administration to vet and issue statements for the safeguard of infrastructure is not sufficient to counter the risk posed by ERW's and unsafe physical structures throughout the city, leaving individuals particularly vulnerable.

✚ A mechanism including set norms and capacity building of the local engineering force would be required, supported by the international community and the UN.

1.4 The RCC does not currently reflect the city's composition. Programming must be sensitive to the realities of this structure, as well as to the urban and tribal representations in the city. These factors could hamper local community plans and risk instability, allowing an ISIL resurgence operations in the area.

✚ Local governance models could support the RCC to ensure equal representation and consensus on future planning processes.

1.5 The damage has affected the centre of the city, including its market and cultural heritage landmarks. The lack of communal spaces affects the capacity of actors to support social cohesion

✚ Programming must go further than supporting infrastructure and social services, to include elements of the city's identity and communal spaces, i.e. sports facilities, cultural heritage sites, traditional cafes.

1.6 Rehabilitation of services incompatible with population distribution lays additional burdens for certain families who must commute.

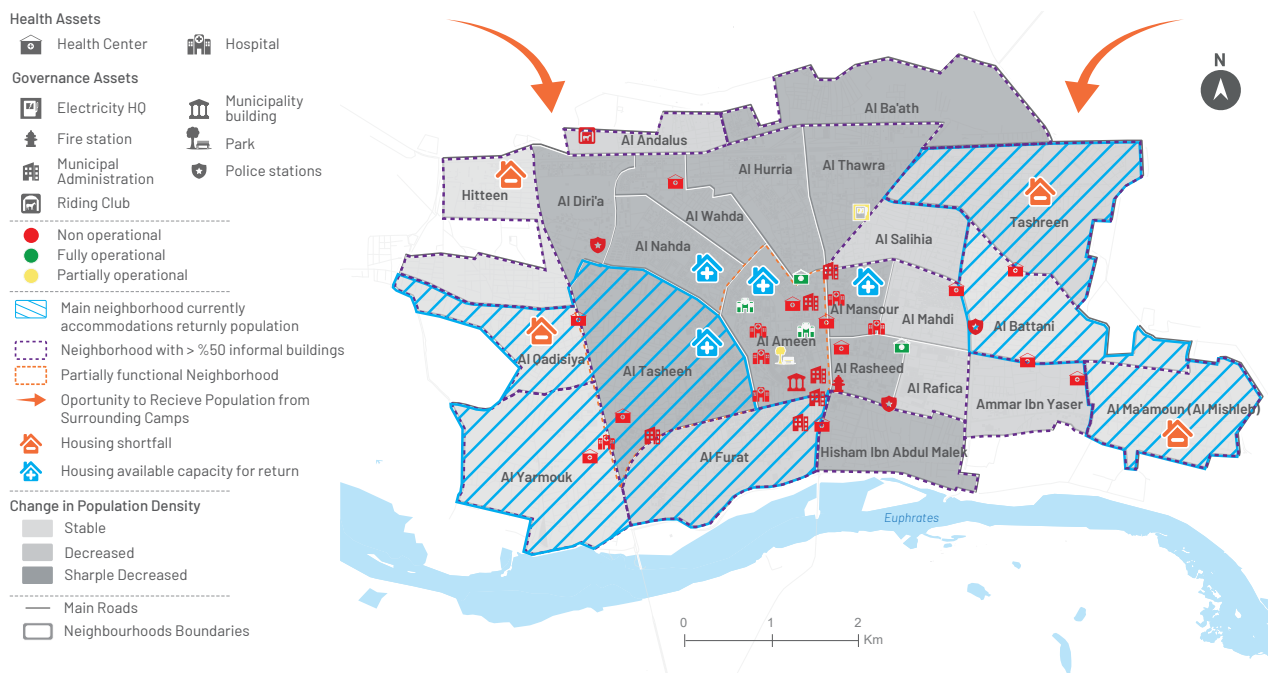
✚ The community's active involvement in the distribution of the budget of projects would ensure a fairer model and ultimately improve project identification mechanisms. In the meantime, rehabilitation of the public transport system can have profound impact on the city's recovery.

1.7 There are currently no mechanisms in place to engage Ar-Raqqa's youth, while Ar-Raqqa remains a sanctuary with a sizeable youth presence.

✚ Engaging youth through economic activities and job creation, in governance and community dialogue, is of course increasingly important.

2. Return Conditions and Limitations

Map 15.2: Return Conditions and Limitations per Neighbourhood



2.1 Returns in Ar-Raqqa have occurred organically. The current population distribution model should be invested in across all city neighbourhoods to support the organic growth of where people have returned, which is a safeguard against security issues, future HLP risks. This also sets the ground for future tribal connections in the city.

✚ The primary policy in Ar-Raqqa should focus on population stability instead of an increase of population, to maintain a balanced population distribution across the city.

2.2 Ar-Raqqa has lost sizeable amount of its population. However, the city has the potential to become a destination for returnees from camps, especially informal camps around Ar-Raqqa city, to relocate into rehabilitated parts of the city.

✚ Increasing population in the city will require substantial investment in infrastructure, schools, basic healthcare, water and sanitation, road networks and housing.

2.3 The city has been reconfigured economically and socially following the conflict and the current resilience and humanitarian programming is not able to re-establish the city's social and economic significance. Indeed, tribal communities have been extremely impoverished and the pre conflict residents with no tribal affiliations have left the city. There is currently an absence of the middle-class.

✚ Involving the tribal representatives and notables of the community in governance structures is a safeguard to inter-tribal escalation and will assist in the diffusion of tensions.

2.4 Contamination from ERW and UXO exists throughout the City. Returns will continue to be subject to safety concerns.

3. Guidelines for short and medium-term response

Map 15.3: Specific Short and Medium Term Response per neighbourhood



Short term

3.1 Support a dialogue process with all actors. This would include:

- A community outreach strategy to engage various communities, including tribal representatives, notables, women and youth, to create the foundations for social cohesion and dialogue;
- A strategic planning workshop including all relevant actors involved in mediation/governance negotiations to discuss confidence-building measures and safeguards for Ar-Raqqa;
- An inclusive dialogue joining all concerned parties, including the UN, to develop a meaningful area-based plan to secure a transition to an enhanced governance model;

3.2 Promote social cohesion through the rehabilitation of community gathering areas and civic involvement. This includes rehabilitation of parks, open spaces, youth sports facilities, and cultural heritage areas to support a community outreach strategy to engage all communities. It also includes areas tainted by ISIL public punishments. Mass graves and informal cemeteries should be carefully handled.

3.3 Align the humanitarian and recovery response with locations of population return. There is a mismatch between the “inside-to-out” spatial focus and the current inhabited areas, which is primarily

in the outskirts and fringe neighbourhoods. This mainly affects programming in sectors such as housing, water supply, education, primary health care, and open spaces. (see map 15.3)

3.4 Support youth integration. This includes soft skills like communication, leadership and teamwork. Other activities should be supported such as sports, music, theatre, and scouting.

3.5 Confirm that the distribution of aid, and recovery programmes is representative of all community groups, both in decision making and in resource-sharing.

3.6 Support accessibility and mobility throughout the city particularly east-west/north-south connections. This includes the rehabilitation of the main transportation network, as well as city-wide removal of debris and UXO decontamination. Efforts should prioritize primary street arterials and those connecting the nearby countryside. This helps to preserve the rights of returnees to return to their properties. (see map 15.3)

3.7 Neighbourhoods with little-to-no education access should be given special concern. There is a continued need for removal of ERW contamination along school access routes. Some facilities lack proper heating, lighting and water systems. (see map 15.3)

RISKS, RETURN AND RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

3.8 Provide for continued rehabilitation of the Ar-Raqqa water station and treatment facility.

Continued emergency repairs and network capacity improvements to the water supply should be performed in all areas of the city. Develop an operations and maintenance plan for water facilities and secure resources in order to implement the plan. The community should study whether a new emergency water treatment station, or stations, should be constructed to serve northern areas of the City. (see map 15.3)

3.9 Emphasize healthcare response implementation in eastern neighbourhoods and along the city's periphery where much of the return has occurred.

Specialized and qualified medical staff should be deployed to areas with the greatest concentration of health vulnerable population. (see map 15.3)

3.10 Encourage continued revitalization and development of small commercial, retail, shops, workspaces, and services.

This should include development of vocational training and other entrepreneurial supports (i.e. microfinance, networking, market access). Prioritize merchants in areas of highest population returns, and areas with largest concentration of small shops, including the city's centre and Al Mansour, Al Rasheed, and Al Ameen neighbourhoods. (see map 15.3)

Medium term

3.11 Improve community processes.

Ensure a community-driven, bottom-up approach to project identification, which includes women and youth, for all recovery planning. Local authorities could begin testing procurement and contracting modalities to support local workforce and economic development. This includes the rehabilitation of community infrastructure and housing.

3.12 Pilot an all-inclusive transition from SDF governance to a development and good governance nexus, responding to recovery, reconciliation and reconstruction needs.

3.13 Bridge connectivity for local services, regional mobility and economic development.

The rehabilitation of bridges (cross-points across Euphrates) to resume function as primary entry-points to the City, especially from the south. This will serve to alleviate traffic congestion in and out of the city. It will also re-establish connectivity and commercial transportation routing through Ar-Raqqa; providing both significant social and economic benefits. As trade between both Turkey and the Kurdish Administration with the government of Syria is hampered by instability in Deir Ez-Zor and Idlib, Ar-Raqqa has become most practical route and hub for trade and transport. (see map 15.3)

3.14 (Re) establish Ar-Raqqa as the preeminent grain and cotton processing centre in northern Syria through:

- Restoring agricultural trade networks and linkages to rural satellite towns and surrounding Governorates. This includes value-chain analysis and targeted investments in agricultural infrastructure.
- Ensuring sufficient access to agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizers, and machinery. Development actors should work with agricultural cooperatives to monitor seed types, prevent invasive species and discourage unsustainable farming practices.
- Supporting and rehabilitating Ar-Raqqa's agricultural markets and agro-processing workshops.

3.15 Support formulation of a regional strategy for sourcing of construction materials

such as cement, steel, additives, electrical, plumbing, appliances, and other finishing materials in the event of continued SRTF funding.



Funded by the European Union with technical and scientific support from the EC JRC, which is an
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