

SYRIA AND IRAQ CRISIS

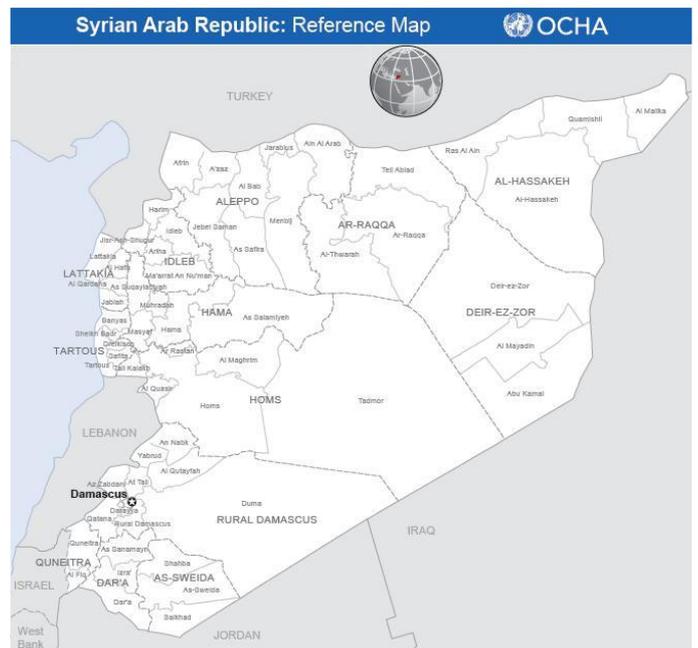
2015 ANNUAL OPERATIONS PLAN

I. CONTEXT

SYRIA

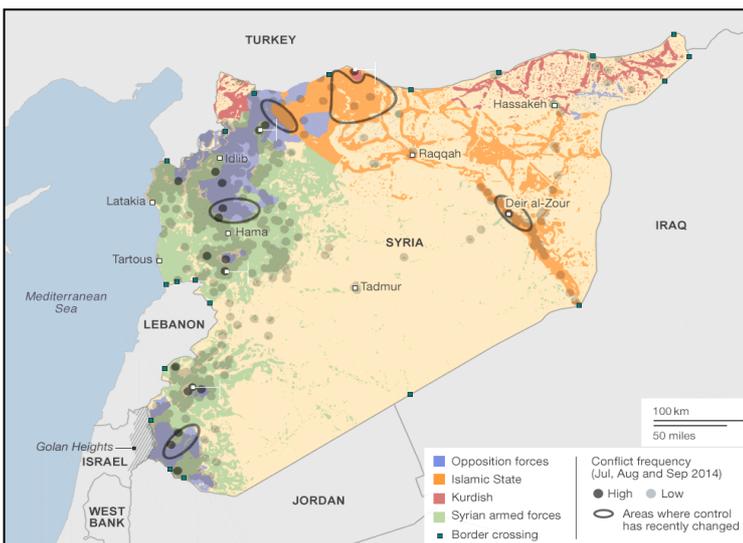
The origins of the Syrian civil war fall within the context of the mobilizations originating in Tunisia in December 2010. In Syria, peaceful demonstrations against the government of Bashar al-Assad began on 15 March 2011, which were harshly put down by the police and the army in an attempt to quickly quell the revolt. After months of systematic government repression, a growing number of opposition groups decided to opt for violence as a response to the regime, giving rise in August of that year to the founding of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Four years later, neither has the Assad regime collapsed nor has the opposition been able to build a political and military structure sufficiently cohesive to overthrow it that includes all the social groups living in Syria. In the meantime, the conflict has caused more than 200,000 deaths and more than 1 million



wounded¹, as well as the massive displacement of the population, both within Syria and towards neighbouring countries: Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Egypt.

Today, violence continues to dominate the national scene, with forces loyal to the regime fighting nearly a thousand armed groups espousing ideologies ranging from secular groups to Islamists and jihadists². The most prominent among them are the FSA, which brings together groups of different tendencies, secularists and Islamists, including the Brigades of the Martyrs of Syria; the Syrian Islamic Front (SIF), resulting from the dissolution of the Syrian Islamic Liberation Front



¹ OHCHR in OCHA. Working Group of High Level Group. Geneva. "Overview of Humanitarian Situation and Response in Syria". 29 January 2014.

² Gonzalo Caretti, RTVE (Spanish National Radio and Television), September 2014.

Areas controlled by different parties in the conflict: opposition forces (blue), ISIL (orange), Kurdish militias (red), Syrian Army (green). July, August and September 2014.

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(SILF) in November 2013, whose goal is the creation of an Islamic State after the overthrow of Assad, and whose groups include *Ahrar ash-Sham* (Islamic Movement of Free Men of the Levant), the *Farouq* Brigades and the Army of Islam (*Jaysh al-Islam*) formed by more than 40 Islamist groups revolving around *Liwa al-Tawhid* (Brigade of Monotheism), considered the most important Salafist group not linked to al-Qaeda.

Among the main jihadist groups tied to al-Qaeda, the al-Nusra Front (*Jabhat al-Nusra*) is the most prominent; it is not subordinate to the FSA, with which it has had conflicts, although in southern areas they are fighting together. With a Salafist ideology, it was founded in early 2012 by a member of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), Mohammad al-Jawlani, implanting sharia law in some conquered areas. Also in the mix is the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), formed from different al-Qaeda cells in Iraq, who took advantage of the war to enter into Syria, initially joining the al-Nusra Front proclaiming itself the Islamic State of the Levant, announced by its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in April 2013. In November 2013, his rival Ayman al-Zawahiri—top leader of al-Qaeda—tried to dissolve ISIL and separate it from the al-Nusra Front, recognizing the latter³ as the sole representative of al-Qaeda in Syria, but without success.

ISIL has taken advantage of this situation of generalized violence and the power vacuum in much of Syria (and Iraq) to finally proclaim a caliphate on 28 June 2014. Since then, it has repeatedly committed brutal actions against the civilian population, which have enabled it to control much of the provinces of Aleppo, al-Raqqah, Al Hasakah and Deir ez-Zor, in the east, where they now manage courts, schools, services and natural resources. At the same time, and after sporadic fighting in Syrian Kurdistan, in the north of the country, its offensive has been concentrated, since September 2014, in Ayn al-Arab (Kobane), where violent clashes continue between ISIL and the People's Protection Units (YPG), armed wing of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party⁴.

As a result of this situation, the number of persons needing humanitarian assistance in Syria reached 12.2 million⁵ in March 2015 (out of an estimated total population of 21.4 million people). Of these, more than 7.6 million are internally displaced, with 50% being minors and 4.7 million located in areas under siege or difficult to access. In addition, there are already 3.8 million Syrian refugees, mainly in neighbouring countries. The number of persons affected by the crisis continues to rise, and only in recent months, with ISIL's advance into Syrian Kurdistan and the fighting to control Kobane, another 200,000 Kurds are reported to have fled. These figures make the Syrian crisis the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War.

³ Mark Tran, *The Guardian*. 11 June 2014.

⁴International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *Rule of Terror: Living under ISIS in Syria*. 14 November 2014.

⁵ ECHO "Fact Sheet", 6 March 2015.

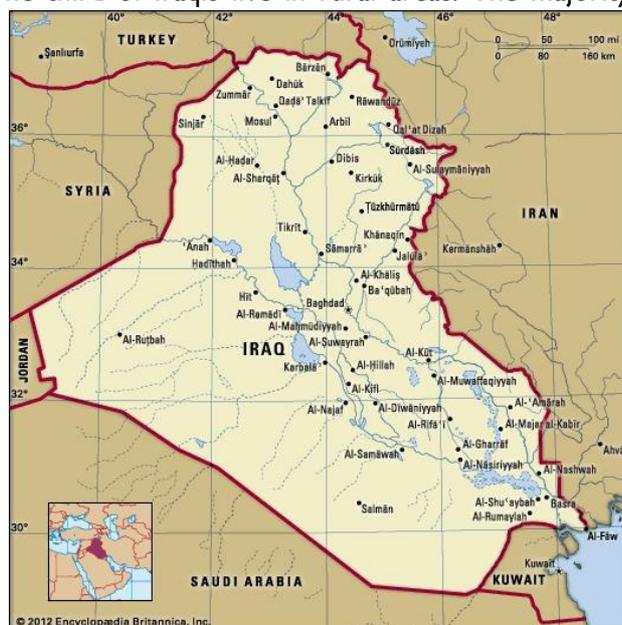
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IRAQ

The demographic component and sectarian tribal and religious divisions in the population are basic factors for understanding the source and development of the conflict. Iraq is made up by a variety of ethnic and religious groups. The largest ethnic group comprises Arabs (80%), followed by Kurds (16%), Turks, Turkmen, Azerbaijanis, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Persians, and Armenians. Whether Arab or Kurd, 97% of the population is Muslim, about 60% being Shiites; the other 3% are either Christian, belonging to the Chaldean Catholic Church, or practise other religions. The Arab population generally maintains strong patrilineal ties, linked more to tribal affiliations than to national, political or religious ones⁶. One third of Iraqis live in rural areas. The majority, settled in the middle of the country on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, engage in agriculture. The Kurdish population, herders, live in the northeastern mountains, while the nomadic Bedouin groups are located in arid zones northwest of Baghdad, and the Shiite population of different ethnicities (*Madan*) is concentrated in the marshy flatlands of the south and east.

The authoritarian government of Saddam Hussein (1979-2003) was unable to adequately piece together the different inimical sensitivities in a country that was artificially cobbled together by the British in 1932, nor were the international troops led by the United States (2003-2011) able to democratize and develop such a fragmented society, where violence reigns everywhere. As far as domestic affairs are concerned, the government of Nouri al-Maliki (2006-2014) managed the country in a sectarian manner, newly aligning the many Sunni groups that had hoped to be reintegrated into national politics as a result of the agreement reached with the US seal of approval. At the same time, relations between the central government and that of Iraqi Kurdistan have seriously deteriorated, with the breakdown in political relations and the blockade of the part of Iraqi oil revenues corresponding to Erbil since January 2014.



The visible discontent of these different social groups, and the public disenchantment with a government unable to meet their basic needs and ensure security in every part of the country, led to a generalized power vacuum after the legislative elections of April 2014. In this context, ISIL was able to step up the offensive that it had been carrying out since late 2013 in Fallujah and Ramadi (causing, in January 2014, the forced displacement of 480,000 Iraqis)⁷, to expand its presence to the provinces of Anbar, Nineveh (including taking its important capital city, Mosul), Diyala and Salah al-Din, and putting pressure on the national capital, Baghdad. These actions caused the forced displacement of another 500,000 people.

Since then, the Iraqi Armed Forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga fighters have shown they are unable to stop the advance of ISIL, which has the circumstantial support of Sunni militias and nationalist elements that oppose the central government and are resisting the challenge of the US-led military coalition, which began a phase of air strikes on 8 August 2014.

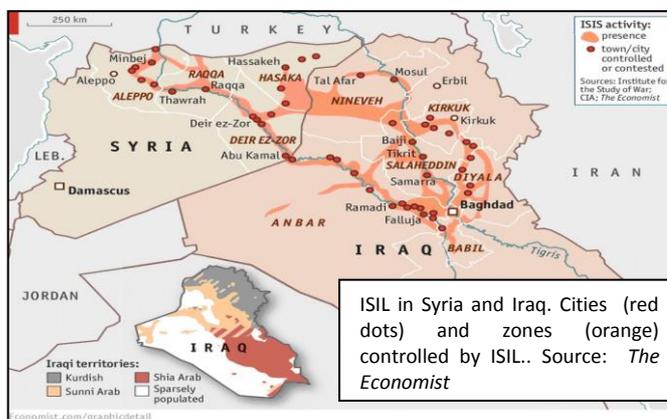
⁶ Majid Khadduri, Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 2014.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/293631/Iraq/232258/Arabs#toc22939>

⁷ ECHO "Humanitarian Implementation Plan" (HIP) Iraq, 3 November 2014.

The fighting in the region has trapped civilian populations in combat zones, such as the Yazidis, Christians and other ethnic groups in the plains of Nineveh, where they have been persecuted, besieged (siege of Mount Sinjar), attacked and murdered by ISIL. In the north of Iraqi Kurdistan, combats between insurgent groups, ISIL and the Peshmerga have worsened the situation to the point that in August 2014 alone, 850,000 people were forced to flee.

The conflict has left nearly 20,000 dead and wounded from January to September 2014,⁸ and continues to cause massive population movements in the 18 Iraqi provinces. The number of displaced persons in the central region is now approximately 700,000, of whom 400,000 are in Anbar province; 850,000 in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially in Dohuk province; and 200,000 in the south of the country.

According to United Nations estimates, 5.2 million people urgently need humanitarian aid and protection. Of these, 2.2 million are internally displaced, and 1.5 million are in host communities affected by the conflict. In addition, 1.7 million is vulnerable population who lives in areas directly hit by the conflict. Meanwhile, the conflict in Syria has caused the entry of approximately 235,000 Syrian refugees, 95% of them resettled in Iraqi Kurdistan, although about 20,000 subsequently returned to Syria.



GENERAL AND HUMANITARIAN FIGURES		
	SYRIA	IRAQ
Population	21.4 million	35 million
Total persons with humanitarian needs⁸	12.2 million: - 7.6 million internally displaced persons in Syria, ⁹ and 4.8 million persons living in remote or combat areas. - 3.8 million refugees in neighbouring countries (640,000 in refugee camps and 2.56 million in host communities)	5.2 million: - 2.2 million internally displaced persons - 1.5 million in host communities within Iraq - 1.7 million members of vulnerable populations directly hit by the conflict - 235,000 Syrian refugees
Total refugee population in neighbouring countries¹⁰	3,831,103 persons: -Egypt and North Africa: 160,716 -Iraq: 242,468 -Jordan: 624,325 -Lebanon: 1,180,755 -Turkey: 1,622,839	246,000 persons
Human Development Index (HDI)¹¹	0.658 (ranking 118)	0.642 (ranking 120)

⁸ Iraq, "Strategy Response Plan 2014/2015". <http://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-strategic-response-plan-2014-2015>

⁹ World Populations Review, October 2014. <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/iraq-population>.

¹⁰ Total number of refugees registered and waiting for registration, UNHCR figures at 6 March 2015.

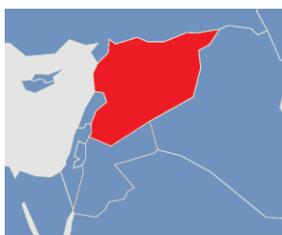
¹¹ UNDP, "Human Development Report 2014", http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/IRQ.pdf

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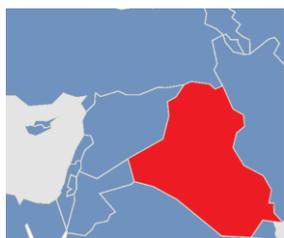
2. POPULATIONS IN SITUATIONS OF VULNERABILITY

In the context of the civil war in Syria and Iraq, the number of persons affected by the conflict is rising daily due to the large number of areas affected by fighting, the movements of ISIL and other armed groups, and air strikes by the US-led coalition. All of this inevitably leads to massive, constant movements of populations forced to abandon their homes. The population most exposed to suffering the direct impact of violence are **internally displaced persons in Syria and Iraq, and the Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries. Women in situations of vulnerability, minors, disabled persons and the elderly** stand out as the most vulnerable, both inside Syria and Iraq and in host communities. In addition, ISIL's advances have meant the persecution and execution of ethnic and religious groups. **Palestinian refugees in Syrian territory** are also subject to attacks and long sieges (Yarmouk) by combatants, compounded by the ban on entry into Jordan, their being returned to Syria¹² (*refoulement*) or their internment in the Cyber City refugee camp.



In **Syria**, according to United Nations estimates, the number of people in need of humanitarian aid has risen to 12.2 million. Of them, 7.6 million have been displaced within the country, 4.8 million are living in remote or combat areas, 420,000 are Palestinian refugees and 28,300 are Iraqi refugees. The most urgent humanitarian needs are related to protection of the population, exposure to indiscriminate attacks (including “barrel bombs”), aggressions against civilian buildings, illegal detentions, torture and disappearances. The greater part of the population also suffers from severe psychological scars. A priority is supporting the healthcare sector to avoid its

collapse as a result of the war, the destruction of health centres, and the lack of medical staff. More than 1 million persons have been wounded, and they need surgery, postoperative care and rehabilitation. A large part of the population in combat zones does not have access to health services. The destruction of crops and expansion of the conflict has reduced food production, raising prices a great deal and impeding food distribution. A total of 4.5 million people need food assistance. In addition, the long periods of drought, along with the interruption of water and sanitation services due to the war, have caused an emergency situation due to lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, especially in Der Ezor, Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Dara’a and rural areas around Damascus. In addition, the destruction of entire neighbourhoods and constant displacements mean that most of the population is living in inadequate, unhealthy housing.



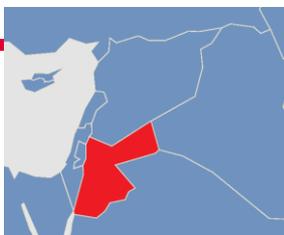
In **Iraq**, according to United Nations, 5.2 million people urgently need protection and humanitarian aid. Of these, 2.2 million are internally displaced persons, and 1.5 million are in host communities affected by the conflict. In addition, 1.7 million members of vulnerable populations live in areas directly impacted by the conflict. Furthermore, the conflict in Syria has caused the entry into Iraq of approximately 235,000 Syrian refugees, 95% of them resettled in Iraqi Kurdistan, although about 20,000 have returned to Syria. Of the Syrian refugee population, 58% are found in eight refugee camps in the Kurdish provinces of Erbil, Duhok, Nineveh and Sulaymaniyah, and in the Al-Obaidi Refugee Camp in Anbar province. Domiz is the largest, with 53,202 refugees. In addition, 130,331 persons from Damascus and areas occupied by ISIL—Aleppo, Hassakeh and Deir ez-Zor¹³—have found refuge in the cities of Duhok, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Anbar. Since 25 September 2014, the start of fighting in Kobane between ISIL and the PYD, 14,552 Kurds from Kobane, some after first fleeing to Turkey, have found refuge in Iraqi Kurdistan, going through the Ibrahim Khalil border crossing.

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¹² Human Rights Watch. “Not Welcome: Jordan’s Treatment of Palestinians Escaping Syria”, August 2014.

¹³ UNHCR Information Management Unit, 15 November de 2014.

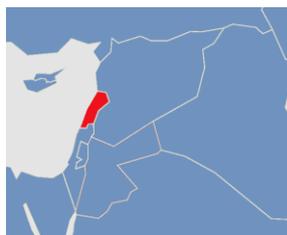


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deportations and *refoulement*, even for vulnerable populations¹⁴ such as the wounded and unaccompanied minors.

Of the more than 624,325 refugees registered, only 20% live in camps, located in the north of the country: Mafraq (Zaatari), Irbid (King Abdullah Park and Cyber City) and Zarqa (Azraq, Mourijep al-Fohud). The other 80% are living in host communities, which has created tensions between both communities related to access to services and resources. To alleviate the impact of refugees on vulnerable populations, the Jordanian Government, like others in the region, has drafted a *National Resilience Plan 2014- 2016*, whose objectives, together with those of the UN's new *Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)*, are incorporated into the *Jordan Response Plan*.



In **Lebanon**, with a refugee population of 1.1 million (representing 25% of the country's entire population), the admission of new refugees is increasingly difficult, while the government is adopting restrictive measures for refugees who are already registered¹⁵. Furthermore, tensions between both communities have risen since August 2014, when ISIL and the al-Nusra Front captured a group of soldiers from the Lebanese Army in the city of Ersal, which led to the arrest in several Lebanese cities of Syrians accused of belonging to extremist groups. The Lebanese Government's ban on building refugee camps, the lack of adequate housing and of economic resources for paying rent, forces many families to seek makeshift housing, e.g. shacks (15%), buildings under construction (28%), warehouses and garages, without privacy and affording scarce protection from extreme temperatures. More than 80% of refugees live in shared housing, nearly always with several families under one roof, and without adequate access to water and sanitation, with the consequent health problems, above all for minors. As in Jordan, the Lebanese Government is drafting a 2015 *Lebanon Crisis Response Plan*, including the *Road Map of Priority Interventions for Stabilization from the Syrian Conflict* of November 2013.



In **Turkey**, on 13 April 2013 the Aliens and International Protection Act was passed, providing a comprehensive framework for protecting and assisting all asylum-seekers and refugees, regardless of their country of origin, in accordance with international standards. In April 2014 the new Directorate-General for Migrations Management was fully operational¹⁶. The latest UNHCR figures indicate that there are 1.6 million refugees in Turkey, of whom more than 80% live in host communities and the rest in the 22 existing refugee camps, located in 10 provinces. Since September 2014, almost 200,000 more refugees entered Turkey, fleeing from the fighting in Kobane. To address this new wave of refugees, most of them located in Suruç, Turkey's national disaster and emergency management agency, known as AFAD, agreed to build a new camp with a capacity for 22,000 people¹⁷, the largest and newest in the country, which opened at the end of January 2015.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, *Vulnerable Refugees Forcibly Returned to Syria*, 23 November 2014.

¹⁵ ECHO "Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP)", Syria crisis. 28 October 28 2014. Version 1.

¹⁶ Profile of UNHCR field operations in 2014.

¹⁷ UNHCR update on operations in Turkey, 26-31 October 2014.

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3. PRINCIPAL HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

SYRIA

Responding to the humanitarian needs in Syria, identified within the ECHO comprehensive framework analysis as extreme¹⁸, represents a challenge for humanitarian organizations due to the restrictions on access to populations in combat zones, caused by the constant military actions by the different parties in the conflict and the advance of ISIL.

To facilitate humanitarian access to Syria and within the country and to ensure that it gets to populations in need, on 14 July 2014 the Security Council adopted Resolution 2165, authorizing UN agencies and their partners to use routes crossing lines of fire inside Syria, new border crossings for humanitarian assistance at Bab al-Salam and Bab al-Hawa (on the border with Turkey), al-Yarubiyah (on the border with Iraq), and al-Ramtha (on the border with Jordan), as well establishing, during 180 days, a monitoring mechanism for cross-border operations. This decision was extended, by Resolution 2191 of 17 December 2014, until 10 January 2016.

Although according to the UN, the implementation of this resolution is leading to positive results as regards better access to the civilian population for humanitarian assistance, both cross-border and cross-line¹⁹, according to ECHO, at the end of 2014, the scope and scale of border operations by the UN are still limited²⁰. Moreover, in October 2014, the UN, together with the humanitarian partners operating in Syria, launched the *Whole of Syria* Bi-Monthly Joint Operations Plan in which working groups from the different sectors identified the needs-based intervention areas and implemented an action plan in accordance with the partners' capacity to access these areas.

Regarding neighbouring countries, more than 80% of Syrian refugees live outside of the established camps, in urban and rural areas, which represents an additional burden for the host countries that do not have the economic conditions, resources and services necessary to absorb this massive influx of refugees, who in the case of Lebanon make up 25% of the total population.

To address this humanitarian crisis and respond both to the needs of the Syrian refugees and to that of resilience-based development on the part of the host countries affected by the influx of refugees into their communities, the governments of these countries, together with UN agencies, donors, the World Bank and international NGOs are working on national and regional plans. The need for a resilience-based development response in host countries is set forth in the report by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) *A Resilience-based Development Response to the Syrian Crisis*²¹, well as in the UNDP/ODI document *Towards a Resilience-based Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis*²².

The new regional response plan is the result of a joint effort by the United Nations, international organizations and donors to create a common regional assistance strategy, including humanitarian, development, and macro-financial support, both for the Syrian population inside and outside of their country and for

Developments in the Syrian civil war, together with the advances of ISIL in this country and in Iraq, indicate a long-term crisis in which the international community should intervene to ensure the protection of the civilian population in the region. These efforts to end the conflict—including the different UN Security Council resolutions (numbers 2042, 2043, 2118 2139, 2165 and 2191) and the Geneva II peace conference held in February 2014—have not led to any results.

¹⁸ ECHO, "Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP), Syria crisis". (Note 15)

¹⁹ Communication of 28 August 2014.

²⁰ ECHO "Humanitarian Implementation Plan HIP", 2015 (note 15).

²¹ UNDP, *A Resilience-based Development Response to the Syrian Crisis*, October 2014.

²² UNDP, ODI. *Towards a Resilience-based Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis: A Critical Review of Vulnerability Criteria and Frameworks*, May 2014.

neighbouring countries that are hosting a large Syrian refugee population. It is expected that this strategy, set forth in the *Comprehensive Regional Strategic Framework (CRSF)*, will serve as the basis for assistance in the 2014-2016 period²³. The common action plan for 2015-2016, which reflects the principles of the CRSF, as well as the lessons learned from previous plans—the *Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP)* and *Regional Response Plan*—are included in the *Syria Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (S3RP)*. The plans comprises five country plans developed at the national level in coordination with the governments of Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt. The 3RP priorities at the regional level target the protection of the refugee population, support for national and local service providers, and social cohesion.



Protection. 12.2 million people with protection needs. A priority is to achieve full respect for international humanitarian law (IHL) and human rights (HR) on the part of combatants, and to facilitate humanitarian assistance to the entire population, with special attention to those who have not been able to flee cities under siege, war zones, and areas of difficult access. The protection of minors, prevention of and response to gender violence, and protection of LGBTI people are also priorities, both in conflict areas and in the host countries. Furthermore, the exposure of adults and children—as victims, witnesses or perpetrators—to the violence of war and the brutality of ISIL has a severe impact on the mental health of most of the population inside and outside Syria, which is why psychological and psychosocial assistance is also a priority.



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). Nearly the entire population in Syria has little access to safe drinking water and sanitation systems, and therefore the distribution of water and of water purification systems is essential to prevent the outbreak of epidemics. In host countries, access to water and sanitation systems is insufficient in informal settlements, refugee camps, makeshift housing, and housing shared by several families.



Health. The conflict in Syria has caused 1 million wounded people who need urgent, specialized healthcare. There are a total of 12.2 million people needing health services. Chronic patients depend on health services which, in many parts of the countries, are either inaccessible to them or have ceased to be operational. The provision of medical services and material and medication, as well as access to these services, is a priority within Syria. Furthermore, the refugee population in neighbouring countries does not have ensured access to health services, overwhelmed by growing demand, restricted by the authorities, or inaccessible due to lack of economic resources.



Shelter and non-food items (NFIs). This has been identified as a priority need for 12.2 million people, especially in the winter months, both inside and outside Syria. The situation is especially dramatic for those living in conflict zones, for those trapped in the no man's land in border areas of Jordan and Turkey, and those who have no resources to pay rent, whose homes have been destroyed, who have been displaced several times, and who are living in makeshift settlements within Syria and in neighbouring host countries. In addition, it is necessary to provide NFIs to the latter.



Food and Nutrition Security. The use of hunger as a weapon of war in conflict zones, the destruction of natural resources and cultivated areas, laying siege to the civilian population, the repressive measures taken by ISIL against beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance, or hindering the distribution of food assistance, have all led to high levels of undernourishment within Syria, which, along with the shortage of water and health services, raises the risk of epidemics. In host countries, most of the refugee population's food needs are not covered. There are 12.2 million people with unmet food security and nutrition needs, of whom 6.8 million are suffering severe food insecurity.

²³ OCHA, "Comprehensive Regional Strategic Framework", CRSF, May 2014

IRAQ



Protection. 5.2 million people with protection needs. The parties in the conflict are committing generalized IHL and HR violations, especially in the northern and central zones of the country including executions (even of minors), kidnapping, torture, arbitrary detentions, human trafficking and forced pregnancies. Ethnic and religious minorities are especially persecuted; their cities, places of worship, property and lifestyles are destroyed. The population in combat zones is directly affected by this violence and by restrictions on their movements, which impedes their access to basic services and goods. In addition, both the rural population and those living in host communities need protection with regard to their living conditions, security and freedom of movement. A registration system for displaced persons is necessary in order for them to have access to humanitarian aid. Of the 3.6 million Iraqis in areas under the control of ISIL or related armed groups, 2.2 million require urgent humanitarian assistance, in particular the displaced population outside the refugee camps and in areas of difficult access, and therefore it is necessary to ensure humanitarian access to these areas.



WASH. At least 2 million Iraqis urgently need access to safe drinking water and sanitation systems. Many displaced persons have sought refuge in schools, mosques, abandoned buildings or makeshift settlements without access to basic water and sanitation services. Moreover, the massive flow of displaced persons to the cities and towns worsens the situation in the host communities, which also lack these services.



Health 5.2 million²⁴ Iraqis need interventions which ensure their access to health systems.



Shelter and NFIs. 1.2 million people need adequate housing, and nearly 1.4 million need NFIs, including the means to face extreme winter temperatures. The lack of adequate housing for the thousands of displaced persons throughout the country is a severe problem as winter approaches. Approximately 800,000 people urgently need adequate housing, and at least 940,000 are lacking even minimal NFIs. In Iraqi Kurdistan, at least 390,000 newly displaced persons need housing, and 480,000 persons need to be equipped to face winter temperatures.



Food and Nutrition Security. 2.8 million Iraqis currently need food assistance. Many agriculture zones and aquifer resources are under the control of armed groups, which has lowered production level and raised the price of food, as well as interrupting the government's public distribution system. According to one study, 73% of displaced persons considers access to food a priority.

4. CHALLENGES

- **Coordination:** Advocate for UN and ICRC leadership in Syria and Iraq. Promote within the entire donor community the idea of channelling resources through qualified humanitarian agencies with a presence on the ground. Stress the need for a comprehensive coordinated multisectoral response from development agencies to support host countries.
- **Access:** Ensure the access of the civilian population, including that in areas of difficult access²⁵ and

24 OCHA Fast Track Priorities, the British Iraq Strategic Response Plan Iraq. http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/FastTrack/Priorities/Iraq/2015_0.pdf, Feb-Jun 2015

25 EU JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL. "Elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat", 6 February 2015, p. 11 http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/20150206_JOIN_en.pdf

overcoming geographic limitations both inside Syria and Iraq and on their borders and in neighbouring countries. In Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, access limitations are linked to the deterioration of security in zones where the displaced persons or refugees are located.

- o **Safety:** There is a high level of insecurity and all combatants must guarantee the safe passage of civilians and humanitarian personnel, and facilitate the distribution of assistance.

5. SPANISH RESPONSE 2015

In 2015, and in line with the 4th Master Plan, the HAO will provide a quality humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis—Strategic Guideline (SG) 7. Attention shall be paid to reducing inequalities and vulnerability to extreme poverty and crises (SG 2). An approach shall be adopted that promotes social cohesion systems and providing basic social services (SG 4) and promotion of women's rights and gender equality (SG 5).

On the one hand, a response shall be offered based on purely humanitarian needs, prioritizing interventions to protect the humanitarian sphere, victims, and vulnerable populations, such as internally displaced persons, Syrian and Palestinian refugees affected by the conflict, and vulnerable populations in host countries. Special attention shall be given to vulnerable women and minors, the wounded, the elderly, and people with disabilities. On the other, through partnerships with specialist humanitarian agents based on their operational, technical and economic capacities, humanitarian actions will primarily be channelled through the network of specialist humanitarian partners within the United Nations System, the ICRC and NGOs. Priority will be given to those striving to provide a response that improves efficiency, defining specific vulnerability criteria to select beneficiary persons, coordinating on the ground, and providing adequate indicators that enable improved accountability of the HAO.

In 2015, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq are defined as priority intervention countries, in which there is a commitment to working with a comprehensive pro-resilience regional approach, in line with the comprehensive approach of the UN and the host country governments.

The HAO will initially earmark approximately **3.5 million euros** in 2015, a figure that will be revised over the course of the year. The intervention sectors on which the response is to focus are detailed below.

In the sector of protection, programmes in the psychosocial subsector will be supported, for the psychological recovery of Syrian refugee minors and displaced minors, as well as interventions to promote the protection of victims and the application of IHL.

Regarding the sectors of food security and shelter and NFIs, this year, in line with ECHO, in such affected countries as Lebanon and Jordan these sectors will be covered essentially through unconditional cash transfers, which will make it possible to have a more dynamic local economy while strengthening the autonomy, dignity and empowerment of beneficiaries by offering them the flexibility to define spending priorities for themselves based on their most urgent and immediate needs in the short term, which are usually housing, food and medication. This approach falls within the framework of social protection and the rights-based approach of Spanish Cooperation's Fourth Master Plan. Regarding Syria, the food security sector will be covered with direct food assistance or through money transfer mechanisms.

As for the WASH sector, this year efforts will continue inside Syria to improve affected populations' access to water and sanitation services through the renovation and maintenance of WASH systems and providing access to safe drinking water. In Lebanon, support will be given to improving sanitation through drainage services and emptying septic tanks, using vouchers as a payment method (Cash for Work).

Finally, in the health sector, support will be given to programmes in host countries that integrate a resilience approach and make it possible to improve access to and quality of health services for refugees in an extremely vulnerable situation, working closely with the local health system in order to mitigate the impact of the conflict on the refugee population, avoiding the deterioration of the sector and improving local services. Within Syria, local health structures will be supported.

AOP SYRIA AND IRAQ 2015



In Iraq, it will be a matter of providing a multisectoral needs-based response with stakeholders who have the capacity to access and operate in highly insecure situations.

The HAO will continue to participate in international forums, and the High Level Group, where it will continue to defend the need to achieve specific advances regarding access to and humanitarian assistance for those populations with humanitarian needs. It will also continue to ask for an end to the use of force and indiscriminate bombing of civilians, as well as to attacks on ethnic minorities. In addition, it will try to uphold mechanisms and organizations that make it possible respond rapidly to emergencies within Syria, and to promote Security Council Resolutions 2165 and 2191 to improve the scope of cross-border operations, and Resolution 2139 within Syria.

During 2015, there are plans to launch a competitive call for funding applications from Spanish NGOs to carry out projects in the area of humanitarian action.

AOP SYRIA AND IRAQ 2015



AECID is a Spanish government agency attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. It acts as the executive body in charge of Spanish development cooperation, one of the priorities of which is humanitarian aid. Since its creation in 2007, AECID's Humanitarian Action Office (HAO) has been responsible for managing and carrying out Spain's official humanitarian action, guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence. Although the Master Plan for Spanish Cooperation provides general guidelines, and Spanish Cooperation confirms its commitment to humanitarian action in its Country Partnership Frameworks (CPF), the HAO's humanitarian action is carried out through its Annual Operations Plans (AOP), documents aligned with the principles of humanitarian action and Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles). They are also coordinated with strategies adopted by the United Nations, the European Union and other leading humanitarian actors. The AOPs are complementary to the CPFs, following the rationale of EU programming, differentiating development planning and humanitarian planning.

The HAO has contributed over €700 million to the international response to the principal humanitarian crises, supporting specialized partners such as the World Food Programme, UNICEF, UNHCR, PAHO, WHO, FAO, OCHA, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and specialist organizations from Spain.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

[ECHO: Humanitarian Implementation Plan \(HIP\). Syria Crisis.](#)

[ECHO: Humanitarian Implementation Plan \(HIP\). Iraq Crisis.](#)

[Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan \(SHARP\)](#)

[Syria Regional Refugee Response Plan \(RRP\)](#)

[Syria Emergency Response Fund](#)

[Iraq Strategic Response Plan 2014-2015](#)

[FTS: Total Funding to the Syrian Crisis 2014](#)

[Technical Cooperation Office in Amman](#)

[Find out about the AECID HAO's work in 2014](#)

[Where do we cooperate?](#)

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