



ALERT

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS IN ALEPPO

THE GLOBAL PROTECTION CLUSTER CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION to protect people under intensified aerial bombardment over the last week in East Aleppo. In East Aleppo, which has been besieged since 7 July, scores of people, including children and humanitarian workers, have been killed or wounded in this renewed offensive. Protection Cluster partners with contact to civilians in East Aleppo undertake periodic surveys to better understand the extreme challenges that they face. In a survey over the weekend of 18-20 November, over 88% of the sample 84 respondents said that the bombing prevented their movement. In addition, the lack of humanitarian access has led to extreme scarcity and expense of food, with few sources of livelihood to ensure basic survival. In recent days, reports of looting of NGO and local authority warehouses in search of food or items to sell highlights the desperation of the trapped civilians. Indiscriminate shelling has also killed and injured dozens of people in West Aleppo.

The Protection Cluster's monitoring since August 2016 confirms that the physical threat of aerial bombardment has consistently overshadowed any other protection threat in the city. The bombardment has destroyed homes and forced people to flee to other parts of the city for safety. In a previous survey in October, 55% of the sample 397 respondents interviewed identified a need for psychosocial support due to the pressure and stress caused by the siege and bombardment.

Protection monitoring in October indicated that very few people (only 1.5% of 397 respondents) believed that there were safe routes to leave the city, either for medical cases or other reasons. In the 18-20 November survey, none of the respondents believed that there was a safe route. Respondents identified the siege and military attacks, the physical threat of bombs and snipers, and the lack of mediation or monitoring by a third party such as the UN as reasons for their lack of faith in safe routes.

If safe and secure routes did exist, 44% of the 397 respondents contacted in October indicated their view that people would not leave the city, mainly due to the lack of safe alternative places to go in Syria, the desire to remain with relatives, protect their property and the prohibitive cost of relocating. The 40% who indicated that people would leave in the event of safe routes noted the need for physical safety, with increasing need for humanitarian assistance, as the motivations behind leaving.

THE GPC RECALLS THAT ALL PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT have obligations to protect civilians under International Humanitarian Law, Human Rights Law and Criminal Law. The GPC urges parties to:

- Respect the principle of distinction in International Humanitarian Law and ensure that civilians are protected against attacks and the effects of hostilities;
- Allow civilians to move securely and voluntarily to safe places inside or outside East Aleppo;
- Allow civilians safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance within East Aleppo;
- Ensure the safety of humanitarian aid workers, assets and supplies.