



October 2014

International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update III

1. Since the publication of UNHCR's October 2013 *Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update II*,¹ the situation in Syria has further deteriorated in terms of security, human rights, displacement and humanitarian needs.

Conflict and Security Situation

2. Nearly all parts of the country are now embroiled in violence, which is playing out between different actors in partially overlapping conflicts and is exacerbated by the participation of foreign fighters on all sides. Fighting between the Syrian government forces and an array of anti-government armed groups continues unabated. In parallel, the group "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham" (hereafter ISIS)² has consolidated control over significant areas in northern and north-eastern Syria and engages in frequent armed confrontations with anti-government armed groups,³ Kurdish forces (People's Protection Units, YPG) as well as government forces. The launch of airstrikes against ISIS targets⁴ as of 23 September 2014 has added an additional layer of complexity to the conflict. As international efforts to find a political solution to the Syria situation have so far not been successful, the conflict, continues to cause further civilian casualties, displacement and destruction of the country's infrastructure.
3. At the time of writing, government forces control large parts of the country's western and central areas (Lattakia, Tartous, Hama and Homs governorates), the capital Damascus and most of its environs and the southern governorate of Suweida, in addition to the road links between these areas. ISIS has, as of mid-2014, consolidated its hold over a largely contiguous stretch of territory in mainly northern and north-eastern Syria (as well as large areas in neighbouring Iraq), including the eastern Aleppo countryside, Raqqa, Deir Ez-Zour and southern Hassakeh governorates.⁵ Territorial gains by ISIS have reportedly come on the heels of the group's enhanced

¹ This current document, *Update III*, supersedes *Update II* (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *International Protection Considerations with regard to people fleeing the Syrian Arab Republic, Update II*, 22 October 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5265184f4.html>).

² The "Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham" (ISIS) (Arabic: *Ad-Dawlah Al-Islamiyyah fi Al Iraq wa Al-Sham*), is also known as the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) and has proclaimed itself as "Islamic State (IS)". For the position of the Security Council on "*ISIL, ANF [Jabhat Al-Nusra] and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al-Qaida*", see United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2161 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7198th meeting, on 17 June 2014, S/RES/2161 (2014)*, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2161%2014%29 and United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2170 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7242nd meeting, on 15 August 2014, S/RES/2170 (2014)*, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2170%2014%29.

³ The term "anti-government armed groups" refers to armed groups and alliances seeking to overthrow the Syrian government through violent means, including, *inter alia*, Jabhat Al-Nusra (JAN), the Islamic Front (IF), the Syrian Revolutionaries Front (SRF), and the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

⁴ A number of airstrikes reportedly targeted the Al-Qa'eda-linked Khorasan group; AFP, *Coalition Airstrikes in Syria Killed Over 500*, 23 October 2014, <http://abcn.ws/1skv08j>; Washington Post, *Airstrikes in Syria kill a leader of al-Qaeda cell*, 24 September 2014, <http://wapo.st/1vejakM>.

⁵ It has been estimated that the territory under ISIS control in Iraq and Syria encompasses a population of some nine million people; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, para 15.

military capabilities following its expansion in Iraq, and were largely at the expense of anti-government armed groups. In late August 2014, ISIS reportedly captured the Tabaqa airbase (Raqqah governorate), overtaking the government's last stronghold in that governorate.⁶ An array of anti-government armed groups - with diverse ideological and political backgrounds and shifting alliances - operate mainly in the southern governorates of Dera'a and Quneitra, Rural Damascus, northern Homs, Lattakia countryside as well as Idlib countryside and Aleppo (both city and countryside). Jabhat Al-Nusra (JAN)⁷ has a record of cooperating with other anti-government armed groups, but more recently has reportedly sidelined some of its former allies, e.g. in parts of Idlib, where it took control of areas along the Turkish border.⁸ The YPG has consolidated control over the *de facto* self-administered Kurdish areas in the north, namely Hassakeh, Kobane (Ayn Al-Arab) and Afrin. It has been engaged in fending off ISIS, which has been seeking to expand control into Kurdish-dominated areas, most recently with a major military offensive against Kobane (Aleppo governorate), resulting in the large-scale displacement of the predominantly Kurdish population from the city and its environs.⁹

Civilian Casualties

4. The number of persons killed as a result of the conflict has reportedly surpassed 191,000 by April 2014. The greatest number of documented deaths was recorded in the governorate of Rural Damascus, followed by Aleppo, Homs, Idlib, Dera'a and Hama governorates.¹⁰ The deterioration of Syria's healthcare system has reportedly resulted in thousands of ordinarily preventable deaths from chronic diseases, premature deaths due to normally nonfatal infectious diseases, neonatal problems and malnutrition.¹¹ In addition, the conflict has resulted in hundreds of thousands of people wounded, often resulting in long-term disabilities,¹² and many more suffering from the psychological consequences of having been witness to violence, the loss of family members, displacement and deprivation.¹³

http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696. By some estimates, ISIS occupies up to 35 percent of Syria's territory; Associated Press, *A Look at the Islamic State Militants in Syria*, 28 August 2014, <http://abcn.ws/1rBIFhx>.

⁶ Deutsche Welle, *Islamic State captures Tabqa air base in Syria*, 25 August 2014, <http://dw.de/p/1D04Z>.

⁷ See FN 2.

⁸ UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, 21 August 2014, S/2014/611, para 10, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54083f8b4.html>.

⁹ UN News Centre, *Hundreds of thousands of Syrian Kurds live in fear of Islamist extremist violence – UN*, 23 September 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48799>.

¹⁰ Human Rights Data Analysis Group (HRDAG), *Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic*, Commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2014, <https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/HRDAG-SY-UpdatedReportAug2014.pdf>. According to the report, the number of documented deaths in Rural Damascus was 39,393, Aleppo (31,932), Homs (28,186), Idlib (20,040), Dera'a (18,539) and Hama (14,690). The vast majority (85 percent) of the victims documented are male, while females make up 9.3 percent. The report does not differentiate between fighters and civilians. Five datasets were analysed in the report: those provided by the Government of Syria (up to end March 2012 only), the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) (up to end April 2013 only), the Syrian Centre for Statistics and Research, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), and the Violations Documentation Centre (VDC). The figure of 191,369 deaths is more than double the nearly 93,000 deaths cited in HRDAG's previous report, published in June 2013, which covered the first two years of the conflict. The June 2013 report is available at: HRDAG, *Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic*, Commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 13 June 2013, <https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/HRDAG-Updated-SY-report.pdf>.

¹¹ "(...) reports estimate that since the start of the conflict some 200,000 Syrians have died from chronic illnesses due to lack of access to treatment and medicines, which is in fact more than the estimated 162,000 people who have died as a direct result of warfare"; European Commission, *The silent war: 200,000 Syrians have died due to lack of access to health care*, Statement/14/177, 28 May 2014, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_Statement-14-177_en.htm. See also Save the Children, *A Devastating Toll: The impact of three years of war on the health of Syria's children*, 2014, p. 4, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/531ec9444.html>; Newsweek, *In War-Torn Syria, a Health Crisis Emerges*, 18 March 2014, <http://bit.ly/1pmw9jm>; Al Jazeera, *Syria doctors flee amid crackdown*, 28 February 2014, <http://aje.me/1fOkAvN>.

¹² According to WHO, the violence has led to more than 750,000 injuries; WHO, *Regional SitRep, August 2014*, 10 September 2014, p. 2, <http://syria.unocha.org/sites/default/files/August%20SitRep.pdf>.

¹³ "The World Health Organization estimates that 3 to 4 percent of people affected by an emergency (like the war in Syria) will develop severe mental health disorders, such as psychosis or severe depression. (That's compared to 2 to 3 percent before an emergency). The organization also says that 15 to 20 percent of people in an emergency will develop mild or moderate anxiety or depression disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) -- as compared to 10 percent beforehand -- and that a "large percentage" of people will experience "normal distress" during an emergency"; Foreign Policy, *A Tidal Wave of Trauma*, 27 May 2014, <http://atfp.co/1o3RWuo>. It is estimated that not more than 40 psychiatrists are currently available in Syria, mainly in Damascus. Additionally, a shortage in psychotropic medicines in the local market has been observed due to the damage caused to the pharmaceutical industry; UNHCR, *Echoes From Syria Issue 5 - October 2014*, p. 2, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/543fadf24.html>. See also The National, *Syria will pay heavy price for trauma of war inflicted on children*, 11 March 2014, <http://bit.ly/1nwqQvyn>; Reuters, *Syrian doctors struggle to care for mentally ill and traumatized*, 4 March 2014, <http://reut.rs/1g7hP58>; Médecins Sans Frontières, *Syria: An invisible crisis - alarming psychological needs among refugees in Iraq*, 8 October 2013, <http://www.msf.org/article/syria-invisible-crisis-alarming-psychological-needs-among-refugees-iraq>.

Forced Displacement

5. The conflict in Syria has caused the largest refugee displacement crisis of our times, with Syrians now the world's largest refugee population under UNHCR's mandate. It continues to generate increasing levels of displacement each day with an average of 100,000 refugees arriving in host countries in the region every month in 2014. Since March 2014, the Syria conflict has resulted in nearly half of the population displaced, comprising 6.45 million inside Syria and over 3.2 million registered refugees who have fled to neighbouring countries.¹⁴ More than half of those displaced are children.¹⁵ Aerial bombardments and shelling of civilian areas have resulted in extensive displacement.¹⁶ Furthermore, the systematic and deliberate denial of food and medical supplies to certain localities has been described as a means to displace the population.¹⁷ Increasingly, infighting between armed opposition groups and ISIS has resulted in displacement inside and outside of Syria.¹⁸ Others, including members of religious and ethnic minority groups, are fleeing violations and abuses committed by anti-government armed groups.¹⁹ In particular the expansion of ISIS control over territory and brutal treatment it has meted out to the population has resulted in significant displacement.²⁰ Most recently, more than 200,000 mostly ethnic Kurds have been displaced due to an advance by ISIS militants on the town of Kobane (Ayn Al-Arab) and surrounding villages in Aleppo governorate, the majority of which fled to Turkey in what constitutes the largest exodus in a span of few days into Turkey since the beginning of the conflict.²¹ Furthermore, people are increasingly forced to flee due to a lack of services, including inadequate health care and loss of livelihood amidst rising food prices.²² Multiple displacements have been a striking feature of the Syria conflict as frontlines keep shifting and formerly safer areas become embroiled in conflict.²³ Moreover, incidents of internally displaced persons (IDPs) being targeted and forcibly displaced again have been recorded.²⁴
6. In addition to large-scale internal displacement, more than 3.2 million Syrians have taken refuge in the region, with more than 1.13 million registered with UNHCR in Lebanon, making it the country with the highest per capita concentration of refugees in recent history;²⁵ more than 1 million in Turkey; over 619,000 in Jordan;

¹⁴ UNHCR, *Syria Regional Refugee Response*, accessed 25 October 2014, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>; UNHCR, *UNHCR - Syria tops world list for forcibly displaced after three years of conflict*, 14 March 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/5321cda59.html>.

¹⁵ UNHCR, *Needs soar as number of Syrian refugees tops 3 million*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html>.

¹⁶ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 12 February 2014, A/HRC/25/65, para 144, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, para 149, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51aee9484.html>.

¹⁷ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, para 20, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51aee9484.html>.

¹⁸ For example, between 22 April to 19 May 2014, "(...) clashes between Jabhat al-Nusra, Free Syrian Army groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) led to the displacement of at least 115,000 people in Deir-ez-Zor and Dar'a governorates. Displacement occurred following clashes for control of gas and oil resources around the Koniko gas station in Deir-ez-Zor governorate and after Jabhat al-Nusra gained control of Kerba village in Dar'a governorate"; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 22 May 2014, S/2014/365, para 7, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac00ee4.html>. See also AFP, *100,000 civilians flee jihadist clashes in Syria*, 10 May 2014, <http://bit.ly/T9WJiC>; The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Indecisive Inter-Rebel Fighting in Syria Benefits the Regime*, PolicyWatch 2200, 28 January 2014, <http://washin.st/MY1Tdo>.

¹⁹ "Others – often, but not exclusively, from the Alawite, Shi'a, Druze and Christian communities – are fleeing attack by anti-Government armed groups. Within this context, specific instances of forcible displacement have been recorded"; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, para 149, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51aee9484.html>.

²⁰ UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, 21 August 2014, S/2014/611, para 6 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54083f8b4.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 133-135, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, para 41, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>.

²¹ UNHCR, *Carried to safety, Kobane refugee joins thousands heading to Iraq*, 13 October 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/543bb9889.html>.

²² UNHCR, *Needs soar as number of Syrian refugees tops 3 million*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html>.

²³ "UNHCR and other aid agencies say increasing numbers of families are arriving in a shocking state, exhausted, scared and with their savings depleted. Most have been on the run for a year or more, fleeing from village to village before taking the final decision to leave. (...) Many newly arriving refugees say they only left Syria as a last resort. A growing number, including more than half of those coming to Lebanon, have moved at least once before fleeing, and one in 10 have moved more than three times. One woman told UNHCR she had moved 20 times before crossing into Lebanon"; UNHCR, *Needs soar as number of Syrian refugees tops 3 million*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html>. See also Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Patterns of displacement continue to be massive in Syria*, 27 September 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13791&LangID=E>.

²⁴ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, Annex III, para 2, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, p. 1, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51aee9484.html>.

²⁵ UNHCR, *Syrian refugees in Lebanon surpass one million*, 3 April 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/533c15179.html>.

215,000 in Iraq and 140,000 in Egypt.²⁶ The hosting countries are experiencing severe demographic, economic, political and social pressures.²⁷ In addition, over 165,000 asylum applications have been submitted by Syrians in European countries (other than Turkey) by the end of September 2014.²⁸ As a result of large-scale flight and emigration, the Syrian population by the end of 2013 was estimated to have declined by over 12 percent compared to its pre-conflict population.²⁹

7. In addition to Syrians, over 270,000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria have been displaced as nearly all of their residential areas have experienced fighting or the use of heavy weapons. According to UNRWA reports, approximately half of the 540,000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria are currently displaced within Syria,³⁰ while another 70,000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have been scattered across the region and farther afield.³¹

Human Rights Situation and Violations of International Humanitarian Law

8. The protection situation in Syria has progressively and dramatically deteriorated. According to the UN Secretary-General, “[T]he conflict continues to be characterized by horrendous violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses, with a total disregard for humanity”³² and the Independent Commission of Inquiry summarized in its most recent report the impact of the conduct of the warring parties on civilians as “immeasurable suffering”.³³ Parties to the conflict are reported to commit war crimes and gross violations of human rights, including acts amounting to crimes against humanity,³⁴ with widespread impunity.³⁵
9. Reports by the Independent Commission of Inquiry and human rights organizations allege that government and pro-government forces have, *inter alia*, committed massacres and conducted widespread attacks on civilians, systematically committing murder, torture, and enforced disappearance amounting to crimes against humanity.³⁶ They have reportedly also committed gross violations of human rights and the war crimes of murder, hostage taking, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and targeting civilians. Furthermore, they have reportedly also disregarded the special protection accorded to hospitals and medical and humanitarian personnel.

²⁶ As at 25 October 2014. For updated figures, see <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

²⁷ UNHCR, *Needs soar as number of Syrian refugees tops 3 million*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html>.

²⁸ Less than four percent of Syrians who fled the conflict have sought safety in Europe (excluding Turkey). Since the conflict began, only five countries in Europe (Bulgaria, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) received more than 5,000 asylum applications from Syrians; in contrast, 17 countries received fewer than 200 applications during the same period; UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, p. 4, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

²⁹ According to the Syrian Centre for Policy Research, Syria had a population of 20.87 million inhabitants in 2010; by the end of 2013, the population has reportedly declined to 18.35 million inhabitants, largely as a result of people departing the country, although the contraction was marginally affected by the increased mortality resulting from the conflict. Taking into account the pre-war growth rate of the Syrian population, Syria would, had it not suffered this armed conflict, have reached an estimated total population of 22.44 million inhabitants by the end of 2013; Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria, combined third and fourth quarter report (July – December 2013)*, May 2014, p. 31, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf.

³⁰ UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 79*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-79>.

³¹ In Lebanon, 44,000 Palestine refugees from Syria have been recorded with UNRWA; in Jordan 14,290 and in Gaza 860 have approached UNRWA for assistance. UNRWA also received reports of around 4,000 Palestine refugees in Egypt and smaller numbers in Libya, Turkey and East Asia; UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 79*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-79>.

³² UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, 21 August 2014, S/2014/611, para 53, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54083f8b4.html>.

³³ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

³⁴ See consecutive reports by the Independent Commission of Inquiry, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/iicisyria/pages/independentinternationalcommission.aspx>. See also reports by Human Rights Watch, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/middle-eastn-africa/syria> and Amnesty International, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/syria>.

³⁵ According to Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, “Impunity has made its home inside the Syrian Arab Republic”; UN News Centre, *Impunity, unprecedented violence, denial of aid hallmarks of Syria conflict – UN rights panel*, 18 June 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48070>. See also reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IICISyria/Pages/IndependentInternationalCommission.aspx>. Calls for the Syria situation to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to prosecute abuses by all parties to the conflict have to date been unsuccessful; UN News Centre, *Russia, China block Security Council referral of Syria to International Criminal Court*, 22 May 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47860>; International Federation for Human Rights, *Syria: Groups call for ICC referral*, 15 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5391b73b10.html>; Human Rights Watch, *UN Security Council: Support Justice for Syria*, 14 April 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/534d2feb4.html>.

³⁶ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, para. 28, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

Indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombardment, including with cluster munitions, barrel bombs and chlorine gas, as well as artillery shelling are reported to have resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties and destroyed entire neighbourhoods. Government forces have reportedly further laid siege to certain opposition-held areas, regularly reinforced by sustained shelling and bombing campaigns.³⁷ These tactics have resulted in numerous local truces in Homs, Damascus and Rural Damascus. Such truces are reportedly often followed by mass arrests of men of fighting age.³⁸ Pro-government forces have also been implicated in recruiting and using children in hostilities.

10. Reports by the Independent Commission of Inquiry and human rights organizations allege that anti-government armed groups have committed massacres and war crimes, including murder, execution without due process, torture, hostage-taking, enforced disappearance, sexual violence, recruiting and using children in combat and non-combat functions, and attacking protected objects, medical and religious personnel and journalists. Government-held localities, including religious minority areas, are frequently subjected to indiscriminate mortar, rocket and IED attacks, by anti-government armed groups.³⁹ Anti-government armed groups have laid siege to or temporarily cut off water and/or electricity supplies to civilian areas perceived to be sympathetic to the government.⁴⁰ Reports by the Independent Commission of Inquiry and human rights organizations also implicate members of ISIS in torture, murder, enforced disappearance, and forcible displacement as part of attacks against the civilian population in the governorates of Raqqa and eastern Aleppo, amounting to crimes against humanity.⁴¹ ISIS also is reported to conduct indiscriminate attacks against civilians, using mortars, rockets and car and suicide bombs. Real or perceived dissent to the authority of ISIS or infringements of its rules, which are based on a strict interpretation of *Shari'a* law, are reported to result in severe punishment without due process, including public executions, lashings and amputation.⁴² According to reports, ISIS has also extensively recruited children for use in military operations, including suicide bombing missions.⁴³ ISIS has also reportedly cut water and electricity to contested civilian areas.⁴⁴
11. As indicated by the Independent Commission of Inquiry and human rights organizations, the YPG and the *Asayish*, the military wing and the police forces, respectively, of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), which exercises *de facto* control over predominately Kurdish areas in northern Syria have reportedly been implicated in

³⁷ See consecutive reports by the Independent Commission of Inquiry, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/iicisvria/pages/independentinternationalcommission.aspx>. See also reports by Human Rights Watch, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/middle-eastn-africa/syria> and Amnesty International, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/syria>.

³⁸ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 11, 46, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

³⁹ See, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; Human Rights Watch, *Syria: Women, Children Held Hostage for a Year*, 6 August 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53e4a34d4.html>; Human Rights Watch, *"Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die": Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria*, 24 June 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62313-1425, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a9751b4.html>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups*, 14 March 2013, MDE 24/008/2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/514304f42.html>; Human Rights Watch, *Syria: End Opposition Use of Torture, Executions*, 17 September 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/505847cc2.html>.

⁴⁰ UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, para 56, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>; UN News Centre, *Syria: Ban warns against targeting civilians after armed groups cut water supplies in Aleppo*, 17 May 2014, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=47816>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Briefing note on sieges across Syria*, 16 April 2014, MDE 24/018/2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536c8abf4.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 18 March 2014, para 85, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/537605144.html>; OHCHR, *Living Under Siege - The Syrian Arab Republic*, February 2014, pp. 1, 9, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5305e1694.html>.

⁴¹ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, para 38, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>. See also Human Rights Watch, *Syria: ISIS Holds 130 Kurdish Children*, 1 July 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/30/syria-isis-holds-130-kurdish-children>; Human Rights Watch, *Syria: ISIS Summarily Killed Civilians*, 14 June 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a01b494.html>; Amnesty International, *Rule of Fear: Isis Abuses in Detention in Northern Syria*, MDE 24/063/2013, 19 December 2013, p. 3, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52b2b1ce4.html>.

⁴² UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, paras 24-28, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696; OHCHR, *Syria's brutal war threatens international peace and security: UN commission of inquiry*, 27 August 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14966&LangID=E>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 30-38, 65-74, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, *"Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die": Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria*, 24 June 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62313-1425, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a9751b4.html>.

⁴⁴ For example, on 8 June 2014, ISIS reportedly cut water and electricity to Deir Ez-Zour; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 20 June 2014, S/2014/427, Annex, p. 10, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53abcd2e4.html>. See also Amnesty International, *Syria: Briefing note on sieges across Syria*, 16 April 2014, MDE 24/018/2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/536c8abf4.html>.

human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, abuses in pre-trial detention, and due process violations.⁴⁵ The YPG has reportedly broken up a number of anti-government and anti-PYD protests, arresting protestors and political opponents.⁴⁶ The YPG and *Asayish* committed to end child recruitment and started a process of demobilizing all children under the age of 18; however, concerns remain in particular in the face of the intensification of fighting between the YPG and ISIS.⁴⁷

Impact of Conflict and Violence on the Civilian Population within Syria

12. A particular feature of the conflict has been that different parties to the conflict frequently impute a **political opinion or affiliation** to larger groups of people, including families,⁴⁸ tribes,⁴⁹ religious or ethnic groups⁵⁰ or

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Under Kurdish Rule: Abuses in PYD-run Enclaves of Syria*, 19 June 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62313-1432, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a400c04.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 18 March 2014, para 22, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/537605144.html>; Syria Deeply, *New Dangers for Opposition Kurds*, 10 May 2013, <http://nwsdp.ly/f7idb>.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch, *Under Kurdish Rule: Abuses in PYD-run Enclaves of Syria*, 19 June 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62313-1432, p. 4, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a400c04.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 16 August 2013, A/HRC/24/46, paras 53, 62, 94, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52302c5c4.html>; Reporters Without Borders, *News providers targeted by both government and opposition forces*, 28 August 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/522481d34.html>.

⁴⁷ Geneva Call, *Syria: monitoring the prohibition of child soldiers by Kurdish armed forces*, 7 October 2014, <http://www.genevacall.org/syria-monitoring-prohibition-child-soldiers-kurdish-armed-forces/>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, para 97, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; Geneva Call, *Syria: Kurdish armed forces demobilize 149 child soldiers*, 7 July 2014, <http://www.genevacall.org/syria-kurdish-armed-forces-demobilize-149-child-soldiers/>. See also Human Rights Watch, *"Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die": Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria*, 24 June 2014, ISBN: 978-1-62313-1425, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a9751b4.html>.

⁴⁸ Reports consistently describe the targeting of family members and other persons affiliated with those who are opposing or are perceived to be opposing the government. As such, family members (examples relate to spouses, children including minor children, siblings, parents and also members of the extended family) of, for example, (real or perceived) protestors, activists, members of opposition parties or armed opposition groups, defectors and draft evaders, have reportedly been targeted for arbitrary arrest, *incommunicado* detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, including sexual violence, as well as summary execution. Neighbours, colleagues and friends have also reportedly been targeted. In cases in which a wanted government opponent, or person perceived to be a government opponent, cannot be found, security forces reportedly turn to arresting and/or abusing members of his/her family, including children, either as a form of retribution for the wanted person's opposition activities or defection, to obtain information about his/her whereabouts, or as a means to force the wanted person to turn him/herself in or to confess to the charges brought against him/her. In particularly grave instances, entire families related to members of the opposition or defectors have reportedly been arrested or extra-judicially executed, for example during house searches; see, for example, Human Rights Watch, *Submission on the second periodic report of Syria to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, May 12, 2014*, 24 June 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/24/submission-second-periodic-report-syria-United-nations-committee-elimination-discrim>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 16 June 2014, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, para 35, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>; US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Syria*, 27 February 2014, pp. 3, 6, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220588.pdf>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 12 February 2014, A/HRC/25/65, paras 20, 35, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 27 January 2014, S/2014/31, paras 18, 19, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52f222744.html>. Likewise, anti-government armed groups and ISIS, have reportedly singled out family members of government supporters or perceived government supporters, including, for example, members of the government, government and pro-government forces, or political parties affiliated with the government, commonly for kidnapping against ransom, to pursue a prisoner exchange or as a form of retribution; see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 18 March 2014, para 28, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/537605144.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/22/59, 5 February 2013, para 73, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/513727e62.html>.

⁴⁹ In August 2014, it was reported that ISIS executed 700 members of Al-Sheitat tribe, mostly civilians, in several villages in Deir Ez-Zour governorate in response to a tribal uprising against ISIS rule; Washington Post, *Islamic State atrocity ignored, Syrian tribe says*, 20 October 2014, <http://wapo.st/1r2Gk9B>; International Crisis Group, *CrisisWatch Database – Syria*, accessed 25 October 2014, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/publication-type/crisiswatch/crisiswatch-database.aspx?CountryIDs={1341CC4D-F195-4B82-A9B9-0411818FDB03}>; Al Jazeera, *Islamic State group 'executes 700' in Syria*, 17 August 2014, <http://aje.me/1skh8ju>.

⁵⁰ As the conflict evolved, religious minority groups, including Alawites, Shi'ites, Christians and Druze, have reportedly increasingly aligned themselves with the government, largely due to complex factors such as fear of retribution and discrimination at the hands of an increasingly radicalized opposition, lack of political alternatives, loss of family members, as well as economic reasons. Members of religious minority groups have also joined pro-government groups, including in order to protect their communities from (real or anticipated) attacks. Attacks against religious minorities have increased and may involve a combination of motives. What may appear as religiously-motivated attacks may (primarily or additionally) involve political motives as religious minorities are often blamed by anti-government armed groups for government abuses. Members of religious minority groups and their localities/communities have come under threat and direct attack by anti-government armed groups, including raids, mortars, rockets and car bombs as well as sieges and disruption of basic supplies; see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, para 65, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>; US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013 – Syria*, 27 February 2014, p. 41, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220588.pdf>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 12 February 2014, A/HRC/25/65, para 117, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/22/CT, 11 March 2013, para 12, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53abc8db4.html>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Women, Children Held Hostage in Syria*, 28 October 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/527769c44.html>. (Arab) Sunnis, especially if from areas known for their sympathies for the opposition or living under *de facto* control of anti-government armed groups, are broadly perceived as opposing the government. As such,

whole towns, villages or neighbourhoods. As such, members of a larger entity have, without individually having been singled out, become the targets for repercussions by different actors, including government and pro-government forces,⁵¹ ISIS⁵² and anti-government armed groups,⁵³ for reason of real or perceived support to another party to the conflict. According to consistent reports, whole communities which are perceived to be holding a particular political opinion or affiliation in relation to the conflict have become the target of aerial bombardments, shelling, siege tactics, suicide attacks and car bombs, arbitrary arrest, hostage-taking, torture, rape

their localities have been subjected to shelling, artillery fire, military raids and withholding of food and other basic necessities. Several reported massacres perpetrated against Sunnis in demographically mixed areas such as Al-Houla, Tremseh, Baniyas and Al-Bayda appeared to at least partly display sectarian motives. Sunnis have further been targeted by government and pro-government forces for arbitrary arrest, *incommunicado* detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment as well as extra-judicial and summary executions on account of their real or perceived affiliation with Sunni Islamist or Salafist parties or, more generally, anti-government armed groups. Sunnis have also reportedly been singled out for originating from or residing in locations under control of or having sympathies for anti-government armed groups; see, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 5 February 2013, A/HRC/22/59, Annex VIII, para 31, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/513727e62.html>; Human Rights Watch, "No One's Left" - Summary Executions by Syrian Forces in al-Bayda & Baniyas, 13 September 2013, ISBN: 978-1-62313-0480, p. 2, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5236a4274.html>; US Department of State, *Syria 2012 International Religious Freedom Report*, 20 May 2013, pp. 5-6, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/208624.pdf>.

⁵¹ Reports indicate that civilians living in or originating from localities that have seen popular protests and/or have a presence of, or have (temporarily) fallen under control of armed opposition groups are by and large associated with the opposition and, thus, considered by the government to be opposing it. As such, civilians in these localities have reportedly been subjected to (mass) arrests, torture, sexual violence, extra-judicial executions, and massacres committed by government and pro-government forces during ground incursions and house searches. Government and pro-government forces have also engaged in pillaging and destruction of homes and shops belonging to perceived opponents during military raids. As the government lost control over parts of the country, it has reportedly increasingly resorted to subjecting civilians in these locations to extensive artillery shelling and aerial bombardment, including with cluster ammunition and "barrel bombs". In a number of opposition-held areas, the government is reported to have laid sieges, thereby systematically depriving hundreds of thousands of civilians of basic necessities such as food and medical assistance. Persons originating from areas perceived to be opposing the government are reported to be under general suspicion of opposing the government and are thus at heightened risk of arrest, detention and abuse, for example at checkpoints, on the basis of their origin as indicated on their ID cards. See, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, Annex IV, para 64, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>. See also UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, paras 50 and 58, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 24 March 2014, S/2014/208, para 10, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53abeaa04.html>; Human Rights Watch, *Syria: Unlawful Air Attacks Terrorize Aleppo*, 24 March 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/533946244.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 12 February 2014, A/HRC/25/65, paras 20, 36, 53, 112, 133, 134 and 138, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 27 January 2014, S/2014/31, para 36, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52f222744.html>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Civilians in al-Baydah and Baniyas exposed to summary executions*, 26 July 2013, MDE 24/037/2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51f777064.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 4 June 2013, A/HRC/23/58, paras 21, 64 and 69, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/51aee9484.html>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Government bombs rain on civilians*, 14 March 2013, MDE 24/009/2013, pp. 1, 11-13, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/514305d42.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 5 February 2013, A/HRC/22/59, Annex VIII, para 29 and Annex XIII, para 2, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/513727e62.html>.

⁵² Reports indicate that, as part of its efforts to establish and consolidate control, ISIS has deliberately targeted civilians on the basis of their real or perceived political opinion and/or religious or ethnic identity, including through indiscriminate attacks on (minority) areas, summary execution, and forced displacement. For example: "On 20 March [2014], several hundred ISIS fighters surrounded Tel Akhader (Al-Raqqa) and threatened to kill its Kurdish residents if they did not leave. Terrorised, people fled with only the clothes on their backs"; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, para 41, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>. The Independent Commission of Inquiry further reported that in July 2013, anti-government armed groups, including ISIS, JAN, Ahrar Ash-Sham and FSA-affiliated groups, deliberately displaced Kurdish civilians from localities in Tal Hasel and Tal Aran (Aleppo) and Tal Abyad (Raqqa) in the context of clashes with Kurdish armed groups. Kurdish civilians were reportedly instructed through loudspeakers to leave the towns or otherwise face attack, homes were reportedly looted and burnt and fighting-age men abducted: "The pattern of conduct perpetrated by non-State armed groups in Ar Raqqa and Aleppo in July indicates a coordinated and planned campaign to forcibly displace Kurdish civilians. The methods employed, the threat of violence and subsequent abductions demonstrate the deliberate displacement of a population on the basis of its ethnic identity. Such conduct amounts to the war crime of forcible displacement"; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 12 February 2014, A/HRC/25/65, paras 145-150, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53182eed4.html>.

⁵³ Reports indicate that anti-government armed groups frequently consider locations where the government maintains control, and thus the inhabitants thereof, by and large as "pro-government". "Pro-government" is often interpreted in broad terms, and includes areas that host government military installations or personnel (often located in residential areas), but also populations considered supportive of the government on the basis of their religious background. In particular, Alawite and other Shi'ite communities are frequently labelled as "pro-government", although this is not uniform practice amongst the various anti-government armed groups. Civilians in areas perceived as "pro-government" have been subjected to massacres, extra-judicial execution, torture, hostage taking, and attacks with mortars, rockets and IEDs. Anti-government armed groups have also laid siege or temporarily cut off water and/or electricity to perceived pro-government localities in what was said by the UN Secretary-General to be amounting to "collective punishment", and have laid sieges on some localities; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, para 7, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, Annex IV, paras 35-50, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; UN Human Rights Council, *Oral Update of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, A/HRC/26/CRP.2, 16 June 2014, paras 19-22, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53a033004.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 23 April 2014, S/2014/295, para 8, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac05584.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 22 May 2014, S/2014/365, para 46, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac00ee4.html>; Amnesty International, *Syria: Summary killings and other abuses by armed opposition groups*, 14 March 2013, MDE 24/008/2013, p. 5, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/514304f42.html>.

and other forms of sexual violence, and extra-judicial executions. The perception of sharing a political opinion or affiliation in relation to the conflict is often based on little more than an individual's physical presence or origin in an area, or his/her ethnic, religious or tribal background. The risk of being harmed is very real and is in no way diminished by the fact the person concerned may not be targeted for or exposed to harm on an individual basis.

13. The situation of **women** has been dramatically affected by the ongoing conflict as they have become increasingly exposed to a range of violations from different parties in the conflict.⁵⁴ Thousands of women have reportedly been killed as a result of shelling in civilian areas, the use of snipers, during raids and massacres.⁵⁵ Others have been detained, taken hostage, subjected to torture and sexual or other violence, used as human shields or subjected to harsh interpretations of *Shari'a* law.⁵⁶ Women who have become the primary or sole caretakers for their families due to their male family members' injury or disability, detention, disappearance, death or participation in the conflict, face specific hardships in rebuilding their lives and caring for their families amidst increased risk of abuse and exploitation.⁵⁷
14. **Children** are among those most affected by the conflict. More than 10,000 children have been killed as a result of crossfire, shelling and bombardment as well as in targeted violence such as sniper fire and summary executions and massacres.⁵⁸ Many others have been injured, detained, abducted and traumatized.⁵⁹ As at March 2014, 5.5 million children were reported to have been affected by the conflict, up from 2.3 million only one year earlier.⁶⁰ Up to one million children live in hard-to-reach areas in Syria.⁶¹ More than half of Syria's school-aged children, 2.8 million, are reported to be out of school.⁶² Many children affected by the conflict have been or may be exposed to child labour, domestic violence and/or early and forced marriage.⁶³ Reports document the recruitment of children for support functions and combat by various parties to the conflict, putting them at great risk of death,

⁵⁴ "As fighting has engulfed civilian areas, the barest possibility of a normal life has been destroyed. The impact has been particularly grave for women and children, whose most basic rights are infringed by the conduct of the parties"; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, para 137, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

⁵⁵ Of the 191,000 documented casualties (see para 4), the vast majority (85 percent) are male. 17,795 (or 9.3 percent) are female, although it is believed that this is an undercount of the real number of females killed in the conflict; UN New Centre, *Pillay castigates "paralysis" on Syria, as new UN study indicates over 191,000 people killed*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14959&LangID=E>; Human Rights Data Analysis Group, *Updated Statistical Analysis of Documentation of Killings in the Syrian Arab Republic*, Commissioned by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, August 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SY/HRDAGUpdatedReportAug2014.pdf>.

⁵⁶ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, *Violence against Women, Bleeding Wound in the Syrian Conflict*, November 2013, pp. 10, <http://bit.ly/Intvqca>.

⁵⁷ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 49, 83, Annex III, para 4, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>. See also Los Angeles Times, *The ranks of Syrian widows grow as rebels are killed off*, 28 May 2014, <http://fw.to/SHxxeNT>.

⁵⁸ UNICEF estimated that as of January 2014 at least 10,000 children had been killed, with the real number likely even higher; UNICEF, *Under Siege - The devastating impact on children of three years of conflict in Syria*, March 2014, p. 5, <http://childrenofsyria.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Under-siege-March-2014-WEB2.pdf>. Among the 191,000 documented casualties (see para 4) there are more than 8,800 minors, including 2,165 children under the age of 10. The real number is likely considerably higher as in the majority of cases the victims' ages has not been recorded; UN New Centre, *Pillay castigates "paralysis" on Syria, as new UN study indicates over 191,000 people killed*, 22 August 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14959&LangID=E>. See also UN General Assembly, *Children and armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General*, 15 May 2014, A/68/878-S/2014/339, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b3b7654.html>; Oxford Research Group, *Press Release: Major New Report Shows 11,420 Children Killed in Syrian Conflict: 7 out of 10 by Explosives, 1 in 4 by Bullets*, 24 November 2013, http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/middle_east/press_release_new_report_stolen_futures_hidden_death_toll_child_casualties.

⁵⁹ See, for example, UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 84, 94, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

⁶⁰ UNICEF, *Infographic: Syria's Children Under Siege*, May 2014, <http://www.unicefusa.org/syria-infographic-under-siege>.

⁶¹ UNICEF, *Syria Crisis Monthly Humanitarian Situation Report 14 July – 15 August 2014*, 15 August 2014, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF_Syria_Regional_Crisis_Hum_SitRep_15Aug2014.pdf.

⁶² UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, para 88, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

⁶³ UNHCR, *A Year in Review 2013 - UNHCR Syria*, 2013, pp. 14-16, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52d7c00c4.html>; Child Protection Working Group, *Child Protection Assessment 2013*, 19 September 2013, http://www.crin.org/docs/SCPA-FULL_Report-LIGHT.pdf.

injury, trauma or torture.⁶⁴ Child marriages and sexual violence emerged as a major concern among Syrian refugee populations, with devastating consequences for the education and health of Syrian girls.⁶⁵

15. The protection and humanitarian situation of **Palestine refugees in Syria** is reported to continue to deteriorate. By virtue of their distribution within the major urban centres, including in Dera'a, Damascus and Rural Damascus, Homs, Hama, Lattakia and Aleppo, many of the 570,000 Palestine refugees and other registered persons/persons eligible to receive services from UNRWA have been directly affected by the conflict. According to former UNRWA Commissioner-General, Filippo Grandi, many of the 12 Palestinian camps have been turned into “battlegrounds between armed opposition groups and government forces, trapping Palestinians inside embattled areas.”⁶⁶ Parties to the conflict have blocked humanitarian access and employed siege warfare on Palestinian refugee camps, including most notably on Yarmouk in Damascus, where over 18,000 civilians remain trapped.⁶⁷ Camps such as Sbeineh and Husseinieh in Rural Damascus and Dera'a have reportedly largely been emptied of their residents.⁶⁸ Some 6,000 residents of the of the Ein El Tal camp (near Aleppo) were, according to UNRWA, forced out at gunpoint in one day by anti-government armed groups, which entered the camp in late April 2013.⁶⁹ Out of the approximately 540,000 Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Syria, around 270,000 have been displaced inside Syria and over 70,000 to other countries.⁷⁰ Numerous homes, shops, schools and health facilities in Palestinian camps and residential areas have been damaged or destroyed as a result of fighting, looting and attacks.⁷¹ As with other minorities, there are reports of Palestine refugees having been drawn into the conflict, supporting, or perceived to be supporting, one of the sides, putting them at risk of reprisals and abuse.⁷²
16. Many **refugees and asylum-seekers in Syria**, mostly Iraqis, have left Syria since the beginning of the conflict and felt compelled, by lack of another option, to return to their country of origin. Others have been displaced, once again, within Syria or to other countries.⁷³ As of 18 October 2014, approximately 29,700 refugees and asylum-seekers (10,000 families) remain registered with UNHCR in Syria.⁷⁴ This compares to nearly 110,000 registered refugees at the beginning of 2012 and over 143,000 at the end of 2010. This trend is expected to continue due to the volatile security situation. The large majority originates from Iraq, but there also small groups

⁶⁴ UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2014/611, 21 August 2014, para 15, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/611; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, paras 85, 90-92, 95 and 97, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic*, 27 January 2014, S/2014/31, para 12, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52f222744.html>.

⁶⁵ International Rescue Committee, *Are We Listening? Acting on Our Commitments to Women and Girls Affected by the Syrian Conflict*, September 2014, <http://www.rescue-uk.org/sites/default/files/Women%20of%20syria%20-%20For%20web%20version2.pdf>; UNFPA, *Syrian crisis takes heaviest toll on region's women and girls*, 13 August 2014, <http://shar.es/1a8CbW>; Save the Children, *Too Young To Wed - The growing problem of child marriage among Syrian girls in Jordan*, 2014, http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/TOO_YOUNG_TO_WED_REPORT_0714.PDF.

⁶⁶ UNRWA, *Statement by Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly*, 7 November 2013, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-filippo-grandi-commissioner-general-unrwa-fourth-committee>.

⁶⁷ UNRWA, *The Crisis in Yarmouk Camp*, accessed 25 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/crisis-in-yarmouk>; UNRWA, *UNRWA expresses deep concern on water situation in Yarmouk*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/unrwa-expresses-deep-concern-water-situation-yarmouk>.

⁶⁸ Sbeineh had a pre-conflict population of more than 22,000 persons; Ramadan used to have a population of 1,000; UNRWA, *Where We Work – Syria – Camp Profiles*, 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/syria/camp-profiles?field=16>; UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 79*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-79>.

⁶⁹ Ein El Tal remains inaccessible at the time of writing; UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response Update 79*, 3 October 2014, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/emergency-reports/syria-regional-crisis-response-update-79>. See also UNRWA, *Syria Regional Crisis Response January – December 2014*, p. 10, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/2014_syria_emergency_appeal.pdf.

⁷⁰ See above para 7.

⁷¹ UNRWA estimated in November 2013 that around 46,000 Palestine refugee homes have been damaged or destroyed and 59 out of 180 UNRWA facilities have sustained various degrees of damage as a result of the conflict; UNRWA, *Statement by Filippo Grandi, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly*, 7 November 2013, <http://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/official-statements/statement-filippo-grandi-commissioner-general-unrwa-fourth-committee>.

⁷² See, for example, UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 22 May 2014, S/2014/365, para 14, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac00ee4.html>; United States Department of State, *2013 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Syria*, 27 February 2014, p. 18, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53284a6414.html>.

⁷³ Al-Akhbar, *Iraqi refugees in Syria: Between a rock and a hard place*, 11 April 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19388>; UNHCR, *A Year in Review 2013 – UNHCR Syria*, 2013, p. 58, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52d7c00c4.html>; IRIN, *Analysis: Syria's forgotten refugees*, 23 April 2012, <http://shar.es/11OIQ6>.

⁷⁴ Of these, more than 24,000 are from Iraq. This figure does not include new arrivals from Iraq as a result of the recent escalation of conflict; UNHCR, 18 October 2014.

from Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia and other countries.⁷⁵ Traditionally, most refugees in Syria reside in Damascus and its surrounding countryside, and, to a lesser extent, in Homs, Deir Ez-Zour and Dera'a, including in many areas that have been directly affected by conflict. Refugees residing in conflict areas are at risk of being killed, injured or arrested,⁷⁶ especially those that find themselves unable to leave for a combination of reasons, including lack of documentation to pass checkpoints, lack of financial means to find shelter elsewhere, insecurity and road blocks. Furthermore, in a situation of active conflict and increased lawlessness, refugees are particularly vulnerable to being singled out for detention, kidnapping, robberies, threats and harassment, as they lack extended family and tribal or community networks.⁷⁷ Refugees' perceived association with one of the parties to the conflict, based on their nationality or religion, may expose them to direct targeting.⁷⁸ As a result of the recent escalation of the conflict in Iraq, new groups of Iraqi refugees, including members of minority groups, have fled from Iraq to Syria, including tens of thousands of Yazidis that arrived in Hassakeh governorate in August 2014.⁷⁹ While most of these refugees transited via Syria into the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, more than 3,700 remain in Newroz Camp in Hassakeh governorate while an additional 400 live in nearby host communities. As a result of unemployment and loss of livelihoods, many refugees in Syria have exhausted their financial resources. Most are dependent on humanitarian assistance; however, access to refugees for UNHCR and other organizations is restricted due to security constraints.⁸⁰ They further have to compete with the large numbers of IDPs for affordable accommodation, and face regular electricity and water cuts. Many refugee children have seen their education disrupted as a result of insecurity, destruction or occupation of schools, and are at an increased risk of child labour. Resettlement remains the only durable solution for many refugees in Syria who are in desperate need of protection. In 2013, more than 5,600 refugees departed Syria to various resettlement countries. In addition, a number of refugees ex-Syria, mainly Iraqis, had their cases processed for resettlement in neighbouring countries after they were forced to flee Syria. More resettlement places are needed urgently for these refugees. When refugees recognized by UNHCR under its mandate in Syria relocate as a result of the conflict to a country other than their country of origin or habitual residence the fact that they were recognized by UNHCR under its mandate should be accorded considerable weight in state asylum procedures.⁸¹

Humanitarian Situation

17. With the conflict in Syria in its fourth year, the humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate. The total number of people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria has reached 11 million, including approximately 6.45 million IDPs. Whereas the whole of Syria is affected, the majority of those in need of assistance are, according to reports,⁸² concentrated in the governorates of Aleppo, Rural Damascus and Idlib. Over 4.7 million people are living in hard-to-reach areas, in addition to 241,000 who are trapped in besieged areas, cut off from basic supplies and largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors.⁸³ At the end of 2013, 75 percent of Syrians were estimated to live in poverty, with more than half the population living in extreme poverty, able only to secure the most basic food and non-food items required for the survival of their households. One fifth of the population were found to live in

⁷⁵ UNHCR registration data, 18 October 2014. Not all refugees are registered with UNHCR. As at January 2014, the government estimated that there were 149,000 refugees in the country; UNHCR, *2014 UNHCR country operations profile - Syrian Arab Republic*, accessed 25 October 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html>.

⁷⁶ Los Angeles Times, *A sequel to a nightmare for Iraqi refugees living in Syria*, 21 July 2012, <http://lat.ms/1m5zHa7>.

⁷⁷ UNHCR, *A Year in Review 2013 - UNHCR Syria*, 2013, p. 59, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52d7c00c4.html>. See also Washington Post, *For Iraqis who fled to Syria, sectarian clashes are all too familiar*, 10 April 2013, <http://wapo.st/16PZv8f>.

⁷⁸ UNHCR, *A Year in Review 2013 - UNHCR Syria*, 2013, p. 59, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52d7c00c4.html>. See also Rudaw, *Christian Refugees in Syria Forced Back to Iraq by War*, 28 April 2013, <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/28042013>.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, *From Iraq into Syria - Update 1 - 18 August 2014*, 18 August 2014, <http://shar.es/11ODcS>. See also BBC News, *Iraq crisis: Inside 'swollen' refugee camp in Syria*, 15 August 2014, <http://bbc.in/1tW4AA7>.

⁸⁰ UNHCR, *2014 UNHCR country operations profile - Syrian Arab Republic*, accessed 10 September 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486a76.html>. See also Al-Akhbar, *Iraqi refugees in Syria: Between a rock and a hard place*, 11 April 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/19388>.

⁸¹ UNHCR, *MM (Iran) v. Secretary of State for the Home Department - Written Submission on Behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 3 August 2010, C5/2009/2479, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c6aa7db2.html>.

⁸² UN OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic - Governorate Profile (June 2014)*, 6 August 2014, <http://syria.unocha.org/sites/default/files/Syria%20governorate%20profiles%206%20August%202014.pdf>.

⁸³ In spite of Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014), which demands that sieges be lifted immediately, a number of sieges are reported to remain in place, affecting, at the time of writing, an estimated 241,000 persons, including 196,000 persons in Damascus and Rural Damascus, besieged by government forces, and 45,000 persons in the Shi'ite enclaves of Nubul and Zahra in northern Aleppo, besieged by anti-government armed groups; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, paras 40-46, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696.

abject poverty, with households unable to meet even the most basic need for food, and, in the case of those living in conflict/besieged areas, facing hunger, malnutrition and starvation.⁸⁴

18. Access to food,⁸⁵ water and sanitation,⁸⁶ housing,⁸⁷ health care,⁸⁸ and education⁸⁹ is severely affected by the cumulative effects of armed conflict and the related destruction of infrastructure, disruption of essential services and loss of livelihoods.⁹⁰ All parties to the conflict have been implicated in targeting vital services resulting in interruptions to the supply of safe drinking water and electricity.⁹¹ Internally displaced families who have lost their sources of income, the urban poor, subsistence farmers, small-scale herders, casual labourers and petty traders are reportedly among the most affected groups. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance inside Syria is expected to further increase due to limited or non-existent basic services, decreasing access to food and water, and lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.⁹²
19. According to the reports of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)⁹³ there have been some noted improvements in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including cross-line and cross-border. However, humanitarian access remains precarious as a result of insecurity

⁸⁴ Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria, combined third and fourth quarter report (July – December 2013)*, May 2014, pp. 5, 33-36, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf.

⁸⁵ The conflict has severely limited food production, marketing and imports. Loss of livelihood, deepening poverty, inflation and currency depreciation have further eroded families' capacity to meet basic needs and cope with the crisis. An estimated 6.3 million people are highly vulnerable to food insecurity and in critical need of food and agriculture support. Many families report reducing their number of meals and opting for cheaper and less nutritious foods; FAO, *Syria Crisis - Executive brief*, 3 April 2014, http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/emergencies/docs/Syria-Crisis-Executive-Brief-03-04-14.pdf.

⁸⁶ The conflict has resulted in the breakdown of public services such as water, sanitation and solid waste management. A UNICEF-led countrywide assessment revealed that in areas affected by conflict, water supplies are only available at one third of pre-crisis levels. Power cuts, fuel shortages, lack of maintenance due to insecurity, and damage to infrastructure have been identified as the main reasons behind the worsening water shortages. Collection and safe disposal of domestic waste is also highly disrupted; UNICEF, *Water and Sanitation Services in Syria Severely Disrupted by Conflict, Says UNICEF*, 8 February 2013, http://www.unicef.org/media/media_67830.html.

⁸⁷ Xinhua, *Roundup: Syria's housing units need 100 bln USD for reconstruction*, 10 December 2013, <http://on.china.cn/1qYE07f>; Reuters, *One third of Syrian homes destroyed: U.N.*, 11 September 2013, <http://bit.ly/1q74nm1>; Al-Monitor, *Study: Half a Million Homes Destroyed in Syria*, 3 May 2013, <http://almon.co/83h>; UN OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin – Syria*, Issue 22, 19 March – 8 April 2013, p. 1, https://syria.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/Syria_Humanitarian_Bulletin_22_130408_EN.pdf.

⁸⁸ The healthcare system is reported to have been compromised through damage and destruction to medical facilities and healthcare infrastructure, the flight, death and injury of healthcare professionals, and the collapse of pharmaceutical production. An estimated 60 percent of hospitals have been destroyed or damaged and 70 percent of health centres are either damaged or out of service. Production of medicines has fallen by 70 percent and prices have risen so high that many are unable to afford them. In addition, hundreds of health personnel have been killed or injured and at least half of Syria's doctors have left the country; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, Annex, p. 13, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 20 June 2014, S/2014/427, para 35, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53abcd2e4.html>; Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria, combined third and fourth quarter report (July – December 2013)*, May 2014, pp. 6, 38-41, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf.

⁸⁹ More than 4,000 schools have reportedly been destroyed, damaged or turned into shelters for IDPs, storage facilities or military bases. Furthermore, hundreds of teachers and other educational staff have reportedly been killed and others have been wounded, kidnapped or arrested. Enrolment and attendance rates have dramatically plummeted, with more than half of all school-age children no longer attending school by the end of 2013. Based on current enrolment ratios it is estimated that Syria has the second worst performance in the world.; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 20 June 2014, S/2014/427, Annex, p. 10, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53abcd2e4.html>; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 22 May 2014, S/2014/365, Annex, p. 12, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac00ee4.html>; Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria, combined third and fourth quarter report (July – December 2013)*, May 2014, pp. 6, 38, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf; UNICEF, *Infographic: Syria's Children Under Siege*, May 2014, <http://www.unicefusa.org/syria-infographic-under-siege>; UNHCR, *Syria Crisis: Education Interrupted*, December 2013, p. 5, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52aebbc04.html>.

⁹⁰ Syria is reportedly overwhelmed by unemployment, with an estimated 54 percent of the labour force, or 3.39 million persons, unemployed at the end of 2013. The majority, some 2.67 million of these people, lost their jobs during the conflict, with their loss of income impacting on over 11 million dependents, who lost their main source of livelihood; Syrian Centre for Policy Research, *Squandering Humanity: Socioeconomic Monitoring Report on Syria, combined third and fourth quarter report (July – December 2013)*, May 2014, pp. 5, 27-29, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/scpr_report_q3-q4_2013_270514final_3.pdf.

⁹¹ UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, para 11, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696.

⁹² UN OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic – Governorate Profile (June 2014)*, 6 August 2014, <http://syria.unocha.org/sites/default/files/Syria%20governorate%20profiles%206%20August%202014.pdf>.

⁹³ UN Security Council, *Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) [on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the establishment of a monitoring mechanism]*, 14 July 2014, S/RES/2165(2014), <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53c66b974.html>; UN Security Council, *Resolution 2139 (2014) Adopted by the Security Council at its 7116th meeting, on 22 February 2014*, S/RES/2139 (2014), http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/2139%282014%29; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2014/611, 21 August 2014, para 23, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/611.

and access constraints imposed by parties to the conflict.⁹⁴ Of particular concern are populations in hard to reach and in besieged areas that are reported to be virtually cut off from basic supplies and remain largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors.⁹⁵ Security risks to humanitarian workers are high, as dozens of humanitarian workers have been killed, detained or abducted and UN vehicles, warehouses and ambulances have been exposed to attacks.⁹⁶

20. In December 2013, the UN launched the largest appeal in its history with the revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) and the Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP6). The mid-term revision of the two plans called for US\$ 6 billion in total to provide humanitarian aid to Syria and neighbouring countries. As at 25 October 2014, according to the UN financial tracking system, the two plans have received 38 and 52 percent, respectively, of their total budget requirements.⁹⁷

Access to Territory and the Right to Seek Asylum

21. UNHCR characterizes the flight of civilians from Syria as a refugee movement. Syrians, and Palestine refugees who had their former habitual residence in Syria, require international protection until such time as the security and human rights situation in Syria improves significantly and conditions for voluntary return in safety and dignity are met.
22. UNHCR deeply appreciates the generosity extended by countries in the region which have received the majority of persons fleeing from Syria in spite of the enormous strain and pressures on their economies, public infrastructure and resources, including national services, such as education and health systems. While pressures on host countries in the region increase, there are growing concerns about the ability of Syrians and Palestine refugees who had their former habitual residence in Syria, many of whom having been displaced multiple times, to reach borders within Syria,⁹⁸ and to find access to and be admitted by host countries in the region and beyond.⁹⁹ Cases of forcible returns and denial of access are reportedly increasing.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ “All parties to the conflict continue to deny access to humanitarian assistance in an unjustifiable manner”; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014). Report of the Secretary-General*, S/2014/611, 21 August 2014, para 55, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/611. “Despite the passing of resolution 2139 (2014), insecurity, hostilities and administrative restrictions continue to prevent humanitarian access to a growing number of locations. The level of obstruction to the delivery of aid by all warring parties was qualified as “inhuman” by OCHA’s Under-Secretary-General Valerie Amos”; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, Annex III, para 1, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

⁹⁵ See above FN 83.

⁹⁶ “Twenty-nine United Nations national staff members, of whom 26 are UNRWA staff, continue to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 63. This includes 15 United Nations staff members, 38 SARC staff members and volunteers, 7 Palestine Red Crescent Society volunteers and staff members, and 3 international NGO staff members”; UN Security Council, *Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014)*, S/2014/696, 24 September 2014, para 55, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/696. “Syrian humanitarian workers face a number of risks, including summary execution, kidnapping, arrest, violence and harassment”; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014)*, 22 May 2014, S/2014/365, Annex, p. 16, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ac00ee4.html>. See also ICRC, *International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement deplores deaths of two more Red Crescent volunteers in Syria*, 3 June 2014, <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/news-release/2014/06-03-syria-sarc-joint-statement.htm>; UN News Service, *Syria: UN humanitarian chief condemns attack on warehouse during aid distribution*, 25 May 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5384a1034.html>.

⁹⁷ Financial Tracking Service, *Total Funding to the Syrian Crisis 2014*, accessed 25 October 2014, <http://fts.unocha.org/pageloader.aspx?page=special-syriancrisis>.

⁹⁸ “There are worrying signs too that the journey out of Syria is becoming tougher, with many people forced to pay bribes at armed checkpoints proliferating along the borders. Refugees crossing the desert into eastern Jordan are being forced to pay smugglers hefty sums (US\$100 a head or more) to take them to safety”; UNHCR, *Needs soar as number of Syrian refugees tops 3 million*, 29 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ff76c99.html>.

⁹⁹ See for example New York Times, *No Syrians Are Allowed Into Jordan, Agencies Say*, 8 October 2014, <http://nyti.ms/1xpHGji>; Daily Star, *France backs creation of Syria-Turkey safe zone*, 8 October 2014, <http://bit.ly/1neeGdJ>; Daily Star, *Border policies quietly changing for Syrian refugees*, 2 October 2014, <http://shar.es/1mprZb>; Daily Star, *Lebanese minister lobbies for Syrian refugee camps*, 27 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/Zg0Vj8>; Reuters, *Syrian refugees top 3 million, half of all Syrians displaced: U.N.*, 29 August 2014, <http://reut.rs/1qQQEVE>; Daily Star, *Derbas: Lebanon could close border with Syria*, 11 August 2014, <http://shar.es/1a1gf8>; Human Rights Watch, *Jordan: Palestinians Escaping Syria Turned Away*, 7 August 2014, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/07/jordan-palestinians-escaping-syria-turned-away>; UNRWA, *Midyear Review of the Syria Regional Crisis Response: January – December 2014*, p. 5, http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/syria_regional_crisis_response_midyear_review_2014.pdf; Amnesty International, *Families ripped apart as Palestinian refugees from Syria denied entry to Lebanon*, 1 July 2014, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/families-ripped-apart-palestinian-refugees-syria-denied-entry-lebanon-2014-07-01>; Reuters, *Turkey builds wall in token effort to secure border with Syria*, 5 May 2014, <http://reut.rs/1kBYKUF>; Human Rights Watch, *Egypt: Syria Refugees Detained, Coerced to Return*, 11 November 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/52820e5f4.html>; Amnesty International, *Growing restrictions growing restrictions, tough conditions: The plight of those fleeing Syria to Jordan*, 31 October 2013, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5278ecd64.html>.

¹⁰⁰ UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic*, 13 August 2014, A/HRC/27/60, Annex III, para 3, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53fed8134.html>.

23. UNHCR is concerned about physical barriers, such as fences, or other deterrents along borders,¹⁰¹ and practices such as pushbacks at land and sea borders.¹⁰² The number of Syrians arriving in Europe by sea increased in 2013 and has continued to increase in 2014, with Syrians as one of the main nationalities of those rescued in the Mediterranean Sea.¹⁰³ Persons having fled Syria who cross international waters in search of international protection should be allowed to disembark at a place of safety, meaning a place which is physically safe, where basic needs can be met, and where they are safe from *refoulement*.¹⁰⁴
24. Against this backdrop, UNHCR continues to urge all countries to ensure that persons fleeing Syria, including Palestine refugees and other habitual residents of Syria, are admitted to their territory and are able to seek asylum. The entry and admission of persons having fled Syria needs to be dealt with in a protection-sensitive manner, regardless of whether they resort to seeking entry without appropriate documentation or in an otherwise irregular manner. UNHCR appeals to all States to ensure that Syrian civilians are protected from *refoulement* and afforded international protection, the form of which may vary depending on the processing and reception capacity of countries receiving them, while guaranteeing respect for basic human rights. Syrians and habitual residents of Syria in need of international protection who approach UNHCR and/or the respective host Governments upon arrival on the territory of the host State, have been, or are being, registered as persons seeking international protection.

Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum

25. Given the situation of armed conflict prevailing in Syria, it is possible that among those departing Syria and seeking international protection in neighbouring countries there may be individuals who have taken part in the hostilities - that is, combatants,¹⁰⁵ and/or armed elements.¹⁰⁶ Whilst aware of the challenges in the current environment, UNHCR nevertheless calls upon all Governments concerned to make every effort to identify combatants and armed elements among arrivals from Syria and to house combatants/armed elements separately, consistent with the humanitarian and civilian character of asylum. Individuals identified as combatants or armed elements, including children associated with armed forces or armed groups, need to be treated in accordance with existing standards in applicable international law.¹⁰⁷

Assessing Individual Asylum Claims

26. While the majority of Syrians and others leaving the country remain in the region, the numbers of individuals who arrive in countries further afield and seek international protection are increasing. Their claims need to be assessed in fair and efficient procedures. UNHCR considers that most Syrians seeking international protection are likely to fulfil the requirements of the refugee definition contained in Article 1A(2) of the *1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, since they will have a well-founded fear of persecution linked to one of the Convention grounds. For many civilians who have fled Syria, the nexus to a 1951 Convention ground will lie in the direct or

¹⁰¹ Open Democracy, Cynthia Orchard, *Closed eyes, closed borders: EU policy and refugees from Syria*, 3 September 2014, <http://bit.ly/1Daufld>; UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, p. 7, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

¹⁰² UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, pp. 7-9, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

¹⁰³ UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, pp. 4, 10-12, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

¹⁰⁴ See: UNHCR, *Submission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the Case of Hirsi and Others v. Italy*, 29 March 2011, Application no. 27765/09, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4d92d2c22.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Note that UNHCR uses the term “combatants” in a wider sense than the specific meaning of combatant in international humanitarian law and applies it to “any member, man or woman, of regular armed forces or an irregular armed group, or someone who has been participating actively in military activities and hostilities, or has undertaken activities to recruit or train military personnel, or has been in a command or decision-making position in an armed organization, regular or irregular, and who find themselves in a host State.” See UNHCR, *Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum*, September 2006, p. 17, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/452b9bca2.html>.

¹⁰⁶ The term “armed elements” refers to all individuals carrying weapons, who may be either combatants or civilians. It is intended to include civilians who may happen to be carrying weapons for reasons of self-defence or reasons related to any military activities. While all armed elements need to be disarmed upon crossing the border into a host State, only combatants need to be separated and interned. See UNHCR, *Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum*, September 2006, p.17, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/452b9bca2.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In general, children associated with armed forces or armed groups should not be interned, although exceptions may apply to children of 15 years of age and above for reasons related to the conflict. In such cases, interned children should benefit from special guarantees as provided for in international humanitarian law and human rights law. See UNHCR, *Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum*, September 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/452b9bca2.html>.

indirect, real or perceived association with one of the parties to the conflict.¹⁰⁸ In order for an individual to meet the refugee criteria there is no requirement of having been individually targeted in the sense of having been “singled out” for persecution which already took place or being at risk thereof. Syrians and habitual residents of Syria who have fled may, for example, be at risk of persecution for reason of an imputed political opinion because of who controls the neighbourhood or village where they used to live, or because they belong to a religious or ethnic minority that is associated or perceived to be associated with a particular party to the conflict. In this regard, UNHCR welcomes the increased granting of refugee status to asylum-seekers from Syria by EU Member States in 2014, in comparison to 2013, when most EU Member States predominantly granted subsidiary protection to Syrians.¹⁰⁹

27. In – increasingly exceptional – cases in which the 1951 Convention inclusion criteria will not be met, consideration must be given to broader refugee criteria elaborated in regional refugee instruments,¹¹⁰ or other forms of international protection, including subsidiary protection,¹¹¹ or protection from *refoulement* derived from universal or regional human rights norms,¹¹² or based on national legislative standards.

Risk Profiles

28. Where claims of asylum-seekers who have fled Syria are considered on an individual basis in accordance with established asylum or refugee status determination procedures, UNHCR considers that persons with any of the profiles below, or a combination thereof, are likely to be in need of international protection in the sense of the 1951 Convention, unless, of course, exclusion clauses would apply (see para 29). Family members or persons otherwise closely associated with persons in any of the profiles below are, depending on the individual circumstances of the case, also likely to be in need of international refugee protection. Where relevant, particular consideration needs to be given to any past persecution to which applicants for international protection may have been subjected.¹¹³

The profiles listed here are not necessarily exhaustive; they are based on information available at the time of writing. Hence, a claim should not automatically be considered as without merit simply because it does not fall within any of the profiles identified here.

- *Persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the government*, including, but not limited to, members of political opposition parties; protestors, activists and others perceived to be sympathizing with the opposition; members of anti-government armed groups, or persons perceived to be members of anti-government armed groups; draft evaders and deserters from the Armed Forces; Government and Ba’ath Party officials who abandoned their positions; family members and affiliates of persons opposing or perceived to be opposing the government; and civilian inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods, towns and villages perceived to be opposing the government.

¹⁰⁸ See also para 12.

¹⁰⁹ UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, p. 16, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

¹¹⁰ For regional refugee criteria, see Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (“OAU Convention”), 10 September 1969, 1001 U.N.T.S. 45, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html>; *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama*, 22 November 1984, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36ec.html>; Asian-African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO), *Bangkok Principles on the Status and Treatment of Refugees* (“Bangkok Principles”), 31 December 1966, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3de5f2d52.html>.

¹¹¹ For subsidiary protection, see, European Union, *Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted* (recast), <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2011:337:0009:0026:EN:PDF>.

¹¹² Such as: the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, [Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 39/46 of 10 December 1984, entry into force 26 June 1987, in accordance with article 27 (1)], <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx>; *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* [Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 entry into force 23 March 1976, in accordance with Article 49], <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>; European Convention on Human Rights, [*Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, Rome, 4.XI.1950], http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf.

¹¹³ See relevant considerations on the impact of past persecution in paragraph 26 of the following guidelines; UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: “Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative” Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, HCR/GIP/03/04, 23 July 2003, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html>.

- *Persons supporting or perceived to be supporting the government*, including, but not limited to, government officials and members of government-affiliated parties; members and perceived members of government and pro-government forces and civilians perceived to be collaborating with government or pro-government forces; family members of persons supporting or perceived to be supporting the government; and civilian inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods, towns and villages perceived to be supporting the government.
- *Persons opposing, or believed to oppose, ISIS in areas under its de facto control.*
- *Persons opposing, or believed to oppose, anti-government armed groups in areas under their de facto control.*
- *Persons opposing, or believed to be opposing, the PYD/YPG in areas under their de facto control.*
- *Certain professionals*, in particular journalists and other media professionals, citizen journalists; doctors and other health professionals; human rights defenders; humanitarian workers; artists; and businessmen and industrialists.
- *Members of religious groups*, including Sunnis, Alawites, Ismailis, Twelver Shi'ites, Druze, Christians, and Yezidis.
- *Persons Perceived as Contravening Shari'a Law in areas under control of extremist Islamist groups.*
- *Members of minority ethnic groups*, including Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, Circassians, and Armenians.
- *Women*, in particular women who are victim of or at risk of sexual violence, early and forced marriage, domestic violence, "honour crimes" or trafficking.
- *Children*, in particular children who are at risk of detention or have previously been detained; children victims of or at risk of underage and forced recruitment, sexual and domestic violence, child labour, trafficking, and systematic denial of access to education.
- *Individuals of diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity and intersex individuals.*
- *Palestine Refugees from Syria.*

Exclusion Considerations

29. Among Syrian nationals or habitual residents seeking international protection, there may be individuals who have been associated with acts falling within the scope of the exclusion clauses provided for in Article 1F of the 1951 Convention.¹¹⁴ Exclusion considerations would be triggered, in particular, in cases involving possible participation in acts of violence since March 2011, including unlawful attacks against civilians, attacks on schools and hospitals and destruction of cultural and religious sites, murder, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, kidnappings, hostage-taking, rape and other forms of sexual violence, forced displacement and recruitment and use of children.¹¹⁵ Exclusion considerations would also be triggered in cases of claimants who may have been involved in human rights violations or other acts within the scope of Article 1F of the 1951 Convention before March 2011.¹¹⁶ In all such cases, it will be necessary to examine carefully any issues of individual responsibility for crimes which may give rise to exclusion from international refugee protection. Given the potentially serious consequences of exclusion from international refugee protection, the exclusion clauses need to be interpreted restrictively and applied with caution. Participation in armed conflict is not, as such, a ground for exclusion.

¹¹⁴ UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, HCR/GIP/03/05, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html>.

¹¹⁵ There have been reports of human rights violations (pre- and post-2011) and serious violations of international humanitarian law (as of July 2012) on all sides. See in particular, the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoISyria/OralUpdate18March2014.pdf>. With regards to ISIS and JAN, see also UN Security Council, *Security Council Adopts Resolution 2170 (2014) Condemning Gross, Widespread Abuse of Human Rights by Extremist Groups in Iraq, Syria*, 15 August 2014, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11520.doc.htm>.

¹¹⁶ See e.g. Annual Reports on Syria by Amnesty International for 2011 or earlier years, available at: www.amnesty.org and reports on Syria contained in Human Rights Watch World Report for 2011 and years prior to 2011, available at: <http://www.hrw.org/node/79288>.

Similarly, mere membership in a group or organization is not a sufficient basis to exclude. A full assessment of the circumstances of the individual case is required in all cases.¹¹⁷

Returns, Moratorium on Forced Returns and Consideration of Sur Place Claims

30. As the situation in Syria is likely to remain uncertain for the near future, UNHCR welcomes the fact that several Governments have taken measures to suspend the forcible return of nationals or habitual residents of Syria, including those whose asylum claims have been rejected. Such measures should remain in place until further notice. UNHCR also considers that it would not be appropriate to return nationals or habitual residents of Syria to neighbouring and non-neighbouring countries in the region of Syria. In some cases, such return may not be safe for the individuals concerned, and it may be impossible for their (specific) needs to be met. More broadly, however, UNHCR considers that States, by refraining from forced returns to neighbouring countries and countries in the region, would both acknowledge the significant contribution of these States to the protection and assistance of those who have fled Syria and express international solidarity with them, recognizing that the very large majority of persons having fled Syria is being hosted in the region and that only a very small percentage of Syrians has reached countries further afield.
31. In light of the developments and changed circumstances in Syria, it may be appropriate to reopen case files of Syrians whose asylum claim were rejected in the past, to the extent that has not yet been done, so as to ensure that those who as a result of changed circumstances have a valid *sur place* claim have it appropriately adjudicated, enabling them to benefit from protection and entitlements flowing from refugee recognition.
32. UNHCR calls upon Governments to monitor any returns of Syrians or habitual residents of Syria to Syria from neighbouring or other countries and to assess that these returns are based on a free and well-informed decision. In light of the prevailing circumstances in Syria, such returns, which may take place for reasons of personal or family matters or because assistance and/or protection needs are left unmet, should not be a bar to re-entry and should not necessarily restrict access to protection and assistance in the host country. UNHCR, however, calls upon Governments to be vigilant for signs of recruitment for participation in hostilities amongst the refugee population, which may be evidenced by returns to Syria. Persons who have returned to Syria for this reason would need to be identified as combatants or armed elements in accordance with the above guidance (paragraph 25).

Solidarity and Burden Sharing

33. UNHCR has continuously warned that immediate measures must be taken to mitigate the risks of regional spill-over of the conflict, and in order to prevent the destabilization of Syria's neighbours. Robust and timely measures of international solidarity are needed, more than ever, to support neighbouring countries and countries in the region in their efforts to protect and assist those fleeing Syria.¹¹⁸ This includes, *inter alia*, the active engagement by (and generous funding of) humanitarian and development actors to help host communities in bolstering their infrastructure and public services, supporting the continuous absorption of high numbers of refugees within these communities.
34. UNHCR repeats, with renewed urgency in the face of mounting pressures on and a renewed influx into Syria's neighbouring States, its call on States beyond Syria's immediate region to explore concrete and meaningful ways of expressing solidarity. Neighbouring States will be unable to sustain the immense burden and protection responsibilities they are currently shouldering without meaningful and substantial solidarity measures, which need to go beyond offers made so far. The escalation of conflict in Iraq, repeated security incidents in Lebanon, the

¹¹⁷ In some cases, individual responsibility for excludable acts may be presumed if membership and participation in the activities of a particularly violent group is voluntary. Detailed guidance on the interpretation and application of Article 1F of the 1951 Convention can be found in UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, HCR/GIP/03/05, 4 September 2003, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3f5857684.html>; and *Background Note on the Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3f5857d24.html>.

¹¹⁸ UNHCR, *Background note on international solidarity, responsibility-sharing and burden-sharing on refugee-related issues*, 26 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr-northerneurope.org/print/media/artikel/84bb28a5190e0264d14538aedecb65ac/background-note-on-international-sol.html>; UNHCR, *Ministerial Coordination Meeting of Major Host Countries for Syrian Refugees in Jordan*, 4 May 2014, <http://shar.es/1anw9P>. See also Jordan Times, *Syria neighbours want more from world to handle refugee burden*, 4 May 2014, <http://bit.ly/1qODxUo>.

challenges Turkey faces in mounting a response to the latest influx of Syrian refugees at an unprecedented pace, as well as reports of increased social tensions between refugees and host communities serve as evidence of the destabilizing impact of the Syrian refugee influx in the region. Apart from much-needed solidarity through further financial and other contributions to affected countries in the region towards addressing the humanitarian and emergency development needs,¹¹⁹ solidarity should take the form of generous programmes for humanitarian admission, resettlement or other forms of admission,¹²⁰ such as simplified, extended and expedited family reunion, visa procedures and the extension of student or employment-related visas. The creation of legal admission programmes and increased cooperation in identifying durable solutions for refugees would also contribute to reducing the number of persons now having no other options for reaching safety but to embark on risky boat or overland journeys.

35. UNHCR is encouraged by standing offers representing different forms of solidarity,¹²¹ but urges these States to do more, and other States to join this effort,¹²² in the face of a crisis of unprecedented dimensions in an increasingly volatile regional security environment.
36. Finally, solidarity can and should be expressed by ensuring appropriate treatment¹²³ and protection for the still relatively small numbers of Syrians arriving in countries further afield, whether directly from Syria, through countries in the region or by sea, by ensuring access to territory and to swift and fair asylum procedures. Generous approaches to protection are needed, reflected in non-penalization of those arriving without identity documents (or otherwise in an irregular manner) and high refugee recognition rates coupled with the granting of associated rights.

Future Developments

37. This guidance will be updated as the situation in Syria evolves. All decisions in relation to international protection needs for civilians fleeing Syria must be based on up-to-date information about the security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the country.

¹¹⁹ See, for example, UNHCR, *Ministerial Coordination Meeting of Major Host Countries for Syrian Refugees in Jordan*, 4 May 2014, <http://shar.es/1anw9P>.

¹²⁰ According to UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, "(...) Resettlement and other humanitarian admission programmes are critical and can be life-saving for the victims of the conflict in Syria. This represents another expression of solidarity with the host countries and the communities that have been suffering the impact of this terrible conflict on their economy and society"; UNHCR, *New resettlement places offered for Syrian refugees*, 27 June 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ad92ff6.html>.

¹²¹ UNHCR has asked States to provide 30,000 resettlement and humanitarian admissions places for Syrian refugees in 2013 and 2014. UNHCR also called upon States to make multi-annual commitments towards a goal of providing resettlement and other forms of admission for 100,000 Syrian refugees in 2015 and 2016. The majority of offers received to date come from European states, with Germany having offered over half the global total. In addition, the United States has pledged open-ended resettlement numbers; UNHCR, *Finding Solutions for Syrian Refugees – Resettlement and Other Forms of Admission of Syrian Refugees*, 11 August 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf>; UNHCR, *UNHCR urges Europe to do more to help Syrian refugees*, 11 July 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53bfcd969.html>; UNHCR, *New resettlement places offered for Syrian refugees*, 27 June 2014, <http://www.unhcr.org/53ad92ff6.html>.

¹²² UNHCR, *Syrian Refugees in Europe: What Europe Can Do to Ensure Protection and Solidarity*, 11 July 2014, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53b69f574.html>.

¹²³ The establishment of strict limits and safeguards on the use of detention, combined with the application of alternatives to detention and any measures improving the conditions for asylum-seekers who are awaiting decisions on their protection claims are also important elements of the response to arrivals from Syria in these countries. See: UNHCR, *Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers and Alternatives to Detention*, 2012, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/503489533b8.html>.