



## SYRIAN CRISIS

# SITUATION REPORT #1

**August 27, 2012**

### I. SUMMARY

- Continued conflict in Syria leaves 1.5 million people displaced within the country
- Syrians registering as refugees doubles in past four months, up from 40,000 to over 155,000
- Working with companions ELCA helps set up refugee camp in Jordan
- ELCA gives \$200,000 toward relief efforts within Syria
- ELCA commits \$250,000 for refugee camp management and shelter
- For more information visit [www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster) and [blogs.ELCA.org/disasterresponse](http://blogs.ELCA.org/disasterresponse)

### II. SITUATION

The Syrian uprising that began in February 2011 has led to an extraordinary time in Syria's history. The situation has left 2.5 million people in need of assistance. Thousands of Syrians have fled their homes, attempting to escape the violence. Those relocating from their homes depart without much preparation, leaving them dependent upon what cash they may have available and on their individual social networks. Most left initially believing they would soon return. As this period of displacement has extended, their resources have dwindled or are already gone. Many are moving to more stable areas of Syria and others are crossing the borders to neighboring countries.

The UN estimates that the number of people displaced within Syria has risen to about 1.5 million (5 percent of the total population). Many of these people have been displaced multiple times, fleeing from place to place, as they continue to search for safety. When they arrive many do so with no relatives to rely on and no jobs as businesses have been closed or are operating only intermittently.



Map Sources: ESRI, Europa Technologies, UNCS.  
*The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Jun 2012.*

Syria's economy is deteriorating. Since March 2011, the Syrian pound has depreciated against the US dollar by around 68 percent, significantly affecting ordinary Syrians who now find it difficult to pay for food, rent and fuel. This change, combined with rising prices, is driving lower-income Syrians more deeply into poverty and is creating a pressing internal humanitarian crisis. In particular, the current unrest is compromising children's psychosocial wellbeing, nutrition and health, and rights to protection and development.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has registered over 120,000 Syrian refugees, with the two highest populations being in Lebanon (31,000) and Jordan (36,000). Syrians are also crossing into Turkey and Iraq. However, many reports indicate that those who have left Syria are reluctant to register as refugees, and thus there are as many as 200,000 displaced Syrians outside of Syria.

Host communities in Lebanon are strained with absorbing and supporting tens of thousands of new arrivals. The United Nations is working with Lebanese authorities and partners to finalize a contingency plan in case larger numbers of Syrians arrive in the coming weeks. Among the most pressing needs are for food and basic non-food items, shelter, medical and health care, education and psychosocial support.

The UN estimates that around 35,000-50,000 Syrians in Jordan require assistance. Many Syrians have been accommodated and supported by the Jordanian communities. With the high rates of arrivals, the expectation of another major influx, and the host communities' already limited resources, an extreme humanitarian crisis is anticipated. In cooperation with Jordanian authorities, the UN has opened a refugee tent camp in Za'atri that will accommodate 100,000 people. While the tents will provide shelter, it is still necessary to provide the arriving families with humanitarian assistance such as hygiene items, infant care items, food supplies and healthcare in order to help ensure that minimum international standards for such camps are achieved and maintained.

### **III. COORDINATED RESPONSE**

The ELCA has been working with and through companions and member organizations within Syria and the surrounding region to help meet the needs of vulnerable populations. These well-established relationships have helped ensure that this help is getting to those most in need and is being administered in a way that ensures the dignity of all. As the situation continues to progress we will stay in contact with our companions to assess the future needs of the region.

In January 2012, Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson wrote to Christian church leaders in Syria, offering support of the churches' collective call for an end to violence and his prayers for the people in the region. These words echo the commitment of the ELCA to accompany the people of Syria and encourage the promotion of peace and reconciliation.

In June 2012, ELCA Disaster Response working through the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) deployed \$200,000 to help meet the needs of people within Syria. This has helped 7,350 families (approximately 30,000 people) to be provided with food and items such as hygiene kits, household items, bedding sets and clothing. Our partners are also addressing healthcare awareness for 375 families (approximately 1,800 people) through psychosocial care and training in nutritional

support for mothers. Rental subsidies, tuition fees and classes have also been made available to help alleviate some of the economic burdens faced by displaced families.

More recently, the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land have invited the ELCA to participate in responding to the needs of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Given the extreme temperature swings and frequent blowing dust, provisions for adequate shelter, along with camp management expertise, have become priorities for implementation. ELCA Disaster Response has committed \$250,000 to support adequate lodging for 300 families (approximately 1,500 people) within Za'atri refugee camp, located near the Jordanian city of Mafraq. Camp management efforts will ensure people receive necessary health, food and water services along with the dignity all people deserve.

In addition to ongoing advocacy efforts to maintain U.S. investments in migration and refugee programs and other international poverty-focused development assistance programs that support internally displaced people, the ELCA is working with global partners to shape U.S. policy toward Syria that strengthens protection of vulnerable populations within and beyond Syria's borders.

## IV. FUNDRAISING

The ELCA has opened a designated account (Syria Conflict) to receive gifts for response efforts to this disaster. One hundred percent of all gifts contributed to these funds will be used entirely to respond to this disaster both for immediate needs and long-term rehabilitation of communities and livelihoods.

Contributions to this appeal can be made in the following ways:

- Give by phone at 800-638-3522
- Donate online at: [www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster)
- Send checks to:  
ELCA Disaster Response  
39330 Treasury Center  
Chicago, IL 60694-9300  
Memo: Syrian Conflict

## V. COMMUNICATION

To help you share and advocate about this situation the ELCA offers a number of reproducible found at [www.ELCA.org/disaster](http://www.ELCA.org/disaster) and elsewhere. These include:

- Worship resources including prayers, litanies, hymns and a bulletin insert
- ELCA News Release found at [www.ELCA.org/news](http://www.ELCA.org/news)
- Featured content on the ELCA Disaster Response blog at [blogs.ELCA.org/disasterresponse](http://blogs.ELCA.org/disasterresponse)

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