



# RISK ANALYSIS – BRIEFING NOTE

Syria | Aleppo

January 2026

# BACKGROUND

Since the most recent escalation of armed clashes in the city of Aleppo, the protection environment has deteriorated rapidly. Fighting within densely populated neighborhoods, the expansion of security checkpoints, intermittent road closures, and evacuation orders issued by the transitional authorities have significantly increased civilians' exposure to violence and restricted their access to safety, services, and livelihoods.

These dynamics are compounded by:

- The growing militarization of civilian spaces and discretionary enforcement practices, including profiling at checkpoints.
- Acute and systematic threats faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals due to structural discrimination, social stigma, and the absence of legal and institutional protection frameworks.
- Further erosion of coping capacities among marginalized groups as a result of protracted conflict, economic collapse, and repeated displacement.

## **Methodological Note:**

This analysis focuses exclusively on protection risks in the city of Aleppo during the most recent escalation. While serious violations against other Syrian communities have been documented in different parts of the country, a detailed examination of those contexts falls outside the scope of this briefing and should be addressed through separate, context-specific briefings.

# KEY FINDINGS

- Armed clashes in residential areas have generated critical, life-threatening risks for civilians, with a disproportionate impact on LGBTQIA+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and low-income households.
- Forced displacement and overcrowding in collective shelters increase exposure to violence, forced disclosure of identity, and exploitation.
- Checkpoint-related violations and movement restrictions in Aleppo pose severe risks, particularly for gender non-conforming individuals, trans persons, and members of targeted ethnic communities.
- Risks of gender-based violence, mental health deterioration, and exclusion from humanitarian assistance have intensified during the recent escalation.
- The absence of urgent interventions sensitive to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) significantly increases the likelihood of irreversible harm.
- Local civil defense and rescue actors face heightened risks of targeting or enforced disappearance while carrying out their duties.
- Detainees are exposed to practices that violate human dignity, including humiliation, harassment, verbal and psychological abuse, and deprivation of basic safeguards.

# PROTECTION RISKS AND URGENT NEEDS

## → Identified Risks and Challenges

- Direct attacks on civilians and unlawful killings resulting from hostilities.
- Ill-treatment, harassment, and arbitrary practices at checkpoints.
- Conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, particularly against women, queer individuals, and trans persons.
- Forced disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity in shelters and during movement.
- Destruction and vandalism of private property in certain neighborhoods of Aleppo.
- Severe psychological distress caused by cumulative trauma and displacement.
- Exclusion from humanitarian assistance due to discrimination, lack of documentation, or fear of exposure.
- Severe restrictions on freedom of movement affecting access to safety, services, and livelihoods.
- Patterns of discrimination and targeting based on ethnic affiliation within parts of the city.

## → Affected Populations and Impact

- Civilians across the city of Aleppo, particularly individuals from the Kurdish community, LGBTQIA+ persons, women, persons with disabilities, and displaced populations.

These groups face compounded risks due to intersecting vulnerabilities, the absence of protection mechanisms sensitive to social, ethnic, and gender diversity, and the escalation of hate speech and discriminatory practices.

## → Consequences

- Increased risk of lethal violence and serious injury.
- Heightened exposure to gender-based violence, exploitation, and coercion.
- Psychological harm, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, and suicidal ideation.
- Reliance on unsafe coping mechanisms due to exclusion from formal assistance.
- Persistent insecurity and instability.
- Entrenchment of structural discrimination and hate speech, undermining social cohesion.
- Abuse and ill-treatment of detainees in field-based or official detention facilities.
- Elevated risks of arbitrary arrest and enforced disappearance.

## → Drivers

- The convergence of armed conflict, forced displacement, weak governance, discriminatory practices, hate speech, and the absence of protection frameworks that recognize social, ethnic, and gender diversity—including SOGIESC—has created a high-risk environment characterized by a lack of effective accountability and oversight.

## → Legal and Normative Framework

These protection risks constitute violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and established humanitarian protection standards, including obligations related to civilian protection, non-discrimination, and the preservation of human dignity.

## → Current Response

SEEN has initiated remote case management, provided psychosocial support, operated hotline services, and documented violations.

However, the scale and severity of needs far exceed available resources, particularly in relation to emergency cash assistance, safe shelter alternatives, and mobility support.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Target Audience

Donors, humanitarian actors, protection actors, coordination bodies, and stakeholders with influence over civilian protection.

## Priority Actions

- **Immediate protection measures:** Emergency relocation, safe mobility support, and confidential protection referrals.
- **Safe shelter alternatives:** Expansion of non-collective, protection-sensitive housing options, particularly for LGBTQIA+ individuals.
- **Cash-based assistance:** Flexible funding linked to protection outcomes (transport, temporary shelter, basic needs).
- **GBV and mental health services:** Survivor-centered, confidential responses inclusive of SOGIESC considerations.
- **Coordination and advocacy:** Strengthen protection coordination to prevent profiling, forced disclosure of identity, and exclusion from assistance.
- **International advocacy:** Apply pressure to ensure the transitional authorities comply with their obligations to protect civilians, prevent violations, and guarantee accountability.

# ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

Available evidence indicates a structural failure on the part of the transitional authorities to ensure civilian protection and prevent serious human rights violations in the city of Aleppo. The absence of effective accountability mechanisms and the continuation of arbitrary security practices continue to exacerbate protection risks and undermine prospects for stability and dignified living conditions

# CONTACT

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