

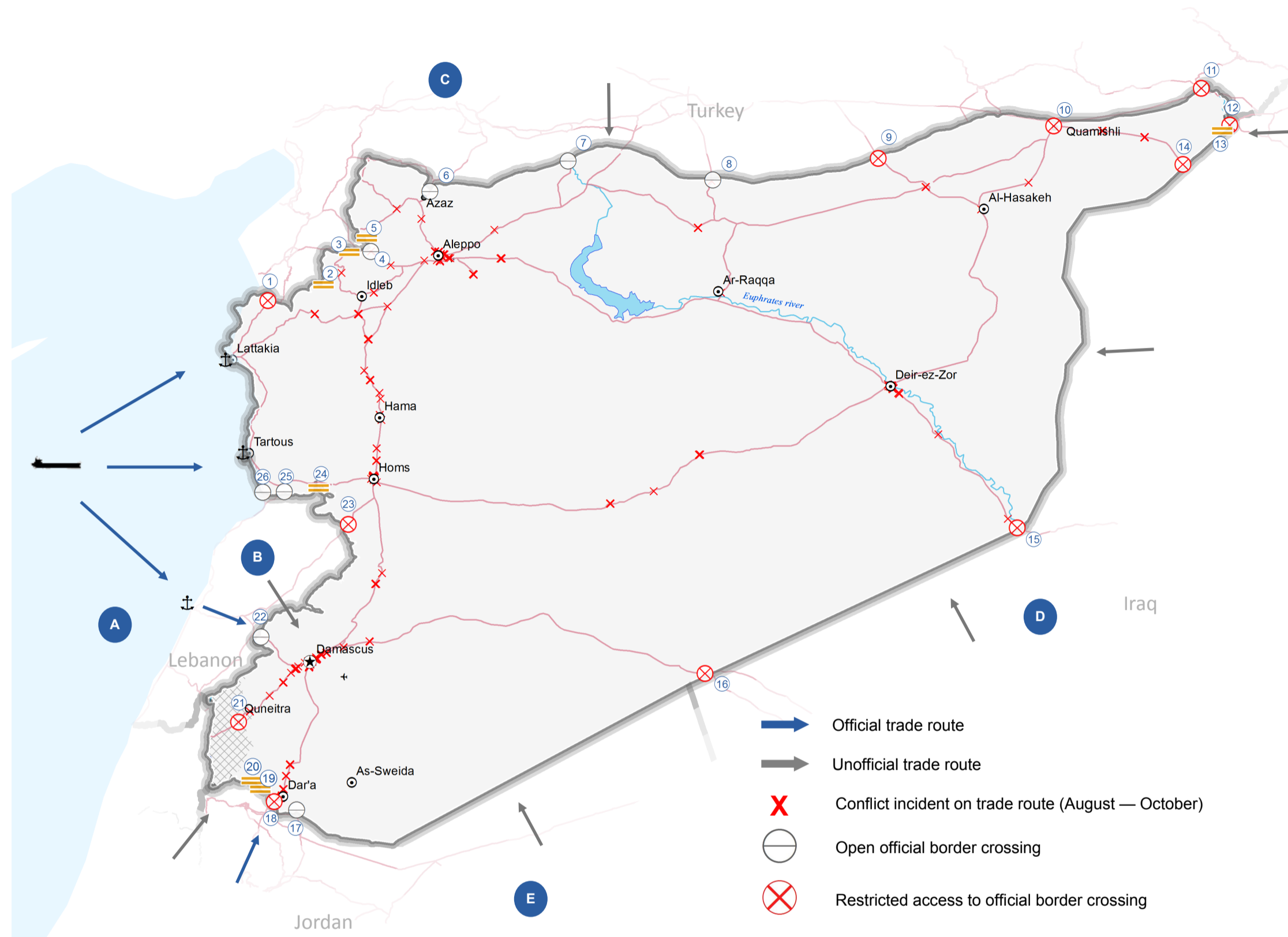
# Cross-border movement of goods

Syria Needs Analysis Project - December 2013

## Key issues

Due to a rapid decrease in local production and stocks, Syria increasingly relies on imported goods:

- A Beirut port:** Beirut port, which currently operates at full capacity, is the major official channel by which goods destined for Syria are imported. From the port, trucks transport goods through Lebanon, across the Masnaa border crossing (22) and into Syria. This key supply route is highly dependent on the security situation in Lebanon and along the Beirut-Damascus road. Any decrease in functionality of the port or Lebanese-Syrian border or conflict along the Beirut-Damascus road has large implications on the supply chain.
- B Border region:** Cross-border smuggling of goods between Syria and Lebanon was already common before the crisis and the conflict has caused a surge in smuggling activities from Lebanon into Syria, primarily serving the Qalamoun region in Syria. The Lebanese border region has witnessed frequent security incidents and any escalation of the violence, or a crackdown on smuggling, will cut an important supply route for medicines and fuel to a large number of people residing in the areas of Syria bordering Lebanon.
- C Turkey:** In July 2012, Turkey closed its Syrian border to commercial traffic. However, a 'zero-point-delivery' structure was established under which aid and trade from Turkey is unloaded in a buffer zone for onward transport into Syria. Not all actors operating in Syria can make use of this structure as the Government of Syria (GoS) does not approve cross border operations from Turkey. Hence, some actors are forced to import Turkish commodities via Lebanese or Syrian ports.
- D Iraq:** Al-Qa'im border crossing (15), one of the major supply routes across the Middle East, has been closed to commercial traffic for more than a year. Official crossings into Iraqi Kurdistan have been closed for the large part of 2013. However, trade and smuggling between tribes on each side of the border is continuing. Since October, the GoS has reportedly allowed relief actors to import some supplies from Iraq into Al-Hasakeh through Rabi'a'a border crossing (14).
- E Jordan:** Official trade between Syria and Jordan only occurs at the Naseeb/Jaber (17) crossing since the Dar'a/Ramtha (18) crossing was closed in 2012. Before the conflict, the Syria-Jordan crossings were a significant component of the regional trade routes linking Syria to the Gulf countries. However, since the start of the conflict official trade has drastically decreased at these crossings. While trade continues through the Naseeb/Jaber crossing, it remains severely restricted due to insecurity and limited transport capacity in Syria. Customs procedures for pharmaceutical products can reportedly be challenging.



- Official trade route
- Unofficial trade route
- Conflict incident on trade route (August — October)
- Open official border crossing
- Restricted access to official border crossing
- Unofficial crossing (not officially recognised)

## Supply routes inside Syria

The supply chain differs significantly throughout the country, affecting the quality, availability and costs of goods as well as the market actors involved:

- Official:** Much of the supply in GoS-controlled areas occurs through official routes, whereby every step of the chain works with permission of the GoS and according to GoS approved prices and standards. An example is the medicine supply chain, whereby the GoS uses private traders to supply medicines to GoS-supported pharmacies and hospitals.
- Partly official:** The official trade route only covers a part of the needs in areas no longer under GoS control. To fill this gap, actors inside and outside of the official chain channel goods to unofficial sources. One example is the sale of subsidised bread at higher prices by bakeries.
- Unofficial:** Most basic items consumed in opposition-controlled areas are brought into the country without GoS oversight or approval. A parallel, unofficial chain has emerged involving the purchase, transport and sale of these goods. The fuel market in north-east Syria is, for instance, almost completely informal, with smuggling of unofficially sourced oil into Turkey.

**Constraints:** Conflict around major roads and criminal activities, including the looting of goods, highly constrain the movement of goods. Additional barriers include a shortage of drivers willing to work in unsafe areas and limited storage space.

## Official routes into Syria

There are 2 main official supply routes into Syria:

- One of the main official entry points for goods into Syria is the Masnaa border crossing (22), through which commercial and relief goods flow without major difficulties. Items not sourced within Lebanon are imported through Beirut port. Since the start of the Syrian crisis, activity at the port has increased to unprecedented levels as a reduction in Syrian domestic production has resulted in increased demand for international goods and regional traders have shifted from land routes over Syria to shipping routes.
- Tartous and Lattakia ports are fully operational and remain important points of entry. They reportedly have the capacity to handle more than the current amount of cargo. However, the security situation, shortages of trucks, drivers and the limited available storage space inside Syria hamper onwards delivery and constrain increased use of the ports.

**Constraints:** Official supply routes are severely constrained by sanctions imposed on Syrian individuals and companies by the Arab League, European Union, United States and Turkey. Although the sanctions do not target food and medicine imports, there is a reluctance of foreign banks, ship-owners and traders to sell and transport goods to Syria. In September, several countries, eased sanctions on Syria to permit trade on humanitarian grounds.

## (Semi) - unofficial routes into Syria

Due to the breakdown of law and order in some border areas, smuggling of goods from neighbouring countries, a common activity even before the crisis, is rife. In addition, the lack of GoS presence at more than half of the official border crossings leads to the creation of semi-unofficial routes, whereby actors on both sides of border crossings allow for goods to cross the border.

As supply routes from Damascus, Lattakia and Tartous reach part of areas no longer under GoS control, these unofficial routes are the only way to obtain basic items for many opposition-controlled areas.

Unofficial movement of goods takes place from all neighbouring countries into Syria. Due to its informal nature, only limited information is available on these trade routes. Most information is available from Lebanon and Turkey: in Lebanon, the Aarsal area is an important source of fuel and other commodities, primarily serving the region bordering Lebanon. Medicines, wheat and other commodities flow from Turkey into the opposition-controlled border areas. In Jordan, some unofficial movement of goods, including bread flour and medical supplies, occurs at informal border crossings west of the Dar'a/Ramtha crossing.

## Key commodities

**Wheat:** Due to the significant decrease in domestic production, the GoS increasingly relies on imported wheat, mostly through the GoS-run General Establishment for Cereal Processing and Trade (Hoboob) and private merchants. The GoS imposes strict quality controls on the wheat imported into Syria. In opposition-controlled areas where domestic production and GoS-subsidised bread no longer meet demand, wheat and flour are sourced through informal networks.

**Fuel:** Local production and imports from Lebanon and Iraq are the main sources of fuel in Syria. There is reportedly no fuel shortage in the country, but prices are high and vary significantly across Syria depending on the origin of the available fuel. In Tartous and Lattakia, fuel is widely available due to import through the ports, while the costs and difficulties of transporting fuel over land result in high fuel prices in remote areas.

**Medicines:** The financial sanctions and closure of factories have resulted in shortages of medicines, from an estimated domestic production covering 90% of needs to an estimated 20% currently. The remainder is imported from other countries, particularly Lebanon. Informal shipments of medicines from Turkey and Iraq are common, often with limited quality control.

## Crossing points

Official and unofficial

Name	Syrian name	Control
1 Yayladagi	Bab al-Kasab	Government of Syria
2 Harem		Opposition groups
3 Hacıpasa	Darkosh	Opposition groups
4 Reyhanlı/Cilvegözü	Bab al-Hawa	Opposition groups
5 Atmeh		Opposition groups
6 Öncüpinar	Bab al-Salam	Opposition groups
7 Karkamis	Jarablus	Opposition groups
8 Akçakale	Tell Abiad	Opposition groups
9 Ceylanpinar	Ras Al Ain	Kurdish groups
10 Nusaybin	Quamishli	Kurdish groups
11 Cizre	Ein Diwar	Kurdish groups
12 Peshakapor	Simalka	Kurdish groups
13 Sahela		Kurdish groups
14 Rabi'a'a	Yarobiyeh	Kurdish groups
15 Al Qa'im	Abu Kamal	Opposition groups
16 Al Waleed	Al Tanf	Unknown
17 Naseeb	Jaber	Government of Syria
18 Dar'a	Ramtha	Opposition groups
19 Tal Shihab		Opposition groups
20 Al Hayt		Opposition groups
21 Quneitra		Government of Syria
22 Masnaa	Jdaidet Yabous	Government of Syria
23 Mashari' Al-Qaa	Joussieh	Government of Syria
24 Al-Amani	Tal Kalakh	Government of Syria
25 El Aaboudieh	Dabbousieh	Government of Syria
26 El Aarida	Tartous	Government of Syria



**Purpose** - This thematic report outlines the main official and unofficial supply routes of fuel, wheat and medicines into Syria. The Syria Needs Analysis Project welcomes all information that could complement this report. For additional information, comments or questions please email [SNAP@ACAPS.org](mailto:SNAP@ACAPS.org)

**Disclaimer** - Information provided is provisional as it has not been possible to independently verify field reports. Border crossing points and supply routes in Syria are subject to frequent changes. This report covers a highly dynamic subject; the information is current of the date of publication.

**Sources:** Reuters 2013/05/17, Reuters 2013/09/16, interviews with individuals active in the Syria response. Map data: conflict - UNDSS; infrastructure - WFP Logistics Cluster; administrative boundaries - OCHA COD.

ACAPS and MapAction would like to thank all organisations who have provided input to this report.

## Wheat production and imports per year (in '000s tonnes)

