

## Analysis of weapons contamination in Syria

Since March 2011, violence in Syria has had a devastating impact with an appalling number of casualties, displaced people, destruction of homes and infrastructures. The way explosive weapons<sup>1</sup> have been and continue to be widely used in populated areas in Syria, maiming and killing at the time of use but also contaminating large areas for the years to come, is a dreadful characteristic of this conflict.

Handicap International is involved in the humanitarian response in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Syria through physical rehabilitation, psychosocial support, emergency distributions and risk education to prevent accidents caused by explosive weapons. The organization has produced this report to document the threat posed by those arms. It is based on a compilation of secondary data on incidents linked to conventional weapons and improvised explosive devices covering the period December 2012-March 2015. Considering the difficult context that hinders systematic or comprehensive data collection, the report provides trends and estimates on the extent of weapons contamination and gives an idea of the immediate and long term impact on Syrian population.

The study shows how ghastly the extent and the intensity of the combats are. The use of explosive weapons appears overwhelming: they account for **more than 83% of the 77,645 recorded incidents, of which 75% took place in densely populated areas.** In the sole Damascus governorate, 5,353 incidents were reported, an average of seven incidents each day. In total, **5.1 million of people - including 2 million children - are living in areas which are highly contaminated** following the use of explosive weapons.

Internally Displaced Persons are also identified in the report as particularly exposed, since **1.7 million of them live in the most contaminated zones, with more than 800 000 located in highly affected conflict areas.**

The consequences on civilians are huge. The blast or fragmentation effects around the point of detonation

of explosive weapons kill or generate complex injuries. With more than one million people injured, and with the destruction of the health system in Syria, building an inclusive society in the future will be a critical challenge. Another long term threat is caused by weapons that failed to detonate on impact. The presence of those explosive remnants of war is an obstacle for the security and wellbeing of civilian population, but also for the overall reconstruction of the country. Those key infrastructures such as housing, schools, health centers and water sanitation systems which have been hit will remain contaminated and thus durably unusable when they are not completely destroyed.

In rural areas, the presence of landmines and improvised explosive devices on roads and fields affect the possibility for the population to move to a safer place and affect agriculture-based livelihoods.

The social and economic legacy of explosive weapons in Syria is immense and should be addressed as a priority matter.

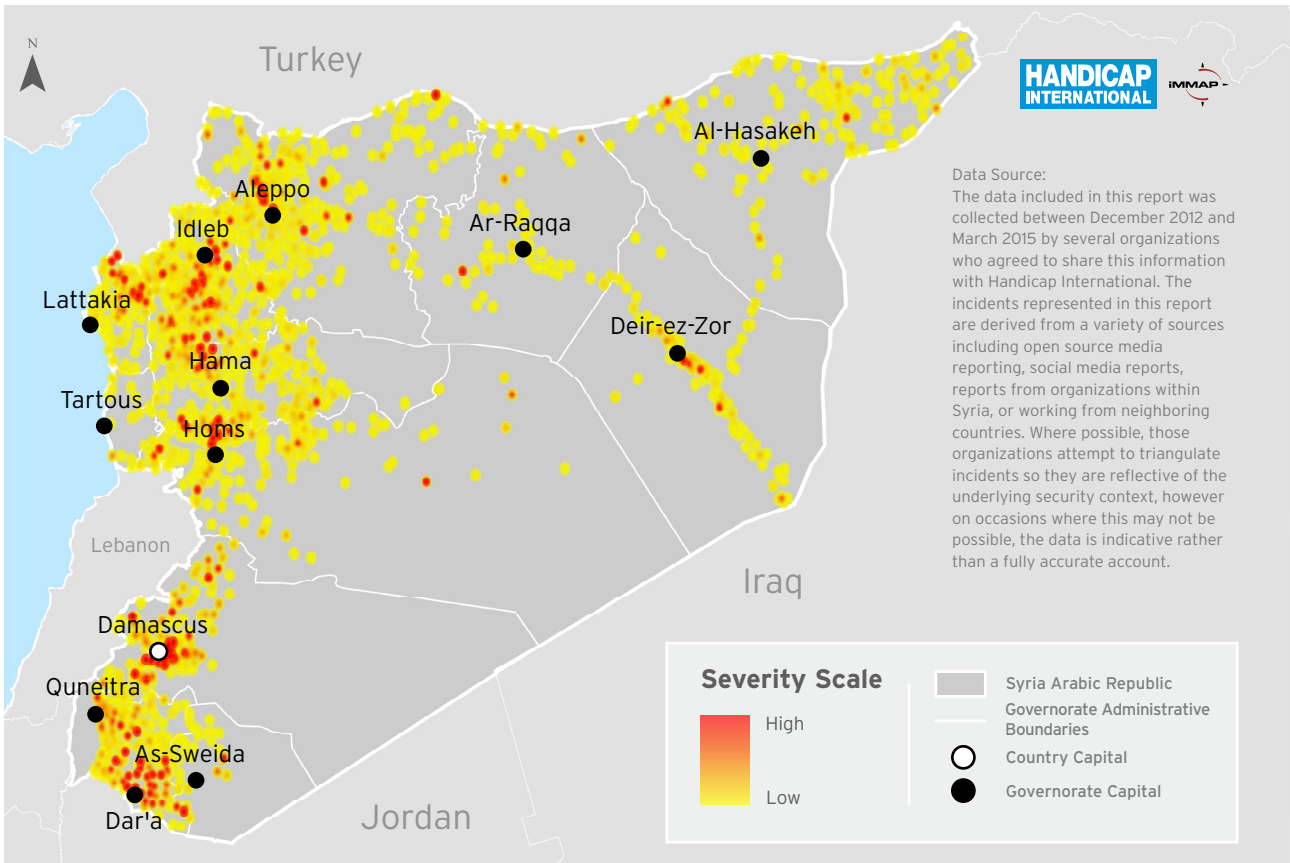
- The international community has to urgently protect civilians from the use of explosive weapons.
- Warring parties must immediately stop using explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas.
- Risk education activities targeting local, displaced and returning population, should be considered essential to avoid further accidents and protect human security.
- Plans for future clearance of highly contaminated areas have to be made.
- Populations must have unhindered access to protection and humanitarian assistance.

**Handicap International calls on the international community to actively engage in the discussions currently taking place at global level towards an international political commitment to end the use in populated areas of explosive weapons with wide-area effects.**

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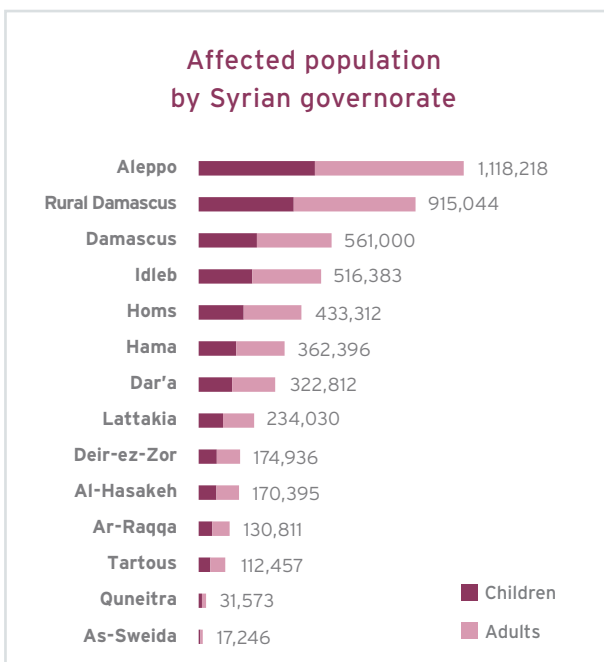
1. Explosive weapons include explosive ordnance such as mortars, rockets, artillery shells and aircraft bombs as well as improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC - Density of explosive weapons use (2013 - 2015)

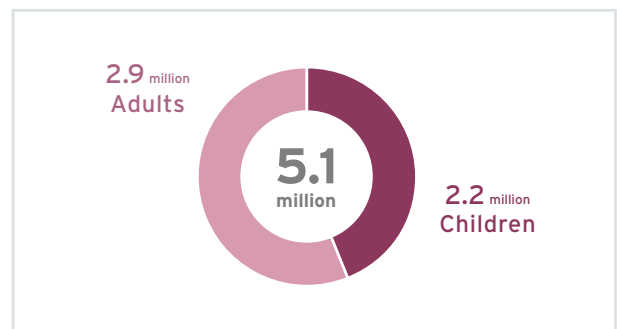


This map depicts the intensity of use of explosive weapons in Syria between December 2012 and mid of February 2015. A color gradient portrays the severity and location of incidents reported in

Syria. The darker the color, the higher the number of incidents, the higher the impact and the larger the number of victims, and people who have been affected by those incidents.



These charts depict the affected population based on age (adults, and children aged 18 and younger) and distributed by Syrian governorates. Explosive weapons have dramatically affected the lives of more than 5.1 million Syrians, many of whom are taking refuge inside the country not able to return to their homes. The danger still exists as numbers of incidents soars.



- Link: <http://www.handicap-international.org/fileadmin/Case-Study-Syria.pdf>
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