



## Statement on the Protection of Civilians in Dara'a al-Balad, Syria

2nd September 2021

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The situation in Dara'a in Southern Syria remains tense with many civilians encircled since 24 June. On 28 July, heavy and indiscriminate shelling and intensified ground clashes resulted in civilian casualties. Since then, more than 38,000 people – most of them women and children – have been displaced from Dara'a Al-Balad and reside with relatives and host communities and in six collective shelters. An estimated 5,000 to 6,000 families remain in Dara'a Al-Balad.

Humanitarian partners on the ground reported the dramatic difficulties in access to basic services, including protection services, due to ongoing insecurity and movement restrictions in Dara'a Al Balad. Major concerns have been raised over the impact of the violence and displacement on the most vulnerable, including women, adolescent girls and boys, children and people with disabilities, many of whom live in overcrowded shelters, leading to exposure to increased protection risks. The destruction of civilian infrastructure has further exacerbated needs. Without unimpeded access of humanitarian actors to Dara'a al-Balad and Dara'a sub-district at large the situation could lead to critical repercussions for civilians.

Considering the threats to the protection of civilians associated to the siege-like situation in Dara'a al-Balad, the Global Protection Cluster recalls that all parties to the conflict have obligations to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure under International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law.

The Global Protection Cluster calls for immediate action to:

Allow civilians to move securely and voluntarily to safe places and areas of their choice, as guaranteed by the core fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, namely the distinction between civilians and combatants and the prohibition to inflict unnecessary suffering. This includes their ability to safely access humanitarian and protection services.

Grant urgent and unimpeded humanitarian access, including for protection partners, to all affected areas and communities, permitting the freedom of movement and safety of humanitarian aid workers, assets and supplies, in accordance with both treaty and customary international humanitarian law.

The paramount priority of all actors should be addressing the humanitarian and protection needs of people on the frontlines, ensuring they have, first and foremost, access to safety and access to aid. The Global Protection Cluster will continue to stand alongside civilians and provide the urgently needed support.

For further information, please contact William Chemaly, Global Protection Cluster Coordinator.

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