



On the Brink of Famine

The Ukraine Conflict and Food Crisis in Syria

The Global Accountability Network's
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ON THE BRINK OF FAMINE: THE UKRAINE CONFLICT AND FOOD CRISIS IN SYRIA

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The GAN is a collective of international criminal prosecutors and practitioners who supervise and work with law students on specific atrocity projects. Currently, there are three accountability projects for four nations: Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, and China in regard to the Uyghur Genocide.

The students under SAP are assigned to a section of the work such as investigations, research, and/or legal analysis regarding alleged war crimes and/or crimes against humanity. SAP's goals are to gather evidence that can one day help to form the basis for a criminal prosecution and to make a qualitative analysis on the current crises in Syria.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Abu Alaa is a Syrian living in Damascus. Along with many other Syrians, Abu Alaa wakes up after dawn and heads to the bakery at 6:00 A.M to obtain bread for his family.¹ Even though he begins his journey at dawn, Abu Alaa finds approximately 60 to 70 people also waiting in line.² After waiting in line for up to six hours, or half of his day, Abu Alaa is lucky enough to receive two packets of round flatbread that the Syrian regime allots for his family.³ In Syria, Abu Alaa's experience is not unique.

Bread has long been a central staple of the Syrian diet, and its importance became even more pronounced with the onset of the Civil War in 2011.⁴ As essential food commodities rose 247 percent from October 2019 to October 2020, bread served as a cheap source of calories that millions of Syrians living in poverty relied on.⁵ Now, however, Syrians, and especially those in government-controlled areas, are facing an extreme bread and wheat crisis due to a variety of factors.⁶ While the bread crisis is sure to result in dire consequences for the entire Syrian population, negative impacts will be disproportionately felt by the 12.4 million Syrians, or 60 percent of the population, who were reported food insecure and on the brink of famine in February 2021.⁷

This document first outlines the history of wheat and food stuffs production in Syria in the early 2000s, before exploring the various factors that have since contributed to the current bread crisis, including: difficulties the regime is facing in importing wheat, the unfair distribution of bread within Syria, inability of bakeries to produce bread, impact of foreign state activity, and the onset of the drought in Syria. The document then discusses how the bread crisis has impacted the Syrian population, before providing recommendations for addressing the bread crisis moving forward. Importantly, this document will analyze the effect of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and the subsequent damaging effects it has had on international food logistics.

II. HISTORY OF WHEAT AND FOOD STUFFS PRODUCTION IN SYRIA

Before the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011, Syria produced enough wheat to support its population.⁸ Between 1990 to 2006, Syria increased its wheat production by 2.7 million tons largely due to the expansion of its wheat fields, irrigated areas, and varieties of wheat and chemical fertilizers.⁹ Syria's farming sector had also seen sizable public and private investment in fast-

¹ Ruth Sherlock, *Hours in Bread Lines: People Across Syria Struggle to Get Food*, NPR (Dec. 1, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/01/940802150/hours-in-bread-lines-people-across-syria-struggle-to-get-food>.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Syria: Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, HUM. RTS. WATCH (Mar. 21, 2021), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/21/syria-bread-crisis-exposes-government-failure> [hereinafter *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*].

⁵ SYRIA COUNTRY OFFICE: MARKET PRICE WATCH BULLETIN, WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (Oct. 2020), <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000121574/download/>.

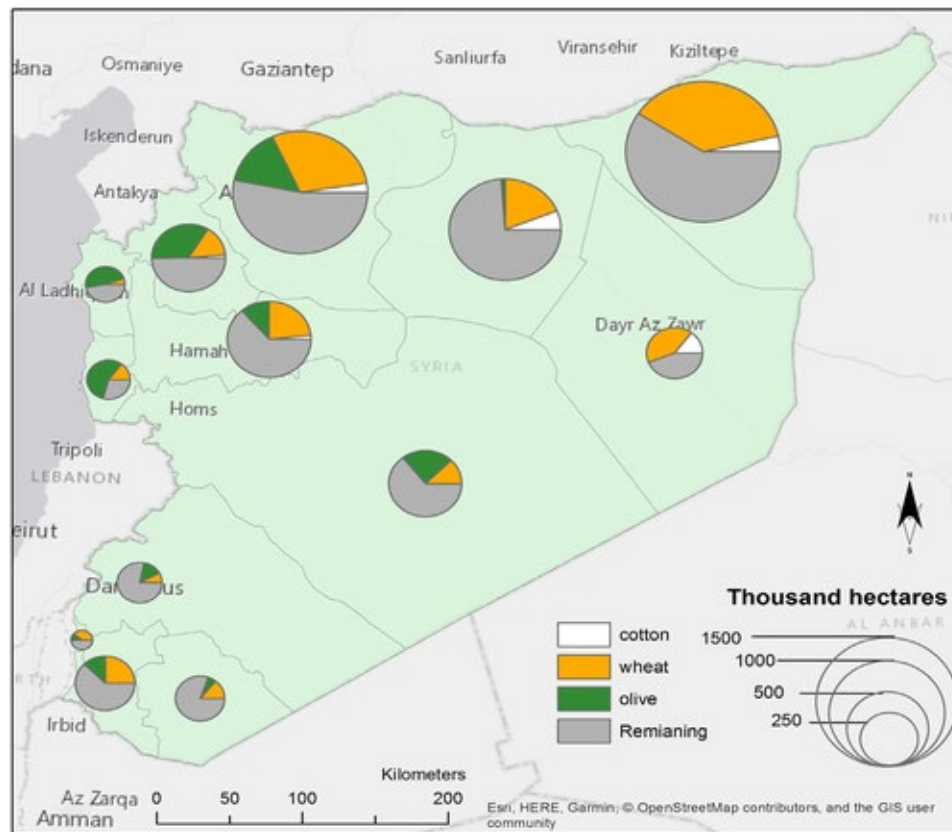
⁶ THE WHEAT AND BREAD CRISIS IN SYRIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE POPULATION, CTR. MIDDLE E. STUD. (2021), https://www.orsam.org.tr/d_hbanaliz/the-wheat-and-bread-crisis-in-syria-and-its-impact-on-the-population.pdf [hereinafter THE WHEAT AND BREAD CRISIS IN SYRIA].

⁷ Press Release, World Food Programme, Twelve Million Syrians Now In The Grip of Hunger, Worn Down By Conflict and Soaring Food Prices (Feb. 17, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/twelve-million-syrians-now-grip-hunger-worn-down-conflict-and-soaring>.

⁸ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

⁹ THE WHEAT AND BREAD CRISIS IN SYRIA, *supra* note 6, at 2.

growing modern farming techniques and infrastructure before the outbreak of war in 2011.¹⁰ In northeastern Syria for instance, the authorities were beginning to invest in sprinkler irrigation in many of the larger state-run projects, as was the case with some large private investments.¹¹ The investment led to an average wheat production of 4.1 million tons a year from 2002 to 2011, transforming Syria into the only country in the region that was self-sufficient in food production and staple agricultural crops, such as wheat and barley.¹²



Distribution of wheat, olive, and cotton by governorate in Syria. Image credit to Ministry of Agriculture (2014)

However, in 2009, Syria's wheat production fell from 4.9 million tons in 2006 to 3.7 million tons due to a severe drought that forced the nation to begin importing large quantities of wheat.¹³ Syria's bread crisis was subsequently severely exacerbated by civil war between 2010 and 2018, Syria lost 943,000 hectares of cultivated land due to military operations, displacement of farmers and farmworkers, mismanagement of state resources, and conflict-related costs,

¹⁰ *Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria: From Decades of Self-Sufficiency to Food Dependence*, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INT'L PEACE (June 4, 2015), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2015/06/04/food-insecurity-in-war-torn-syria-from-decades-of-self-sufficiency-to-food-dependence-pub-60320> [hereinafter *Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria*].

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² U.N. FAO, SPECIAL REPORT: 2021 FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT MISSION TO THE SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC – DECEMBER 2021, at 1, 12 (Dec. 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8039en> [hereinafter FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT].

¹³ *Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria*, *supra* note 10.

including change in control of parts of the country.¹⁴ The Syrian-Russian military alliance's unlawful airstrikes also led to further losses of land and the destruction of numerous bakeries.¹⁵

As the armed conflict drove millions of Syrians into poverty, wheat production was collapsing, and the shocking decline in wheat production was especially brutal for Syrians who relied on bread as a cheap and filling staple.¹⁶

III. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE BREAD CRISIS

This section will detail the primary factors that have led to the current food crisis. Specifically, this section will explore logistical difficulties in importing wheat, the unfair distribution of bread, the inability of bakers to produce bread, the impact of foreign state activity on Syria, and the onset of drought in 2021. The combination of these factors has created a cocktail for crisis, leaving millions of civilians in danger of famine and further suffering in the Levant.

A. *Difficulties Importing Wheat*

In the past decade since 2011, the regime has continued to face difficulties in importing wheat, exacerbating the bread crisis.¹⁷ In 2020, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that while Syria would produce approximately 2.6 tons of wheat, it would need 4.1 million tons to sustain domestic consumption.¹⁸ Despite this demonstrated need, the Syrian regime has been unable to secure the currency reserves it needs to pay for these imports due to international sanctions, the COVID-19 pandemic, and frozen Syrian assets in banks in Lebanon.¹⁹ The Syrian regime has also struggled to retain traders for its contracts, and sanctions have further inhibited traders from importing goods into Syria.²⁰

B. *Unfair Distribution of Bread*

The unfair distribution of bread within Syria has led to already marginalized populations within Syria having limited access to bread. In some regions, individuals are asked to form separate lines based on their identification as military and security personnel, residents, and displaced people, and bread is distributed based on the value assigned to their identification, where displaced people are determined to be the lowest priority.²¹ Local organizations have also been reported to distribute bread based on an individual's ethnicity, sect, and area of origin.²²

Privately-owned bakeries often provide different bread quality based on an individual's economic status, providing "tourist bread" to wealthier individuals, which is supplemented with

¹⁴ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

¹⁵ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

¹⁶ *Food Insecurity in War-Torn Syria*, *supra* note 10.

¹⁷ Ben Parker & Annie Slemrod, *Syria's 'Bread Crisis' in Graphs*, THE NEW HUMANITARIAN (July 29, 2021), <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/maps-and-graphics/2021/7/29/syrias-bread-crisis-in-graphs>.

¹⁸ Ruth Sherlock, *Imagine Waiting 6 Hours to Buy A Couple of Bags of Bread*, NPR (Dec. 3, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/12/03/941382003/imagine-waiting-6-hours-to-buy-a-couple-of-bags-of-bread>.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

²² *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

additional ingredients including milk and sugar.²³ Thus, affluent families in Syria have an easier time receiving their bread and often receive the unsubsidized, higher quality “tourist bread.”²⁴

While the wealthy can receive “tourist bread” or bread from the black market, the poor are forced to make large compromises to survive. For example, in many families adults refrain from eating so that they can afford bread and other food items for their children.²⁵ Specifically, 46 percent of Syrian households have cut down on their daily food rations so that children have enough to eat.²⁶ Children are also often forced to work or stand in line for bread in place of attending school.²⁷ This confluence of disturbing reports does not end, however, as, Syrian security services have been accused of taking bread from parcels to sell it on the black market for higher prices.²⁸



People queue for bread in Damascus, Syria, October 7, 2020

Lastly, in September 2020, the Syrian government announced its decision to ration the distribution of bread based on family size, while doubling the price of subsidized bread in October 2020.²⁹ Human Rights Watch reported that residents claim the new subsidization formula has made food shortages among families even worse, with individuals needing to further cut down on their meals.³⁰

²³ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

²⁴ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

²⁵ Sam Heller, *Syrians Are Going Hungry. Will the West Act?* THE CENTURY FOUND. (June 7, 2021), <https://tcf.org/content/report/syrians-going-hungry-will-west-act/?session=1> [hereinafter Heller].

²⁶ SYRIA AT WAR: EIGHT YEARS ON, UNITED NATIONS: ESCWA 33 (2020).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

²⁹ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

³⁰ *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

C. *Inability of Bakeries to Produce Bread*

For bakeries, the shortage of wheat has been devastating, with bakeries across Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama being forced to close.³¹ While the Industry and Trade Ministry of Syria claims that the number of operable bakeries increased from 65 in 2016 to 178 in 2019, locals dispute this claim, asserting that about half of these bakeries remain destroyed or damaged.³² The number of closed bakeries actually increased from 2020 to 2021 by 18 percent, from 59 to 70 closed bakeries.³³

Bakeries are also having difficulty securing ingredients, like flour and yeast, and have varying levels of access to avenues of support depending on the region in which they are located.³⁴ For example, in the Idlib Governorate, only nonprofit organizations provided bakeries with support, while bakeries in the Aleppo and Ar-Raqqa Governorates had access to more than one source of support.³⁵ In addition to being unable to secure ingredients and lacking the support to do so, 93 of the 277 identified open bakeries reported needing assistance with infrastructure, such as building rehabilitation, equipment, and machine maintenance.³⁶

D. *Foreign States' Impact on the Bread Crisis in Syria*

Foreign states have also exacerbated the Syrian bread crisis, both through direct and indirect intervention. From sanctions to decreasing exports of grain, the United States, Lebanon, Turkey, and Russia have uniquely contributed to the food insecurity of the Syrian population and the worsening bread crisis.

i. *The United States' Sanctions and the Devaluation of Syrian Currency*

The United States' sanctions on Syrian fuel and the subsequent impact on the devaluation of Syrian currency has placed Syria and its population in a monetarily weak position.³⁷ While the currency devaluation has particularly placed Syria's low-income population at a significant disadvantage when trying to buy bread that is overpriced,³⁸ the United States' fuel sanctions have further impacted food security in Syria. As the sanctions impact the "transport of goods between governorates," there has been a rise in "higher costs for basic commodities, even if they're locally produced."³⁹

ii. *Lebanon's Decrease in Grain Exports and Remittance Flows*

Moreover, after the blast in the Beirut port, grain exports from Lebanon to Syria were expected to decrease as the blast destroyed Lebanon's largest grain silo.⁴⁰ Because of the Syrian

³¹ *Assad Regime Struggles to Deal with Bread Crisis*, DAILY SABAH (Mar. 3, 2021), <https://www.dailysabah.com/world/syrian-crisis/assad-regime-struggles-to-deal-with-bread-crisis-in-syria>.

³² *Bread Crisis Exposes Government Failure*, *supra* note 4.

³³ BAKERY FACILITY MAPPING FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA: STUDY FOR NORTHWEST SYRIA, IMMAP 5 (2021).

³⁴ According to iMMAP, 22% of bakeries lack access to locally milled flour. *Id.* at 9.

³⁵ *Id.* at 7.

³⁶ *Id.* at 8.

³⁷ Sam Heller, *Syrians Are Going Hungry. Will the West Act?* THE CENTURY FOUND. (June 7, 2021), <https://tcf.org/content/report/syrians-going-hungry-will-west-act/?session=1>.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.* (quoting a humanitarian worker based in Damascus).

⁴⁰ Benedikt Barthelmess & Liam Carson, *How Is The Crisis in Lebanon Impacting Syria's Economy?*, MIDDLE E. I. (Aug. 28, 2020) <https://www.mei.edu/publications/how-crisis-lebanon-impacting-syrias-economy>.

government's inability to work directly with international traders, the Syrian regime has long been forced to acquire a substantial amount of its international grain imports through Lebanon; the blast is likely to negatively impact the legal grain supply route to Syria.⁴¹

Lebanon is also the second largest source of remittance flows to Syria, but the impact of the blast on Lebanon's economy and the subsequent potential decrease in remittance flows from Lebanon to Syria are expected to decrease the household income of Syrians,⁴² further limiting their ability to buy goods, including bread.

iii. *Turkey's Chokehold on the Euphrates and the Inflation of the Turkish Lira*

Turkey's chokehold on the Euphrates River has also contributed to the bread crisis in Syria. Despite a water-sharing agreement signed in 1989 by Turkey, Syria, and other regional countries, Turkey has since constructed numerous dams that have strengthened its ability to constrict water flow.⁴³ While Syria was granted 42 percent of previous flow levels of the Euphrates River from Turkey, the actual flow has been much less than the required amount.⁴⁴

After the Syrian government lost control of northeast Syria, Turkey began restricting flow of the Euphrates River into the region,⁴⁵ and in 2021 alone, water flow from Turkey was reduced by an additional 60 percent.⁴⁶ The 60 percent reduction was reported to have occurred over a matter of weeks and is believed to be a targeted effort by Turkey aimed at Syrian Kurds in control in the region.⁴⁷ Turkey has also further reduced the flow of the Euphrates as it dealt with a severe drought and desired to keep more water for its own people and uses.⁴⁸ In fact, the water flow from Turkey into Syria was so slow in 2021 that the water level was estimated to be about 5 meters, or 15 feet, below the original water level,⁴⁹ and 438 pumping stations on the Euphrates in Syria were recorded as out of order, forcing many Syrian farmers to watch their farms go dry.⁵⁰

⁴¹ Barthelmess & Carson, *supra* note 40.

⁴² Barthelmess & Carson, *supra* note 40.

⁴³ FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT, *supra* note 12, at 27.

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ Fatma Ben Hamad, *Syrian Villagers Along Euphrates Accuse Turkey of Cutting Water Access*, THE OBSERVER (Nov. 8, 2020), <https://observers.france24.com/en/20200811-syria-along-euphrates-villagers-accuse-turkey-starting-water-war>.

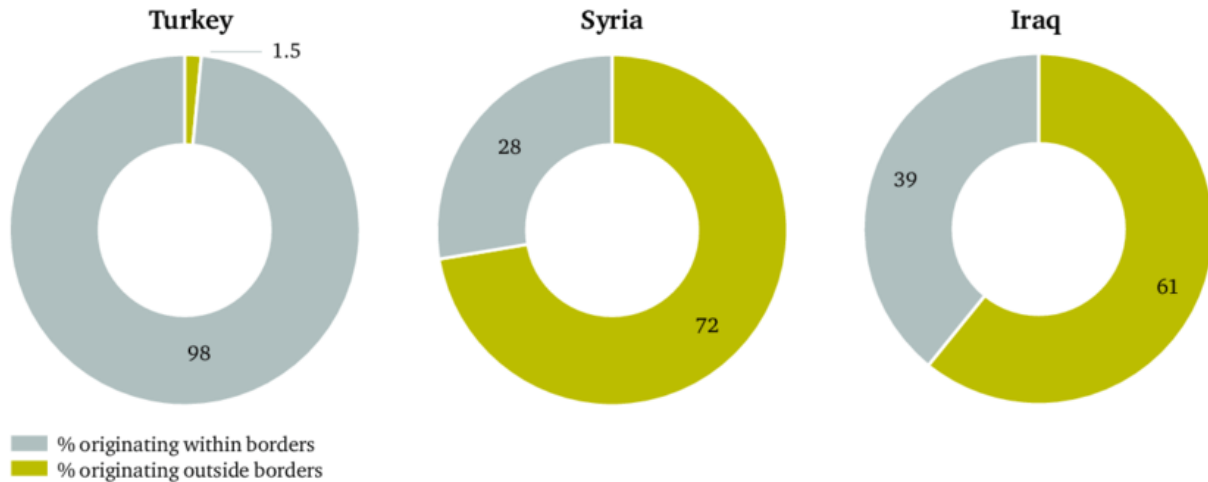
⁴⁶ Sirwan Kajjo and Ezel Sahinkaya, *Water Drop in Euphrates River Increases Tensions Between Syrian Kurds, Turkey*, VOA NEWS (May 6, 2021), https://www.voanews.com/a/extremism-watch_water-drop-euphrates-river-increases-tensions-between-syrian-kurds-turkey/6205509.html.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ U.N. OCHA, SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC: EUPHRATES WATER CRISIS & DROUGHT OUTLOOK, (June 17, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-euphrates-water-crisis-drought-outlook-17-june-2021>.

⁴⁹ FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT, *supra* note 12, at 27.

⁵⁰ *Id.*; see also Fatma Ben Hamad, *Syrian Villagers Along Euphrates Accuse Turkey of Cutting Water Access*, THE OBSERVER (Nov. 8, 2020), <https://observers.france24.com/en/20200811-syria-along-euphrates-villagers-accuse-turkey-starting-water-war>.



The dependence of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq on transboundary water resources. Image credit to Mohammad Nawwar Shamout, Damascus University, Department of Water Engineering.

Separately, the inflation rate and corresponding depreciation of the lira has led to sharp increases in the price of bread and fuel throughout the northwestern region of Syria, which is heavily dependent on imports,⁵¹ exacerbating to the situation of tight wheat imports from Lebanon and Turkey.⁵² Northern regions of Syria, under the control of the Syrian rebels and the Salvation Government, began paying combatants, administrative employees, and aid workers in Turkish lira.⁵³ As a result, the Turkish lira became the primary currency in northwestern Syria in June 2020 to free the region from the depreciating Syrian pound.⁵⁴

In early to mid-2021, however, Turkey's president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan began implementing aggressive interest rate cuts in an experimental economic policy designed to spur Turkish exports and economic growth.⁵⁵ Ignoring rising inflation rates, Erdoğan continued to push interest rate cuts, leading to an inflation rate of 36.1 percent by December 2021 that massively depreciated the Turkish lira.⁵⁶ By February 2022, inflation in Turkey hit a high of 48.7 percent, contributing further to the lira's previous loss of 44 percent in value in 2021.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Kareem Chehayeb & Ali Haj Suleiman, *Turkish lira crisis hits Idlib in Syria*, ALJAZEERA (Nov. 27, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/11/27/turkish-lira-crisis-hits-idlib-in-syria> [hereinafter Chehayeb].

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Cash crash: Syria's Economic Collapse and the Fragmentation of the State*, CTR. FOR OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RSCH. (July 6, 2020), <https://coar-global.org/2020/07/06/cash-crash-syrias-economic-collapse-and-the-fragmentation-of-the-state/>.

⁵⁴ *Several cities in Syria move to adopt Turkish lira*, TRT WORLD (June 11, 2020), <https://www.trtworld.com/magazine/several-cities-in-syria-move-to-adopt-turkish-lira-37202>.

⁵⁵ Daren Butler & Nevzat Devranoglu, *Turkish lira in historic 15% crash after Erdogan stokes fire sale*, REUTERS (Nov. 23, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-lira-drifts-off-record-low-erdogan-defends-policy-rate-2021-11-23/>.

⁵⁶ *Id.*; see also Baris Balci, Ugur Yilmaz, & Onur Ant, *Turkey Said to See Inflation Rate Peaking at About 40% in 2022*, BLOOMBERG (Jan. 22, 2022), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-01-22/turkey-said-to-see-inflation-rate-peaking-at-about-40-in-2022#:~:text=Turkey's%20inflation%20rate%20hit%2036.1,January%20survey%20of%20market%20participants>.

⁵⁷ Natasha Turak, *Turkey's Inflation Hits Nearly 50%, Highest in Two Decades*, CNBC (Feb. 3, 2022), <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/03/turkeys-inflation-hits-nearly-50percent-highest-in-two-decades-.html>.

The rising price of bread and other goods led some Syrians in the Northern region to borrow money just to buy groceries.⁵⁸ In turn, lenders have absorbed losses due to further depreciation of the lira when customers are unable to repay the loans on time.⁵⁹ And for some bakeries in northern Syria, the cost to produce bread has increased so much that bread is sold at a loss.⁶⁰

iv. *Russia's Lack of Grain Exports and the Impact of Their Invasion of Ukraine on Global Inflation*

Russia, one of the world's largest exporters of wheat and Bashar Al-Assad's ally, promised the Syrian regime that it would help meet the domestic demand for wheat in Syria by selling one million tons of grain to Syria during 2021.⁶¹ Despite this promise, cargoes have been slow to arrive, and the public customs data shows no significant supplies being sent to Syria.⁶² Moreover, in light of the coronavirus pandemic, Russian companies are reported to have suspended their wheat supply in Syria and have withdrawn from their contracts in fear of Syrians not being able to afford wheat.⁶³

The repercussions of the Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine are likely to reverberate across the global market, including the Middle East and Syria. Global food prices were up 28.1 percent at the end of 2021 compared to a year prior,⁶⁴ and in January 2022 global food prices reached their highest levels since 2011, when prices jumped due to the Arab Spring uprisings across Northern Africa and the Middle East.⁶⁵ With regards to wheat specifically, global wheat prices spiked 80 percent between April 2021 and December 2021.⁶⁶ In Syria alone, the averages of food prices increased more than 200 percent from 2020 into 2021.⁶⁷

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine is also predicted to significantly increase the price of global wheat prices, further worsening the bread crisis in Syria. Together, Russia and Ukraine account for approximately 25 percent of all wheat exports across the world.⁶⁸ Russia alone accounts for over 18 percent of the world's wheat exports, and in 2021, Russia further limited its

⁵⁸ Chehayeb & Suleiman, *supra* note 51.

⁵⁹ Chehayeb & Suleiman, *supra* note 51.

⁶⁰ Chehayeb & Suleiman, *supra* note 51.

⁶¹ Suleiman al-Khalidi, *Syrian Drought Puts Assad's 'Year of Wheat' in Peril*, REUTERS (June 21, 2021), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/syrian-drought-puts-assads-year-wheat-peril-2021-06-21/>.

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ Waleed Abu al-Khair, *Russia Exacerbates Syria Bread Crisis in Bid to Exact Concession From "ally"*, DIYARUNA (Jan. 25, 2021), https://diyaruna.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_di/features/2021/01/25/feature-01.

⁶⁴ Christopher Emsden, *Global food prices dip in December*, U.N. FAO (Jan. 6, 2022), <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/FAO-Food-Price-Index-december-2022/en>.

⁶⁵ Ana Swanson, *Food Prices Approach Record Highs, Threatening the World's Poorest*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 3, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/03/business/economy/food-prices-inflation-world.html>.

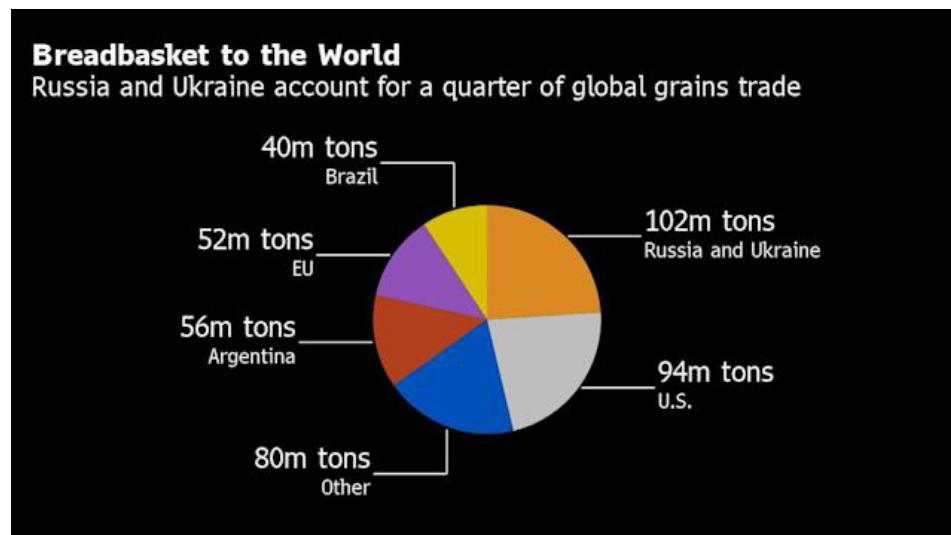
⁶⁶ Ana Swanson, *Ukraine Invasion Threatens Global Wheat Supply*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 24, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/24/business/ukraine-russia-wheat-prices.html>.

⁶⁷ Nicholas Lyall & Karam Shaar, *Three signs of impending famine in Syria absent immediate action*, OPERATIONS & POL'Y CTR. (Dec. 10, 2021), https://opc.center/three-signs-of-impending-famine-in-syria-absent-immediate-action/?fbclid=IwAR3FWtCUOxsuzGdPz0gHcZBmPYL2JX8eVMcrZV_4U6NU3Wjj4KZDH7H7Jq4.

⁶⁸ Hanna Duggal & Mohammed Haddad, *Infographic: Russia, Ukraine and the global wheat supply*, ALJAZEERA (Feb. 17, 2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/17/infographic-russia-ukraine-and-the-global-wheat-supply-interactive>.

wheat exports to address their rising domestic food prices.⁶⁹ Russia also doubled duties on wheat exports, placing additional pressures on importers reliant on Russia.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, Ukraine is the fifth largest exporter of wheat, accounting for 7 percent of the world's export market of wheat.⁷¹ On February 19, 2022, before the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, the International Grain Council's wheat index was up 29 percent compared to the same time a year prior.⁷² Three days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on February 26, 2022, that same index jumped 35 percent compared to the same time a year prior.⁷³ Global wheat prices are also projected to rise to \$11 per bushel, or approximately 38 percent, due to the invasion.⁷⁴ The day after Russia invaded Ukraine on February 25, 2022, the global wheat price spiked in price to its highest price since 2008, reaching \$9.32 per 60-pound bushel.⁷⁵



Estimates for the 2021-2022 season, for wheat and coarse grains. Image credit to International Grains Council.

The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine could also mean drastic reductions in wheat production and exports due to the Russian takeover of Ukraine's Black Sea ports, combined with sanctions and possible international embargos on Russian exports.⁷⁶ In 2020, 95 percent of Ukraine's wheat exports were shipped through its Black Sea ports.⁷⁷ By the second day of the

⁶⁹ Duggal & Haddad, *supra* note 68; see also Swanson, *supra* note 66.

⁷⁰ Megan Durisin & Yuliya Fedorinova, *Wheat Jumps as Top Shipper Russia Signals Prolonged Export Tax*, BLOOMBERG (Jan. 15, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-01-15/wheat-jumps-as-top-shipper-russia-surprises-with-export-tax-hike>.

⁷¹ Duggal, *supra* note 68.

⁷² *IGC Grains and Oilseeds Index (GOI)*, INTERNATIONAL GRAINS COUNCIL (last visited Feb. 26, 2022), <https://www.igc.int/en/markets/marketinfo-goi.aspx>.

⁷³ *Id.*

⁷⁴ Julia Horowitz, *Wheat and corn prices could jump if Russia invades Ukraine*, CNN BUSINESS (Feb. 14, 2022, 12:17 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2022/02/14/business/russia-ukraine-wheat-corn/index.html>.

⁷⁵ Felix Richter, *Ukraine Crisis Likely to Push Up Wheat Prices*, STATISTA (Feb. 25, 2022), <https://www.statista.com/chart/26928/largest-wheat-exporters/>; see also Debbie Mohnblatt, *World wheat prices begin to soar amid the war in Ukraine*, THE JERUSALEM POST (Feb. 25, 2022), <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-698608>.

⁷⁶ Horowitz, *supra* note 74.

⁷⁷ Duggal & Haddad, *supra* note 68.

invasion, major shipping companies had canceled all maritime shipments from Ukraine, and commodities traders had suspended operation due to the conflict.⁷⁸ Harvesting and export of wheat from Ukraine are anticipated to be further impacted if the conflict lasts for a significant period—this will depend on whether roads, railroads, and ports are damaged, and on how long ports and shipping lanes remain closed by Ukraine and Russia.⁷⁹

Turkey's access to wheat imports also impacts Syria as Turkey supplies wheat to areas in northwestern Syria, such as Idlib, Aleppo, and Raqqa.⁸⁰ However, in 2019, Turkey had sourced 74 percent of its imported wheat from Russia and Ukraine.⁸¹ As of April 2020, Turkey was the single largest importer of Russian wheat, surpassing Egypt.⁸² Egypt is the world's largest importer of wheat, and like Turkey, imports most of its wheat from Russia and Ukraine.⁸³ Both Egypt and Turkey have been struggling to balance bread subsidies and have been raising bread prices over the last year to battle rising wheat prices in the global market.⁸⁴ Egypt's recent efforts to find new grain supplies in the wake of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine could indicate a similar future struggle for Turkey and Syria.⁸⁵ To ease import challenges, Turkey and Syria should turn to Egypt's example of diversification. Beyond Russia and Ukraine, Egypt has access to fourteen other countries from which it can purchase wheat.⁸⁶

Notably, the Syrian government increased its reliance on Russian imports of wheat through a financed deal in December 2021,⁸⁷ but Syria was far from fulfilling its previous deal to purchase Russian wheat by the end of 2021 due to lack of funds.⁸⁸ In the immediate wake of Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, Syria's government in Damascus held a meeting to address containment of spending on wheat imports and management of wheat reserves, likely leading to increased rationing.⁸⁹ Without any positive change in funding reserves for the Syrian government, it is uncertain if such a deal with Russia will make a sustained difference—that is, if it does not

⁷⁸ Mike McGinnis, *Ukraine Residents Run For Shelter; Farmers Threatened by War Impacts*, SUCCESSFUL FARMING (Feb. 25, 2022), <https://www.agriculture.com/news/crops/ukraine-residents-run-for-shelter-farmers-threatened-by-war-impacts>.

⁷⁹ REUTERS, *Ukraine shuts ports as conflict threatens grain supplies*, AGWEEK (Feb. 24, 2022, 6:20 PM), <https://www.agweek.com/news/ukraine-shuts-ports-as-conflict-threatens-grain-supplies>; see also Horowitz, *supra* note 74.

⁸⁰ FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT, *supra* note 12, at 15.

⁸¹ Duggal & Haddad, *supra* note 68.

⁸² GRAIN BROKERS AUSTRALIA, *Turkey emerges as major wheat importer*, GRAIN CENTRAL (Apr. 21, 2020), <https://www.graincentral.com/markets/export/turkey-emerges-as-major-wheat-importer/>.

⁸³ Duggal & Haddad, *supra* note 68.

⁸⁴ Sarah El Safty, *Egypt Eyes Bread Subsidy Overhaul as Global Inflation Bites*, REUTERS (Feb. 01, 2022 10:28 AM), <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/egypt-eyes-bread-subsidy-overhaul-global-inflation-bites-2022-02-01/>; see also Umar Farooq, *In Turkey, bread lines grow longer as inflation soars*, ALJAZEERA (Dec. 13, 2021), <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/12/13/in-turkey-bread-lines-grow-longer-as-inflation-soars>.

⁸⁵ Vivian Yee & Aida Alami, *In North Africa, Ukraine War Strains Economies Weakened by Pandemic*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 25, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/25/world/middleeast/in-north-africa-ukraine-war-strains-economies-weakened-by-pandemic.html>.

⁸⁶ Amr Kandil, *Egypt reviews plans to cope with Ukraine crisis' impact on wheat imports, tourism, petroleum prices*, AHAM ONLINE (Feb. 24, 2022), <https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/64/461661/Egypt/Politics-/Egypt-reviews-plans-to-cope-with-Ukraine-crisis%E2%80%99-i.aspx>.

⁸⁷ Rita Ali, *Syria to import one million tons of wheat from Russia*, NORTH PRESS AGENCY (Dec. 6, 2021), <https://npasyria.com/en/68780/>; see also, *Syria's Wheat Crisis Foreshadows Famine*, CTR. FOR OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS AND RSCH., (Jan. 10, 2022), <https://coar-global.org/2022/01/10/syrias-wheat-crisis-foreshadows-famine/>.

⁸⁸ Lyall & Charr, *supra* note 69.

⁸⁹ Beaubien, *supra* note 88; see also, *In an exceptional session, the Council of Ministers approves measures to reduce the repercussions of the Ukrainian Crisis on Syria*, SANA (Feb. 24, 2022), <http://sana.sy/?p=1588718>.

place Syria in a worse financial situation to buy wheat in the longer term. Syrian plans to reduce spending and increase rationing in the face of rising global wheat prices foreshadows more hardships to come in the wake of the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine.

E. *Onset of the Drought in Syria in 2021*

Lastly, Syria began experiencing one of its worst droughts on record in May 2021. In prior years, around one to two provinces out of fourteen were affected by a yearly drought; in 2021, however, the drought affected every province.⁹⁰ Precipitation rates decreased by 50 to 70 percent, depending on the province, and the wide-scale impact of the drought has significantly decreased the yearly barley production.⁹¹ While barley production was estimated to exceed 2.2 million tons in 2021, only 450,000 tons were produced as of June 2021.⁹² The Kurdish-led autonomous administration was also expected to collect much less wheat due to the drought, while also restricting its usage and sales to within the governorate itself.⁹³

IV. CURRENT EFFECTS OF THE BREAD CRISIS IN SYRIA

This section will go beyond the scope of identifying the roots causes and explore the disastrous effects of the current crisis. Specifically, this section will focus on the resulting food insecurity, decrease in humanitarian aid, increase in migration patterns, political instability, and decrease in healthcare access that has resulted from the crisis.

A. *Food Insecurity*

The food security situation in Syria continued to worsen in 2021. According to the World Food Programme ("WFP"), more than 12.4 million people, or 60 percent of the population, were categorized as food insecure in 2020 – 5.4 million more than in 2019.⁹⁴ One of the reasons for the worsening food security is that the insufficient and unequal distribution of rainfall in the 2020 to 2021 agricultural season, together with several heatwaves, the high cost of inputs, limited availability of irrigation water and high cost of fuel for pumping, resulted in a contraction of the harvestable cereal area.⁹⁵ The harvested wheat area was 787,000 hectares, slightly over half of the area harvested in 2019, while harvested barley area was estimated at 352,000 hectares, about 75 percent less than the previous year.⁹⁶ Overall, wheat production in 2021 totaled to about 1.05 million tons, meaning it decreased by 2.8 million tons from the previous year and is only one quarter of the pre-crisis average of 4.1 million tons.⁹⁷ Such severe food insecurity has forced a

⁹⁰ Khaled al-Khated, *Bread crisis looms in Syria amid low wheat production*, AL-MONITOR (June 2, 2021), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2021/06/bread-crisis-looms-syria-amid-low-wheat-production>.

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ FAO CROP AND FOOD SUPPLY ASSESSMENT, *supra* note 12, at 1.

⁹⁵ *Syrian Farmers Face Challenges Preparing for the New Season Following Poor Harvest in 2020/21*, U.N. FAO (Oct. 17, 2021), <https://www.fao.org/resilience/news-events/detail/en/c/1444709/>.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

significant portion of the population to go without eating,⁹⁸ and more than 500,000 children under the age of five are considered chronically malnourished with 90,000 acutely malnourished.⁹⁹

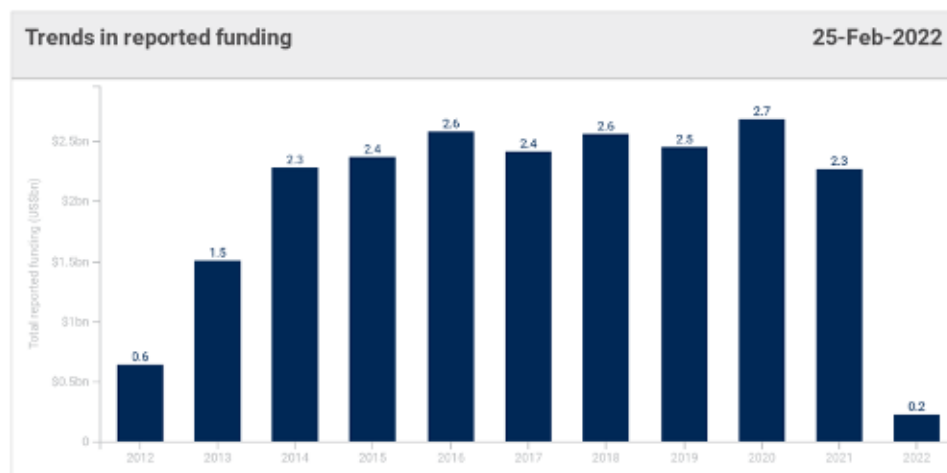
B. *Decrease in Humanitarian Aid*

While food insecurity is driving the need for humanitarian assistance, Syria has experienced a decrease in humanitarian aid. A decline in the global economy caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has led many governments around the world to reduce their aid budgets.¹⁰⁰ As a result, budget constraints have forced organizations like the WFP to reduce their food rations to the more than 5 million people in Syria they assist each month.¹⁰¹ This reduction was the third consecutive decrease in aid by the WFP in Syria.¹⁰²

Unfortunately, this trend is not unique to WFP. According to the Financial Tracking Services of the United Nation's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), humanitarian funding for Syria in 2021 has reached its lowest level since 2014.¹⁰³

Syrian Arab Republic 2021

<https://fts.unocha.org/countries/218/summary/2021>



Note: "Trends from 2008 to 2018" data are currently under review. Reliable annual data can be found in the Country Page by year.

The amount per year might change based on daily reports received and processed in the system

Image credit to OCHA's Financial Tracking Services

⁹⁸ *Supra* note 95.

⁹⁹ HUMANITARIAN NEEDS OVERVIEW: SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC, U.N. OCHA (Mar. 31, 2021), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/2021-humanitarian-needs-overview-syrian-arab-republic-march-2021-enar>.

¹⁰⁰ Lyall & Shaar, *supra* note 67.

¹⁰¹ *Syria Emergency*, WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (last visited Apr. 12, 2022), <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/syria-emergency>.

¹⁰² *WFP Reduces Humanitarian Aid Food Basket for North-western Syria*, THE SYRIAN OBSERVER (Sept. 8, 2021), <https://syrianobserver.com/news/69504/wfp-reduces-humanitarian-aid-food-basket-for-north-western-syria.html>.

¹⁰³ U.N. OCHA, *Syrian Arab Republic 2021* (last visited Apr. 12, 2022), <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/218/summary/2021>.

Since 2012, United Nations humanitarian aid for Syria has been slated each year and funded by United Nations member countries.¹⁰⁴ Although annual allocation requests have been made for over \$3 billion since 2016, rising to over \$4 billion in 2021, funding for the relief has fallen well short of this request.¹⁰⁵ Since 2012, the funding requirements have only been satisfied from 43 percent to 68 percent.¹⁰⁶ Since 2019, that share has been decreasing, although funding levels reached nearly \$2.3 billion in 2020 under a request for over \$3.8 billion.¹⁰⁷ In 2021, actual funding provided for the United Nations' Syrian humanitarian response decreased to 49 percent of the total requested amount, totaling only just over \$1.9 billion contributed under a request for over \$4.2 billion.¹⁰⁸

This decrease in humanitarian assistance during the wheat crisis is likely to intensify food insecurity in the country. While the crisis has yet to be classified as a famine, if current trends persist, the situation has the potential to spiral into famine-level hunger.¹⁰⁹ According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), famine can be declared “when an area has a least 20 percent of households facing an extreme lack of foods, at least 30 percent of children suffering from acute malnutrition, and two people for every 10,000 dying each day due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease.”¹¹⁰

C. Migration

If the wheat crisis and internal instability persist, increased food insecurity within Syria is likely to be a key underlying factor in increasing the number of displaced persons in the coming years. Since 2011, 5.6 million Syrians have become refugees in neighboring countries, with Turkey alone hosting over 3.6 million registered refugees.¹¹¹ As of March 2021, there were 6.7 million internally displaced persons within Syria.¹¹² Food insecurity in the northeastern region as a result of the wheat crisis has caused agricultural communities to migrate to cities in hopes of finding work, even though the economic conditions are not much better.¹¹³ Moreover, food insecurity is not a burden on Syria alone, but also upon its neighbors.¹¹⁴ Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq host 5.7 million Syrian refugees who themselves are not immune to food insecurity.¹¹⁵

Syrians who come from a lower socioeconomic status and are most in need of relief face fewer options in the wheat crisis and the drought that is wreaking havoc upon agriculture. Specifically, the *wasta* system, loosely translated to “network,” has been pervasive in Syria under

¹⁰⁴ U.N. OCHA, *Syria Humanitarian Response Plan 2021*, (last visited Feb. 26, 2022), <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1044/summary>.

¹⁰⁵ *Id.*

¹⁰⁶ *Id.*

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ Press Release, United Nations, As Hunger, Malnutrition Rise in Syria, Security Council Must Ensure Border Crossing Remains Open, Aid Flows to Millions, Humanitarian Affairs Chief Stresses (Mar. 29, 2021), <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sc14479.doc.htm>.

¹¹⁰ INTEGRATED FOOD SECURITY PHASE CLASSIFICATION, *What is Famine?* (last visited Apr. 12, 2022), <https://www.ipcinfo.org/famine-facts/>.

¹¹¹ *Syria Emergency*, UNHCR (last visited Apr. 12, 2022), <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/syria-emergency.html>.

¹¹² *Syrian Refugees Appeal: Humanitarian Action for Children*, UNICEF (last visited Apr. 12, 2022), <https://www.unicef.org/appeals/syrian-refugees>.

¹¹³ *Id.*

¹¹⁴ *Id.*

¹¹⁵ *Id.*

both the Assad regime and the Islamic State.¹¹⁶ The *wasta* system has helped numerous Syrians escape to neighboring countries due to their connections within the Syrian government. For example, some Syrians possess the means to purchase access to government officials who drive them through checkpoints, because government officials are not stopped.¹¹⁷ Given that around 80 percent of Syrians now live below the poverty line, the *wasta* system that allowed some to escape earlier on in the crisis, is of little to no avail for them.¹¹⁸

D. Political Instability

Although military action in Syria has been relatively static, the current wheat crisis has the potential to further destabilize the war-torn country. According to John Godfrey, acting U.S. special envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, “poverty, inequality, and perceived injustice continue to drive many young people to join terrorist groups, including [ISIS].”¹¹⁹ Citing local reports, the envoy shared that ISIS is “actively seeking to exploit the economic situation to reconstitute presence, or try to reconstitute presence, in areas hardest hit by the economic downturn.”¹²⁰ Thus, despite being heavily weakened from its peak, the Islamic State has a recruitment opportunity in Syria with increased lack of opportunity, desperation among youth, and reduced foreign oversight, and so far, the reports show an increasing number of young men joining ISIS in hopes of greater economic opportunity.¹²¹

The Syrian regime’s inability to respond to the growing bread crisis has also led to further instability within the state. For example, a recent decision by the regime to cut back subsidy programs that provided lower food and oil prices resulted in rare protests in Druze.¹²² Moreover, while USAID reported an intended delivery of 3,000 metric tons of wheat to northeastern Syria in November 2021, regime officials objected, accusing the delivery of being faulty and intending to destroy Syrian agriculture.¹²³ These attempts to spread misinformation among farmers and citizens in an already highly-food insecure and increasingly unstable northeastern region will only contribute to the region’s instability and the growth of insurgent forces.

¹¹⁶ Justin Schon, *Violent Encounters and Social Status Shape the Conditions for Migrants fleeing Civil War*, MIGRATION POL’Y INST. (Mar. 4, 2021), <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/conditions-migrants-flee-civil-war-syria> (last visited Feb 21, 2022).

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ *Id.*

¹¹⁹ ‘Poverty and Inequality Paving Way for IS Resurgence in Syria and Iraq, US Warns, MIDDLE E. EYE (July 2, 2021), <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/syria-iraq-islamic-state-group-exploiting-poverty-resurgence-us-envoy-warns>.

¹²⁰ *Id.*

¹²¹ Jane Arraf, *Conflict and Climate Change Ravage Syria's Agricultural Heartland*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 19, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/19/world/middleeast/syria-drought-climate-food.html>.

¹²² DEUTSCHE WELLE, *Hundreds turn out for rare protest in southern Syria*, <https://www.dw.com/en/hundreds-turn-out-for-rare-protest-in-southern-syria/a-60749896> (last visited Apr. 12, 2022).

¹²³ *Id.*



Image credit to Global Risk Insights (2016)

The regime has become increasingly dependent upon imports and aid; however, current economic conditions and the drought foreshadow a difficult path for the regime to continue to import wheat without foreign aid, making it increasingly dependent on foreign powers such as Russia. In August 2021, the state news agency reported that the central bank had requested a six-month suspension of 20 imports to save foreign currency for purchases of wheat when the shortage grew.¹²⁴ The depreciation of the Syrian pound and the internal drop in wheat output has highlighted the regime's dependence upon foreign allies. Between reserving foreign currency for imported wheat and almost one billion U.S. dollars for purchases from domestic farmers in 2020, the regime is in a tenuous and expensive position.¹²⁵

Russia and Iran's military support of the Syrian regime is widely credited with the regime's ability to maintain power. As tensions between the United States and Russia grow alongside the Syrian regime's dependence on Russia, Russia has an opportunity to influence political dynamics in the Middle East through its role in Syria.¹²⁶ As tensions over the invasion of Ukraine increase between the United States and Russia, Russia may use the northeastern region's growing security threat to U.S. interests and allies as a tool.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Hala Haj Taleb & Megan Derision, *Syria Tightens Import Curbs to Save Scarce Dollars for Wheat*, BLOOMBERG (Aug. 18, 2021), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-08-18/syria-tightens-import-curbs-to-save-scarce-dollars-for-wheat>.

¹²⁵ *Syria Imports 200,000s of Wheat from Russia*, MIDDLE E. MONITOR (May 14, 2020), <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20200514-syria-imports-200000-tonnes-of-wheat-from-russia/>.

¹²⁶ Mona Yacoubian, *What is Russia's Endgame in Syria?*, U.S. INST. OF PEACE (Feb. 16, 2021), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/02/what-russias-endgame-syria>.

¹²⁷ James F. Jeffrey, *A Ukraine insurgency? Beware Moscow's "Syria Rules"!*, WILSON CTR. (Jan. 20, 2022), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/ukraine-insurgency-beware-moscows-syria-rules>.

E. Access to Healthcare

Prolonged lack of nutritious food can cause stunting, chronic malnutrition, or other health problems, and Syrians face limited access to healthcare treatment, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹²⁸ The devastating economic crisis and lack of food security has impacted the nation's response in mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Bashar Al-Assad explained that lockdowns and other restrictions were not feasible because the majority of those impacted by COVID-19 would recover from the illness, while the same could not be said for those adversely impacted by poverty and hunger.¹²⁹ Accurate numbers of COVID-19 cases in Syria are inaccessible and the convergence of the bread crisis and the onset of COVID-19 may result in devastating health outcomes for the Syrian population. Moreover, with 70 percent of healthcare workers fleeing Syria since the civil war began, access to treatment is scarce, particularly in light of the fact that the Syrian regime and the Russian Air Force have destroyed most of the country's public hospitals, further limiting access to healthcare.¹³⁰

V. CONCLUSION

One does not need to look far to determine what awaits Syria, as Yemen has been suffering through a famine since 2016.¹³¹ In Yemen, at least 130 children or adults die of hunger per day, with a child dying every ten minutes.¹³² Yet, there has been silence and acquiescence to the devastation of Yemen in the global community, and specifically on the part by the United States.¹³³ Yemen has forecasted a future of Syria that it cannot afford, and global inaction will only yield graves of Syrian children. The failure of the international community to address famine in war-torn areas like Yemen, and potentially Syria, cannot continue.

To provide some stability in the region, the United States needs to increase wheat supplies, contribute more economic aid, and support SDF forces in combating insurgent groups. The United States' approach in Syria may also need to shift to counter regime misinformation about U.S. aid efforts and growing Russian influence in the region. The northeast's role as a major producer of wheat for the whole of Syria gives it an advantage in negotiations with the regime and provides the United States an opportunity to combat the regime's and Syria's overall dependence on Russia as a result of the drought and the wheat crisis. As security threats posed by Syria raise greater concerns for stability across both the Middle East and North Africa, the United States' priorities in the region should evolve to better counter these risks and address the wheat crisis as a means of stabilization.

However, no specific program or action will resolve the current crisis that is thrusting millions of Syrians into hunger and food insecurity. The current global climate is fragile, with the

¹²⁸ HIDDEN HUNGER IN SYRIA, SAVE THE CHILDREN (Sept. 2020), <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/hidden-hunger-syria-look-malnutrition-across-syria-focus-under-twos>.

¹²⁹ Heller, *supra* note 25.

¹³⁰ Elizabeth Tsurkov & Qussai Jukhadar, *Raved by war, Syria's health care system is utterly unprepared for a pandemic*, MIDDLE E. INST. (Apr. 23, 2020), <https://www.mei.edu/publications/ravaged-war-syrias-heafrlth-care-system-utterly-unprepared-pandemic>.

¹³¹ Stacey Philbrick Yadav, *Yemen Dispatch*, MIDDLE E. RES. I. PROJECT (Jan. 30, 2018), <https://merip.org/2018/01/yemen-dispatch/>.

¹³² UNICEF: *One Child Dies Every 10 Minutes in Yemen*, ALJAZEERA (Dec. 12, 2016), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/12/unicef-one-child-dies-every-10-minutes-in-yemen/>

¹³³ Shuaib Almosawa, *As U.S. Focuses on Ukraine, Yemen Starves*, THE INTERCEPT (Mar. 16, 2022), <https://theintercept.com/2022/03/16/yemen-war-biden-us-support-saudi-arabia/>

war in Ukraine only adding to the devastating effects of food insecurity and famine on refugees and displaced people inside Syria. For over 11 years, civilians, women, children, fathers, and families have been suffering from violence, oppression, and insurgency, only to be met with another devastating crisis that threatens future generations. A comprehensive, intersectional approach led by the U.N. and relief agencies is required to combat this issue, and inaction will only serve to spread insecurity and hunger.

The Global Accountability Network (GAN), founded in 2017 by Professor David M. Crane, investigates international crimes in Syria, Yemen, Venezuela, and China. GAN produces crime matrix, crime narrative, most responsible party, and most egregious incident reports that map conflicts and track violations of International Humanitarian Law.