

Flash Report

March 2017

The Humanitarian Situation in Eastern Ghota

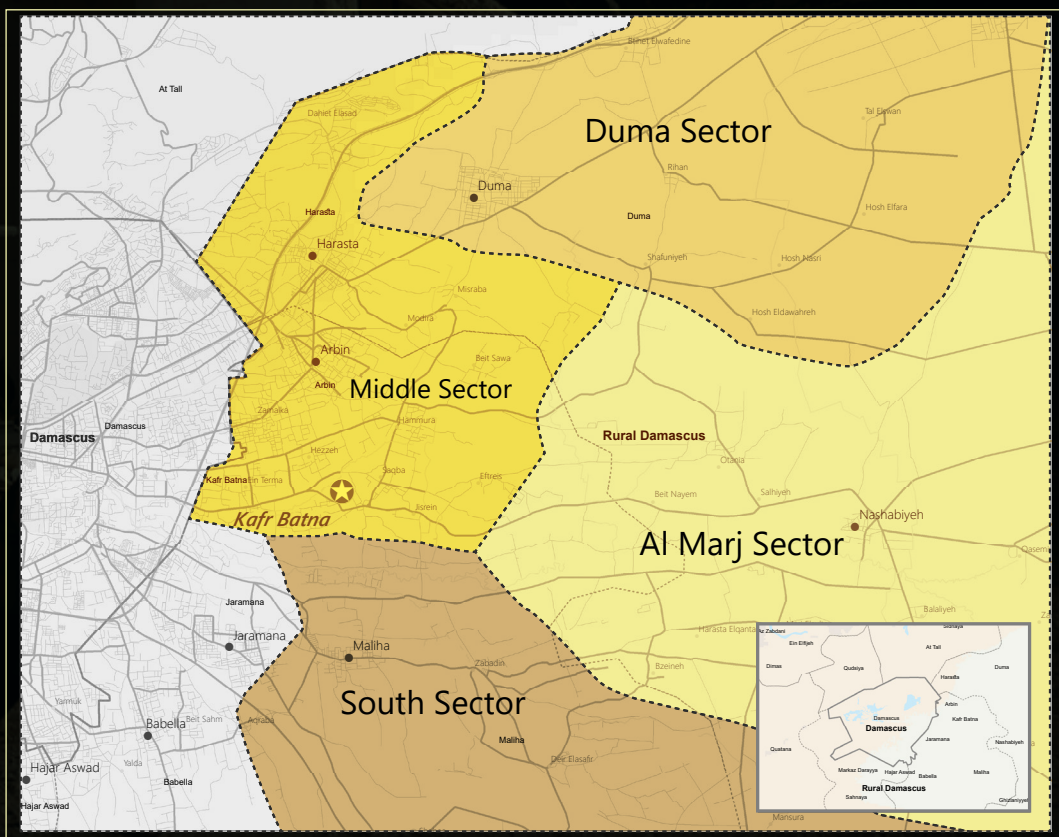
Due to its large population, Damascus has been divided into two governorates. Damascus governorate, the capital of Syria, and Rural Damascus which consists of the countryside surrounding Damascus City. Rural Damascus is commonly called Ghota, and it is divided into Eastern Ghota and Western Ghota.

Eastern Ghota consists of Duma, Kafr Batna, Harasta, Nashabiyyeh, Arbin, and Maliha Sub-districts. It is divided into four sectors: Duma sector, which contains Duma sub-district; the middle sector, which contains Arbin, Kafr Batna, and Harasta; Marj sector a.k.a. Marj Elsultan, which contains Nashabiyyeh; and the southern sector, which contains Maliha.

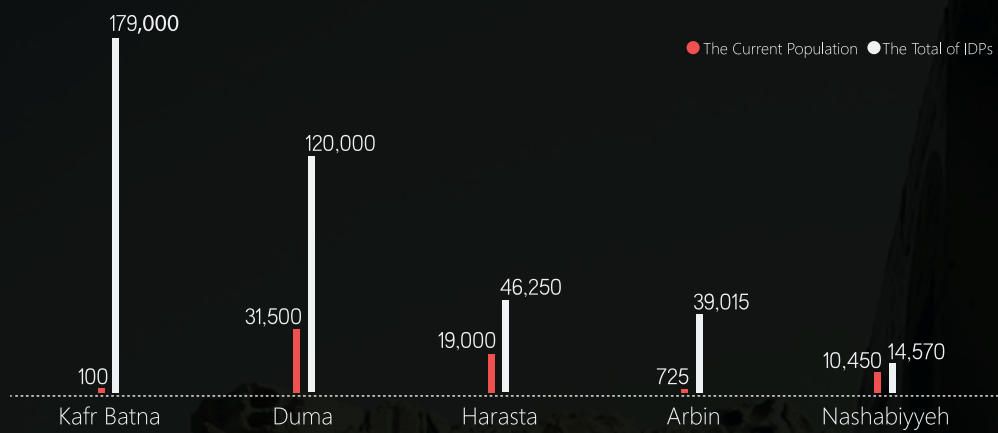
All the sub-districts of Eastern Ghota are controlled by the opposition forces, except for Maliha, which was taken over by the Syrian Regime forces on 15 May 2015. Back then, it had been under the control of the opposition forces for two years. Its population was estimated at **85,000** inhabitants most of whom were displaced into other towns under the control of the opposition forces in Eastern Ghota.

The population of Eastern Ghota, in the five NSAG controlled sub-districts, amounts to **398,835**, of whom **61,775** are refugees who left their homes because the Syrian Regime forces took over their towns, or because their towns are close to the front lines.

Map: Eastern Ghota Sectors



The Numbers of Inhabitants and IDPs



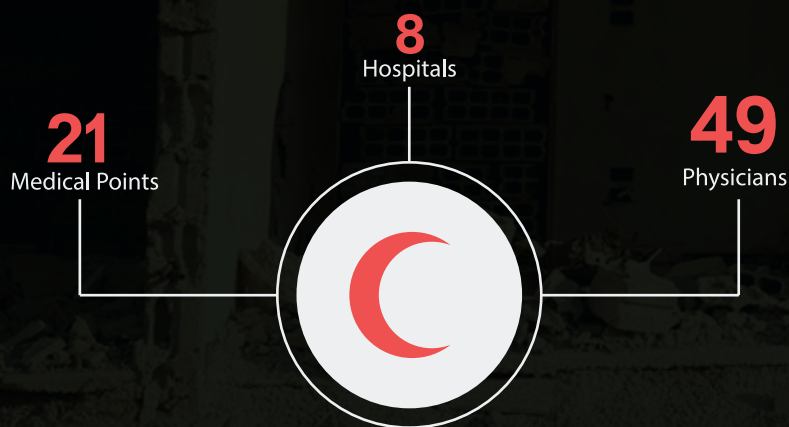
The Humanitarian Situation in Eastern Ghota

First: The Health Sector:

Eastern Ghota contains 21 medical points including field hospitals that provide first aid only, clinics that treat mild ailments and have patients seen, in addition to hospitals, eight hospitals in various areas in Eastern Ghota.

Even though medical services are free of charge at all medical centers, hospitals, and clinics in Eastern Ghota, the shortage of hospitals and specialized physicians lead to the deterioration of the medical situation. This shortage in hospitals and clinics and their weak capacity also lead to an increase in amputation in many bone or vein injuries. Eastern Ghota includes **49 physicians**, from various specializations. A severe shortage of orthopedists, vascular surgeons, and neurosurgeons has been reported.

No organizations subsidize medical supplies in Eastern Ghota, and the inhabitants of the besieged areas in Eastern Ghota rely on medications smuggled into these areas and sold at very high prices.



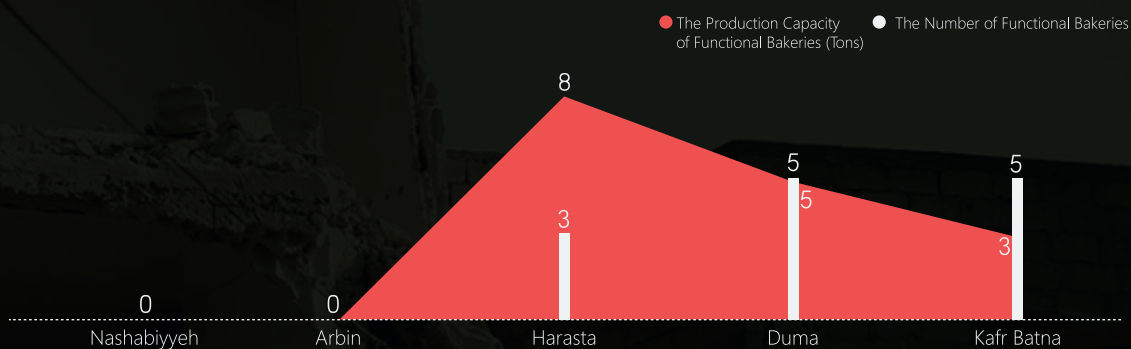
Second: The Food Sector:

Bread:

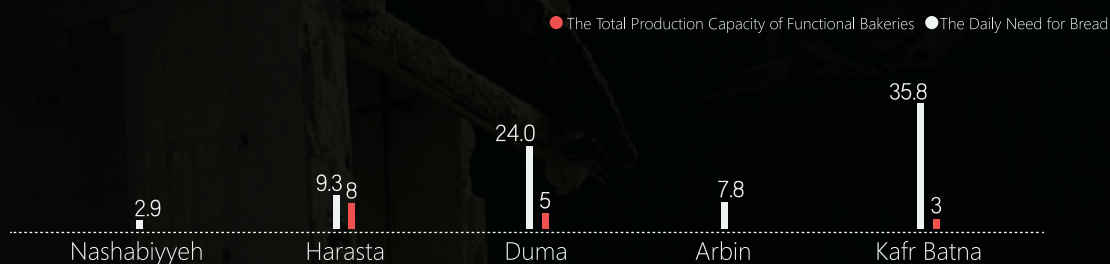
The Eastern Ghota has been besieged for about four years, and no humanitarian aid goes into this area. These areas suffer from a shortage of food and bread is sold at high prices; **1 Kg of bread is sold for 400-500 S.P.** which equals about 1 USD.

There are **13 bakeries** in the sub-districts of Eastern Ghota. They produce about 16 tons of bread a day while the need of the Eastern Ghota population is estimated at 79.767 tons a day. Many bakeries produce bread, and some amounts of bread are smuggled into Eastern Ghota. Many inhabitants produce bread from flour at home.

The Number of Functional Bakeries



A Comparison between the Production Capacity of Functional Bakeries and the Daily Need for Bread



Food Baskets:

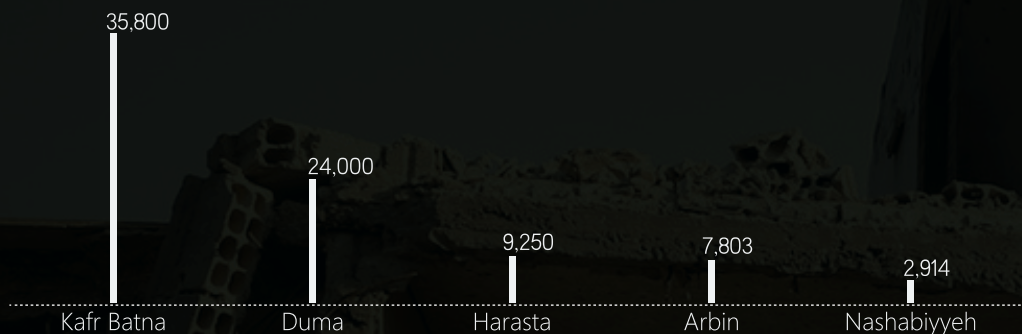
Food is available in Eastern Ghota in limited quantity and high prices in comparison to other areas. The medium **price of a food basket** in Eastern Ghota, Rural Damascus, is **25.380 SYP** which equals 50 about USD, a very high price for the inhabitants who lost their jobs due to the siege on these sub-districts.

The monthly need for food baskets in Eastern Ghota, Rural Damascus, is 79,767 food baskets. In addition, children are in dire need for baby formula and food supplements.

Food supplies are brought in by merchants who use the road of Al-Wafidin Camp. These merchants control the amounts, prices, and types of imported materials. These materials are passed under the supervision of the Syrian Regime checkpoints.

Some food supplies and medications are smuggled through Qaboun Neighborhood, which receives food supplies from Barzeh Neighborhood in Damascus City.

The Number of Required Food Baskets per Month



Third: The Shelter Sector and NFI:

Eastern Ghota includes a large number of IDPs as many inhabitants left their homes, which became close to front lines, seeking less hazardous houses as Eastern Ghota is subjected to shelling.

Most refugees have been distributed to vacant buildings as Eastern Ghota has a large number of unfinished residential buildings in addition to a plenty of buildings that have been abandoned for years and exposed to bombardment or looting. Thus, most of these buildings lack doors or windows.

The Distribution of IDPS



Local Councils cooperate with many local organizations to install one door to each house where IDPs live. These houses also need water reservoirs and curtains for windows holes as they do not have any windows installed.

The markets in Eastern Ghota have a shortage of clothes. This shortage compels families to use second-hand clothes, which started to spread in clothing markets as an alternative to new clothes. IDPs need mattresses and blankets as many of them cannot afford them due to their excessively high prices.

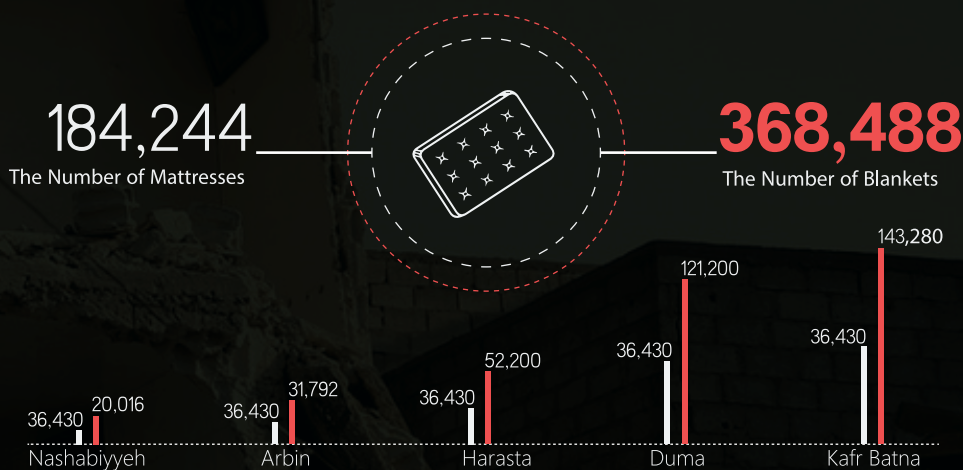
When an IDP leaves his home, which will be taken over by the Regime, he sells his belongings at low prices since the house will be looted by the Regime forces.

Merchants buy furniture and offer them in the market at very high prices that do not fit the buying power of the population. Thus, it is necessary to provide these materials or send them through UN after pressuring the Syrian Regime.

The civilian's need for mattresses is as follows:

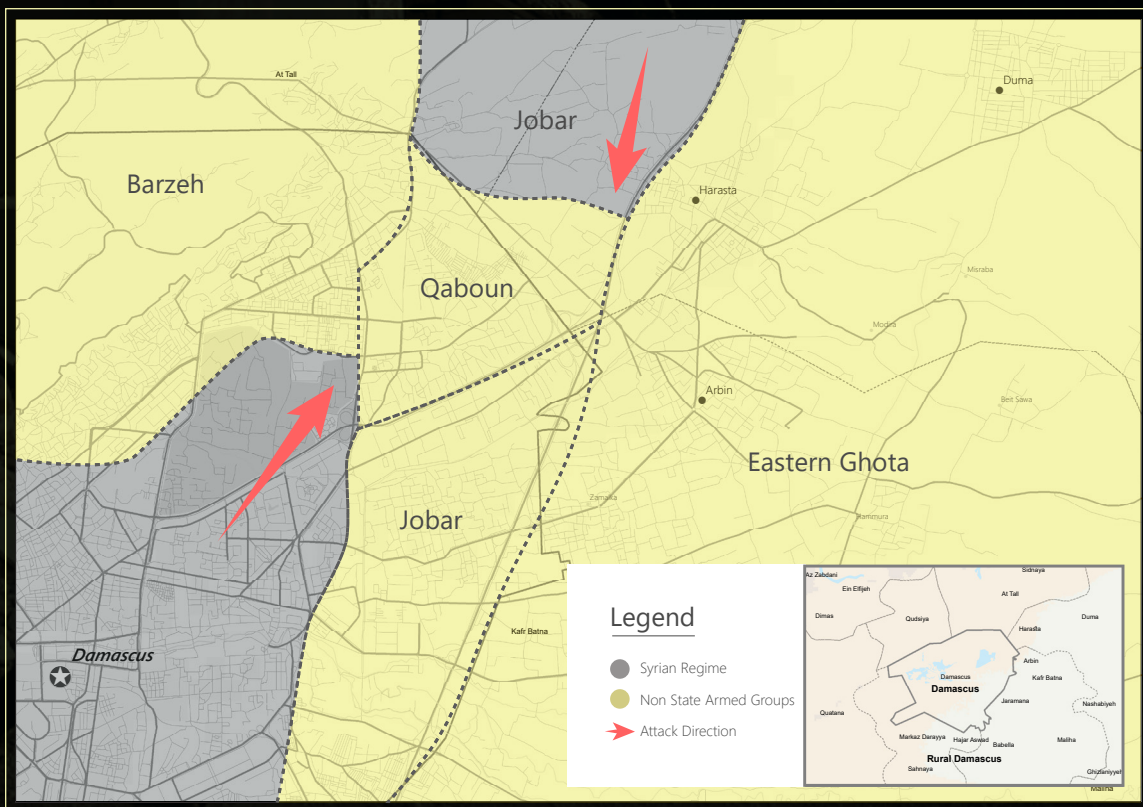
368,488 mattresses and **736,979 blankets**. A distribution plan has been put in place, according to which two mattresses and four blankets will be distributed to each family that remained at home; and 4 mattresses and eight blankets will be distributed to IDP families. The long obstruction of humanitarian aid, along with the displacement of these people who left their home without carrying their belongings, created a strong need mattresses and blankets among IDPs.

The Total Number of Required Mattresses and Blankets



Closing the Siege on Eastern Ghota

The Syrian Regime had previously displaced the population of Darayya in Rural Damascus and other areas. Eastern Ghota is surrounded with Syrian Regime military bases in the north, east, and south, with a single narrow passage into Qaboun Neighborhood. The Syrian Regime has snipers overlooking the road between Eastern Ghota and Qaboun, and this road is often targeted with artillery and air strikes.



There are also some frontlines between the Syrian Regime and opposition forces. The opposition forces control Qaboun Neighborhood, which is separated from Barzeh Neighborhood in Damascus with a street and some farms. The opposition forces control Barzeh Neighborhood, but there is an agreement to allow food supplies into this neighborhood. Small amounts of these materials are smuggled into Eastern Ghota in order to mitigate the siege on **400,000 civilians**.

The Hazard of the Syrian Regime Forces Storming Qaboun

Qaboun is located in the north-eastern part of Damascus City and it consists of irregular buildings, which were inhabited by low-income families before the current events. The fragile buildings made it easy for the Syrian Regime to destroy a huge part of the Neighborhood.

This area gained importance during the current events due to its location between Eastern Ghota and Damascus City to the west. It is bordered by Barzeh in the north and Jobar in the south. It is also adjacent to the Police Academy and Air Force Intelligence Center, which intensified the clashes in this area.

The Syrian Regime is attempting to gain control over this Neighborhood by destroying it completely. On 18 February 2017, it launched a military campaign to control it in order to separate Barzeh Neighborhood from Eastern Ghota, which would facilitate storming Barzeh for the Regime forces on the one hand, and close a siege on Eastern Ghota to prevent its access to aid supplies.

Displacement from Qaboun

With the onset of the military campaign on Qaboun, bombardment and shelling on this neighborhood have intensified, creating a great wave of displacement towards the towns of Eastern Ghota. The number of displaced families amounted to 2309. Most IDPs left their homes without taking their belongings, and no one managed to make a humanitarian response in proportion with their suffering.

The town of Harasta received the largest number of IDPs, which exceeded **6000 IDPs**, mostly staying with host families as a first step before they find residences for themselves. Harasta sub-district is considered unstable due to its proximity to front lines, which will force these IDPs to move again if the Regime forces advance or if bombardment and shelling intensify.

The Number of IDP Families



Summary

The ACU gave an early warning through its reports about displacement operations that the Syrian Regime seeks to undertake. The Syrian Regime besieges these areas and starves their population for long periods, and then it starts mass bombardment to destroy these areas and displace their inhabitants.

The Syrian Regime has prepared new plans for Qaboun; therefore, they seek to destroy the Neighborhood completely. Then, a long siege will be imposed on Eastern Ghota to starve its inhabitants and force them to leave their homes.

The ACU implored the international community to stand against the acts of siege and displacement against civilians and to provide humanitarian aid to all these areas according to the needs analysis.

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The Field Events in Eastern Ghota

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