



Raqqa Situation Report & Recommendations

April 5, 2017

Clashes between ISIS and the international coalition-supported Syrian Democratic forces (SDF) continue in Raqqa's rural areas and outskirts. The clashes extend from the al-Tabqa to the al-Karama area, with a line of approximately 75 km, on three axes from the north, east and west. Nearly every kind of weapon, including ballistic missiles, heavy artillery and air power, are being used in battles in which the primary objective is to expel ISIS and to seize control of the city and its suburbs.

The start of the third phase of the Ghadab al-Furat operation has been the most violent and has resulted in the most civilian casualties thus far, because clashes are approaching densely populated areas. Since the beginning of this third phase the number of civilian casualties has exceeded 230.

All these field developments presage a human tragedy:

- The closure of the dam caused water and electricity to be cut off from the city and the countryside for roughly 10 days, and there is a possibility of a health and environmental disaster. People have few choices; some of them have resorted to drinking from swamps. In addition, the strong currents of water led to floods that completely submerged fields. A large movement of displaced people has started in rural Raqqa as a result of the flooding of the Belikh channel after the SDF opened its gate.
- Some residents left their homes in the city in fear of shelling and prospective battles, in addition to fear of the collapse of the dam. People spread into the nearby countryside and the outskirts of the city.
- The acute shortage of health sector supplies is dire. Almost all hospitals are out of service. There is a lack of medical staff, equipment and medicines. The only hospital left is the National Hospital, though it is about to collapse as a result of repeated bombing.
- There is widespread food scarcity and prices for food are high due to road cuts, which could lead to a major famine. ISIS prevents civilians from leaving its areas; human smuggling fees range between \$200 to \$300 USD. Smuggling into SDF areas is carried out through rugged and unsafe roads due to the fact that ISIS has laid mines. In addition, there is the risk of being hit by the international coalition and SDF.

Based on this we issue a humanitarian appeal to the international coalition forces and their allies:

- Extreme caution must be taken when aerial bombardment is being carried out in order to avoid hitting civilians and the remaining infrastructure.
- Grant a truce for technicians to enter the body of the dam and repair the damage.
- Identify safe areas that are not to be targeted by shelling for civilians in the city and the countryside.
- Open safe corridors, protect them, and advertise them so that civilians are able to leave. Do not target civilians with air and ground fire by the international coalition forces.