

Impact of Ceasefire on Civilians

in areas of Aleppo, Idlib, and Rural Damascus held by Armed Opposition Groups, 20-24 January 2017

SYRIA PROTECTION
CLUSTER (TURKEY)



Background

A ceasefire agreement entered into effect in Syria on December 30, 2016. The effort was brokered by Turkey and Russia and unanimously supported by the United Nations Security Council on December 31.¹ According to the terms of the ceasefire it applies to “all groups of opposing sides” and excludes areas of combat operations against ISIL and the Nusra Front.²

Objectives

This assessment of the Impact of Ceasefire on Civilians in areas of Aleppo, Idlib, and Rural Damascus held by Armed Opposition Groups, conducted 20-24 January 2017, analyzes the protection situation for civilian populations inside Syria. It covers physical threats, protection risks, freedom of movement, access to workplaces and markets, school attendance, access to health, effects of violence on children, and explosive hazards.

This assessment was conducted particularly in light of the ceasefire, which entered into effect three weeks before the beginning of the survey, but will also reflect protection issues which predate that agreement. Trends should therefore be considered in their full context before any correlations are drawn.

This exercise was not intended to measure or verify commitment to or violations of the ceasefire

agreement; rather, it is intended to measure the effect of such agreement on civilians' lives.

Methodology

From January 20-24, 2017, 7 members of the Protection Cluster, including 5 Syrian NGOs and 2 international NGOs, conducted 218 key informant (KI) interviews. This report owes greatly to the efforts of humanitarian workers on the ground inside northern Syria. Partners conducted interviews in areas of Idlib governorate (117 interviews total in Al Ma'ra, Ariha, Harim, and Idlib districts), Aleppo governorate (75 interviews total in in Azaz and Jebel Saman districts); and Rural Damascus (26 interviews in Rural Damascus district) held by non-state armed groups. A complete table of locations, broken down by governorate, district, subdistrict and community is included in a chart on the next page.

118 (54%) of key informants were female and 100 (46%) were male. 47% of the female KIs were teachers, while 15% were housewives. Of the male KIs, 30% were teachers, 10% were labourers, 10% local authorities, 10% storeowners and sellers, and the remainder represent a variety of occupations. Graphics of the breakdown of age and gender, as well as a breakdown by occupation, are included on the next page.

KEY FINDINGS ON THE PROTECTION SITUATION FOLLOWING THREE WEEKS OF CEASEFIRE IN IDLIB, ALEPPO, AND RURAL DAMASCUS

- In areas that did not experience airstrikes or shelling, key informants expressed relief and joy at the sense of safety, and indicated that life was able to return to their communities. Access to

markets, schools, and workplaces improved. In areas which experienced physical threats due to shelling or air strikes, on the other hand, key informants expressed constant fear, which affected their freedom of movement and by extension access to health services, schools, and workplaces.

- The main reason cited for decreases in **access to markets** was physical danger, in addition to inability to pay for goods, lack of goods, and lack of transport. For increases, the feeling of safety was the reason. Women and girls were cited as the most affected groups.
- The groups most affected by **barriers to access to health** were children (106 KIs, including 26 mentions of girls and 3 mentions of boys); women (68 KIs); older persons (26 KIs), poor people (16 KIs), persons with special needs (16 KIs), and men (12 KIs).
- 86% of KIs reported that religious leaders were a main **source of information** for them. The next source (37%) was family, friends, and neighbors; followed by television; telephone; and SMS.
- **Intercommunal disputes** were the most often reported protection risk, with rates highest in Idlib and Ariha districts of Idlib. KIs attributed these disputes to the variety of backgrounds from which IDPs come and the lack of familiarity between communities.

The Syria Protection Cluster (Turkey) is made up of the Protection Cluster as well as three Sub-Clusters: Child Protection, Gender-Based Violence, and Mine Action. For further information, please contact the Protection Cluster Coordinator, Sarah Khan (UNHCR) and NGO Co-Lead Victoria Shepard (IRC) at khansar@unhcr.org and Victoria.Shepard@rescue.org.

¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2336 (2016).

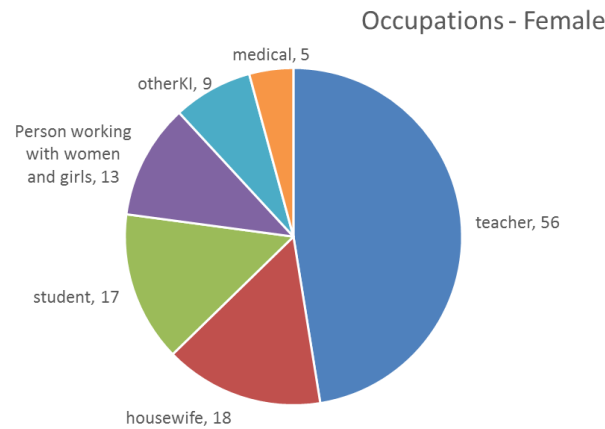
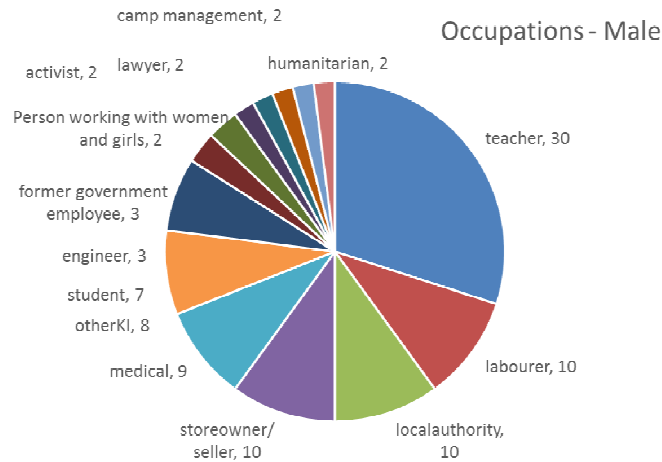
² Letter dated 29 December 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN and the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Turkey to the UN addressed to the UN SG and the President of the UN SC (S/2016/1133).



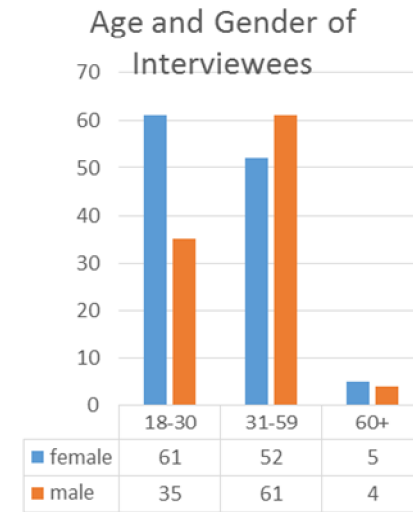
NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS BY LOCATION

Aleppo	75
A'zaz	25
Azaz	13
Azaz	13
Mare	12
Mare'	12
Jebel_Saman	50
Atareb	39
Atareb	26
Sahara	12
Sheikh_Ali	1
Hadher	5
Dalama	5
Daret_Azza	6
Daret_Azza	6
Idleb	117
Al_Ma'ra	10
Heish	1
Kafr_Basin	1
Kafr_Nobol	9
Has	6
Hazarin	3
Ariha	27
Ariha	27
Maarzaf	5
Sarja	22
Harim	60
Dana	60
Atma	35
Dana	4
Qah	1
Termanin	20
Idleb	20
Bennsh	1
Bennsh	1
Idleb	19
Idleb	19
Rural_Damascus	26
Rural_Damascus	26
Arbin	26
Zamalka	26
Grand Total	218

OCCUPATION OF INTERVIEWEES

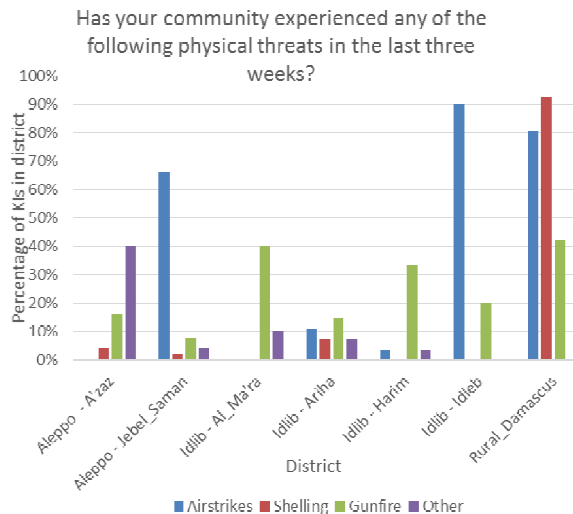


AGE-GENDER BREAKDOWN OF INTERVIEWEES



DETAILED FINDINGS^{3,4}

- Physical threats:** Key informants were asked about instances of airstrikes, shelling, gunfire, or other physical threat in their community in the last three weeks. 89% of 19 KIs in Idlib city noted airstrikes in their community in the last three weeks, along with 85% of 26 KIs in Atareb, 83% of 6 KIs in Daret Azza (Aleppo), and 81% of 26 KIs in Zamalka (Rural Damascus). Key informants in Azaz, Idlib, Ariha, and Harim districts reported airstrikes in no or low numbers. Shelling in the last three weeks was reported by 92% of 26 informants in Zamalka but

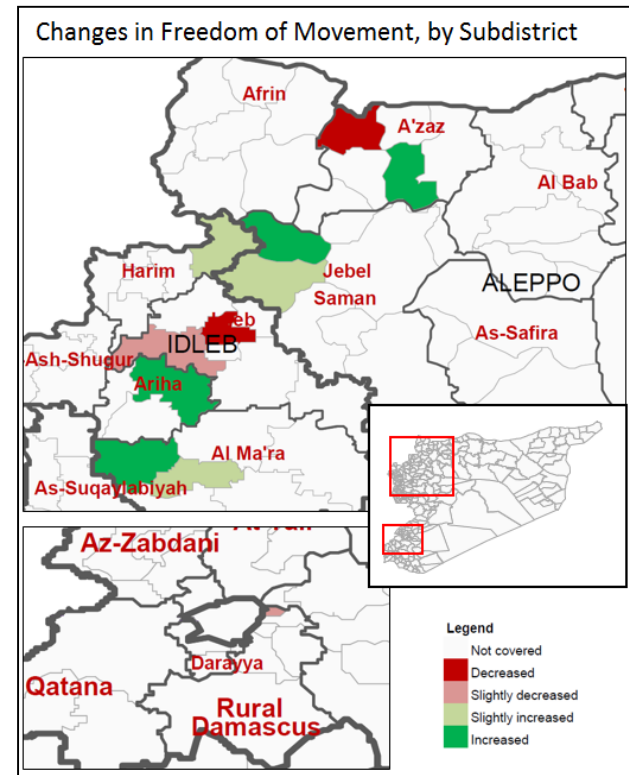


by less than 10% in all other communities surveyed. Gunfire was reported by 42% of 26 informants in Zamalka, as well as by 27% of 117 informants in Idlib governorate and 11% of 75 informants in Aleppo governorate. Under “other” physical threats, informants remarked the truck explosion in Azaz. Other threats included clashes of factions (Kafr Nobl and Dana), armed fights, and increase in cases of theft (Ariha/Maarzaf and Sarja).

- Freedom of movement:** Decreases in freedom of movement were noted in Bennsh, Azaz, Atmeh, Atareb, Idlib, and Zamalkah communities, while increases in freedom of movement were noted in Sheikh Ali, Maarzaf, Mare', Hazarin, Has, Termanin, Sarja, Kafr Basin, Daret Azza, Sahara, and Dana communities.

KIs who noted increases in freedom of movement noted that the ceasefire gave people hope and helped them to return to normal life without fear of shelling and bombardment from airplanes. Men were more able to access their workplaces, including agricultural fields; the markets came back to life; and people’s psychological state improved. Women were able to go to the markets, to make more visits to relatives, and to medical and cultural centers without fear of shelling. They were also able to attend more parties, courses, and activities, and people were happier. Boys returned to playing in front of their houses and going to school and Qur’anic centers without fear, as well as to going to work with their fathers. Girls were also able to return to school and visit the markets without fear, and play more freely. In communities where KIs noted a decrease in freedom of movement, they noted that people did

not believe in the effectiveness of the truce and that people’s state of fear did not change. In communities subject to physical threat of shelling, one KI remarked that “no one is safe, either in his house or on the street.” Some KIs noted a decrease in freedom of movement due to lack of financial resources. Some commented that residents of the communities have surrendered to destiny or fate, continuing to go to work despite the lack of physical security, given that shelling has become a part of normal daily life and as they needed to meet their families’ basic needs. The



³ As noted in “Objectives,” this survey records key informants’ perceptions of the last three weeks and is not intended to be an official monitor of parties’ commitment to or violation of the ceasefire.

⁴ As also noted in “Objectives,” this assessment is conducted particularly in light of the ceasefire, which entered into effect three weeks before the beginning of the survey, but will also reflect protection issues which predate that agreement.



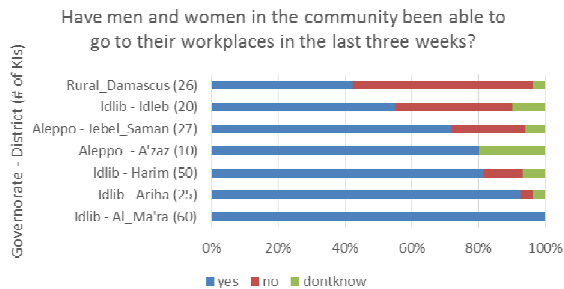
physical threats caused constant fear and worry and caused people to avoid gathering areas. Fear of explosions was noted in Atmeh and Azaz. KIs in Atmeh noted fear of kidnapping, rape, killing, gunfire, and theft. They also noted rules set by the camp management as factors that affected men’s movement. In terms of women’s movement, the above as well as customs and traditions, and fear of verbal harassment, were cited. In Tarmanin, checkpoints and clashes in the region were noted. Some parents restrict the movement of their children out of fear from shelling, kidnapping, explosive remnants, or even child trafficking.

In some communities where the security situation improved, KIs remarked that the freedom of movement nonetheless remained the same because of people’s residual fear, worry, and dread of sudden shelling, aerial bombardment, or explosions, particularly in communities that suffered attacks on schools, markets, and other civilian gathering places.

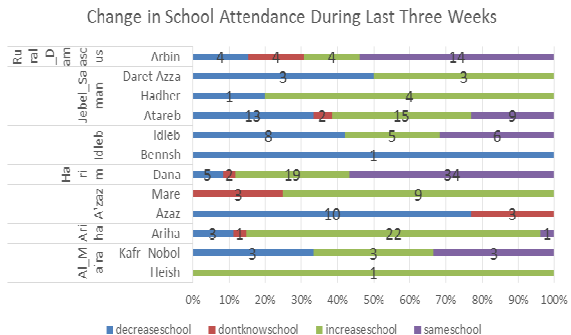
KIs in some communities, particularly on the border, already considered their areas relatively safe from physical threat before the ceasefire, and therefore commented that freedom of movement largely remained the same.

- Impact on access to livelihoods:** KIs who reported that men and women in their community were not able to go to their workplaces in the last three weeks noted fear of sudden shelling and aerial bombardment (Rural Damascus, Jebel Saman), lack of safety (Idlib, Jebel Saman), and fear of kidnapping of men and women (Atma). As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks reflected in this monitoring exercise predate the ceasefire; they should be considered in their

full context and considered not necessarily as correlated with the ceasefire agreement.



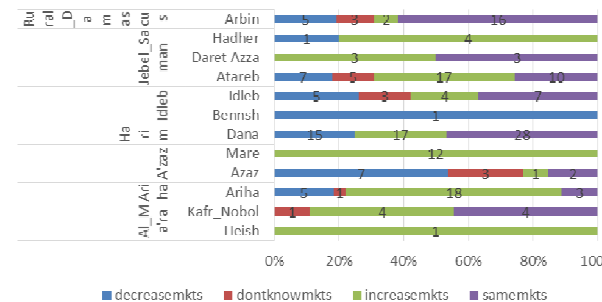
- Impact on Education:** Increases in children’s school attendance were noted by KIs most markedly in Ariha subdistrict of Ariha, Mare subdistrict of Azaz, and Daret Azza subdistrict of Jebel Samaan. KIs attributed increases to the increase in physical safety with the lessening or absence of airstrikes, the increase in population due to arrival of IDPs, students’ desire to learn, and the holding of mid-year exams.



Decreases in children’s school attendance were noted by KIs most markedly in Azaz subdistrict of Azaz, and Idlib subdistrict of Idlib. KIs who noted decreases in school attendance cited fear of

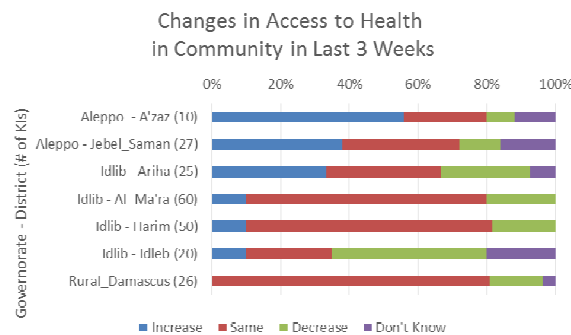
physical threats like airstrikes and shelling. 2 KIs noted each of lack of teacher salaries, lack of available schools, and fear of kidnapping as reasons for decreased school attendance. As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks reflected in this monitoring exercise predate the ceasefire; they should be considered in their full context and considered not necessarily as the direct result of the ceasefire agreement.

Change in Access to Markets



- Access to markets:** For those who noted a decrease in access to markets, the main reason cited was physical danger (from shelling, aerial bombardment, explosion or gunfire). Other reasons included inability to pay for goods, lack of goods in the market, and lack of transport. For those who noted increases, the feeling of safety was the reason. Women, girls, and children were cited as the most affected groups by those who noted an increase in access to the markets. As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context.

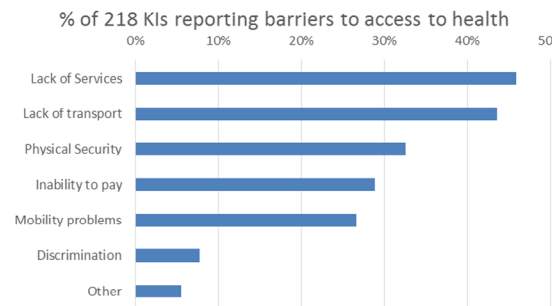
- Access to Health:** Overall 50% of KIs reported that access to health remained the same during the ceasefire, 23% reported an increase, 19% reported an increase, and 8% did not know. 81% of KIs in Rural Damascus, 72% in Harim district of Idlib, and 70% in Al Ma'ra district of Idlib reported no change. 56% in Azaz and 38% in Jebel Saman districts of Aleppo reported increases in access to health. 45% of KIs in Idlib district of Idlib reported a decrease in access to health.



Lack of services was the most-cited barrier to access (by 46% of KIs overall, 81% in Ariha, and 64% in Azaz). Lack of transport was the second-most cited barrier (44% overall, including 96% in Rural Damascus and 58% in Idlib-Harim). Physical security was cited as an impediment by 75% in Idlib district of Idlib and 73% in Rural Damascus. Mobility restrictions were cited by 27% of KIs overall, and discrimination was cited by 8% of KIs overall. Other impediments to access to health included crowding (Daret Azzeh), bad roads (Qah), lack of medical staff (Zamalkeh), lack of medicines (Zamalkeh), and lack of specialized clinics in the village (Dana).

The groups most cited as affected by barriers to access to health were children (106 KIs, including 3 specific mentions of boys and 26 specific mentions

of girls); women (68 KIs), including pregnant women and widows; older persons (26 KIs), poor people (16 KIs), and persons with special needs, and men (12 KIs). 18 KIs said that all groups were affected.

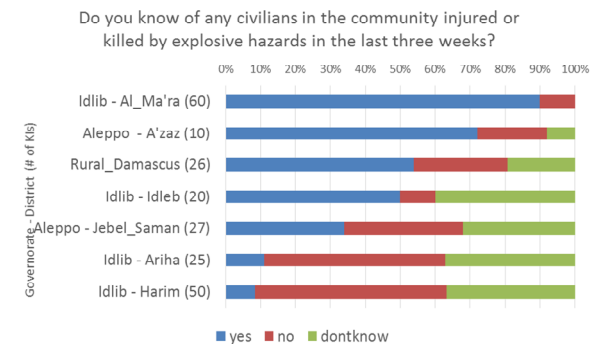


As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks reflected in this monitoring exercise predate the ceasefire; therefore they should be considered in their full context before correlations are drawn.

- Effects of conflict on children:** The most commonly cited types of behavior changes in children, due to the conflict, were aggression (cited by 66% of 218 KIs), bad language (49%), trouble sleeping (49%), disrespect (45%), difficulty socializing (30%), quietness (27%), and use of drugs (5%). Other behavior changes cited included bedwetting, crying, and smoking cigarettes. KIs in Rural Damascus and Idlib districts noted behavior changes in the highest percentages. As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context before drawing correlations.
- Unaccompanied and Separated Children:** KIs reported unaccompanied and separated children in Azaz, Atareb, Daret Azza, Sarja, Tarmanin, Idlib, Bennsh, and Rural Damascus communities, mostly

from the evacuation of eastern Aleppo city in late December 2016. To facilitate follow-up, information was registered for cases that had not been recorded formally. As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context.

- Explosive Hazards:** A higher number of KIs in Al-Ma'ra and Idlib districts of Idlib governorate, Azaz district of Aleppo, and Rural Damascus reported that they knew of civilians in the community injured or killed by explosive hazards in the last 3 weeks.



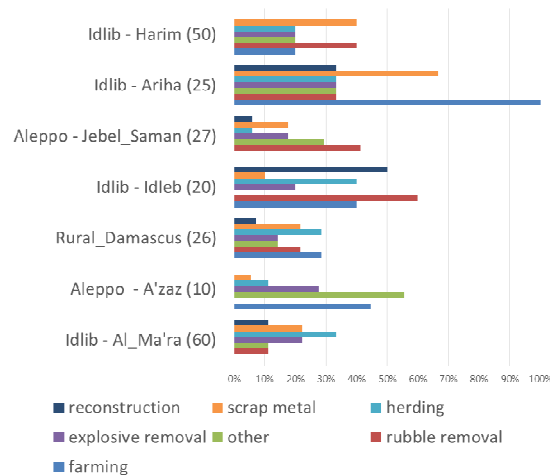
The most common activities at the time of the accident were farming, rubble removal, and "other," which most often included going about their daily work or routine activities to support their families, for example as storeowners. Half of those who answered "other" were from Azaz, the scene of a truck explosion in the town center that killed dozens of people on January 7. As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context before drawing correlations.

and the Free Syrian channel. The most cited radio stations included Orient and Fresh. Other sources of information cited by KIs included civil defense and VHF radio.

- **Final comments:** KIs remarked their hope for an increase in safety and return to stability. For those areas without physical threat of aerial bombardment, shelling, or explosion, they expressed relief that they had not felt in a long time, including feelings of safety, rest, and a return to normal life, and they expressed hope that the ceasefire would become more permanent. On the other hand, KIs in those areas that reported airstrikes or shelling expressed disappointment in the lack of safety despite the ceasefire, and expressed lack of trust in the international community in general or in those who signed the ceasefire agreement. They communicated the constant fear and worry under which they continue to live. They hoped for improvement of their living conditions and the assurance of basic daily needs, as well as support needed to face the winter cold.

Interviewers themselves also noted hopes for increased security and peace, improvement in the level of support for education, and reduction in physical threats. They noted that the ceasefire should be upheld in all areas of Syria and that the survey should be conducted in all areas. Those in areas where aerial bombardment lessened or stopped expressed that the ceasefire had affected all areas of life positively and that people were noticeably more joyful, optimistic, and relieved. They hope that the world will hear them and that the violence inside Syria will cease.

Activity at time of accident



movement. An increase in freedom of movement was noted most often noted for boys.

As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context before drawing correlations.

- **Other protection risks:** Intercommunal disputes were the most often reported protection risk, with rates highest in Idlib district of Idlib (65% of 20 KIs), Al-Ma'ra district of Idlib (60% of 10 KIs), and Ariha district of Idlib (56% of 27 KIs). Family separation was noted most often in Idlib/Harim (45% of 60 KIs) and Idlib/Idlib (35% of 20 KIs), and Rural Damascus (35% of 26 KIs). These intercommunal disputes were attributed to the variety of backgrounds from which IDPs come and are now resident in Idlib. Other risks noted included theft of personal property and price inflation resulting from the blockade of Zamalka. It is not possible to make a direct co-relation to the cease-fire off these above findings.

As mentioned earlier in this note, some protection risks predate the ceasefire and should be considered in their full context before drawing correlations.

- **Sources of information for news:** Overwhelmingly, key informants (86% overall) reported that religious leaders were a main source of information for them. The next source (37% overall) was family, friends, and neighbors; followed by television (33%), telephone (15%), SMS (11%), noticeboards (9%), aid workers (8%), community leaders (6%), radio (4%), armed groups (3%), internet (3%), and press (0%). The most cited television stations included Al Jazeera, Aleppo Today, Al Arabiya and Al Arabiya Al Hadth, Orient,

- **Gender-based violence:** Forced and early marriage was noted as present by 74% of 27 KIs in Idlib/Ariha and 69% of 26 KIs in Rural Damascus. Presence of kidnapping was noted by 75% of 20 KIs in Idlib district of Idlib and 60% of 10 KIs in Al-Ma'ra district of Idlib. Kidnapping was noted to affect men, women, boys, and girls. Domestic violence was reported as present by 48% of 60 KIs in Harim district of Idlib, 35% of 26 KIs in Rural Damascus, and 35% of 20 KIs in Rural Damascus. Exploitation was noted as present by 45% of 60 KIs in Harim/Idlib and 36% of 50 KIs in Jebel Saman/Aleppo. Harassment was noted in Idlib/Harim (23% of 60) and Idlib/Idlib (15% of 20) but virtually not at all in other areas. Sexual violence was reported most often as present in Rural Damascus (19% of 26 KIs), Idlib/Harim (13% of 60 KIs). For girls' freedom of movement, while overall an increase was noted, it was at half the rate of reported increase in men and women's freedom of