

LOCAL TRUCES

AND FORCED DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN SYRIA

January 2017





Local truces and forced demographic change in Syria

Surveys in Homs, Damascus and the Damascene Suburbs

January 2017



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The Day After is a Syrian organization working to support democratic transition in Syria. Its work focuses on the following areas: rule of law, transitional justice, security sector reform, the design of electoral systems, election of the constituent assembly, constitutional design, economic reform, and social policy.

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Introduction

The idea of local truces between the regime and opposition fighters was first proposed over two years ago. The first truce, or “reconciliation agreement” as the regime called it, was concluded in the Barza neighborhood of Damascus in February 2014. Later that year, similar deals were arranged for the rebel-held Damascus neighborhoods of al-Qadam and al-Asali in May, and for the al-Qabun neighborhood in October. From the regime’s perspective, the aim of these truces was to quell an armed uprising in the capital of Damascus and its environs, as well as in the city of Homs and some areas of coastal Hama.

In addition to the truces in Damascene neighborhoods, the truce plan was also applied to towns in the adjacent governorate of Rif Damascus. In parallel to the first truce in the Barza neighborhood, similar deals came into effect in the towns of Beit Sahem, Yalda and Babbila 10 kilometres to the south. North of the capital, a truce was arranged in the city of al-Tal, 15 kilometers north of Damascus. In November 2015, Qudsayya City, 12 kilometers north-west of Damascus, became one of the last opposition-held areas to enter into a truce with the regime. The withdrawal of opposition-fighters was a major regime demand in exchange for ending the siege and re-opening the road into the city. Syrian opposition fighters ceased operations in these areas following the implementation of the truce agreements.

However, these truce arrangements were not successful in all of the capital’s surrounding areas. They failed in both the neighborhoods of Tadamon and al-Hajr al-Aswad, which have been under Daesh control since the end of 2014, as well as in the Yarmouk refugee camp, which contain fighters from both the al-Nusra Front and Palestinian factions. They also failed in areas west of Damascus. For example, the town of Muadamiyat al-Sham adjacent to the town of Darayya in Western Ghouta entered into an agreement with the regime on 25th December 2015, following fighting and a siege that had lasted more than a year; however, the deal soon failed, and a new siege had begun by spring 2015.

With the writing of this report in September 2016, Muadamiyat al-Sham has signed a final agreement with the regime, following UN mediation and witnessed by Russian and Iranian officers. Under the terms of the deal, local opposition fighters and their families are to be transferred to the city of Idlib, while fighters from Darayya can choose to transfer to either shelters in regime-controlled areas, or to Idlib city with the local fighters.

Now, the regime is looking to implement truces in the towns of Wadi Barada, Bassima, Ain al-Fijah, Wadi al-Qarn, Madaya and Zabadani. The latter witnessed an unusual arrangement, with Iranian fighters entering into an agreement with the Ahrar al-Sham movement, mediated by Turkey. Known to the media as the Zabadani-Kefraya agreement, the deal required the withdrawal of opposition fighters to Idlib city in northern Syria, the evacuation of the wounded, and the provision of medical assistance. In return, opposition militants agreed to open the road to the two “Shia” villages of Kefraya and Foua’a to evacuate militants and wounded and to allow the provision of medical assistance, and the regime agreed to stop the bombardment of some villages in the north-western countryside of Idlib.

Some fear that these truces are part of a broader regime project of demographic change in Syria, with pro-opposition communities – often Arab, Sunni and poor – transferred to rural areas like Idlib, which remain targets for the regime, its Russian and Iranian allies, and Daesh. Homs offers a clear example; following a two-year siege, opposition fighters were transferred from the rebel-held neighborhoods of Khalidiya, Bab Sebaa, Bab Hood, Jouret Shiah, and al-Qusur to the northern countryside of Homs, which remains under siege.

Furthermore, it should be noted that these truces are often imposed by the regime following its use of excessive military force. The Assad regime employs full-scale military offensives, including siege tactics, starvation, and the shelling and bombardment of civilian homes, medical centers, and public institutions like commercial bakeries, schools, relief organizations and houses of worship. Once the targeted community has been sufficiently demoralized, truces are enforced which stipulate the displacement of residents or fighters to northern Syria, specifically Idlib and Aleppo, and the confiscation of their property to prevent families of fighters from returning to their homes.

The use of truce agreements is also viewed to be one of Assad's tactics for creating a "Useful Syria." According to this plan, the regime and its support base control "Useful Syria," the major cities of Damascus, Homs and Hama, and the coastline to the northwest; in contrast, "harmful" Syria will be confined to the outlying rural areas which are easily targeted by regime and Russian airstrikes, and remain at risk of Daesh incursion.

The regime's media and security apparatus are keen to market these truce agreements as evidence of victory over the "terrorists". Meanwhile, coverage by opposition media varies. Syrian regime opponents support the truces, recognizing that local residents have no other option but to agree to the terms of the deals. Others, however, reject the truces as one-sided deals of which the regime is the only true beneficiary.

While further theoretical research on this topic may have been carried out, we identified only one study – conducted two years ago by the Omran Center¹¹ –while researching for this report. The subject is important because local truces form a new and important turning point in the Syrian conflict;¹² the paucity of research to-date "ignores an issue which forms an important axis upon which the international community builds its policies."¹³ Because of the lack of field studies and the problems associated with the media's coverage of the topic, there is a clear need for detailed survey research to better understand the mechanisms and outcomes of local truces in Syria.¹⁴ This study addresses that need. The study goes beyond an overview of "the truces", delving into the details of each "truce" and each area surveyed in Homs, Damascus and the Rif Damascus. Likewise, the survey does not simply target residents still living in the truce areas, but also follows deportees from their hometowns after the truce agreement (Homs) and tries to understand the opinions and positions of fighters and their families in addition to other deportees. It also tries to assess the repercussions that these truces have had on people's lives, and on the areas from which they have been displaced. Ultimately, by documenting what has happened with these truces, we hope to help improve the lives of people living in truce areas, and to inform and guide future attempts to negotiate ceasefires or truces.

1- ["The popular position on truces: Motives and Malat"](#), Omran Center for Political Strategy, August 2014.

2- Ibid., p2

3- Rushdie Sharabajee, Muhammad, ["Truces and Reconciliations": How the Alternative Syrian Press dealt with them.](#)

4- See Faris, Obeida. ["How truces re-build a state of fear in Syria?"](#), Al-Rasif 22, December 2015.

This study is divided into three main areas:

Chapter one: This chapter tries to understand the truces and their mechanisms. How were the negotiations taking place preceding the truce? Did the pre-truce negotiations take place? Who conducted the negotiations with regime forces? What were the reasons compelled the fighters to accept it? How knowledgeable were local residents of the terms of the truce?, How were they informed? How satisfied were those informed of the terms of the truce with the terms themselves? How compliant are they and who is responsible for non-compliance? How satisfied are residents with the truce in general?

Chapter 2: This chapter identifies the causes for respondents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the truces by exploring their effects on the lives of the population in terms of political, military, economic, and social impact, as well as respondent's assessment of these impacts on their personal lives. This chapter also seeks to identify economic control after the truce; what has changed and who has benefited from it?

Chapter 3: This chapter tries to learn about the identity of "the strangers" (those who do not stem from the region) and those coming to the area after the truce agreement. We also try to better understand what happened in the demographic field; who are these "strangers" and what happened to the homes and shops of the owners who have been displaced?

OPERATING TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Truce:

Local agreements which have taken place in many areas between the regime and armed forces and ensure in some way the cessation of shelling and military operations under certain conditions.

Demographic change:

Change which occurs due to policies of displacement aimed at changing the ethnic or religious character of the area through the establishment of civilians or fighters from other ethnic or religious groups, and the seizure of the properties of the displaced population.

Respondent's current situation:

Distinguishing between those displaced from their areas and the following:

■ **A fighter leaving after a truce agreement:** After the signing of the truce agreement, it is usually permitted that a number of fighters leave to other areas. The interview was conducted with the fighter after his departure and in his new place of residence.

■ **From the family of a fighter:** Civilians from the family of fighter (i.e. father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter) forced to leave their towns after a truce agreement. The interview was conducted in their new place of residence.

■ **Citizen who left after truce agreement:** Individuals who left after a truce agreement, fled to another area, and state that they are not from the family of a fighter. The interview was conducted with them in the new area of residence.

METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Between March 1st and April 19th 2016, The Day After completed a survey aimed at identifying the nature of the truce agreements held between the regime and inhabitants from a number of areas in Syria, the means which led to the truce, the people’s satisfaction with it, and the most prominent consequences of the truces on the lives of population residing in some of these areas. The Day After’s trained field researchers conducted in person interviews with 1,261 people in Syria distributed over two main samples: **-The first sample includes 1,031 people:** 688 men and 343 women. It is a sample of the population in truce areas such as Damascus (Barza and Qabun), its countryside (Babbila, Yalda, Beit Sahem, al-Tal, and Madaya) and Homs - al-Waer.

-The second sample includes 230 people: 202 men and 28 women. This sample is comprised of persons exiled from their hometowns following the ceasefire agreement. The interviews were conducted in the Northern countryside of Homs, their current place of residence after being exiled from Hama and Homs. The second sample helps us to understand the truce agreements in Homs, which were different from others and have had consequences that might amount to demographic change.

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the first sample in detail and Figures 1, 2, and 3 illustrates the dis-

Map: Samples distributed in Syria

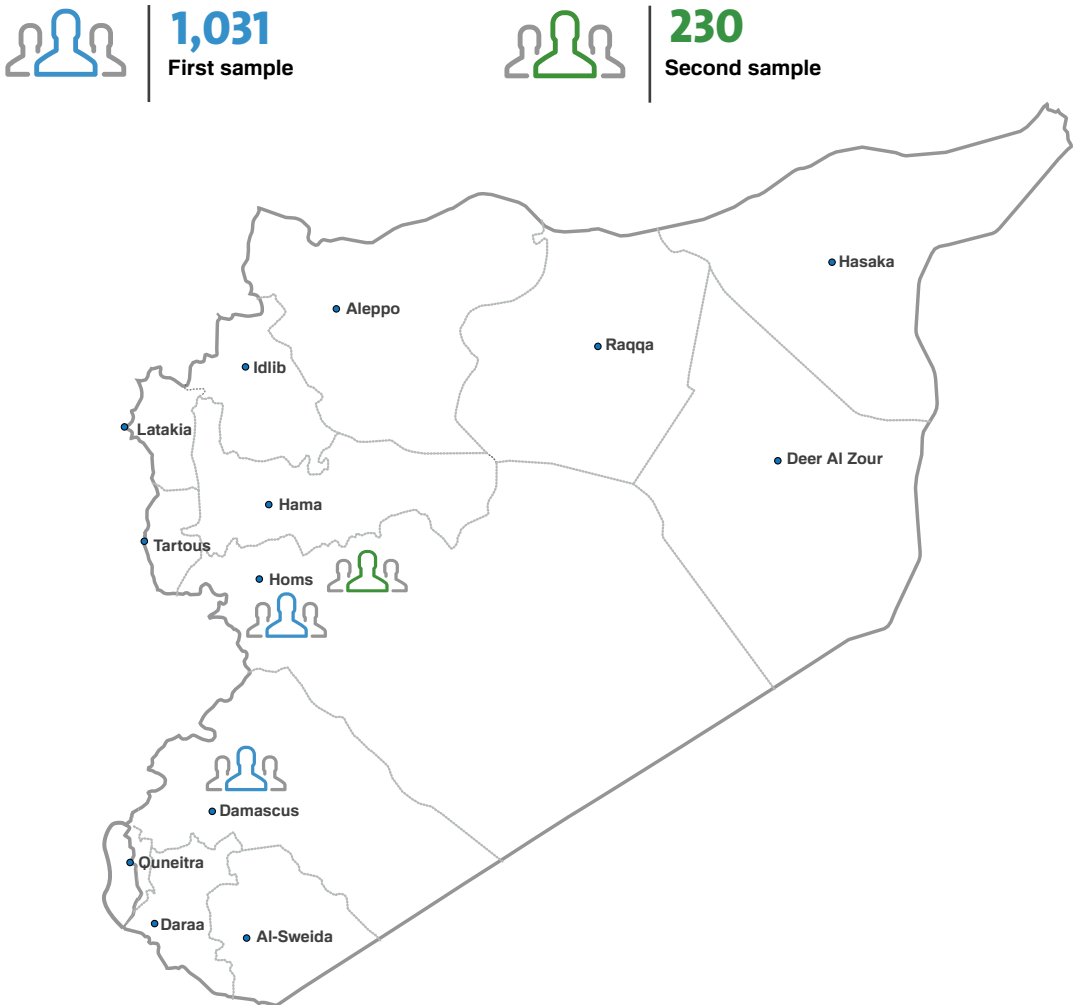


Table1: Distribution of the first sample

Region	Truce area	Men	Women	Total
Homs	Al-Waer	40	142	182
Damascus	Barza	129	28	157
	Al Qabun	79	53	132
Rif Dimashq	Yalda	55	18	73
	Babbila	50	21	71
	Beit Sahem	69	16	85
	Al-Tal	198	47	245
	Madaya	68	18	86
Total		688	343	1031

Figure 1. Persons displaced to the Northern countryside of Homs in the second sample (by number)

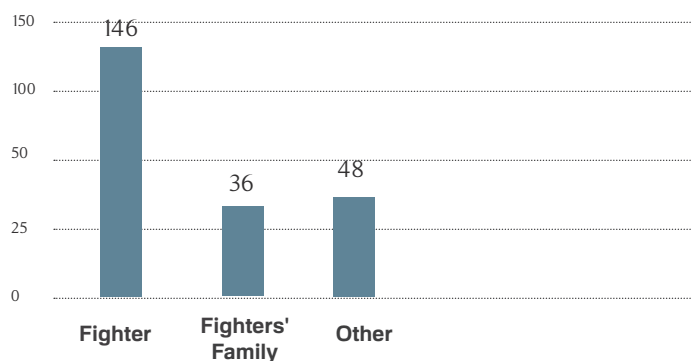


Figure 2. Distribution of the second sample according to area of origin

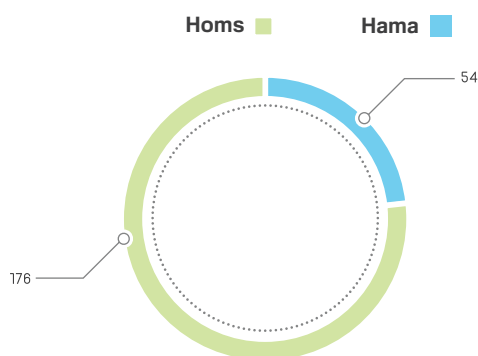
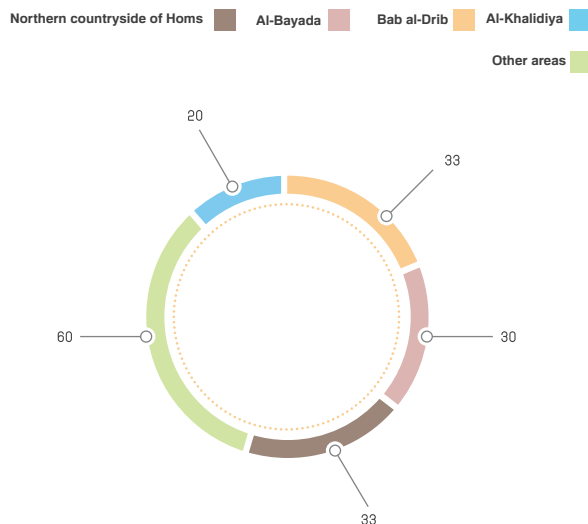


Figure 3. Distribution of the second sample according to the area of origin in Homs



Part: 1

Opinions on the truce agreements

1- How they were reached

How did the negotiations which preceded the truce take place?

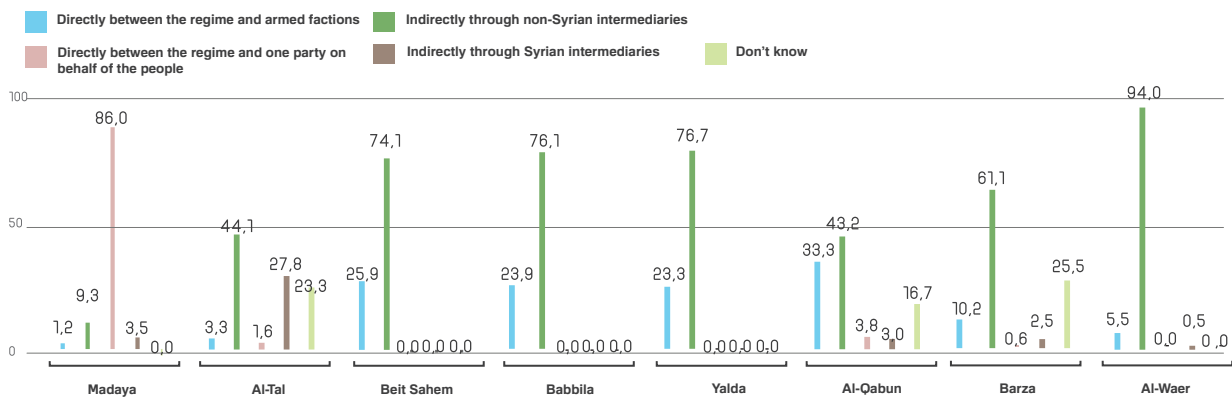


tribution of the second sample in detail.

The negotiations occurred in different ways, though the most prevalent form was apparently directly between the regime and one opposition representative party or an armed faction. But note the difference in the cases of Madaya and al-Tal, where indirect negotiations prevail (through intermediaries): In Madaya the role of non-Syrian intermediaries is more prominent (86.0% indicated so), and in al-Tal we find varying information on the manner in which the agreement was reached (directly or indirectly) (Figure 4).

It doesn't appear as though the people of al-Tal were well-informed about the circumstances of the nego-

Figure 4. The first sample: How did the negotiations preceding the truce take place?



tations which led to the truce.

Answers varied somewhat from what we saw in the first sample, although direct negotiations between the regime and one party on behalf of the people remained the primary method. We note however that more than a quarter of the respondents said that truces were made indirectly through Syrian intermediar-

Figure 5 The second sample: How did the negotiations preceding the truce take place?(%)

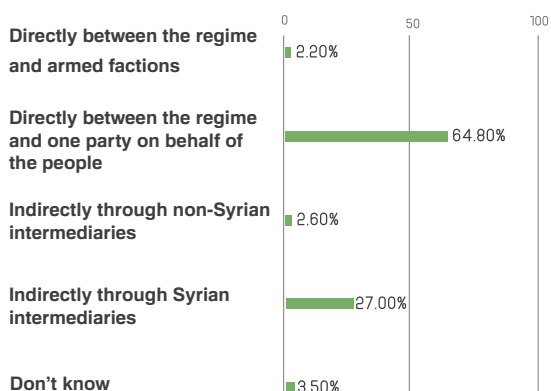
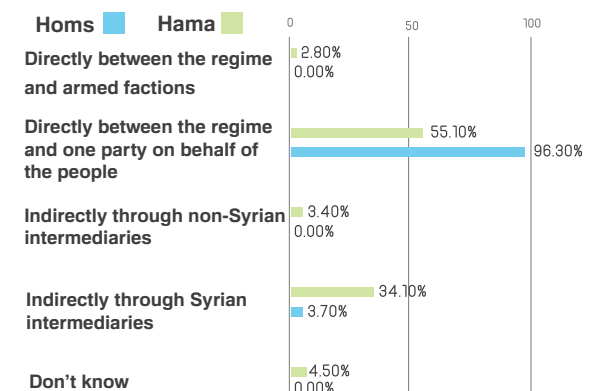


Figure 6 The second sample according to region of origin: How did the negotiations preceding the truce take place?(%)

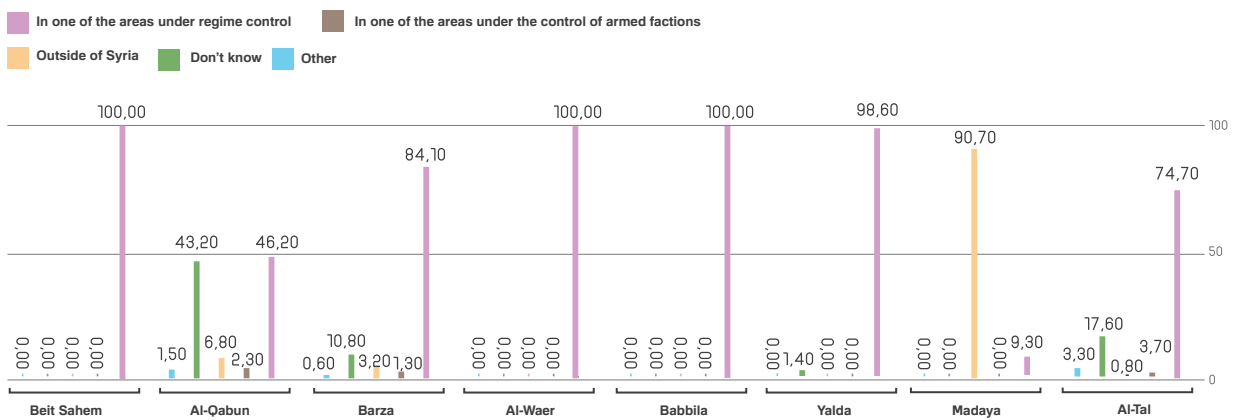


Where did the negotiations preceding the truce take place?

The first sample

ies (Figure 5). It seems that these intermediaries were present in Homs and not in Hama (Figure 6). In general, the negotiations took place in areas under regime control, although there is consensus among respondents in Madaya that the real negotiations in fact took place outside of Syria. We also observe that a large percentage of respondents in al-Qabun (43.2%) said that they don't know where the negotiations

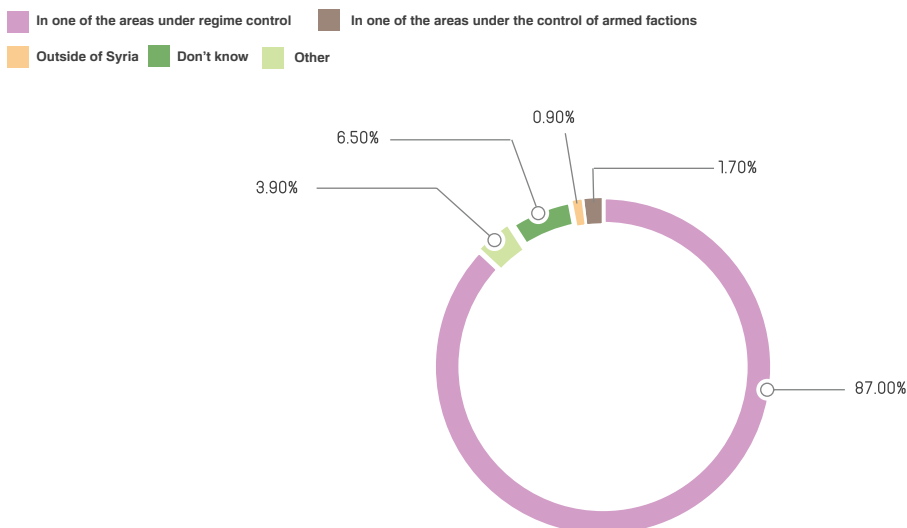
Figure 7. The first sample: Where did the negotiations preceding the truces take place?



The second sample

preceding the truce occurred, and to a lesser degree in Barza (10.8%) and al-Tal (17.6%) (Figure 7). The opinions of the respondents did not differ greatly from that of the first sample. There is consensus to some degree between those exiled to Northern Rif Homs (coming from Hama or Homs) that the negotiations occurred in areas under regime control. This response was chosen by 87.0% of the respondents

Figure 8. The second sample: Where did the negotiations preceding the truces take place?



Where did the negotiations preceding the truce take place?

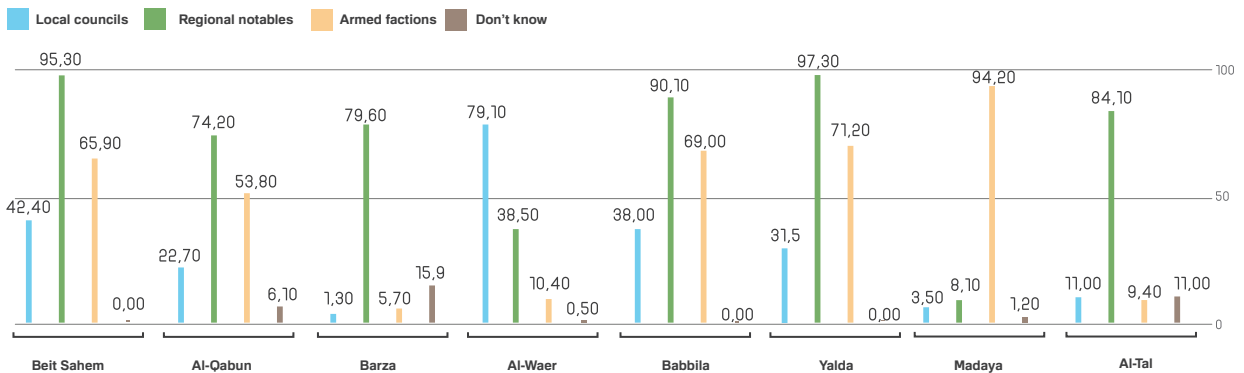
The first sample

(Figure 8).

It seems that town notables played a central role, with the exception of Madaya and al-Waer, in conducting the negotiations preceding the truce (See Figure 9). Though local councils did play some role, it was most likely limited in some areas:

- In Madaya, armed factions played the most prominent role.
- In al-Tal and Barza, negotiations were handled through town notables.
- In al-Waer, the local council played the central role.
- Local councils played some role in reaching a truce in Babbila, Yalda, and Beit Sahem, but in these three towns respondents also mentioned town notables and military factions. It appears that reaching

Figure 9. The first sample: Which party conducted the negotiations preceding the truce See above? (%)



The second sample

a truce here was a shared responsibility by all.

As was the case in the first sample, regional notables played the most prominent role, but the role of local councils almost disappears in Homs and Hama (Figure 10). It appears that the role of armed factions was

Figure 10. Which party conducted the negotiations preceding the truce See above?

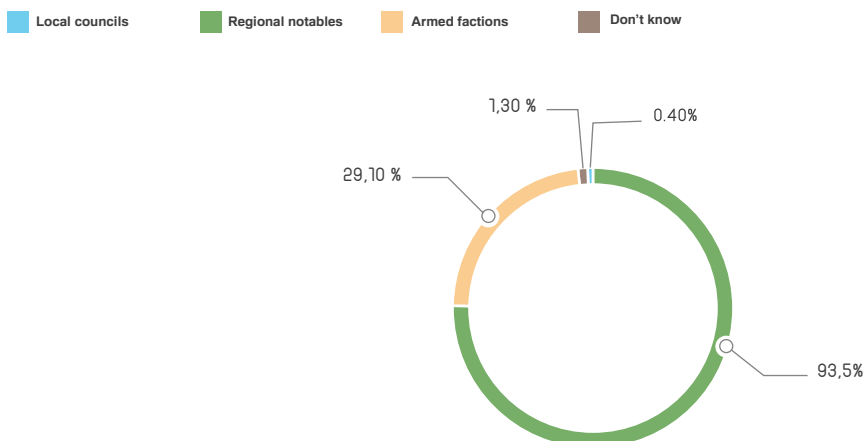
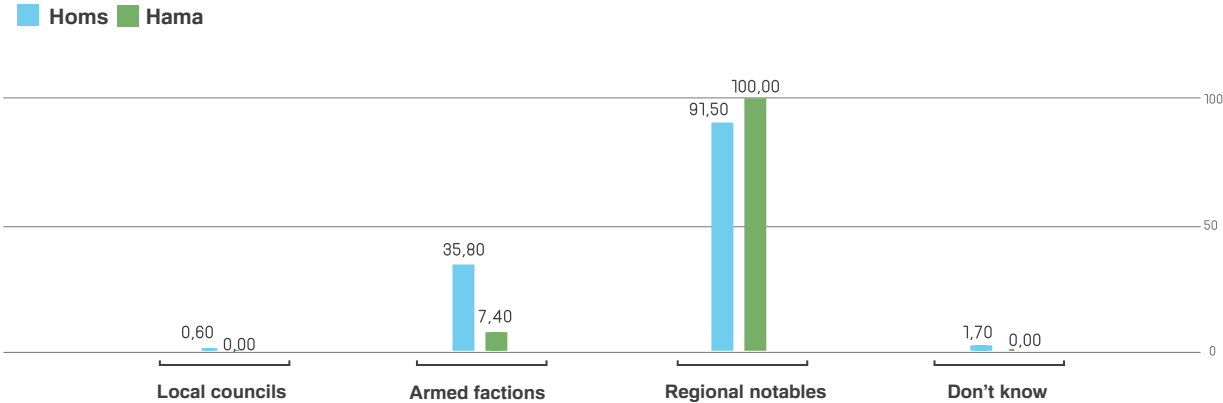


Figure 11. The second sample according to province of origin: Which party conducted the negotiations which led to the truce?



2- Reasons for the fighters’ acceptance of the truce with the regime

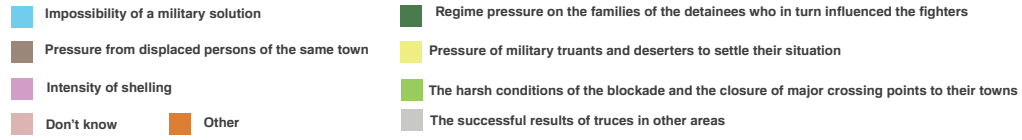
What are the reasons which compelled the fighters to accept the truce?



to some extent greater in Homs compared with Hama (Figure 11). With the exception of al-Tal, it seems that heavy shelling and a brutal siege were a key strategy of the regime to force people to submit to its terms, though other things caused by brutality played a role in pushing the acceptance of the truce:

1. It is noted that in al-Waer the regime resorted to pressuring the families of detainees; the percentage of those who mentioned this reason was significantly higher in this region compared to the others.
2. In Barza, al-Qabun and al-Tal, the suffering of the displaced and their families played a key role in compelling the fighters to accept the truce. Al-Tal differs in that a large percentage chose “other” compared with the rest of the areas, where “concern for the lives of civilians” and the lack of support and reinforcement was frequently mentioned. A small percentage mentioned the shelling or the blockade, the exact opposite of the rest of the areas.

Figure 12. The first sample: What are the reasons which compelled the fighters to accept the truce?



Similar to the first sample, the harsh blockade and the intensity of the shelling come to the fore, but it is noted here that the third place went to the option “other”, meaning primary concern for the lives of the civilians and lack of support and reinforcements came second (Figure 13). Looking at the differences based on region of origin, we find that the majority of the displaced people from Hama (63.0%) also resorted to ‘other’ (Figure 14). It should be noted that the responses of the fighters themselves did not differ greatly from the rest of the displaced people. In fact, the fighters’ two main reasons for accepting the ceasefire were the intensity of the blockade and shelling, with special notice that approximately a fourth of the fighters also primarily mentioned “Other”, meaning concern for the lives of civilians. A similar percentage of civilian displaced people chose this response (Figure 15).

Figure 13. The second sample: What are the reason which compelled the fighters to accept the truce?

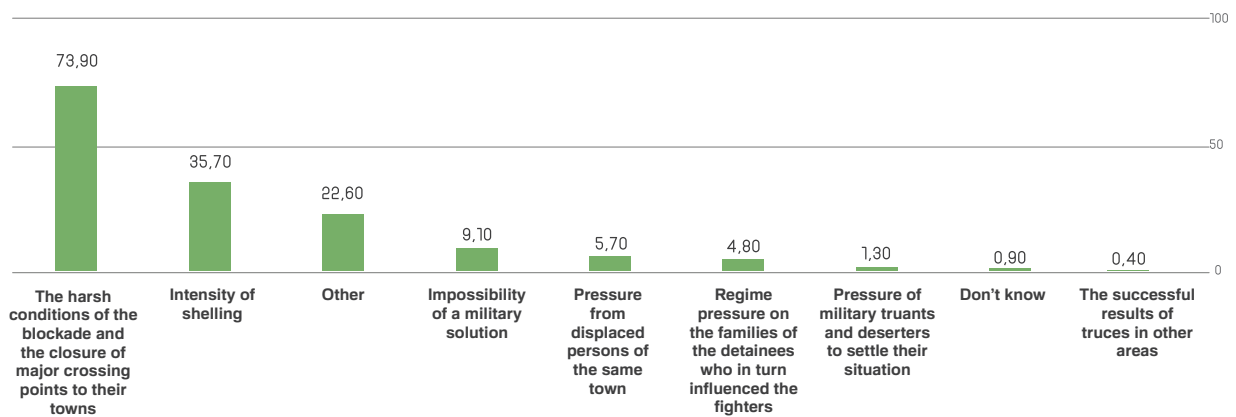


Figure 14. The second sample according to area of origin: what are the reasons which compelled the fighters to accept the truce?

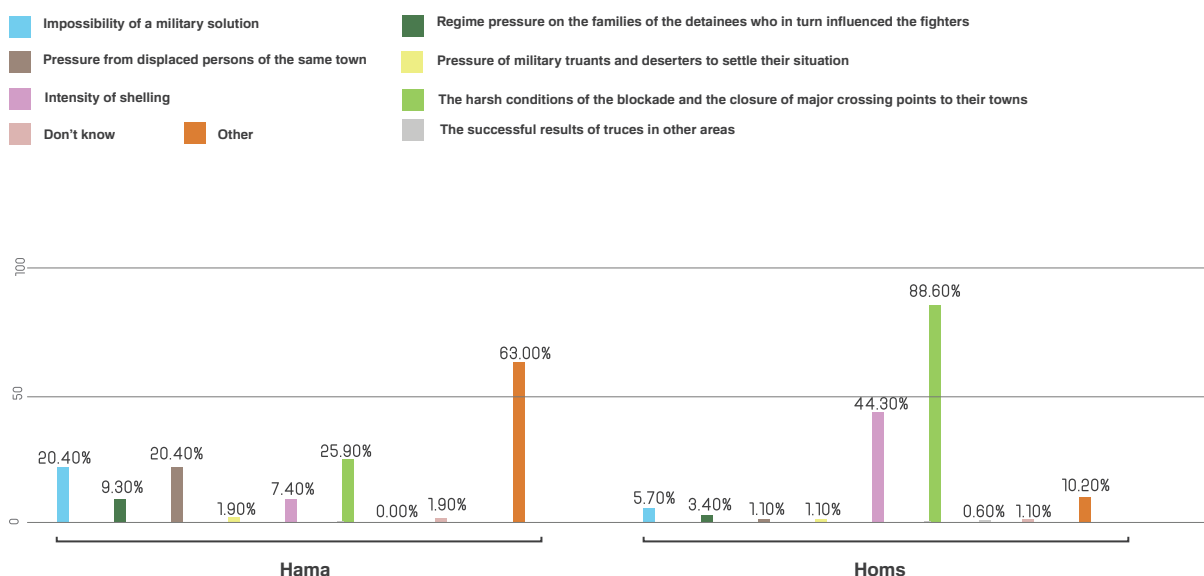
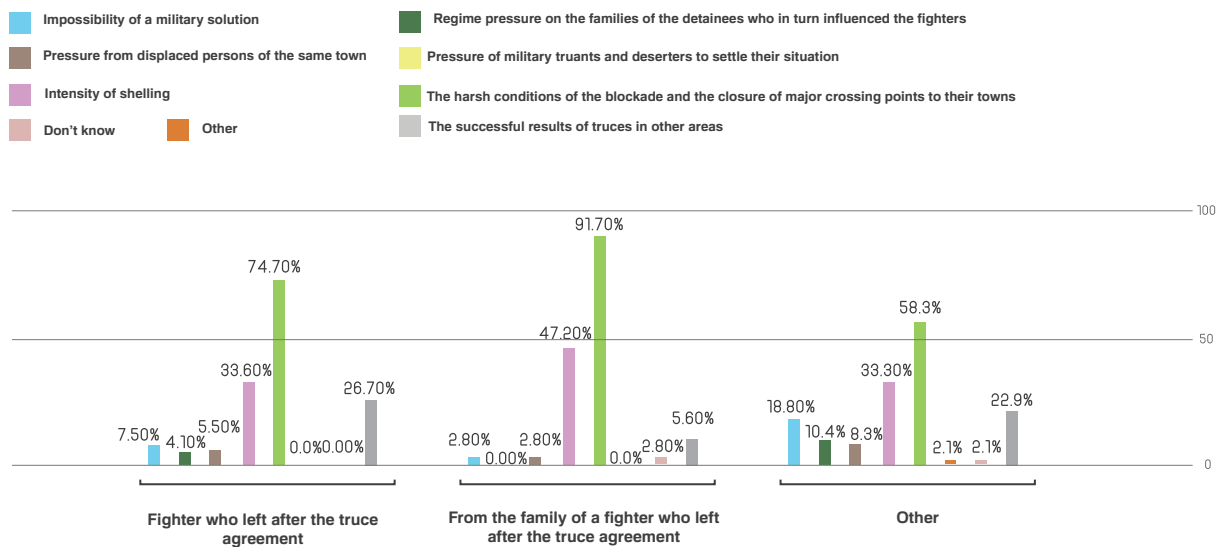


Figure 15. The second sample according to the respondent's situation: Reasons which compelled the fighters to accept the truce according to respondent's situation



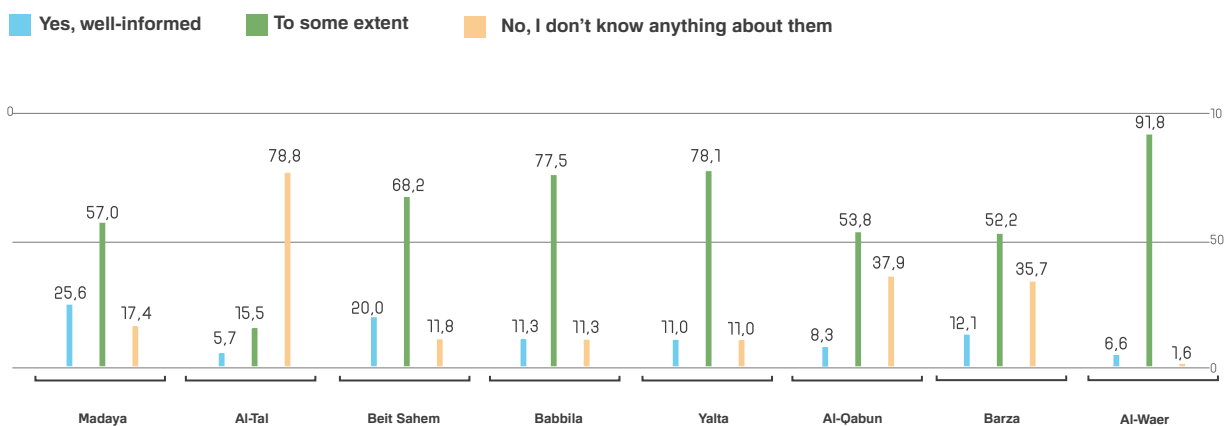
3- Truce terms and the extent of adherence to them

Are you well-informed about the terms of the truce?



Responses reveal that inhabitants of al-Waer were well-informed about the terms of the truce in their area, and the same applies to inhabitants of Babbila, Yalda, Beit Sahem, and Madaya. The percentage of those who said they did not know anything about them increased significantly in Damascus (Barza and al-Qabun). However, inhabitants of al-Tal were completely lacking in information about them, most of

Figure 16. The first sample: Are you well-informed about the terms of the truce?



whom (78.8%) said that did not know anything about the terms of the agreement. (Figure 16). The second sample we interviewed, which included those displaced to the Northern countryside of Homs, gave different responses than that of the first sample. For example, the majority of the respondents said that they do not know anything about the agreements and terms of the truce (59.1%), while approximately a third said that they were informed about them to some extent (Figure 17). The percentage of those who do not know anything about the truce increases among those deported from their areas in Homs, compared to Hama. Whereas up to half of the respondents among the displaced from the latter region reached 64.2% among those deported their areas of origin in Homs (Figure 18). It is likewise noted that the percentage of those informed about the terms of the truce greatly diminishes among displaced people coming from Northern Rif Homs itself, compared with those coming from the city (Figure 19). It is surprising that the percentage of deported fighters who said they do not know anything about the terms

Figure 17. The second sample: Are you well informed about the terms of the truce?

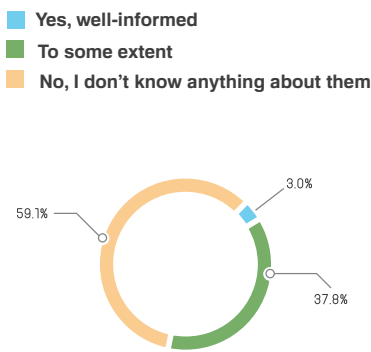


Figure 18. The second sample according to region of origin: Are you well informed about the terms of the truce?

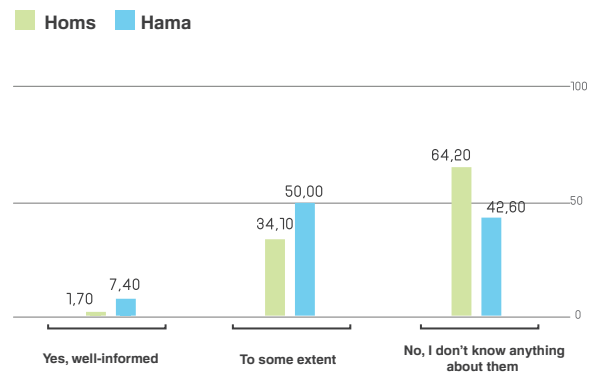


Figure 19. The second sample according to region of origin: Are you well informed about the terms of the truce?

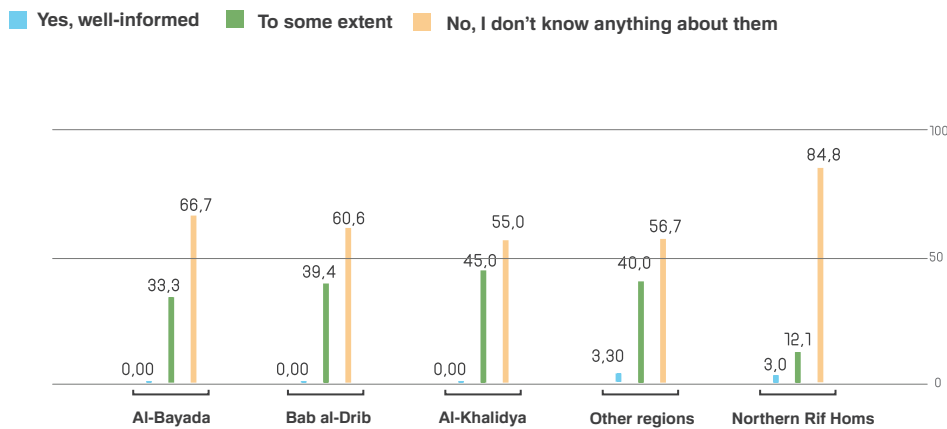
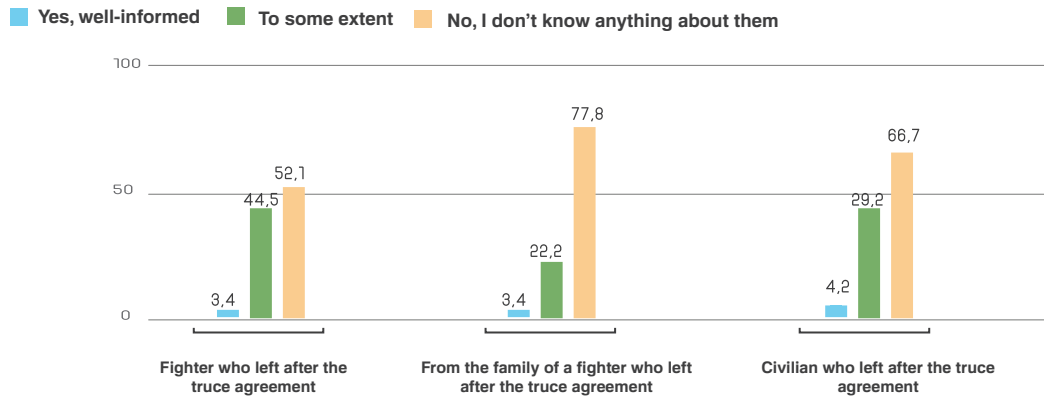


Figure 20. The second sample according to respondent's situation: Are you well informed about the terms of the truce?



Satisfaction with the terms of the truce

of the truce amounts to more than half and reaches its peak among their families (77.8%) (Figure 20). In order to identify the extent of the residents' satisfaction and their acceptance of these terms, we directed the following question only to those who said that they were well informed or informed to some

■ To what extent are you satisfied with these terms?

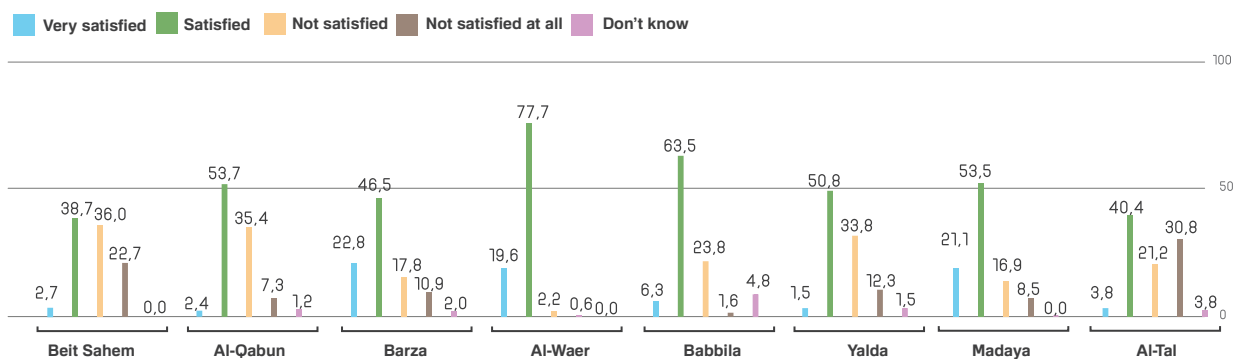


The first sample

extent:

- Satisfaction with the terms of the truce reaches its apex in al-Waer, where the respondents informed about the truce in this area agree that they are either satisfied or very satisfied (97.3%) (Figure 21).
- Most of the respondents informed about the terms of the truce in Madaya, Babbila, and Barza said that they are either satisfied or very satisfied with these terms (74.6%, 69.8%, and 69.3%, respectively) (Figure 21)
- The amount of satisfaction with the terms in al-Qabun is lower, where the percentage of those who said they are satisfied or very satisfied falls to 56.1%, versus 42.7% who said they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all (Figure 21).
- In al-Tal responses show that the most respondents are dissatisfied with the terms of the truce: 52.0% (not satisfied or not satisfied at all) versus 44.2% (satisfied or very satisfied) (Figure 21).
- The majority of respondents informed about the terms of the truce in Beit Sahem said that they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all with these terms (58.7%) (Figure 21).

Figure 21. The first sample: To what extent are you satisfied with the truce terms?



The lack of satisfaction is more common among the displaced people to Northern countryside of Homs, where only around a third said that they are satisfied while the majority said that they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all (Figure 22). Satisfaction recedes significantly among those deported from their areas

Figure 22. Second Sample: to what extent are you satisfied with the terms of the agreement ?(%)

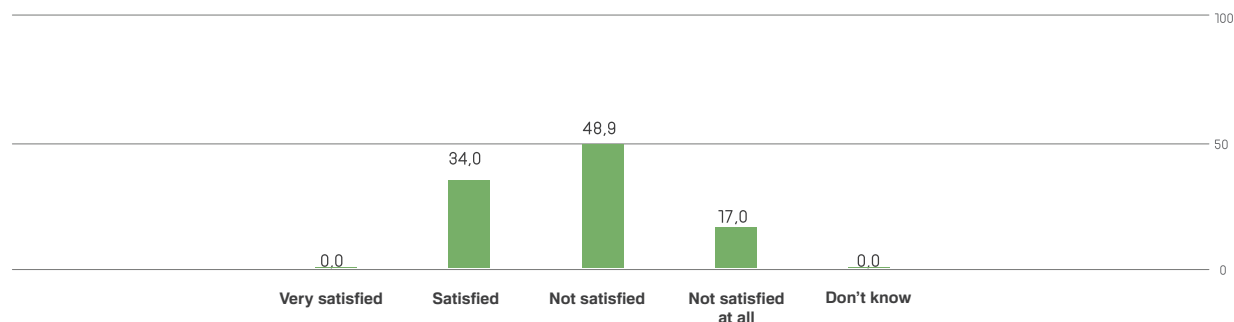
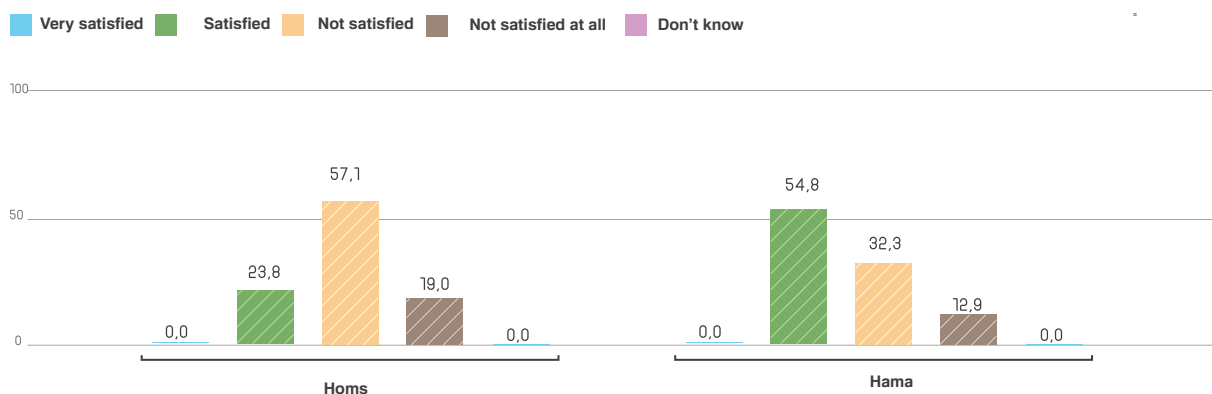


Figure 23. Second Sample according to the area of origin: to what extent are you satisfied with the terms of the agreement ?(%)



Commitment to the terms of the truce

in Homs compared with Hama: from 54.8% to only 23.8% in Hama (Figure 23)

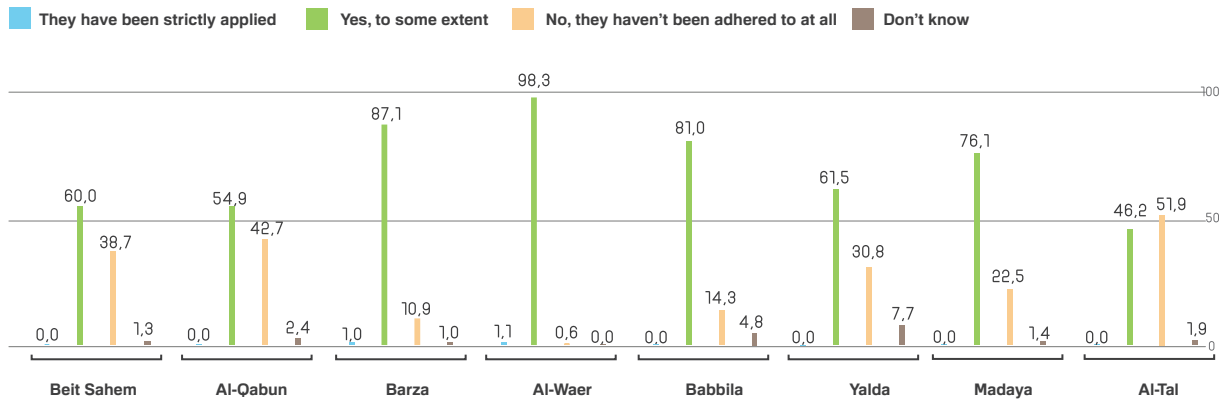
Have these terms been adhered to?

This question was also only directed to those who said they were familiar with the terms of the truce: In al-Waer and Barza there is a kind of consensus that the terms of the truce have to some extent been adhered to (98.3% and 87.1%, respectively) (Figure 24).

Most of the respondents in Madaya and Babbila said that the terms of the truce been adhered to to some extent (76.1%, 81.0%).

The percentage of those who said that the terms of the truce have been adhered to in al-Qabun (54.9%), Yalda (61.5%), and Beit Sahem (60.0%) recedes, whilst more than half of the respondents in al-Tal said that

Figure 24. The first sample: Have the truce terms been adhered to?



 The second sample

they have not been adhered to at all (Figure 24).

More than half of the respondents in the second sample (the displaced people to Northern Rif Homs after the truce agreement) said that the terms of the truce had not been adhered to (Figure 25). The percentage of those indicating a lack of adherence to the terms among the displaced people from Homs rises compared with Hama, where the percentage rises to nearly double from 32.3% in Hama to 63.5% in Homs

Figure 25. The second sample: Have the truce terms been adhered to?

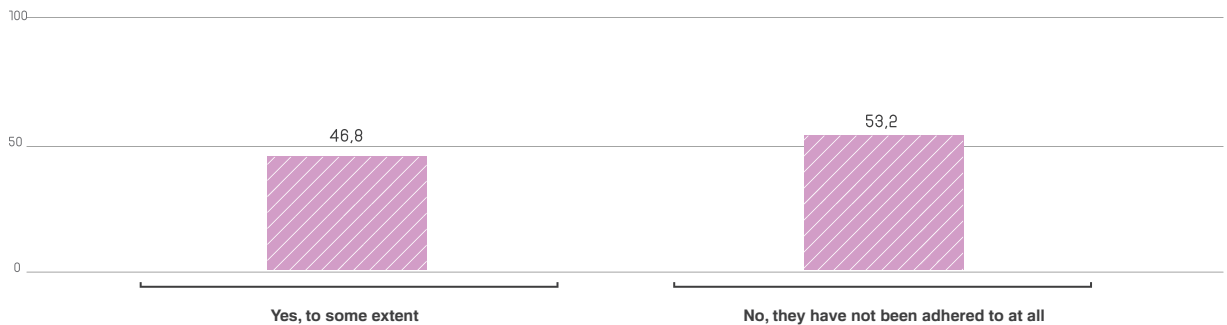
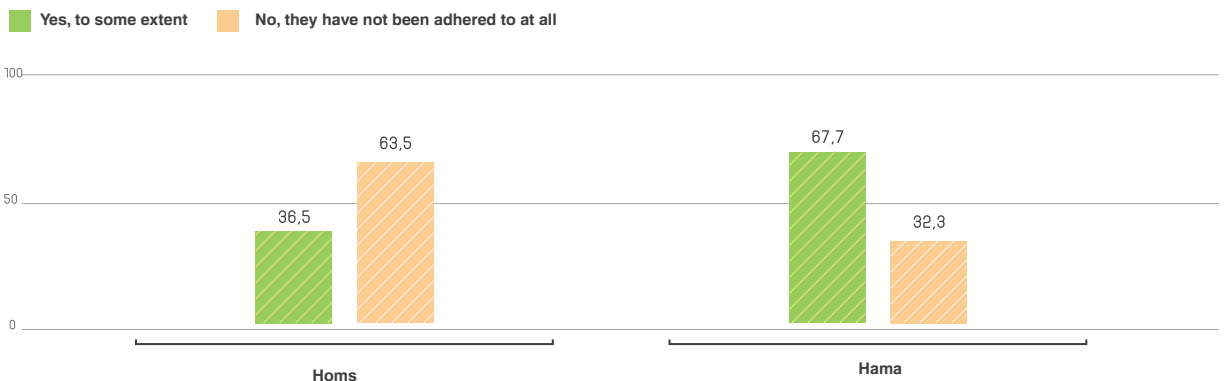


Figure 27. The second sample according to region of origin: Have the truce terms been adhered to?



4- Responsibility for its revocation

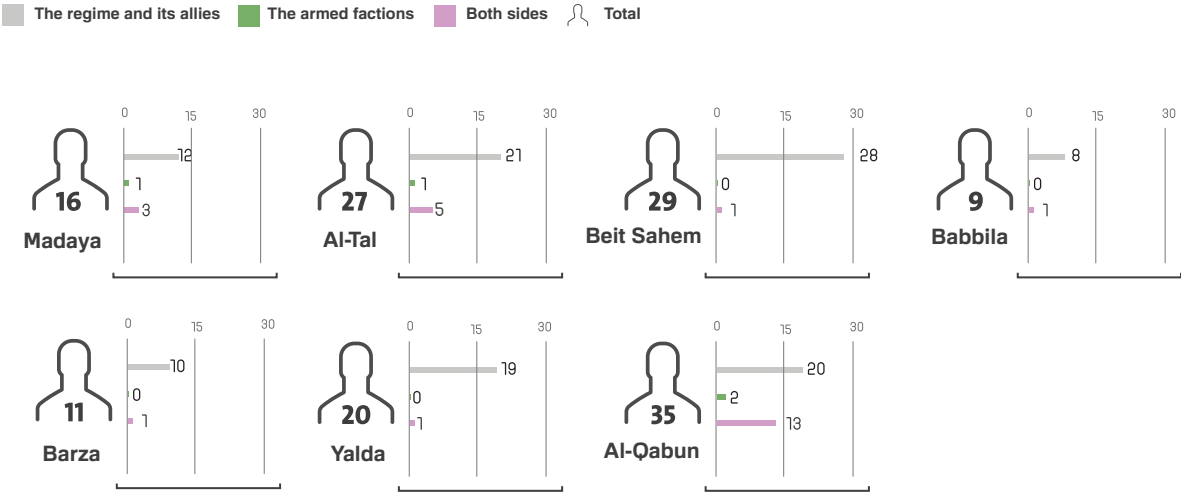
This question was only directed to those who said that they were informed of the terms of the truce and that they weren't adhered to.

Who is responsible for the lack of adherence to the truce?



(Figure 26). Among respondents in Beit Sahem, Babbila and Yalda, who familiar with the terms of the truce and say they have not been adhered to at all, we find a general consensus that the regime and its allies are the ones responsible for the lack of adherence to the agreed terms. Most of the respondents in Madaya and al-Tal also blame the regime primarily for the lack of adherence, however the percentage of regime blame amongst respondents in al-Qabun recedes. Although the greatest percentage (57.1%) here still blames the

Figure 27. Who is responsible for the non-adherence? (Number of respondents)



regime and its allies alone, more than a third blames both sides (Figure 27). There is a general consensus among the displaced people to Northern Suburban Homs that the regime and its allies are solely responsible for the revocation of the truce. None of them blamed the opposition

Figure 28. Were the terms of the truce adhered to?



5- Positions on the truces

Are you satisfied with the truce agreement which previously took place in your area?



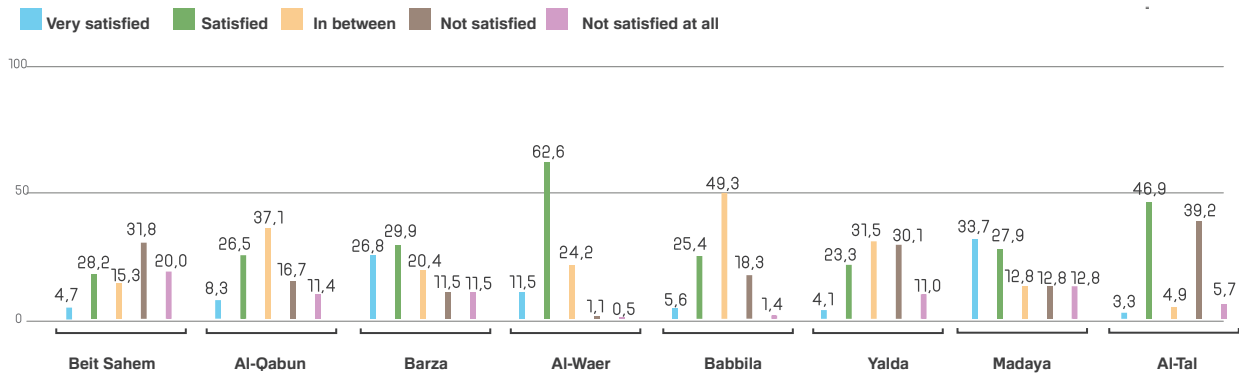
directly, and a very small percentage (not exceeding 8%) blamed both sides (Figure 28).

There is a general satisfaction with the truce amongst the respondents we interviewed in al-Waer^[5], where most of them said that they are either satisfied (62.6%) or very satisfied (11.5%) (Figure 29).

In Damascus, the responses came close to those in Barza and al-Qabun, roughly a fourth of the respondents said that they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all. The rest answered affirmatively or said that they were in between (Figure 29).

In Rif Dimashq the responses vary, where the percentage of those saying they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all exceeded 50% in Beit Sahem, whilst falling in al-Tal (44.9%), Yalda (41.1%), and reaching its lowest level in Babbila and Madaya (roughly a quarter). Interestingly however, there is a division in al-Tal between “satisfied” and “not satisfied” (Figure 29).

Figure 29. The first sample: Are you satisfied with the truce agreement which took place in your area?(%)



The majority of those displaced to Northern countryside of Homs said that they are not satisfied or not satisfied at all with the truce in their areas (60.8%), and less than a quarter of respondents said that they are satisfied or very satisfied (Figure 30). It seems that the lack of satisfaction increases among those coming from Homs compared with those coming from Hama (Figure 31), as well as among those coming from al-Bayada and al-Khalidiya compared with the rest of the areas (Figure 32).

5- Responses show that the satisfaction in al-Waer has been in constant decline as a result of the regime’s aggressive policies and the United Nations’ response (or lack thereof) to them. See Appendix, “A statement from various international institutions in the neighborhood of al-Waer concerning the role of the United Nations in the neighborhood of al-Waer.”

Figure 30. The second sample: Are you satisfied with the truce agreement which formerly took place in your area?(%)

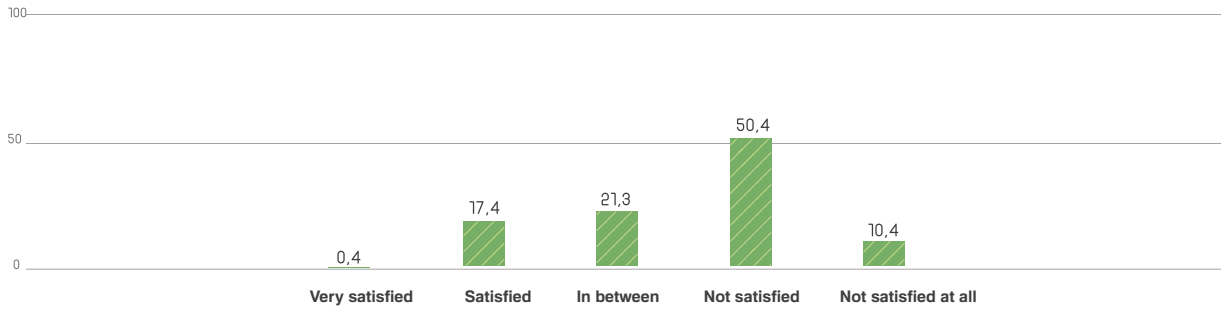


Figure 31. The second sample according to areas of origin: Are you satisfied with the truce agreement which formerly took place in your area? (%)

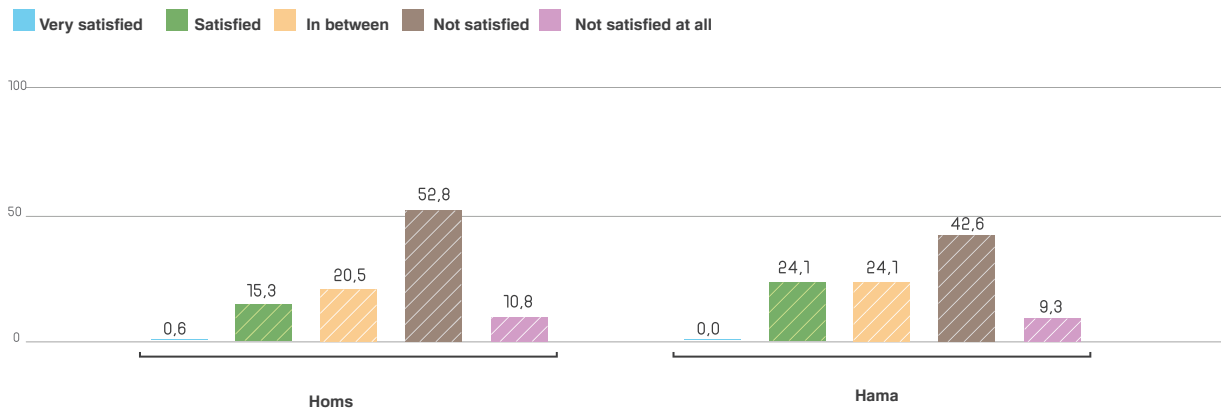
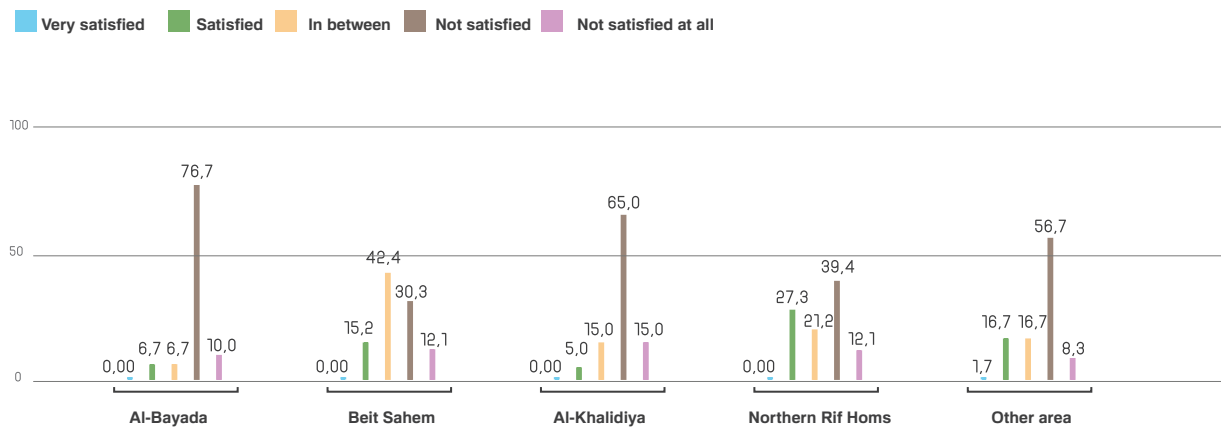


Figure 32. The second sample according to area of origin: Are you satisfied with the truce agreement which formerly took place in your area? (%)

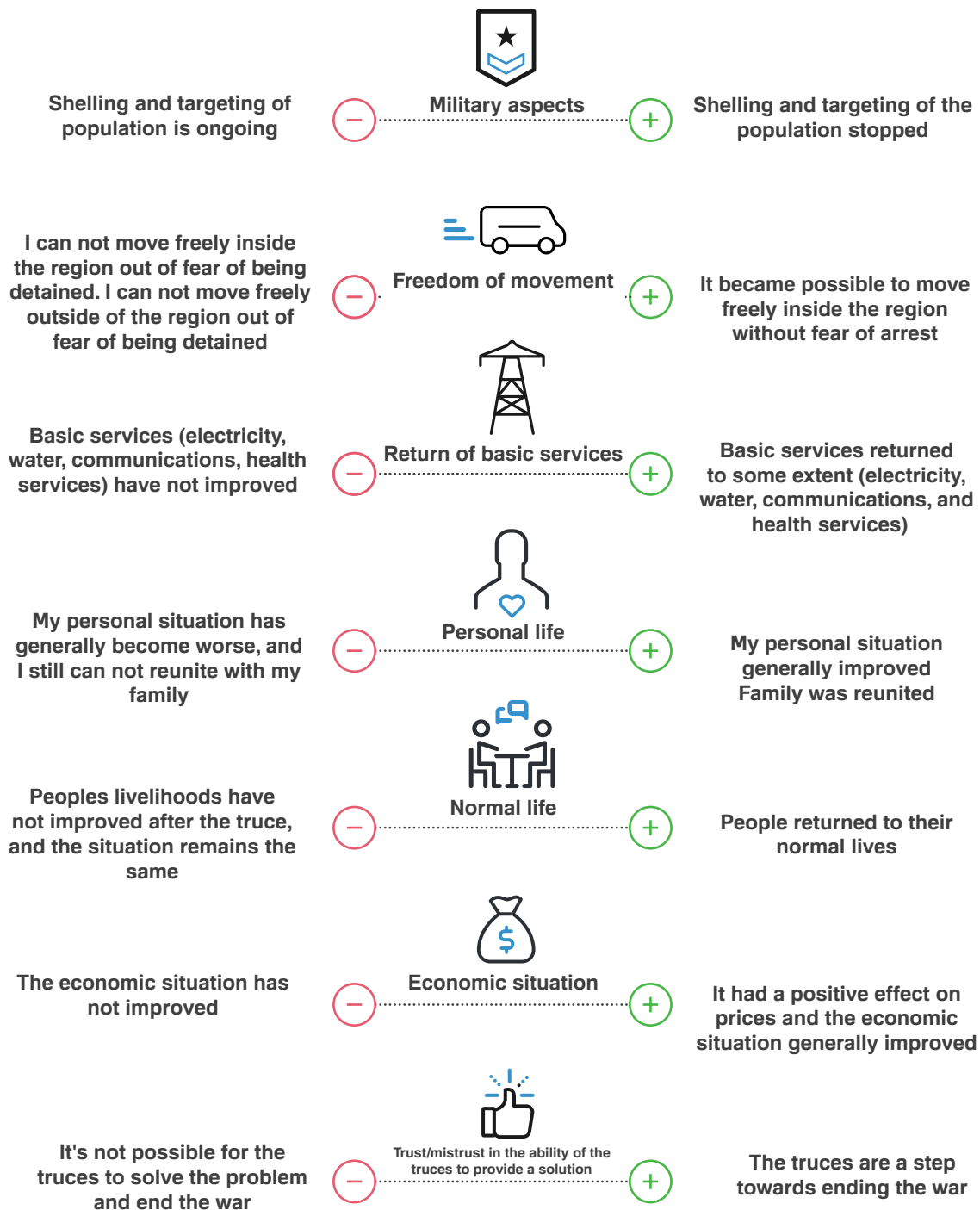


Part: 2

Truce repercussions on the lives of the population

In order to identify the repercussions of the truces on the lives of the population, we asked about the reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction with them. The available options vary and include several aspects pertaining to the significant improvement in the lives of the people in addition to trust/lack of trust in the ability of the truces to end the war. They are shown in detail in Figure 33.

Figure 33. Significant improvement/decline in the lives of the population



1- Reasons for satisfaction

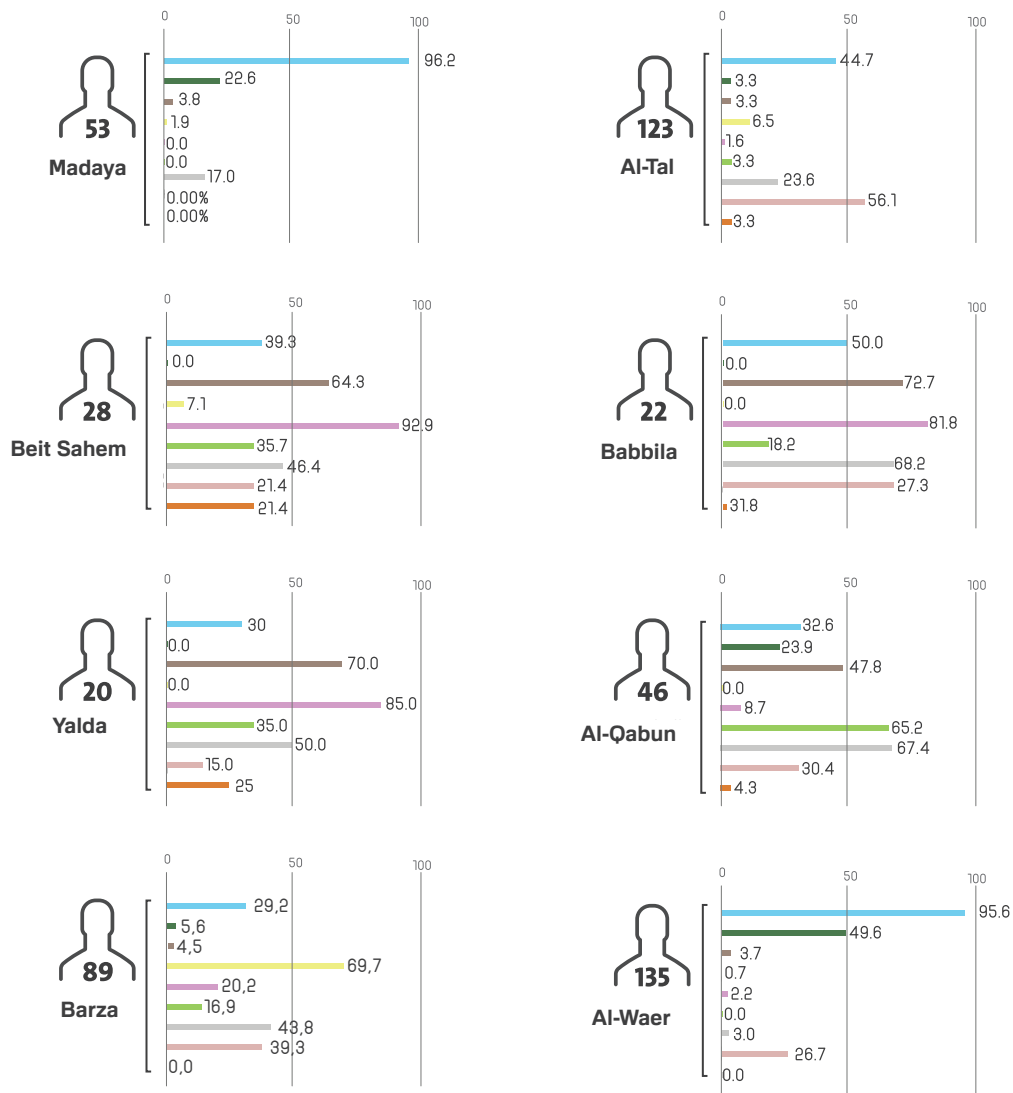
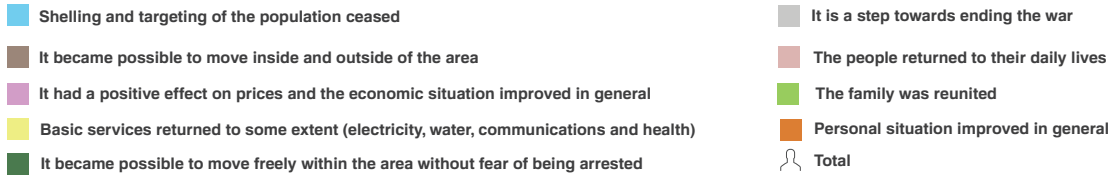
■ What are the reasons for the satisfaction with the former truce in your area?



The conviction that the truces are a possible solution came in the forefront among factors of satisfaction in general: In the first rank in al-Qabun (67.4%), the second in Barza (43.8%), and third in the rest of the areas, with the exception of al-Waer, Homs. Despite the great satisfaction with the truces in al-Waer, a very small percentage said that they consider the truces a first step toward ending the war (only 3%). This is perhaps explained by the nature of the conflict in Homs, and the intensified campaign against the people of Homs since the onset of the Syrian revolution until the present day. Massive change took place all over the city, not only on the scale of destruction, even though this may have happened similarly in other areas, but also because there are widespread fears in Homs of pre-planned sectarian division and demographic change, which will be delved into much greater detail in the later parts of this report.

- In al-Waer, satisfaction came from stopping the shelling (95.6%) and freedom of movement inside the area without fear of being arrested (49.6%) (Figure 34).
- In al-Qabun it appears that the social lives of the population (family reunification) improved (65.20%), and about a third said that the people returned to their normal lives. A similar percentage mentioned the cessation of shelling, making it possible to move about more freely (Figure 34).
- In Barza, most respondents said that the reason for their satisfaction was the return of basic services, and 39.3% said that the return of people to their normal lives (Figure 34).
- In al-Tal the two main reasons were the cessation of shelling and the return of the people to their normal lives (Figure 34).
- The cessation of shelling, improved social situation (family reunification), and improved economic conditions were the main drivers behind the feelings of satisfaction in Babbila, Yalda, and Beit Sahem (Figure 34).
- In Madaya, the main reason was the cessation of shelling (Figure 34).

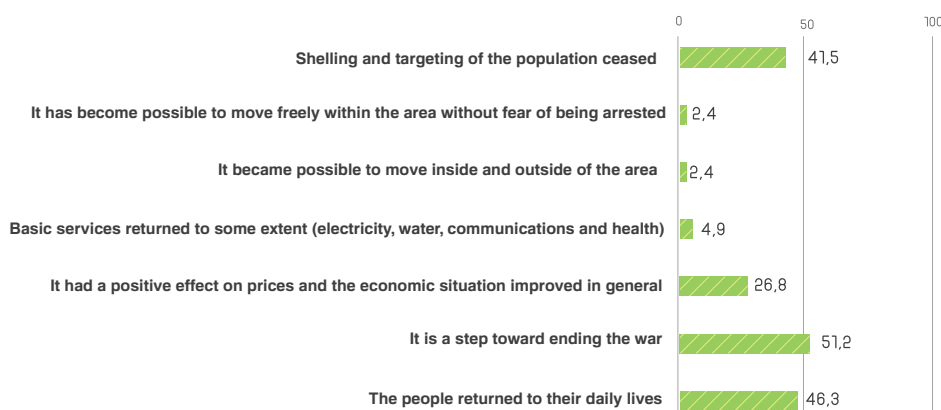
Figure 34. The first sample: What is the reason for satisfaction with the former truce in your area? (%)



 The second sample

More than half of the respondents deported to Northern countryside of Homs said they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the truce in their area, and considered it a first step towards stopping the war (51.2%). As far as the significant improvement of life conditions, the people's return to their normal lives came first (46.3%), and the cessation of shelling in second (41.5%) (Figure 35). In general, as previously outlined, only a small number of them expressed satisfaction with the truces, and this number therefore does not permit delving into detail based on the region of origin, being generally small.

Figure 35. The second sample: What is the reason for satisfaction with the former truce in your area? (%)



2- Reasons for lack of satisfaction

What are the reasons for the lack of satisfaction with the former truce in your area?

 The first sample

The primary factor determining whether respondents supported the truces was the extent to which they believed the agreements would help end the conflict. Other factors that influenced responses included respondents' social and economic status and how people believed the truces would affect their individual livelihoods.

Responses show that the faith in the ability of truces to solve the problem and end the war is related to material status. Those with the most disadvantaged being more convinced that the truces do not pose a solution to the problem, while those with high incomes have greater confidence in the truces and their ability to end the war. There appears to be a trend that the ability to secure the demands of everyday life, in addition to their significant improvement after the truce, helps to strengthen faith in them and their ability to end the war.

- In Damascus, a large percentage of respondents in al-Qabun (compared with Barza) said that the shelling is still ongoing and mentioned poor personal conditions and social situation, restriction of freedom of movement, and fear of arrest. In Barza, the second main reason was that people's lives had not changed for the better (Figure 36). This is an indication of the poor conditions after the truce in al-Qabun compared with Barza.
- In Beit Sahem, most of the respondents mentioned a lack of improvement in basic services, fear of moving outside of the area, and the conviction that the truces cannot solve the problem. More than a third mentioned the social situation of not being able to meet with their family as well as the problem of continuous shelling (Figure 36).
- In Yalda, arrest in the event of movement outside of the town came in the lead, followed by the continuation of shelling and the inaccessibility of family reunions (Figure 36).
- In Babbila, the fear of moving outside of the town came in the lead, followed by the inaccessibility of family reunions (Figure 36).
- In al-Tal, it appears that the main reason was the lack of any significant improvement in people's lives (Figure 36).
- In Madaya, the fear of arrest in the event of moving outside of the town and the lack of improvement in the state of basic services came in the lead, in addition to the social situation and continued shelling (Figure 36).

Figure 36. The first sample: What is the reason for the dissatisfaction with the former truces in your area? (%)

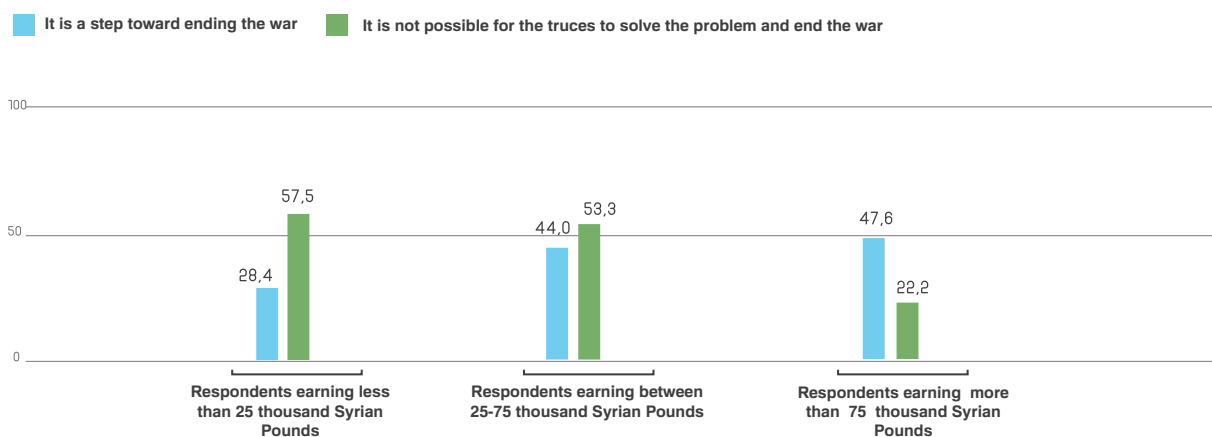
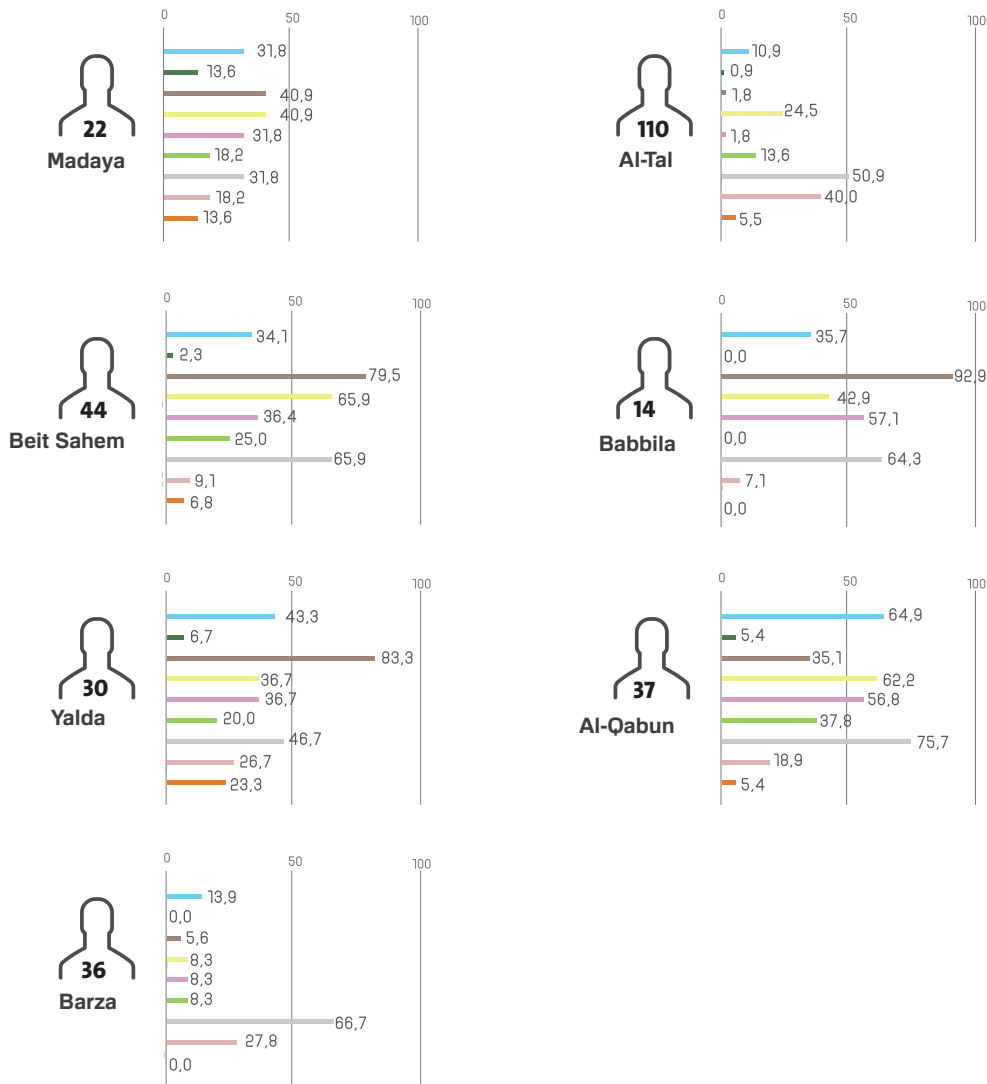


Figure 36 - 1. The first sample: What is the reason for the dissatisfaction with the former truces in your area? (%)

- Shelling and targeting of the population ceased
- It became possible to move inside and outside of the area
- It had a positive effect on prices and the economic situation improved in general
- Basic services returned to some extent (electricity, water, communications and health)
- It became possible to move freely within the area without fear of being arrested
- It is a step towards ending the war
- The people returned to their daily lives
- The family was reunited
- Personal situation improved in general
- Total



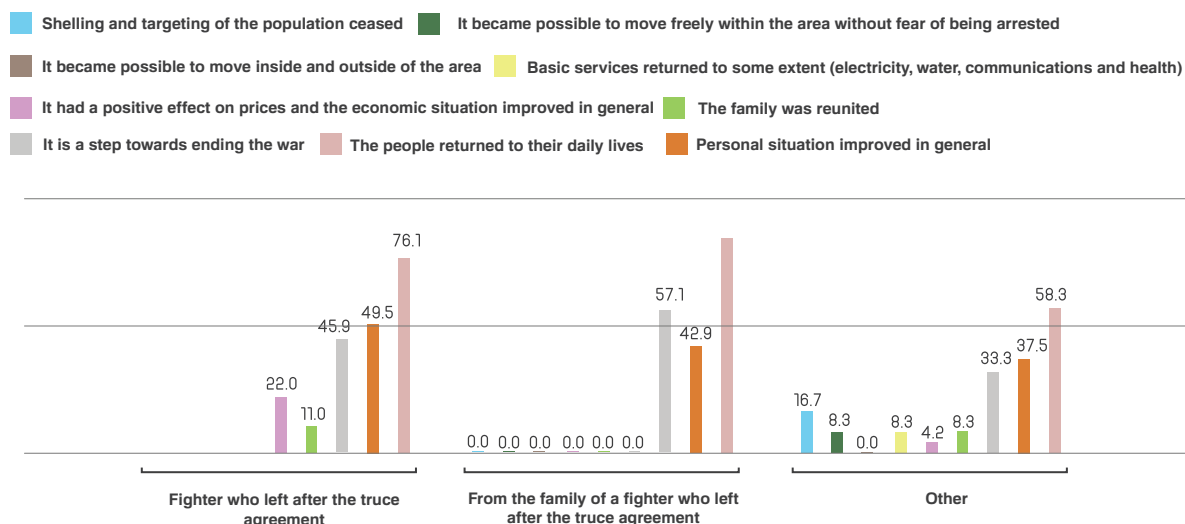
Reasons for dissatisfaction among the displaced people are different from what we saw in the first sample. Here, it shows the role of the negative impact on their personal lives. Roughly half said that their personal situation became worse in general. Most of them said that people’s lives did not improve (73.6%) (Figure 37). It seems that the fighters and their families were most negatively affected on a personal and social level (Figure 38).

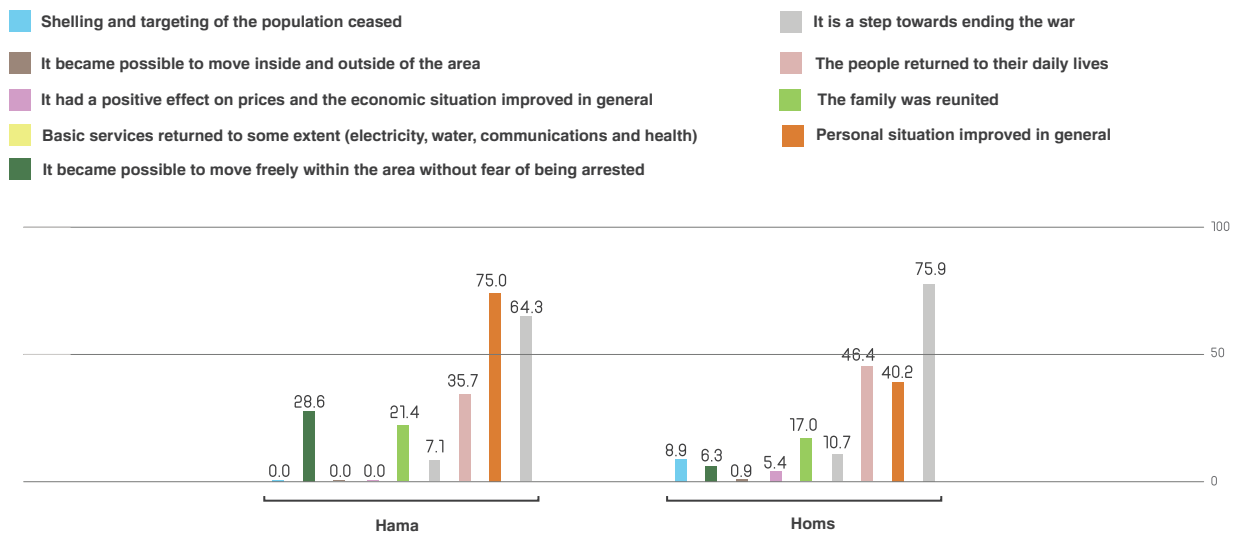
The two main reasons for dissatisfaction in Homs were harm to personal life and the belief that people’s lives did not improve. These reasons were also the main causes of dissatisfaction in Hama though with different ratios (Figure 39).

Figure 37. The second sample: What is the reason for the dissatisfaction with the former truce in your area? (%)



Figure 38. The second sample according to the situation of the respondent: What is the reason for the dissatisfaction with the former truce in your area? (%)





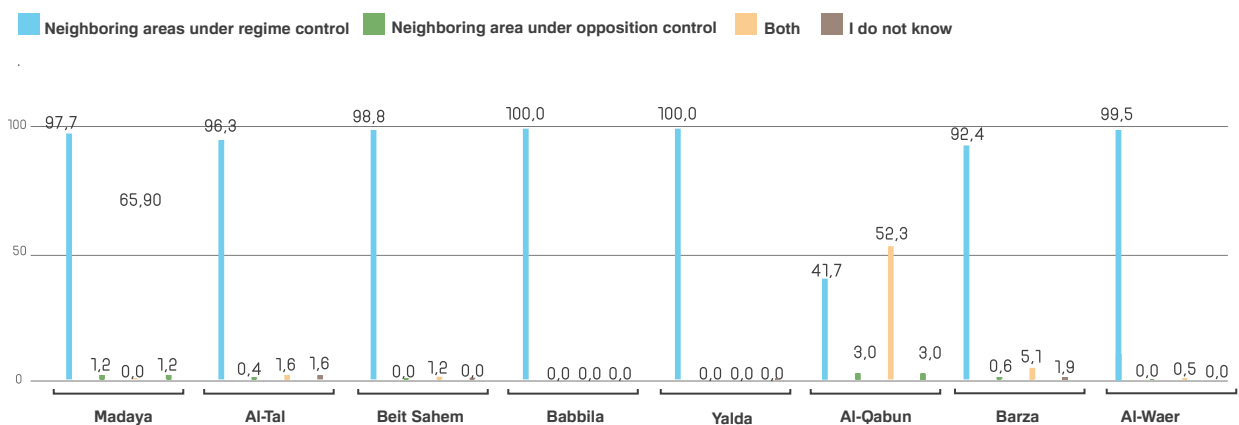
3- Economic control in truce areas

Where do the essential commodities come from in your area?



It seems that one of the most significant aspects of the truces is the regime's complete control over the people's basic needs. With the exception of al-Qabun, (where some goods enter from opposition areas) respondents in the rest of the areas are practically in consensus that they come from areas under regime control (Figure 40).

Figure 40. First Sample: Economic control in areas of the truces (%)



● The second question was about the suppliers, who are they?

In Yalda, Babbila, and Beit Sahem, it appears that traders do a kind of commercial purchasing, in addition to international institutions bringing in assistance and basic necessities for the population. That said, the increase in percentage of those who said “other” is noted, as they mentioned various ways of goods entering indirectly without the knowledge of regime forces. The percentage of these responses reached its peak in al-Tal (54.3%) to the extent that it has become the basic means upon which the population depends on to bring in basic necessities. In Madaya, it seems that the blockade is complete and depends entirely on what is brought in through “trade” by regime forces or international assistance (Figure 41). In al-Qabun, basic resources enter by all ways mentioned, and the percentage of “other”, meaning indirect means without the knowledge of regime forces, reaching roughly 20%; meanwhile in Barza it seems that the traders were shipping independently in addition to what enters by means of regime forces (Figure 41). In al-Waer, the population depends upon what enters through regime forces or international institutions and organizations (Figure 41).

Figure 41. The first sample according to area of origin: Economic control in truce areas? (%)

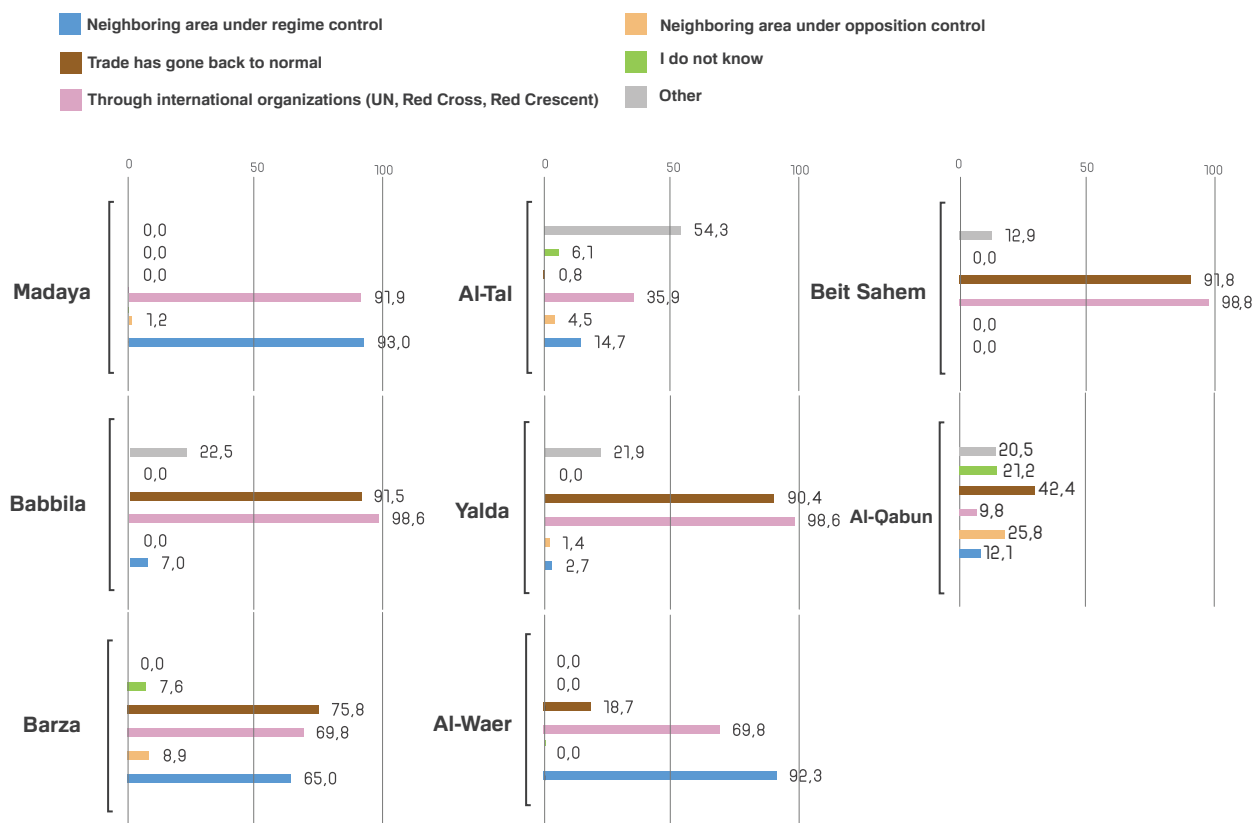
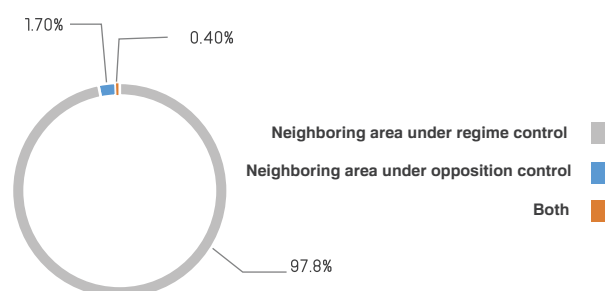


Figure 42. The second sample: Economic control in truce areas? (%)

● The second sample

Once again the case of the responses of displaced people to Northern Suburban Homs differs, there is a general consensus among them in that there is no other source except areas under regime control (97.8%) (Figure 42).



The truces and demographic changes

1- Reasons for lack of satisfaction

Do you know of outsiders who didn't originally live in your area, who currently inhabit it after the truce?

There is no doubt that mass displacement is a general feature of the truces to a great extent, for this reason we will try to focus on the responses of the non-“displaced.”

The first sample

There is almost a consensus in al-Waer that the “strangers/outside” did not come to their area (Figure 43). While respondents in al-Qabun agree that there are “strangers” which came to their area (Figure 43), most of whom mentioned the arrival of opposition fighters (76.2%) (Figure 44). There is also a general consensus in Rif Damascus on the arrival of new comers, and it seems that they were also opposition fighters, except for Madaya, where 11.0% of respondents mentioned the arrival of non-Syrian fighters loyal to the regime (Figure 44).

The second sample

Here, answers differ among those deported to Northern countryside of Homs from what we saw in the first sample. There is almost a consensus among the respondents on the arrival of newcomers (Figure 45). About half of them mentioned the arrival of “civilians from other sects” and more than a third mentioned the arrival of Syrian fighters loyal to the regime, both with and without their families. 77% said that non-Syrian fighters loyal to the regime came to their area after the truce and lived there (Figure 46). Comparing the responses of displaced people from areas inside Hama and with others from inside Homs, we notice that the percentage which mentioned “civilians from other sects” increases significantly from 64% to 634% (Figure 47). As such, the majority of displaced people from Homs say that “civilians from other sects” came to their areas and lived there after the truce. There is almost a consensus among those coming from al-Bayada on this, along with most of those coming from al-Khalidiya and the Northern Rif (Figure 48).

Figure 42. The second sample: Economic control in truce areas? (%)

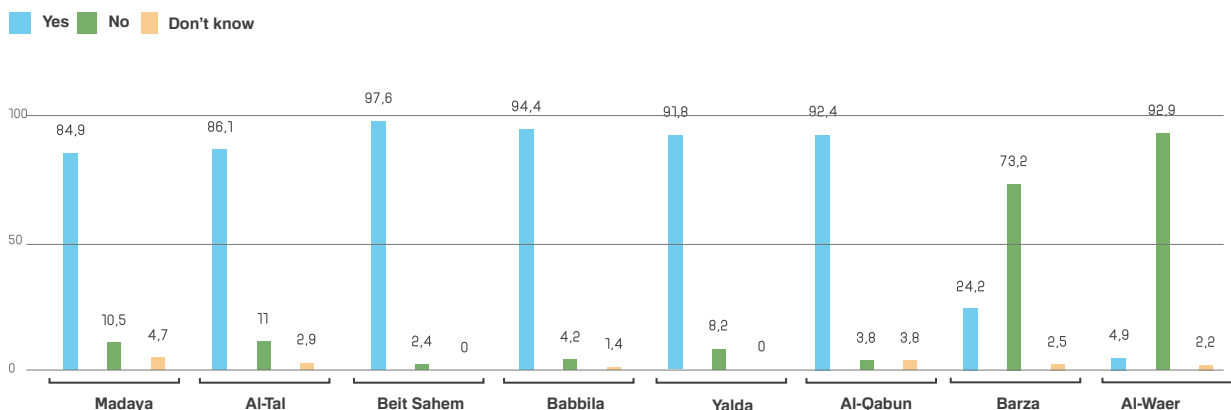


Figure 44. The first sample: Who are they (the new comers)? (%)

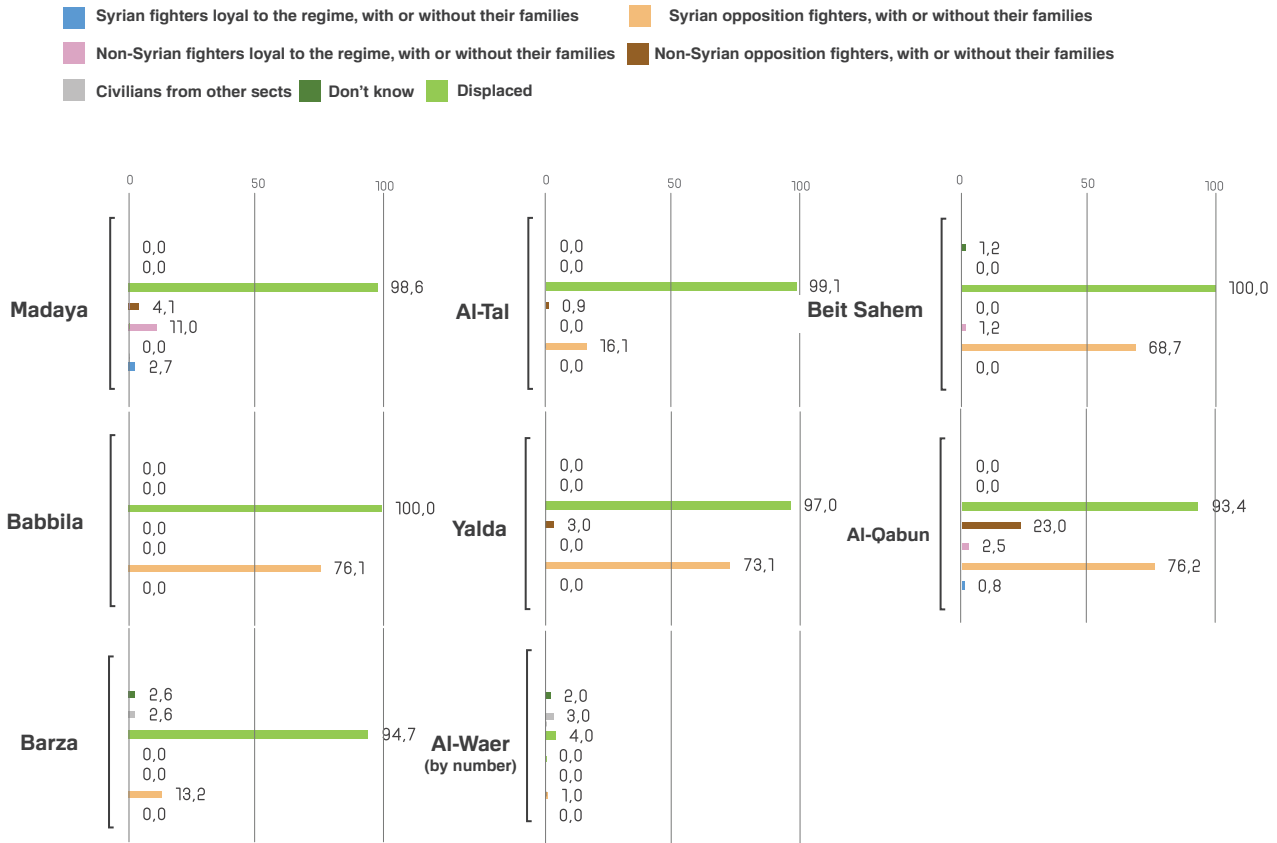


Figure 45. The second sample: Are there new comers not belonging to your area, who came and lived there after the truce? (%)

Yes No Don't know

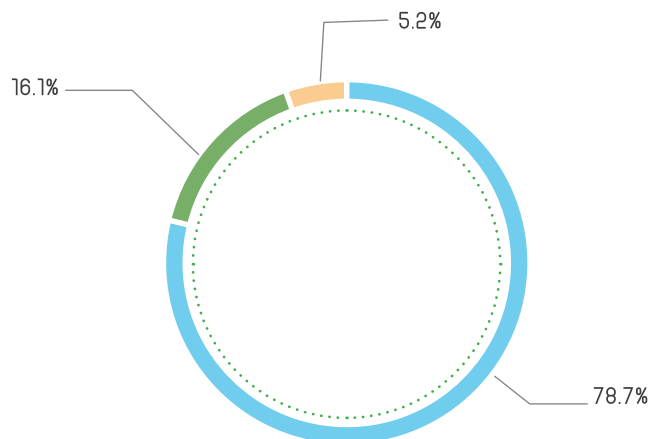


Figure 46. The second sample: Who are they (the newcomers)? (%)

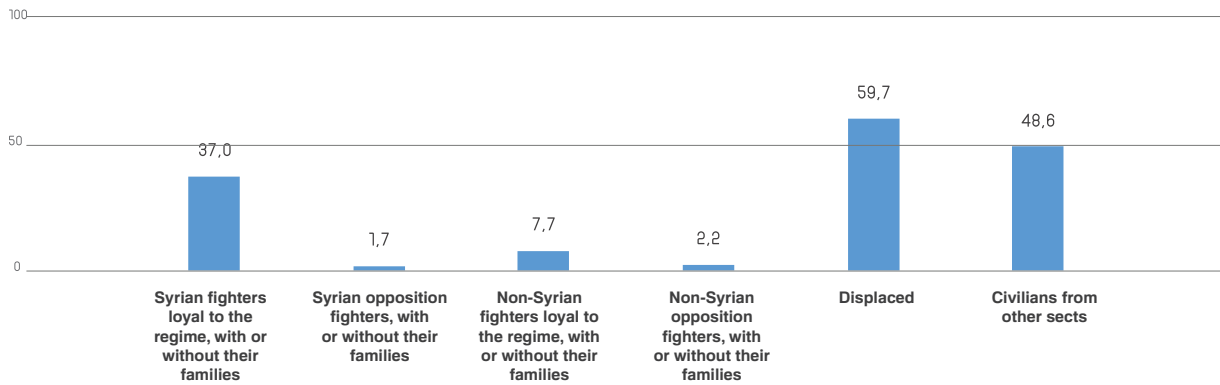


Figure 47. The second sample according to region of origin: Who are they (the newcomers)? (%)

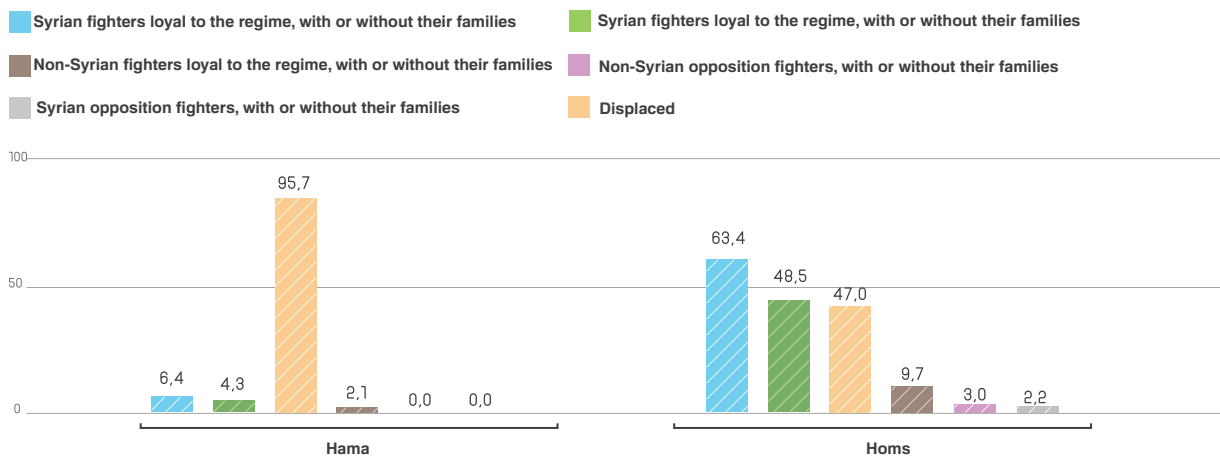
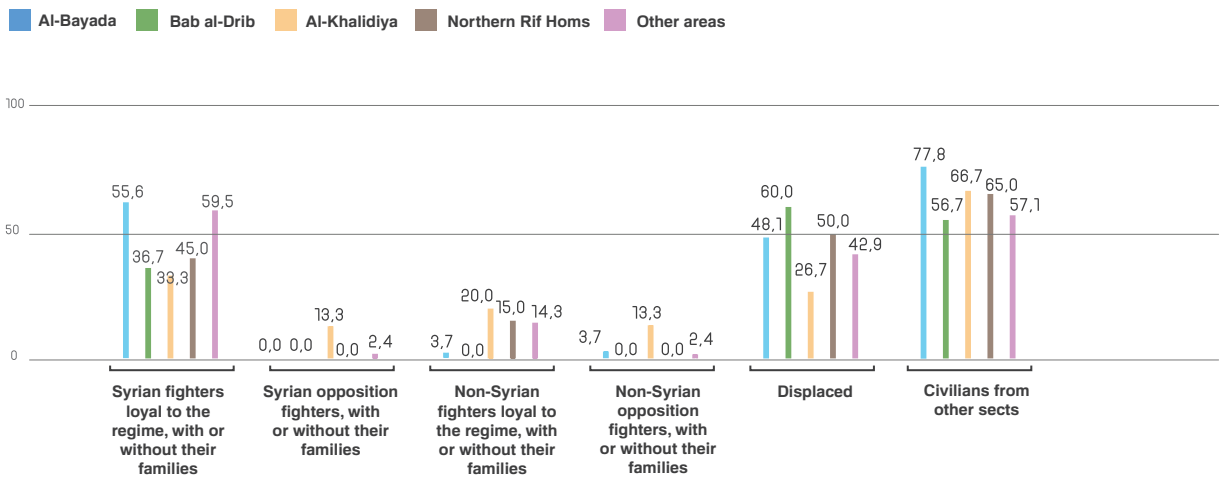


Figure 48. The second sample according to area of origin: Who are they (the newcomers)? (%)



2- Houses and shops: What is their condition?

To your knowledge, what is the condition of the homes and shops from which the residents fled?



Respondents in al-Waer almost agree that their shops and homes were destroyed due to shelling or were looted before and after the truce. It does not appear that “strangers seized them” (Figure 49).

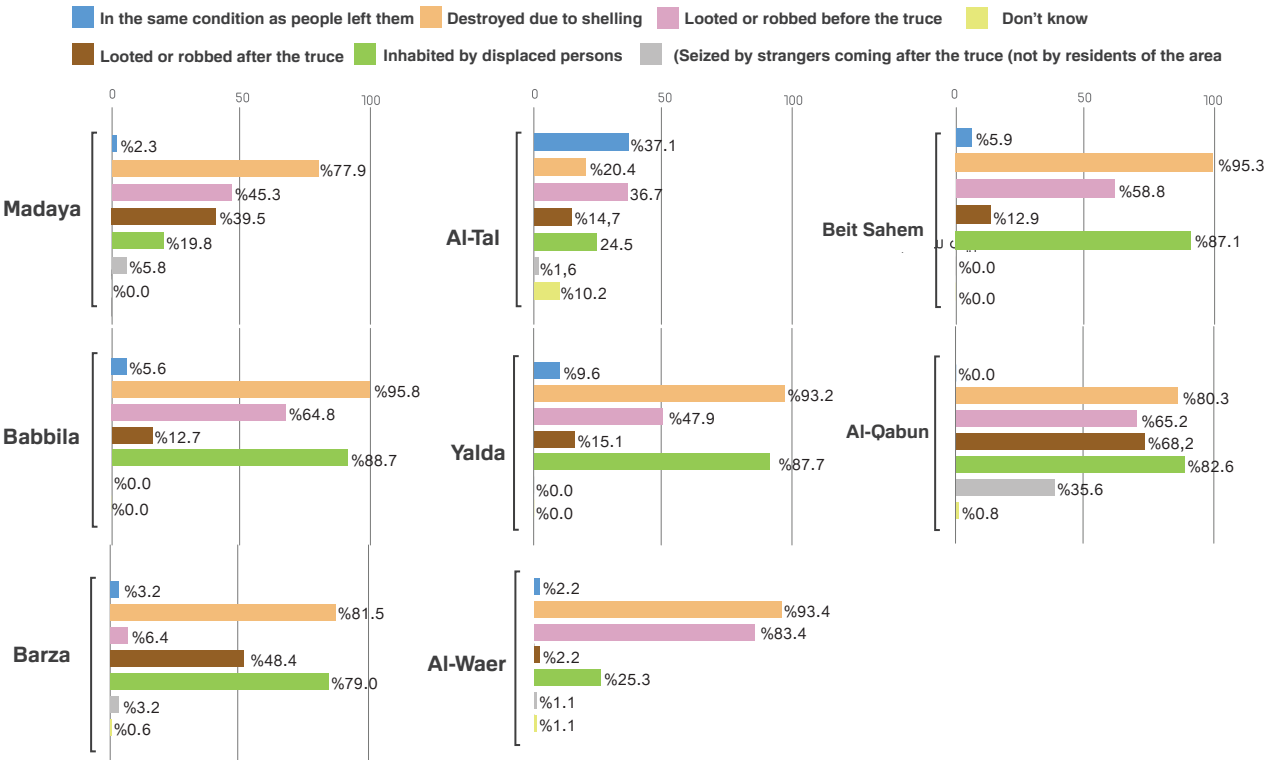
In Damascus, there is almost a consensus that they were destroyed. We notice however, that the majority of the population in al-Qabun said that they were looted and robbed before and after the truce, while 46.6.% in Barza said that they were looted and robbed after the truce, though the percentage indicating this occurred before the truce is 8%. We also notice a large percentage of those who said that the strangers “seized them” in al-Qabun (42.2%) compared with that of Barza (only 4.3%). It must be kept in mind that the newcomers in al-Qabun, in the opinion of most of the respondents, were displaced or opposition fighters not loyal to the regime or “civilians from other sects” (Figure 49).

In Madaya it seems that the properties were destroyed mainly due to shelling, looted and robbing both before and after the truce. A very small percentage said that they were seized by newcomers coming after the truce (5.8%) (Figure 49).

In al-Tal, the responses are distributed among the various choices, but it is noted that a small percentage said that they were looted after the truce (14.7%) or that they were seized by newcomers (only 1.6%). We also note an increase in the percentage of those saying they don’t know what happened, compared to the responses from the rest of the areas (Figure 49).

Answers were similar in Yalda, Babbila, and Beit Sahem: inhabited by displaced persons, destroyed due to shelling, or looted or robbed before the truce. It does not appear that there was any seizure by “the newcomers” (Figure 49).

Figure 49. The first sample: To your knowledge, what is the condition of the homes and shops of the residents who were forced to flee/leave? (%)



Again, the effects of the truce differ in the responses of those displaced to Northern Suburban Homs compared to the residents in truce areas (in al-Waer, Damascus, and Rif Dimashq): Most of the displaced respondents said that they were either looted and robbed after the truce, or destroyed due to shelling. 204% of them said outsiders/strangers seized them, referring to displaced persons, or fighters loyal to the system with or without their families, or “civilians from other denominations” (Figure 50). The responses do not differ greatly in this regard, with the exception of the responses from those coming from al-Bayada (where the percentage who mentioned seizures by strangers reached 367%) (Figures 51 and 52)

Figure 50. The second sample: To your knowledge, what is the condition of the homes and shops from which the residents fled? (%)

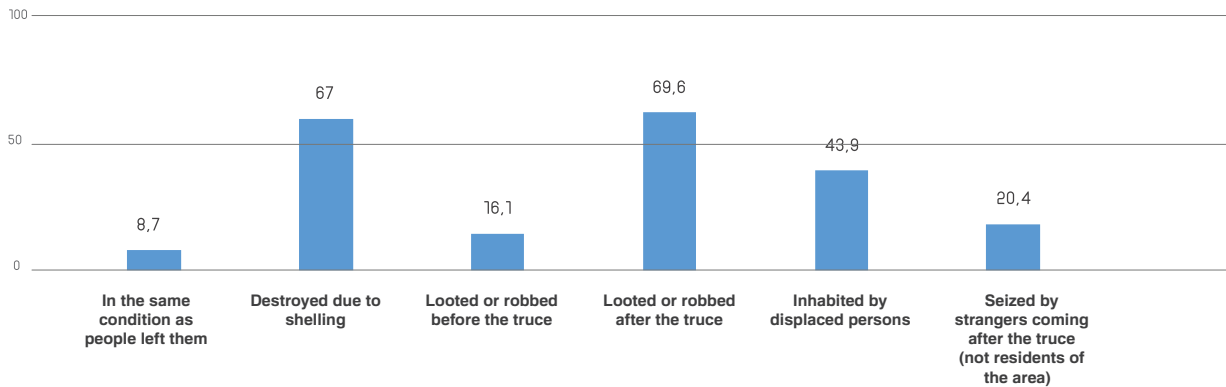


Figure 51. The second sample according to area of origin: To your knowledge, what is the condition of the homes and shops from which the residents fled? (%)

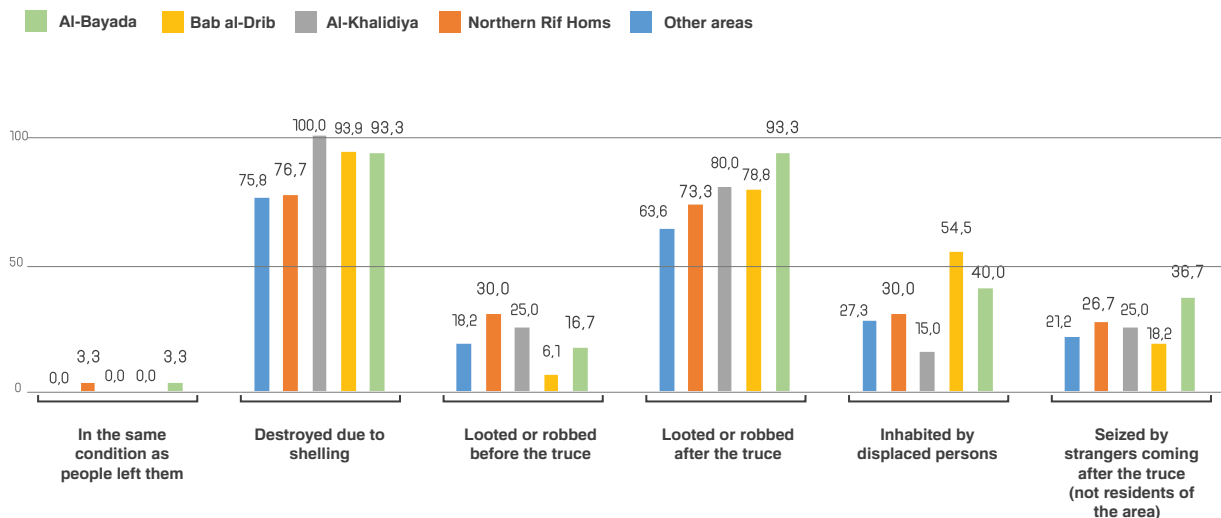
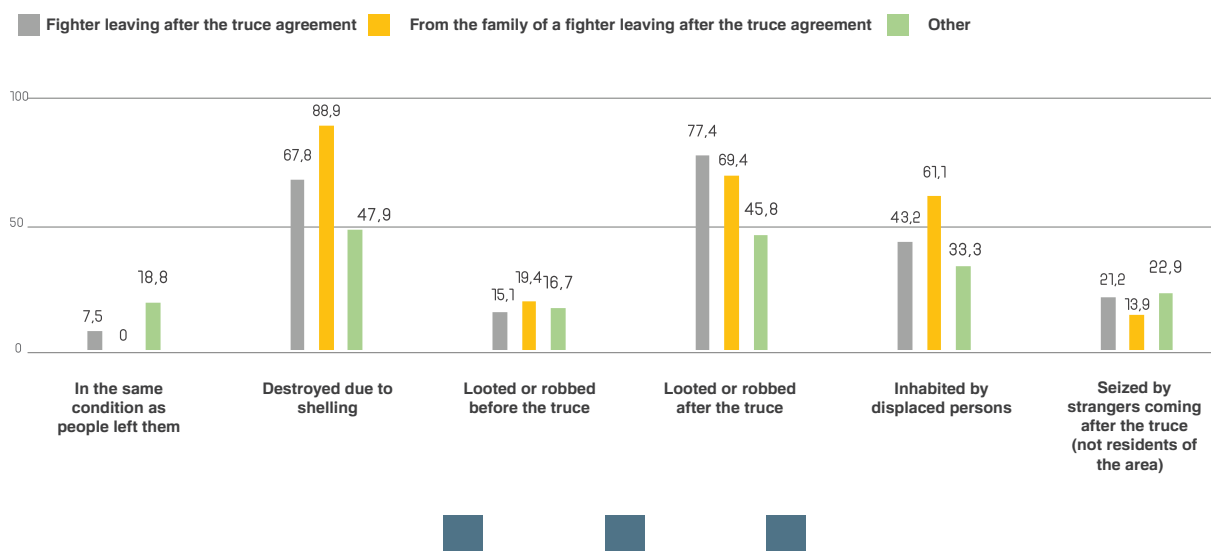


Figure 52. The second sample according to situation of the respondent: To your knowledge, what is the condition of the homes and shops from which the residents fled? (%)



Conclusion and Recommendations:

Our survey reveals that the negotiations preceding regime/opposition truces occurred in different ways, the most common of which was through direct negotiations between town notables, sometimes armed factions, and the regime. In other instances, indirect negotiations occurred through Syrian intermediaries, such as in al-Tal and Homs, or non-Syrian intermediaries i.e. Madaya. Local councils have also played an important role in these negotiations, as in al-Waer, Homs. Our survey also showed that negotiations tend to take place in areas under regime control, with the exception of Madaya, where they took place outside of Syria. In some places like al-Qubun, it seems that location of the negotiations remains unknown to many of the area’s residents.

The reasons by which fighters were compelled to accept the truce varies according to area, but in general the brutal siege and the intensity of shelling are primary motivators. It is also worth mentioning that a significant percentage of fighters deported to Northern countryside Homs mentioned “concern for the lives of civilians” in addition to the lack of support and availability of arms.

In general, we found that citizens were relatively well informed about the terms of the truces. In certain areas, however, the percentage of those who did not know anything about the truce terms was remarkably high, reaching its peak in al-Tal, where an overwhelming majority of respondents report being uninformed. The surprise was in Homs, where more than half of the fighters deported to Northern countryside of Homs said that they did not know anything about the terms of the truce; that percentage reached its peak among fighters’ families. That said, those who were informed of the truce’s terms appeared to be relatively satisfied with them. However, in al-Tal, more than half of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction, making it the position of the majority of respondents in Beit Sahem and displaced people in Northern Suburban Homs. Regarding their adherence to the terms in the truce areas studied, with the exception of al-Tal and al-Qabun (where respondents were somewhat divided), we find that most areas said that the truces were partially adhered to, though not strictly. One outlying case are responses from those deported to Northern Suburban Homs; there, more than half of the respondents said that the terms had not been upheld, and respondents blamed the regime and its allies for truce violations.

There is a general satisfaction with the truce in al-Waer, Homs and in Damascus (specifically in al-Tal and Beit Sahem). The majority of displaced people to Northern Rif Homs expressed their dissatisfaction with them.

Despite the differences between regions, the two most prominent reasons for satisfaction with the truces were the cessation of shelling and the people's ability to return to their normal lives. Among the most prominent reasons for dissatisfaction were restrictions on the of freedom of movement, as well as the negative effects on personal and social life. The latter concerns were significantly pronounced among displaced people to Northern Suburban Homs, where it appears that their displacement and the accompanying violence made a profound impact on their family lives and personal condition.

The primary factor determining whether respondents supported the truces was the extent to which they believed the agreements would help end the conflict. Other factors that influenced respondent support for truces included respondents' social and economic status, and how people believed the truces would affect their individual livelihoods; the more that respondents believed they would be able to secure the demands of everyday life, the more optimistic they are about the truces' ability to end the war.

However, the truces did not solve the issue of looting and theft. A considerable percentage in some of the areas, especially in al-Qabun, Barza and among displaced people to Northern Rif Homs, said that acts of looting occurred or continued after the truce.

Earlier, we suggested that the Assad regime may be using the truce agreements to effect a pre-planned demographic shift. The comparability of results between the studied areas supports this argument. The responses of those displaced from Homs to the Northern countryside differ significantly from the rest of the areas. Most of them said that there are outsiders (civilians from other sects or fighters loyal to the regime) who came to their areas and lived there, and a considerable percentage said that they seized stores and homes whose owners fled, this figure reaching its peak in al-Bayada, Homs.

Moreover, it is not possible to understand the truces without taking into account the wide variation in their mechanisms and effects between regions. This study provides detailed explanations which allow the identification of differences in truces and their results in various areas of Syria. This might help the revolutionary forces in Syria to build better strategies in dealing with any future truces (in case they are necessary ¹⁶⁾). As this study shows, there is a varied degree of acceptance and satisfaction on certain areas vis-à-vis dissatisfaction in other areas. It is important to consider a detailed and accurate study of each initiative to assure the incorporation of elements that can potentially minimize any negative consequences and improve the overall benefits of the agreement, in addition to employing the agreements in the service of the Syrian goals and aspirations of salvation and reconstruction.

Furthermore, the results of this study¹⁷⁾ support the results published in our previous studies on sectarianism and positions on international agreements on Syria. This suggests the need for new studies on the psychological and social effects of forced displacement (based on truce agreements or otherwise) where we can assess how displacement could be a prime motivator in the growth of sectarian ¹⁸⁾ tensions, the greatest danger being those associated with growing feelings of abandonment, disappointment, and a loss of confidence in projects of international powers triggering increasing extremism in Syria¹⁹⁾.

6-It does not seem that the United Nations and the international community are prepared to take any practical steps to stop the war declared by the regime on the Syrian people; instead they have been equally approaching those being attacked by barrel bombs and missiles and those who launch them through selective ceasefire agreements excluding certain powers or If anything, looking the other way whilst they are being involved in the killing, destruction and displacement of people on a mass scale'

7- Specifically, the increasing significance of the negative effects on the personal and social lives of displaced persons after truce agreements and the great absence of any hope among the respondents who said that they are not satisfied with them (i.e. it is not possible for the truces to provide a solution to the problem in Syria).

8- See: "[Sectarianism in Syria](#)", The Day After, February 2016.

9- See: "[Syrian Opinions and Attitudes on the International Agreements on Syria](#)", The Day After, October 2016.

Appendix:

بيان
من مختلف المؤسسات في حي الوعر حول
دور الأمم المتحدة في حي الوعر

دخل حي الوعر قبل أكثر من عام بمفاوضات لأغراض إنسانية برعاية الأمم المتحدة، وقد رفض النظام تنفيذ معظم بنود الاتفاق الناتج عن المفاوضات، والتي كان أبرزها إدخال مواد طبية للحي المحاصر منذ سنوات وإطلاق سراح المعتقلين في سجونهم، بل زاد على ذلك بقصف منازل المدنيين وقنص المارة، وكل هذا كان يترجم إلى معلومات وتقارير موثقة ترسل للأمم المتحدة (بوصفها راعية للاتفاق) إضافة لدورها الإنساني وكذلك لمختلف المؤسسات الإنسانية الأخرى.

1. وعدت الأمم المتحدة ببرنامج استجابة "ضخم" عشية توقيع الاتفاق مع نظام الأسد قبل أكثر من ستة أشهر، يتضمن مشاريع توظيف ومشاريع خدمية واستجابة إنسانية، ولم تنفذ أي منها، كذلك لم نتلقى أي توضيحات عن سبب إلغاء البرنامج.
2. سايرت مكاتب الأمم المتحدة النظام أكثر من مرة في منع الاستجابة لطلبات المحاصرين حيث حذفت من قوائمها موادا كانت في أعلى سلم الأولويات، كذلك قسمت إدخال المساعدات الإنسانية للحي إلى أجزاء صغيرة استجابة لطلبات النظام الذي عمد إلى استغلال ذلك لتحقيق مكاسب معينة مقابل كل جزء يُدخل للحي.
3. بالرغم من التدهور المتنامي للوضع الإنساني في الحي والذي زادت وتيرته خلال الأشهر الثلاثة الأخيرة، لم يصدر مكتب الأمم المتحدة أي بيان عن سبب منع إدخال المواد الإنسانية للحي رغم طلبنا المتكرر للأمر.
4. إطلاق مسؤولين رفيعي المستوى في الأمم المتحدة لوعود وتعهدات بضمن دخول المواد الغذائية وعدم قطع الكهرباء، وعدم التزامهم بوفاء أي منها.
5. زيارة مسؤولي الأمم المتحدة والصليب الأحمر الدولي لمشفى الوليد ومعابنتهم للواقع الطبي المرير بأم أعينهم دون أي محاولة لتحسين الواقع.

وإننا إشارة لما سبق ندعوا الجهات المسؤولة والمشرفة على عمل المكلفين بمتابعة وضع حي الوعر المحاصر داخل سورية، إلى متابعة الأحداث والأسباب المختلفة التي سايرت ما حصل طوال الفترة السابقة.

كما نطالب المؤسسات والمكاتب المختلفة التابعة للأمم المتحدة بالاستجابة الطارئة والفورية لتأمين المستلزمات الإنسانية في الحي، وكذلك الإعلان الفوري عن الطرف المسؤول عن حصار الحي حتى الآن وعدم السماح بإدخال المساعدات إليه.

الموقعون:

- . مجلس محافظة حمص الحرة
- . الجمعيات الإنسانية والإغاثية داخل حي الوعر
- . المكتب الطبي في حي الوعر
- . المكاتب الخدمية داخل حي الوعر

حمص 2016/5/31



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January 2017

