

Scenarios

Syria Needs Analysis Project (SNAP)

September 2013

Scenarios are a description of situations that could occur, a set of informed assumptions about a development that may require humanitarian action. These scenarios can support strategic planning, create awareness, provide early warning and promote preparedness activities for all groups and individuals working on the Syria crisis. The following document covers four scenarios for Syria that are considered possible in the next six months.

Overview

I – Continuation of conflict, increasing political and military fragmentation

- Almost certain to occur within next 6 months
- Major humanitarian impact*

Summary

- A continuation of the current situation leads to further degradation of the humanitarian situation, with basic services becoming increasingly unavailable, particularly during the winter months, and severe protection concerns.

Possible triggers

- A steady flow of military and financial support results in sufficient military capacities for key armed groups to continue fighting.

Possible triggers

- While armed opposition groups consolidate control over specific geographic areas, Syria increasingly splinters into Alawite, Sunni, and Kurdish regions with cities divided into sectarian neighbourhoods.

II – Expanded Spill-over of the Syrian Crisis into Lebanon

- Possible to occur within next 6 months
- Major humanitarian impact

Summary

- Lebanon has been drawn into the Syria conflict as supporters of the opposing sides in Syria battle on Lebanese soil leading to a humanitarian crisis among the Lebanese population.

Possible triggers

- Groups supporting the warring sides in Syria gain strength and momentum within Lebanon. Armed groups opposing the Government of Syria (GoS) are perceived to be a threat to Assad's forces and shelling of the groups within Lebanon becomes fiercer and more widespread.

- Hezbollah's role in Syria is increasingly met with protest and

attacks against Hezbollah-supporting areas in Lebanon, fuelling sectarian tensions across the country

III – Extensive international military intervention has altered the balance of power

- Unlikely to occur within next 6 months
- Important humanitarian impact

Summary

- The international military intervention as proposed by the US Government in September is a punitive action not intended to topple the Assad regime. If this option is implemented, and regional actors do not retaliate, it is unlikely to have a large scale impact on the conflict dynamics. However, scenario III deals with a more extensive attack, which sufficiently diminishes the air capacity of the Syrian Armed Forces, thereby altering the balance of power. Fighting increases as opposition forces take advantage of a weakened GoS military. This leads to increased displacement and a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation. Meanwhile, the situation significantly improves in areas previously targeted by aerial attacks.

Possible triggers

- Conclusive evidence that the GoS used chemical weapons against its people is found and shared.
- International governments reach a consensus to take decisive action in Syria that removes Assad's main military advantage.

IV – Meaningful negotiations begin and conflict reduces significantly

- Unlikely to occur within next 6 months
- Lower humanitarian impact

Summary









- The GoS and a critical mass of opposition groups are persuaded to negotiate as a result of international pressure. Humanitarian access and funding improves, further displacement is limited and some IDPs begin to return due to the reduction in violence and the restoration of basic services.

Possible triggers

- While state revenues, including oil exports, continue to decline the GoS loses financial backing from some allies and due to economic collapse is forced to the negotiating table.
- The opposition loses significant popular support due to fragmentation and the proliferation of hard-line factions so more moderate elements choose to cohere politically and negotiate.

**Humanitarian impact is a measure of how the humanitarian situation deteriorates due to the scenario assumptions.*

Scenario I: Continuing violence, increasing political and military fragmentation

Probability level				
Impact level				

 Already occurring on a small scale

 Already occurring on a large scale

Summary: The protracted conflict continues to intensify, with opposition forces fighting Government forces along the supply line from the north to the south of the country. Fighting among different armed groups, including between Al-Qaeda affiliated groups and Kurdish forces, continues. However, no major changes in the balance of power occur. Intensive fighting around frontlines continues, leading to large-scale new displacement and a deterioration of the humanitarian situation. At the same time, several areas under Government or opposition control, including Tartous, Latakia and Ar-Raqqa, see no conflict and witness an influx of IDPs and returnees. The humanitarian situation gradually worsens due to additional problems compounding barriers to access, reduction in production, scarcity of employment opportunities and the approaching winter season, causing high levels of concentrated poverty in contested areas.

Assumptions

September 2013

- **Conflict dynamics:** All parties to the conflict continue to receive funds, logistical support, intelligence and weapons from allied state and non-state actors. An international military intervention is either so limited that it does not change the dynamics of the conflict or does not occur.
- The conflict continues throughout most of Syria with a military stalemate being maintained: while the warring parties make some tactical gains/losses there is no major change to the overall balance of power. The conflict persists around key border areas, supply lines and military sites in the governorates of Aleppo, Homs, Idleb, Hama, Rural Damascus and Dar'a. The Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) continue efforts to control the centre of Syria, with limited success.
- In opposition held areas, armed groups gradually consolidate control over specific areas, providing some limited, local stability. This results in clearer


demarcation lines, with different groups exercising authority over different areas.


- **Chemical attacks:** Small-scale chemical attacks target key strategic areas including in Aleppo and Damascus.
- **Fragmentation:** The opposition becomes increasingly fragmented. Groups continue to divide and shift alliances, creating new factions. Friction among FSA battalions and Al-Qaeda affiliated groups (the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham, Jabhat Al Nusra and Ahrar Al Sham) is more apparent. In addition, fighting between the Kurdish YPG (People's Defense Units) in the northeast and the Al-Qaeda affiliated groups becomes more violent. These groups increasingly vie for resources, authority and control, with Al-Qaeda affiliated groups increasingly gaining the upper hand.
- **Cross-border measures:** Access to Iraq, Jordan and Turkey remains severely restricted with only occasional openings of crossing points. Lebanon continues to have an open border policy, albeit with restrictions for those carrying no or damaged papers.


Projected Impact

September 2013

- **National:** At the start of 2014, around half of the population still in country (10 million people) are in need of life saving assistance. Those most affected are concentrated in areas under siege; in heavily contested areas; and in regions hosting a large number of IDPs.
- Localised sudden displacement related to specific events, including chemical attacks and coordinated attacks on specific villages, takes place. People are forced to flee not only because of conflict incidents, but also because of a lack of access to basic needs.
- The economic situation deteriorates, severely disrupting livelihoods. Agricultural production drops significantly due to a lack of inputs during the planting season in October and insecurity hampering harvest and trade. The population heavily relies on black market activities and the war economy, including corruption and smuggling. Non state actors establish patronage systems for those supporting their objectives

 6.8 million people are estimated to be in need of humanitarian aid. (as of April 2013)

 An estimated 7 million Syrians, or nearly one-third of the population, have been displaced.

 2 of the 4 industrial Syrian cities (Deir- ez-Zor and Aleppo) are almost entirely out of service. The unemployment rate in the formal economy is estimated to be as high as 60%.

leading to a further breakdown of the rule of law. Salaries paid by armed groups is one of the most important sources of income.

- Access to water is of significant concern, with a large number of people lacking access to potable water and widespread breakdown of sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, resulting in severe health problems.



An estimated 35% of water treatment plants have been damaged specifically in Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh and Deir-ez-Zor.

- Ad-hoc oil refinement in the east and northeast leads to serious health and environmental problems.



- The health infrastructure is further depleted and vaccination coverage reaches critical levels and there is a severe shortage of qualified staff and medical supplies. Localised outbreaks of communicable diseases, including typhoid and measles, occur. Cases of child and maternal malnutrition are reported in the north of the country.



A July Ministry of Health report stated that up to 60% of public hospitals have limited or no capacity.

- The besiegement of populated areas is widely used as a military tactic with food and medical supplies being blocked either by GoS or opposition forces. Concern for communities in such areas is heightened as they have little or no medical supplies or access to assistance.



Areas under siege in September include neighbourhoods of the cities of Homs, Idleb, Aleppo, Eastern and Western Ghouta and Salma region in Lattakia.

- Consolidation of territory in some Government and opposition controlled areas, provides an opportunity to restore basic services such as health, water, sanitation and markets, at a local level.

- **GoS controlled areas:** As fighting concentrates on front lines, some Government controlled areas are now 'safer', and witness an influx of IDPs from contested areas. Due to the influx of IDPs, shelter is of concern, with high rent prices and overcrowded collective shelters. Schools hosting IDPs are no longer available for educational purposes.



- The Government arrests and detains individuals who allegedly support the opposition, including women and children.



- Some reconstruction efforts, such as the repair of water infrastructure, in 'safer areas' improve service

delivery to these parts. Due to relative improvements in security, economic production recovers.



- Displacement from Government held areas is limited and intermittent following sudden coordinated attacks by armed groups.

- **Opposition controlled/contested areas:** A significant part of the infrastructure in opposition-controlled and contested areas is damaged or destroyed. In addition, the disruption of services due to absence of GoS is affecting electricity supply, sanitation and solid waste management.



- Agriculture production is hampered and available supply routes are limited, making the distribution of goods in opposition-controlled areas more difficult. The destruction of infrastructure and factories and the high manufacturing costs results in further reduction of production.



Wheat production for 2012/2013 is estimated at about 2.4 MT, an estimated 40% decrease from the average annual harvest of more than 4 MT in the 10 years before the conflict

- Shortages of food and medicines lead to the spreading of diseases. Treatment of the injured is hampered.



- People in contested areas with disrupted services and infrastructure flee to relatively 'safer' areas.



- Because of radicalization around ethnic and religious affiliations, serious protection issues are likely to affect the population specifically in the north and the east. Lack of law and order in areas where local authority has not been maintained results in significant numbers of retaliations, revenge killings, sectarian violence, and an intensification of gender based violence and human rights violations.



- **Kurdish areas:** Fighting between extremist factions of the opposition and Kurdish groups causes intermittent displacement into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) or to other Kurdish areas within Syria. This includes the most vulnerable groups (children, older persons, etc) who cannot engage in the fighting.







More than 50,000 Syrians fled into KR-I in last 2 weeks of August alone.



- The conflict situation stabilises in some Kurdish areas, not necessarily improving the overall humanitarian situation. The absence of Government services and decrease in humanitarian aid due to access difficulties



significantly affects livelihoods.

- Inability of farmers to access inputs means basic food security is endangered. Al-Hasakeh relies on wheat harvested in July and faces shortages due to insecurity and monopoly of traders. 
- People in the particularly cold north-eastern regions use unrefined oil and cut down trees for firewood due to the lack of electricity, fuel and heating systems. 
- Criminality and insecurity, including kidnappings and ethnic in-fighting, is widespread. 
- **Regional level:** The humanitarian situation deteriorates in host countries. Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq face serious shelter problems. Resources of refugees residing outside camps are depleted and, lacking sufficient support, refugees are forced to relocate to the overcrowded camps where possible or to return to 'safer areas' inside Syria. 
- Border regulations of the host countries remain unchanged. The number of people fleeing to neighbouring countries decreases gradually parallel to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in host countries.
- Border monitoring hampers the supply of goods entering through smuggling routes. 

Humanitarian Access

- Insecurity, checkpoints, fragmentation and restrictions imposed by armed groups on humanitarian actors hamper the access of aid, especially in opposition-held and Kurdish areas. Areas controlled by Al-Qaeda affiliated groups are almost inaccessible to international organisations. SARC and local organisations have limited access. In GoS controlled areas, additional NGOs receive approval and access is improved for INGOs. 
- Chemical attacks lead to more stringent security protocols for aid agencies.
- Access to Damascus-based warehouses and supply 

routes is sporadically blocked.

- Insufficient levels of funding hamper operations.



As of 4 September, only 42% of the humanitarian appeal for Syria is funded.

Priority concerns

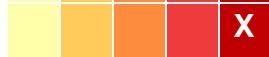
- The provision of food, access to water, health and other essential assistance by humanitarian actors to besieged or contested areas is a high priority.
- Winterisation of shelters, NFI distribution (including heating fuel) during the coldest winter months (Dec-March)
- The lack of protection against the continuous violation of human rights is of grave concern.
- Overcrowded shelters and communities hosting IDPs require urgent contingency shelter interventions for the coming winter conditions.

Scenario II: Expanded spill-over of the Syrian Crisis into Lebanon

Probability level



Impact level



Already occurring on a small scale




Already occurring on a large scale

Summary: Lebanon has been drawn into the Syria conflict as supporters of the opposing sides in Syria battle on Lebanese soil. Extremist elements have a wide presence in Lebanon and engage in conflict with the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and armed groups. The Syrian armed forces make attacks further into Lebanon as the opposition's support base grows. While this scenario does not envisage a full-scale civil war, it does result in a fundamental deterioration in security throughout most of the country.

Assumptions

September 2013

- Following the increased intervention of Hezbollah in Syria, the spill-over of the conflict into Lebanese territory escalates. This results in intensive fighting between the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Lebanese and regional armed groups.
- Intensive fighting is localised along fault lines of areas supporting opposing groups.
- Security incidents such as car bombs and suicide attacks occur with increasing regularity in densely populated areas in different regions across Lebanon.
- Military sites and institutions belonging to the army and Hezbollah are targeted by armed groups.
- The capacity of Beirut International Airport, which is highly vulnerable to attacks, is diminished.
- The border areas and areas further within come under heavy fire from Syrian air raids and missiles. 
- Some areas witness sufficient conflict to force both Syrian refugees and their Lebanese hosts to flee.
- Tensions between the host communities and refugees develop into armed violence forcing the displacement of refugees further into Lebanon and to Syria.

Projected Impact

September 2013

- **Impact on Lebanon:** The main issue affecting the humanitarian situation in Lebanon in the short term is the protection situation, with a large number of areas suffering from shelling, bomb attacks and clashes.
- Small-scale displacement of Lebanese communities, and Syrian IDPs, in areas of intensive fighting occurs with many fleeing to safer areas further from the Syrian border. This further increases rental prices and causes overcrowding. Affluent Lebanese and those with dual nationalities leave the country.
- Health services are increasingly under pressure due to the number of wounded as a result of the fighting; increased caseloads (in areas to which refugees/IDPs flee) and the damage to health infrastructure.
- Lebanon's economy deteriorates as the banking and service sectors are severely affected by the instability. Unemployment, especially in the regions of conflict, increases significantly.
- Important trade routes across the border to Syria are severely disrupted, hampering the flow of trade between the 2 countries. Import of basic goods including fuel/food by sea is negatively impacted by the security situation.
- Living costs increase, overburdening households. Government services are disrupted due to conflict damage and are overburdened in area with large numbers of IDPs. Fuel shortages become more severe, especially with the increased demand in winter. Education is disrupted, particularly in conflict areas. Some schools are used as collective shelters for IDPs
- **Impact on Refugee Situation:** Increased shelling and conflict in the border regions and more stringent border monitoring by the LAF almost completely blocks entry of those fleeing Syria.
- A wave of anti-Syrian sentiment spreads through the host community. As a result of the deteriorating

situation, secondary and tertiary movement is widespread:

- Large scale return of Syrians to their place of origin
- Displacement to safer areas in Lebanon
- An increasing number of Syrian refugees try to flee to Europe and North African countries.



40,000 Syrian asylum claims have been made in EU countries between March 2011 and July 2013.



- The sectors employing Syrians, including construction and the service sector, slow considerably leading to reduced livelihood opportunities for Syrians.
- **Impact on humanitarian situation Syria:** Existing services, such as health facilities and water infrastructure, are further overwhelmed by the influx of a large number of returnees.
- Remittances from Lebanon into Syria, an important source of income for Syrian families, decrease.
- **Regional impact:** With Lebanon increasingly inaccessible to Syrians intending to leave the country, other neighbouring countries see a higher than average number of Syrians trying to cross the border. As long as border restrictions in Jordan and Turkey remain in place, an increasing number of people are stranded at crossing points.

Humanitarian Access

September 2013

- **In Lebanon:** Insecurity and clashes hamper movement of aid personnel and goods.
- Some humanitarian operations are temporarily disrupted/scaled back as humanitarian organisations evacuate non-essential staff.
- The International Airport in Beirut is no longer fully operational, hampering import of relief goods.
- **Impact on Syrian refugees:** Organisations divert significant resources to supporting the affected Lebanese population, thereby decreasing assistance

to Syrian refugees.

- **In Syria:** Humanitarian assistance from Lebanon into Syria reduces significantly, particularly affecting governorates bordering Lebanon.

Priority concerns

- **Impact on Lebanon:** Protection concerns are heightened in Lebanon as the security situation deteriorates. Access to adequate health services is increasingly difficult.
- **Impact on Syrian refugees:** Further to being at risk from the general threat of violence, Syrians face the risk of targeted reprisal attacks.
- Available shelters, in relatively safe areas away from the Syrian border, are severely overcrowded, with Syrians in contested regions moving to these areas.
- Food security is threatened by the blocked access routes, expanded insecurity situation and loss of sources of income.
- **Impact on humanitarian situation in Syria:** The large number of the over 1 million Syrians in Lebanon returning to the safest areas of Syria deepens the humanitarian crisis within Syria, overburdening the already limited humanitarian response.
- Shelter support is a priority in areas of return as well as access to services for returnees, including health care, education and livelihood opportunities.
- Those forced to return to Syria, to avoid the conflict in Lebanon, are at risk of reprisals because of having fled to Lebanon. Thus they may avoid returning to their original locations, preferring to settle as IDPs in a location perceived as safer.

Scenario III: Extensive international military intervention has altered the balance of power

Probability level				
Impact level				

Already occurring on a small scale

Already occurring on a large scale

Summary: International military intervention effectively diminishes the air capacity of the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF). The resultant, shift in the balance of power reduces the Government's military advantage. Opposition groups take advantage by initiating and expanding existing offensives in the contested areas of Aleppo, Homs and Damascus. In these areas, the population faces a significant deterioration in security and access to basic goods and assistance. Apart from a significant decrease in bombardments in areas previously targeted by air strikes, the humanitarian situation in other areas remains largely the same. Humanitarian access is temporarily hampered by the Government as it imposes more restrictions on international organisations as a result of the intervention. Peace talks are postponed indefinitely.

Assumptions

September 2013

- An international military intervention has significantly degraded the air capacity of SAF and thereby altered the military balance of power.
- Iran and Russia do not intervene directly but increase their military and economic support to the Government of Syria (GoS). Opposition groups continue to receive funds, logistical support and weapons from allied international state and non-state actors.
- Opposition forces use the opportunity to shift fighters from certain frontlines and increase offensives in contested areas, particularly in Aleppo, where the SAF is severely weakened without aerial support. Opposition forces take control of more areas in northern Syria, as the GoS no longer has the means to support battalions in remote areas, such as Deir-ez-Zor. Guerrilla tactics, including suicide attacks and car bombs, continue,

mostly in Government controlled areas.

- Fighting continues among opposition groups as well as between Kurdish and Islamist armed groups, particularly in the northern province of Al-Hasakeh.
- Chemical weapons are used on a small scale.
- In response to the intervention, the GoS imposes significant restrictions on international organisations: expelling some and increasing restrictions on visas for others while limiting movements of aid convoys. Nationals of countries involved in the military intervention will face most difficulties. However, these restrictions will be short-term, as the GoS requires external assistance to support public services because its budget is diverted to increased military expenditures.
- Preparations for Geneva II peace talks come to a halt with the GoS refusing to participate because of the intervention while opposition groups focus on increasing their territorial gains before negotiating.

Projected Impact

September 2013

- Although the number of civilian casualties in opposition controlled areas decreases due to a reduction in GoS capacity to conduct air raids, the increase in fighting around strategic areas including Aleppo, Homs and Damascus leads to a deteriorating protection and humanitarian situation for the population trapped in these areas.
- New and secondary displacement occurs around contested areas. A number of IDPs and refugees return to relatively stable areas previously affected by frequent aerial bombardment.
- Battles are fought primarily by ground troops and protection concerns including reprisal killings, sectarian violence, sexual and gender-based violence and arbitrary detention are rife.
- Displacement occurs from contested areas to safer areas while elsewhere the escalation of fighting fuels fear in other areas prompting pre-emptive displacement.

Simultaneously, people return to areas previously affected by aerial bombardments that are now safer.

- As in Scenario I, the Syrian Pound undergoes further depreciation, making it more difficult to import basic goods. At the same time, the decreasing national production necessitates more imports. As a result, more people fall below the poverty line.



The SYP lost 24.7% of its value against the U.S. dollar in the two days following US announcement of possible military intervention

- Diversion of funds to military infrastructure leads to a decrease in funding available for maintenance and repair of public infrastructure and subsidies. In addition, civil servant salaries are not increased in line with inflation. As a result, access to basic services decreases.



- **Impact on Refugee Situation:** Both KR-I and Lebanon witnesses a mass influx of refugees. As the cross-border restrictions imposed by host countries do not change, an increased number of Syrians are trapped on border regions with Turkey and Jordan.



- The lack of sufficient adequate shelter is a key issue in Lebanon and Iraq.
- Services are overstretched and protection problems become pervasive. Due to the supply route between Lebanon and Syria being cut off and the violence inside Syria hampering the access of goods and resources into Lebanon, the financial resources of refugees are further depleted. Due to hygiene and sanitation issues in overcrowded and inadequate shelters, the risks of diseases increase, specifically for children.

Humanitarian Access

In Syria

- Initial restrictions of humanitarian access imposed by the GoS lead to a short-term disruption of aid in Government controlled areas.
- Humanitarian operations in opposition-controlled areas scale up in some regions experiencing low conflict intensity and that are accessible via cross-border

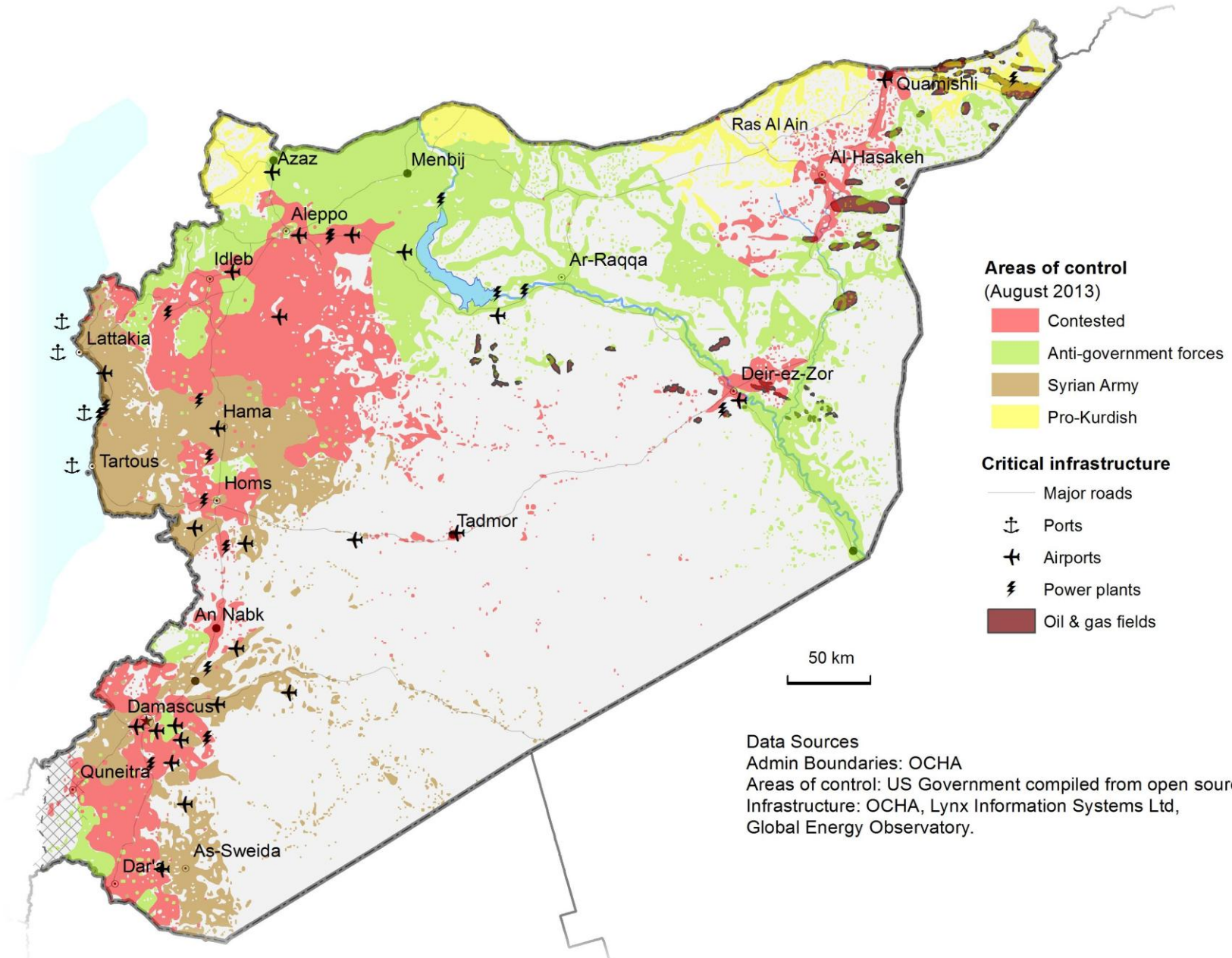
assistance.

- However, overall access in opposition-controlled areas does not significantly change, with checkpoints, insecurity and conflict hampering the provision of relief.

Priority concerns

- The humanitarian impact of increased fighting between ground troops and subsequent internal displacement remains one of the dominant factors shaping the humanitarian needs, with large pockets of unmet needs, particularly in areas witnessing heavy fighting. Given the large-scale destruction of homes and infrastructure, shelter is a high priority as is heating fuel until winter ends in late March. Food assistance and the provision of health and WASH services are also priorities.
- Livelihoods, even those related to the public sector, are significantly disrupted and require support.
- Populations trapped in conflict areas with heavy fighting face protection risks, limited freedom of movement and lack of access to services and humanitarian assistance.
- In areas previously subject to aerial bombardment, now with reduced conflict, increased humanitarian assistance across all sectors is necessary until livelihoods and essential infrastructure have been re-established, both for IDPs and the non-displaced population.


Areas of control and critical infrastructure



Scenario IV: Meaningful negotiations begin and conflict reduces significantly

Probability level				
Impact level				

 Already occurring on a small scale

 Already occurring on a large scale

Summary: The GoS and a critical mass of opposition groups have been persuaded to negotiate as a result of internal and international pressure. All parties involved in the discussions largely respect the ceasefire, one of the preconditions for the negotiations. The armed groups that were not invited or have not agreed to join negotiations continue to instigate spoiler violence in efforts to disrupt the process, particularly in areas in northern Syria. While the negotiations are on-going, humanitarian access and funding improves, further displacement is limited and some IDPs begin to return due to the reduction in violence, hope of peace and the restoration of basic services. In areas under control of groups intent on disrupting the negotiations, the humanitarian situation deteriorates due to lack of access and displacement from these areas increases significantly.

Assumptions

September 2013

- Pressure from the international community results in the GoS and opposition groups agreeing to a ceasefire in areas under their respective control and coming to the table for negotiations. Agreements are reached to allow the movement of goods into besieged areas.
- The GoS and opposition groups maintain control of their respective areas and violence within these areas decreases significantly. The frontlines between the areas are generally quiet, except for localised clashes.
- Armed groups not party to the negotiations continue to fight other opposition groups and the GoS, primarily to disrupt the peace process. These attacks occur in densely populated areas under control of negotiating

parties as well as areas under control of spoiler groups. Clashes around critical infrastructure, including oil producing areas and power plants, in areas accessible by spoiler groups, sporadically occur.

- As a result of improved security in most areas, both operational access and humanitarian funding increase.

Projected Impact

September 2013

- A significant improvement of the security situation and increased access for relief actors results in a significant improvement of the humanitarian situation. New displacement is limited, while improved security in most areas leads to a significant increase in IDP returns. The number of new refugees arriving to host countries dwindles.
- Besieged areas see a significant improvement of the humanitarian situation, due to the ease in transport of basic goods.
- The lines of control between the Government and opposition groups involved in the negotiations remain static.
- The humanitarian situation in areas under the control of spoiler groups continue to deteriorate due to continued fighting and restricted humanitarian access.
- In areas affected by spoiler violence, people continue to flee to other parts of Syria.
- Due to an improved operational environment and as a confidence-building measure, international donors significantly increase funding for the humanitarian response in Syria.
- The provision of basic services, such as health, water, sanitation, electricity and garbage collection, significantly improves in a number of areas as supplies and service staff are able to move more freely due to improvements in security. Some remote pockets do not see an improvement of the humanitarian situation due to a lack of resources to rebuild infrastructure and restore services.

- Despite a significant improvement in the security situation due to the decrease in fighting, the lack of law and order in areas where local authorities have not set in place the required protection mechanisms cause protection concerns. Criminality, gender based violence and retaliatory attacks are common.
- Inflation of the Syrian pound slows and the Government continues to issue salaries to civil servants, allowing the humanitarian situation to stabilise.
- **Impact on regional refugee situation:** Refugee flows to neighbouring countries significantly decrease. There will be some refugee returns, as well as among individual family members returning to check on property and livelihoods. The majority of refugees take a 'wait and see' approach to the negotiations and remain in host countries.



provision of assistance to these areas is a priority.

Humanitarian Access

September 2013

- Humanitarian access increases significantly in most parts of the country, although security checkpoints and criminality remains an issue.
- UN agencies are increasingly able to deliver and monitor assistance cross-line.
- In areas under the control of spoiler groups, general insecurity, localised violence and threats to aid operations continue to impede humanitarian efforts.

Priority concerns

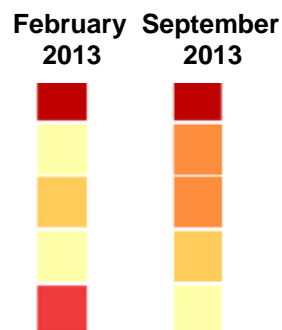
- With increased humanitarian activity, coordination structures both amongst humanitarian actors and with local authorities will need to be swiftly established
- The restoration of basic services (particularly health, water and sanitation) and livelihood and shelter assistance are key priorities. Shelter and protection assistance for those recently displaced and those returning are urgent, particularly in the middle of winter.
- There is a need to closely monitor and assist returns to ensure they take place in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner.
- Gaining humanitarian access and acceptance remains challenging in areas under control of groups intent on disrupting the peace talks. Negotiating

Comparison between February and September scenarios

In February SNAP outlined the likelihood and impact of several scenarios. Over the last 7 months, economic and political factors have led to a change in the situation on the ground. As a result, some scenarios have become more likely to occur during next 6 months, while others seem improbable. This section outlines why the scenarios covered in the February and September reports have become more or less plausible over time.

Comparison likelihood over time

Continued fighting/political military intervention
 Regional deterioration
 International military intervention changes the balance of power
 Negotiated settlement
 Chaotic transition after government collapse



Likelihood
 Almost certain
 Likely
 Possible
 Unlikely
 Very unlikely

Similar likelihood

- Continued fighting and political and military fragmentation:** Over the last 6 months, the warring sides in Syria have been locked in a military stalemate. Though the opposing parties have periodically made gains in particular areas, the overall balance has been maintained and looks likely to continue should no external force act decisively in favour of one side.
- Negotiated settlement:** The negotiations scenario envisioned in February included a political settlement in which President al-Assad stepped down resulting in a government controlled by a combination of opposition representatives and former Government officials. As in February, this scenario remains highly unlikely due to increased fragmentation of opposition groups and the strengthened military position of the Government.

Increase in likelihood

- Regional deterioration:** The security situations in neighbouring Lebanon and Iraq have deteriorated significantly in recent months, highlighting a tense and fragile regional connection to the situation in Syria. With Lebanon hosting a presumed 1 million Syrians, a descent into conflict on Lebanon's soil would have far-reaching humanitarian consequences for both the Lebanese and Syrian communities.

International military intervention changing balance of power: The alleged use of chemical weapons in August led to a renewed international call for military intervention in Syria. The US moved warships into strategic locations in the region in a gesture showing its preparedness to strike. At the start of September, President Obama has signalled that an attack would be limited to reducing the air power of President Assad's forces and degrading his chemical weapons capability.

Decrease in likelihood

- Chaotic transition after Government collapse:** At the beginning of the year, with defections from the Government taking place and the opposition strengthening its political and military ranks, the overthrowing of Assad seemed likely. Since then, however, the Government has demonstrated its resilience while the opposition has become increasingly divided. Hezbollah's significant support to the SAF also helps strengthen the Government's position.

Methodology – For more information on scenario building, please refer to the ACAPS Technical Brief Scenario Development which can be found [here](#)

Disclaimer – Information provided is provisional as it has not been possible to independently verify field reports. As this report covers highly dynamic subject, utility of the information may decrease with time.

Sources – [Cato Institute 2013/08/30](#), [Stratfor 2013/09/04](#), [ICG 2013/06/27](#), [Red Analysis 2013/07/15](#), [ECRF 2013/07/29](#), [Institute for the study of war](#), [Brookings 2013/08/12](#), [UNHCR 2013/07/31](#)

ACAPS and MapAction would like to thank all organisations who have provided input to this report. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report. For additional information, comments or questions, please email SNAP@ACAPS.org

