

SYRIA - Ar-Raqqa City Assessment

January 2018 Food Security Update



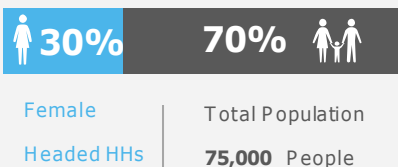
vam
food security analysis



Market- Sief Adoulah Neighbourhood

AREA PROFILE

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



Community Priorities



FOOD SOURCES



OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES



KEY POINTS

- It is estimated that around 75,000 people have returned to Raqqa city since the end of the hostilities in October 2017. There is still widespread presence of landmines, booby traps and unexploded ordinances across the city. Official UN reports note that at least 534 civilians have been injured through blasts of which 112 fatalities since October 2017. Further demining is required before the city can be called safe for return.
- There is massive destruction across the city. Buildings, electricity lines, water pipes and sewage systems have all been affected. An estimated 80% of the city is reported to be damaged by the conflict. A large clean-up operation in Raqqa city is underway.
- The livelihood of Ar-Raqqa city residents have been shattered. The majority of the city's residents are IDPs living with host communities outside the city while around 9,300 Ar-Raqqa city residents are known to still reside in the Ein Issa IDP camp. Many of these people are waiting for the city to be declared safe in-order to return and start to rebuild their lives. While others have already started to return.
- The influx of returnees to Ar-Raqqa city has been increasing since the end of the hostilities in October 2017. In January 2018 the rate of return stood at around 700 households per day, across different neighbourhoods.
- Returnees face a difficult path to rebuilding their livelihoods. Ar-Raqqa city has limited job opportunities and many households are resorting to daily casual labour to sustain their household's income. Poorer households have reported eating less preferred and less expensive foods as well as limiting portion sizes to make ends meet. Child labour is also very common as many schools are still shut and households' income is very low.
- Key food commodities are available at regional prices in markets across Ar-Raqqa city, however residents' financial access to food remains a constraint. Returnees in Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh neighbourhoods, two of the poorest neighbourhoods in Ar-Raqqa city where household's precarity levels are high and incomes are low, reported inability to purchase enough food to meet their household's needs.
- Yet some better-off neighbourhoods are picking-up, such as Ma'amoun. Here food markets have sprung to life with food commodities available in markets due to relatively better supply routes and residents' higher purchasing power.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Demining operations in Ar-Raqqa city are still ongoing. The city remains unsafe for return.
- Assess the full extent of destruction and contamination of agricultural land and water sources.
- Conduct further rapid food security assessments and continue to monitor the food security situation.

*Icons in blue highlight key areas for humanitarian intervention



Situation update of the area

Ar-Raqqa city is located in the northeast of Syria on the bank of the Euphrates River, about 160 kilometres east of Aleppo. It is located 40 kilometres east of the Tabqa Dam, Syria's largest dam. The city's total population was around 300,000 people before the crisis. The main livelihood activities for the area were agriculture related activities (cultivation, herding livestock and trading agriculture and livestock production), trading, industry and government employment.

Raqqa city was captured in 2013 by the Syrian opposition and subsequently by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which made the city its capital in 2014. On 17 October 2017, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) declared the liberation of Ar-Raqqa city from ISIL, the offensive lasted for more than one year, and due to the conflict a vast majority of the population has been displaced from the city to rural Ar-Raqqa. An IDP camp was established in Ein Issa which currently still accommodates around 17,800 IDPs, of whom 9,300 are from Ar-Raqqa city. Most of the Ar-Raqqa city displaced residents were hosted by communities in rural Ar-Raqqa while others moved to other areas in Syria and abroad. It is estimated that by the end of the hostilities only an estimated 7,000 people remained in Ar-Raqqa city.

After liberating the city from ISIL, the local authority officially allowed people to return to the city from 13 November 2017 onwards. Returns were initially only allowed to Ma'amoun, Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh neighbourhoods as these neighbourhoods are in the suburb of the city, where demining operations have already begun. These neighbourhoods also showed lower levels of destruction. Other neighbourhoods such as Hettin, Rashidiyeh, Rafqa, Batani, Sbahiah, Tishrine, Furat, Al Malek have subsequently been opened up to returnees as well. Ar-Raqqa city residents have started to return to the entire city despite of the risk of mines, destroyed infrastructure and shortage in services.

At the time of the assessment, around 15,000 households (75,000 individuals) had returned to the city since October 2017. The graph on right illustrates the number households who have returned by neighbourhood and the below map shows the neighbourhood locations in the city.

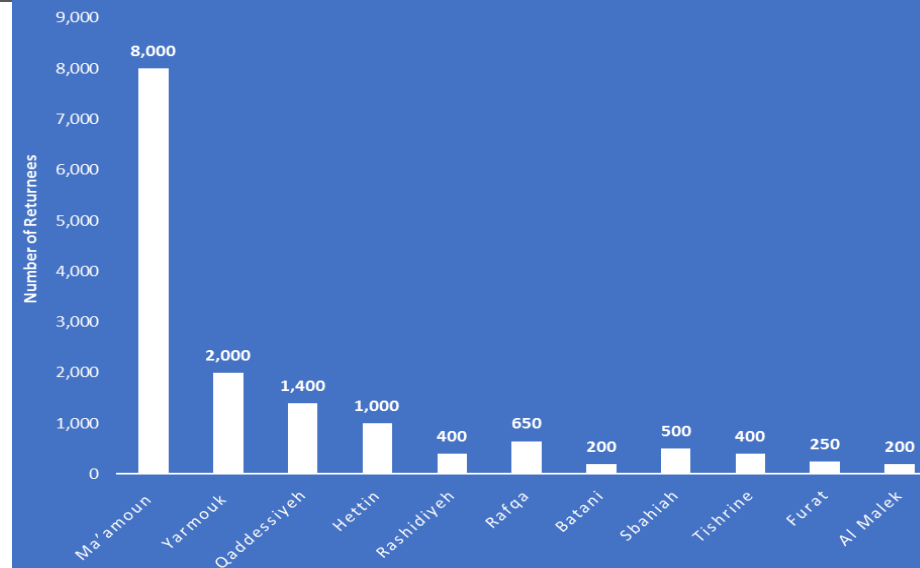
Much of Ar-Raqqa city (about 80 percent), is heavily destroyed. In addition, since October 2017 there have been at least 534 civilians who have been injured through blasts, of which 112 fatalities. More than 75 people were injured/ have died in January 2018 alone (Medecins Sans Frontiers—MSF). On average there have been five explosive-related injuries per day since people have started to return.



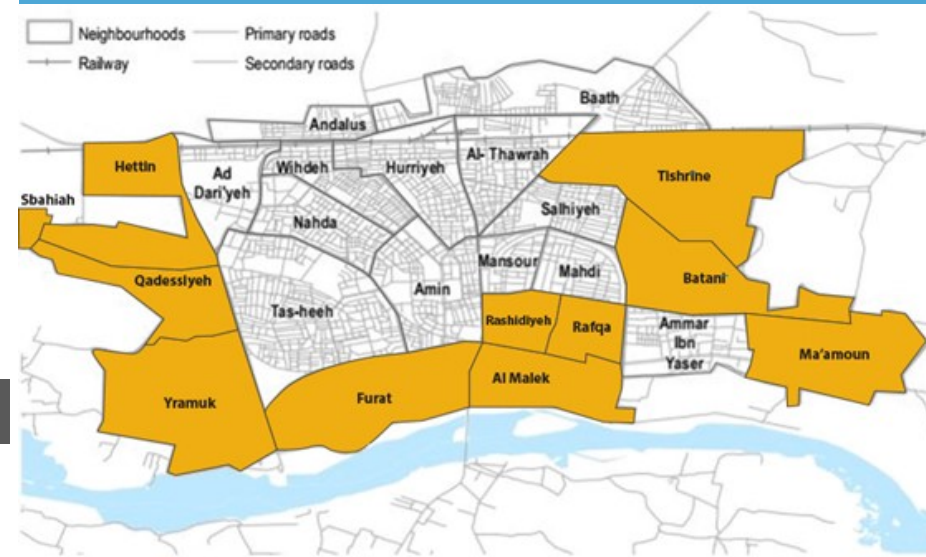
Objective of the assessment

A WFP third party monitor conducted the assessment to:

- Assess the number of returnees to Raqqa city.
- Assess the food security needs of the returnees.
- Assess the extent of the infrastructural damage in the city.
- Assess the situation in the city since being freed and to identify people's priority needs.



Number of Returnees to Ar-Raqqa City Between 13 Nov 2017— 15 Jan 2018



Ar-Raqqa city neighborhoods (updated REACH map)



Food consumption and accessibility

With Ar-Raqqa city still inaccessible for WFP and other humanitarian agencies due to the high risk of injury from remaining mines, booby traps and unexploded ordinances, returnees in Ar-Raqqa city have been receiving no or little food assistance.

By January 2018 the local council reported that it had only been able to distribute food baskets to the Ma'amoun neighbourhood and only to 28 percent of returnees who were residing there.

Instead the market is the main source of food for the returnees. Most returnees in the assessed neighbourhoods mentioned that rice, bulger, cooking oil and sugar were the most consumed commodities in their homesteads. While due to their limited income sources their purchasing power was too low to frequently buy fruit, meat and canned fish and tuna.

There are five bakeries in Ma'amoun, one in Yarmouk and one in Qadessiyeh. These bakeries are provided with wheat flour and diesel by the local authorities (200,000 SYP/ton of wheat flour and 65 SYP/litre of diesel). At the time of the assessment, a bundle of bread (1.5kg) was 70 SYP.

Interviewed respondents reported consuming three meals per day, however most mentioned that they were relying on less preferred and less expensive foods in order to make ends meet. In addition many had reduced their meal portion sizes.

The widespread destruction of infrastructure in the city has also affected the supply of water to the city. There is currently a massive shortage of water for drinking and cooking. Returnees highlighted this issue as an important constraint since the shortage of water in the city is forcing them to pay 200 SYP per drum of water. Each drum is equal to 200 litres and on average a household of five members needs two drums of water per day.



Livelihood profile in the area

Prior to the conflict livelihoods in Ar-Raqqa city largely revolved around agriculture (cultivation, herding livestock and trading agriculture and livestock production), commerce, petty trading, industry and government employment. After the conflict however employment opportunities are scarce in the city. Most returnees are finding work as a casual labourer working in clearing-up rubble, construction work, working in the market and as a petty trader. Respondents mentioned that casual labour was hard to find and lasts only for a day making it not a sustainable source of income. The next day new work needs to be found again. The average casual labour salary in Ar-Raqqa in January is SYP 2,500 per day.

High prevalence of child labour was noticed during the assessment. This was a consequence of the destruction in the city where all schools had closed keeping children idle (three schools were opening at the time of the assessment, one each in Ma'amoun, Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh). Moreover, often the main bread winner of the family had been injured, had gone missing or had died. Families were therefore often requiring all members to work in order for the family to earn enough to buy food to eat.

Most returnees reported returning from Tabqa, Suluk, Al-Mazare', Al-Sulhebyiat and the Ein Issa Camp. Interviewed returnees, who were by-and-large poor vulnerable households who had lost most of their assets and exhausted much of their coping mechanisms, were returning to Ar-Raqqa city as their houses had not been severely damaged during the conflict and they could no longer afford paying rent. For example accommodation in Tabqa could reach up to US \$200 per month.



Bakery in Mishlab neighbourhood



Market – Sief Adoulah neighbourhood



Children at work in Sief Adoulah



Food and livelihood based coping strategies

According to key informants and interviewed households, due to their lack of income and very weak purchasing power, most households were relying on less preferred and less expensive foods. The interviewees also reported that the most vulnerable households were limiting the portion sizes of their meals.

Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh neighbourhoods were considered one of the poorest in Ar-Raqqa city even before the crisis. Households in these neighbourhoods mentioned having exhausted all their savings and having sold off all their valuable assets. Many were now purchasing food on credit and sending children to work as common coping strategies in order to make ends meet. Around 2,000 households currently reside in Yarmouk neighbourhood, and 1,400 households in Qadessiyeh neighbourhood. For Ma'amoun neighbourhood, the situation was found to be somewhat better than in Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh. People in this neighbourhood reported still having some savings and assets (saving money, productive assets such as owning land/property) they could depend on to help them restore their livelihoods.

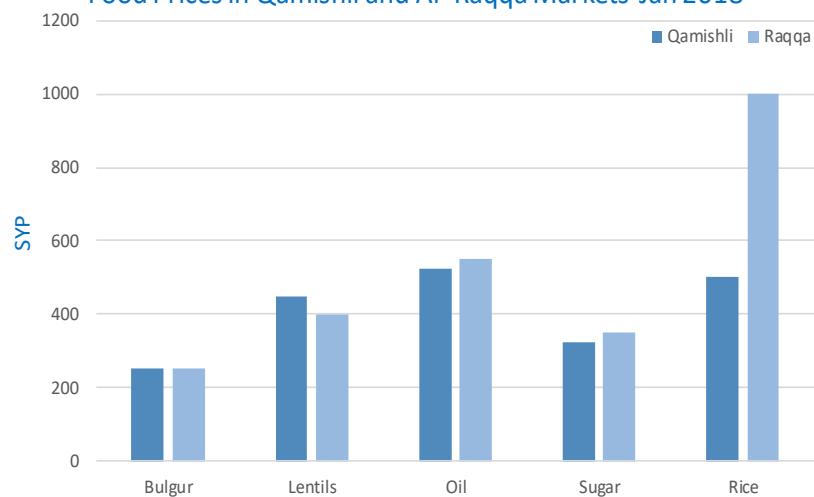


Market- Sief Adoulah Neighbourhood



Markets and food prices

Food Prices in Qamishli and Ar-Raqqa Markets-Jan 2018



Supply routes into Ar-Raqqa governorate have gradually been improving in parallel with the improvement of the security situation in the governorate. Southern Ar-Raqqa was the last area of the governorate to be liberated from ISIL. Supply routes had already been active across many areas of the governorate when the local authorities allowed people to return to Raqqa city. Once people returned markets re-opened soon afterwards. Interviews with traders outlined that the city's main supply routes had not changed compared to before the conflict. Food supply flows to the city primarily followed the below routes:

- Aleppo—Menbij— Tabqa — Ar-Raqqa city.
- Damascus— Atheria— Ar-Raqqa city.

Key commodities (such vegetable oil, bulgur, sugar and lentils) are available in the market at a similar price to close-by markets in north east Syria such as in Qamishly, with the exception of rice

which at the time of the assessment was double the price in Ar-Raqqa city compared to Qamishly. The graph compares the price of food commodities in Qamishli and Ar-Raqqa city in January 2018.

Fuel (diesel) and butane gas from Al-Hasakeh governorate are available in the city. The price of diesel was 80 SYP/litre and the price of butane gas was 5,000 SYP/25K cylinder. The price of diesel in an average accessible area in Syria was 310 SYP/litre in December 2017 while the price of butane gas in an average accessible area in Syria was 3,800 SYP/25K cylinder for the same period.

Traders reported their main constraints to trade to be insecurity, transport costs and low consumer liquidity.

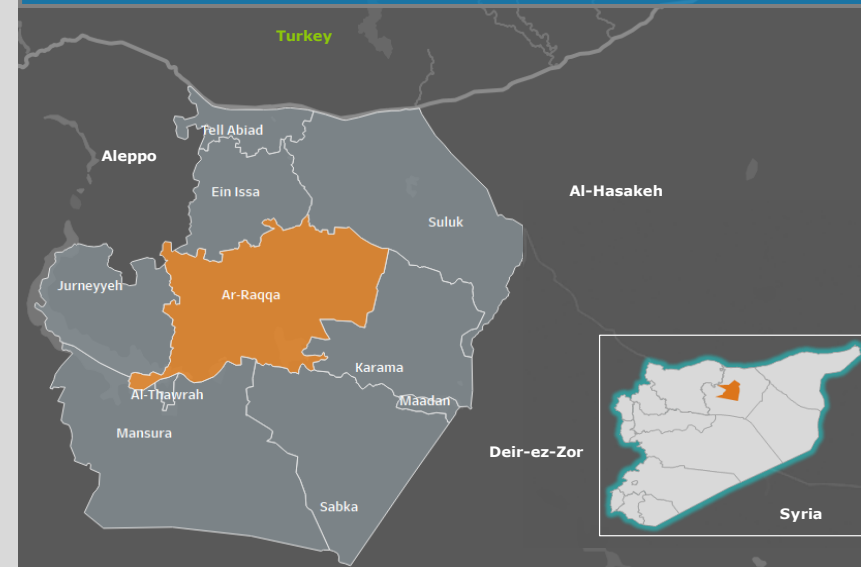


Abu Alhis neighbourhood



Market- Sief Adoulah neighbourhood

Ar-Raqqa sub-district in Ar-Raqqa governorate



Methodology

The assessment was conducted by Global Survey facilitators through focus group discussions (FGD) with local councils, community leaders, and household visits and key informant interviews with local traders.

Data collection took place on January 13 – 15, 2018.

Three focus group discussions were organized in coordination with local councils, one focus group discussion in each of the following neighbourhoods: Ma'amoun, Yarmouk and Qadessiyeh.

The assessment team visited local markets and interviewed traders to collect information about supply routes and availability of commodities and prices.

Limitation

The assessment team's movements were restricted due to the area's high number of remaining mines, booby traps and unexploded ordinances which are scattered across the city.



Shop in Shoab neighbourhood



Market in Sief Aldoulah neighbourhood



A gas shop in Jazra neighbourhood



A butchery in Jazra neighbourhood



For further information:

Jan Michiels

jan.michiels@wfp.org

Dima Alhumsi

dima.alhumsi@wfp.org

Moammar Alhosaeen

moammar.alhosaeen@wfp.org