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HERITAGE

Guidelines for COVID-19



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Guidelines for COVID-19

Iraq, Libya, Syria, Yemen

By

Rene Teijgeler, Isber Sabrine, Yoldez Halleb,
Mahmoud Barakat and Elisabeth Korinth

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Correspondence: isber.sabrine@heritageforpeace.org
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PART 2

COUNTRY OVERVIEWS

Heritage Guidelines for COVID-19

SYRIA– COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Introduction

This chapter sets out the situation of heritage and heritage management in Syria as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will begin by describing the situation, before suggesting advice for heritage staff responding to the crisis, with links to further resources. It also contains specific sections on the effects on archaeological sites, and museums and libraries, and advice on their management, as well as specific advice on digital tools. It is primarily aimed at heritage workers, or those interested in the effects of the pandemic on the heritage of these areas.

As of 2020, Syria has been suffering from conflict for almost 9 years. The conflict continues to take a heavy toll on the life and economy of the people. The United Nations (UN) estimated that the number of deaths directly related to the conflict as of April 2016 was more than 400,000 with many more injured. The conflict has left Syrians with a lack of sustained access to health care, education, housing, and food. In 2019, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that about 6.2 million Syrians had been internally displaced - more than a third of them children - and over 5.6 million were officially registered as refugees.¹ The Syrian health care system is a damaged one, leaving Syrians extremely vulnerable to any additional crisis, such as the outbreak of COVID-19. Since mid-July, the virus has spread very quickly in the different regions of the country. Even before the pandemic, the Syrian economy was seriously affected by the war. The economy is now in a deep crisis; prices are sky high and the local currency (the Syrian pound) has lost around 90% of its value, and it is expected to worsen. On June 17 2020, the US imposed sanctions on the Syrian government with the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act. This new law allows the US government to sanction businesses, individuals, and governmental institutions for economic activities that support the Syrian government. The implementation of the Caesar law led to the collapse of the Syrian currency. 80% of the Syrian population live below the poverty line. The curfew forces them to stay at home, leaving them with no means of income. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are concerned that very few people can work from home or can afford to spend even a few weeks without working, as many Syrians earn their income with daily labour. Clearly, the consequences of the protracted conflict and the break-out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the double crisis, has affected Syrian heritage immensely.

Today the country is divided into three areas, each under control of a different warring party. The first one is the Syrian Government area, the second one is the North East Syria (NES) under the control of the Syrian Democratic Forces and the third is the North West Syria (NWS) under the control of opposition groups supported by Turkey.

Health

Basic data

First case in Syrian Government area: March 22 2020

First case in North West Syria: July 10 2020

First case in North East Syria: March 11 2020.

Most affected region: Ras Almara (close to Damascus)

Cases per August 17 2020

- Confirmed cases: 1677
- Fatalities: 64
- Recovered: 417

The numbers of confirmed cases, fatalities, and recovered patients continue to rise since the outbreak of COVID-19 and the danger of a second wave of infections remains, in fact since September the people who contracted the Coronavirus is growing again (see for more updates ***Resources*** Daily updates).

Underreporting

In Syria, as elsewhere, underreporting of COVID-19 cases is inevitable due to limited testing facilities. However, the reasons for this discrepancy remain controversial. The Syrian Government, for security reasons, continues to prioritize the health care in the areas under their control. The reporting of, and transparency of, COVID-19 cases are lacking throughout the country. The official numbers published by the Syrian government are questioned by international organizations.² They seem to be unrealistic, particularly in the light of the small number of tests administered, and when compared to the numbers of the neighbouring countries. Syrian doctors are reporting a much higher number of people infected with COVID-19: they, and local health officials, also believe many people are dying of COVID-19 at home undocumented. The Syrian government has not been able to provide clear information about the spread of the virus since the outbreak began, and where the people suspected to have contracted the virus could get tested. Next, testing is considered a —security issue and thus only allowed in government clinics.

Misinformation

Syria was ill-prepared to deal with a pandemic, after 10 years of war. When countries in the world were considering a lockdown, Syrian journalists were struggling to get the correct information on the COVID-19 infection. Panic and misinformation made it hard and the government retains a firm grip on the media. Any journalist operating in the regime-held territories - around 63% of the country – must have permission from the authorities. Misinformation about the COVID-19 spread was seen on both social media and the official government, including a statement that the military is fighting the coronavirus. False narratives surrounding the coronavirus undermine important preventive measures. In Syria different actors, seeking to further political and economic goals can easily manipulate information. Warring parties are also all too eager to hide suspected COVID-19 cases in the hope that low numbers will show their capability to contain the pandemic in their respective areas. (For more see ***Resources*** Other resources - *World Health Organisation* - About COVID-19, - COVID-19 - Questions and answers, - Myth busters and *World Health Organisation*, Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region).

Health infrastructure

The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in March, 2020 that Syria's fragile health systems may not have the capacity to detect and respond to the pandemic. Even before the war, public hospitals provided a low standard of care and this has only deteriorated in the years since, across all areas of the country. The risk is particularly acute in the opposition-held North West Syria and North East Syria regions. The two areas are outside the control of the Syrian government, and the people in them have no testing kits available at all. Syrians across the country will not be spared the consequences of the country's debilitated health infrastructure, but some will struggle to an even greater degree. Syria's health care system has been ravaged by years of conflict: 70% of healthcare workers, especially the most qualified,

have fled the country since the outbreak of the uprising that turned into a civil war. Consequently, the number of doctors remaining in Syria who are qualified to deal with COVID-19 patients is quite limited. Most of the country's public hospitals, and many temporary ones –including their staff, have been deliberately targeted and destroyed during the fighting.³

The average age of the population is now higher than in 2011. Given this, Syrian civil society organisations (CSOs) are concerned that the Coronavirus outbreak could lead to a large number of deaths amongst the older generation. The Syrian health sector's capacity to fight the Coronavirus is often measured against the number of ventilators and intensive care unit (ICU) beds, which are very low. However, the real problem in treating COVID-19 cases appears to be the lack of qualified personnel to run the few ventilators and ICUs. Many humanitarian organisations and CSOs are greatly concerned that the Syrian health care system may not be able to manage the COVID-19 breakout at all. Making the situation worse more than 13 million of the 22 million people in Syria depend on humanitarian aid, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).⁴ Due to the war, the majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria now live in improvised houses and confined spaces, which makes maintaining the recommended two-meter distance almost impossible. Under these conditions, it is likely that COVID-19 will spread rapidly, with devastating consequences. See for more information on COVID-19 in Syria [*Resources*](#) [Other COVID-19 Resources on Syria](#).

Syrian Government

The health care system in the areas controlled by the Syrian government is very weak. Even before the war, outside the big cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Tartus, and Latakia, the country's health care infrastructure was of a very poor quality. This was especially true in the North and East of Syria. During the war, good health care became politicized and weaponized, and rendered as a reward for those who stayed loyal to the Syrian government.

As of March this year, the Syrian government's management of the COVID-19 crisis still lacks any clear strategy. More than one month after the receipt of PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction) machines for testing samples from the WHO in April 2020, the Ministry of Health still had no capacity to carry out tests. People suspected of becoming infected have had to wait for days to receive test results, during which they continue to move around and potentially spread the virus. The same ministry has still not supplied medical personnel with enough personal protective equipment (PPE) and staff has not received any training on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures for the Coronavirus. For COVID-19 updates in Syria see [*Resources*](#) [Daily updates](#) and [Government of Syria](#).

North West Syria

The worst situation is in the province of Idlib in North West Syria. Since the ceasefire on March 5 2020, more than 200,000 refugees have moved to displacement camps or to their damaged houses - houses they left abandoned after the fighting broke out. Some 3 million people, almost one third of the Idlib population, now live in crowded conditions or in IDP camps: they lack clean water, and have insufficient hygiene provisions and minimal access to medical care. Adequate hygiene and social distancing are nearly impossible. While the area was granted some respite from the Syrian Government offensive since the ceasefire, the earlier bombing campaigns put 61 medical facilities out of action. At the same time, medicine, medical equipment, and hospital beds have become dangerously scarce.

Just 60 beds for those 3 million people were available before the COVID-19 outbreak. For COVID-19 updates in Syria see ***Resources*** [Daily updates](#) and [North West Syria](#).

North East Syria

A recent report by the WHO describes this region as one of the most underserved in terms of health facilities in Syria today, with the number of health facilities, hospital beds, and health care workers well below accepted standards.⁵ Less than 10% of the public healthcare facilities and just two out of the 11 public hospitals are fully functional and no district meets the emergency threshold of at least 10 beds per 10,000 people.⁶ Health experts have warned that the region has the capacity to deal with around 500 COVID-19 cases, at best. It is difficult to imagine conditions more vulnerable to an outbreak of the virus. The health authorities have only 150 ventilators for patients diagnosed with COVID-19. Medical staff is suffering from the little means at their disposal. Humanitarian organizations, too, need to make impossible choices in these circumstances. For COVID-19 updates in Syria see ***Resources*** [Daily updates](#) and [North East Syria](#).

State and regional authorities regulations

Regulations and actions in response to the COVID-19 outbreak taken by the Syrian Government differ from those taken by North East Syria and North West Syria. For several reasons, not all people are following the measures ordered by the diverse authorities. In some areas, the will to follow the health measures is very low, which demonstrably helps to spread the virus. There is no united governing force in the country that can take the lead to ensure people adhere to the COVID-19 restrictions and measures. In addition, the bad coverage of the Coronavirus by the state-controlled media and the general lack of trust in public institutions reduces the effect of the COVID-19 messages delivered by the Syrian Government.

Syrian Government

In March this year, the Syrian government formed a “Special Committee” to control the proliferation of COVID-19 and, to decide and implement the necessary recommendations and decisions. This committee is interdepartmental, with representatives from different ministries. By the end of March, the government in Damascus had also created the “Higher Committee for Health and National Safety.” On Wednesday, March 25, Syrian authorities announced a nationwide night-time curfew to prevent further spread of Coronavirus from 6 pm to 6 am, taking effect immediately until further notice. According to the Minister of Interior, violators of the curfew will be subject to possible detention. The country has suspended public transportation and ordered the closure of shops and markets. Additionally, all passenger flights into and out of the country have been halted. They took a first step to relax the initial curfew in mid-March. From May 26, the daily curfew was completely lifted, as was the travel ban between and within governorates. Since the March 20, markets have been allowed to open from 8 am to 7 pm, as long as precautionary COVID-19 measures were adopted such as the social distance and hygienic rules. Restaurants, gyms, swimming pools, theatres, cafes, and public parks remained closed for almost two months from late-March till late-May and after that they remained open. Mosques were allowed to re-open on May 26 every day, including for group prayer, providing physical distancing was maintained. Public and private transportation services also started again on that date. Universities and institutions were reopened on May 31, and preparations were on going for basic education and high school exams in June, which are the primary exams in the Syrian education school system. The General Command of the Syrian Army and Armed Forces announced suspension of recruitment measures for soldiers to join the army from late-March till late-May.

They also suspended legal procedures related to summoning charged citizens to court for hearings, and the procedures for prosecuting those who do not attend. Despite these relaxations, the Syrian Government has reiterated that a full curfew remains possible, should factors related to the virus necessitate it. Since the middle of July, the virus started to spread again very quickly throughout Syria, though no new lockdown measures had been implemented by the end of August (see for updates on regulations ***Resources*** [Syrian Government](#)).

North East Syria

In March 2020 the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria issued a decree, valid from 23 March to 5 June, to prevent the spreading of COVID-19. The main measures taken by the authority are a daily curfew from 7 pm to 7 am, transport, medical facilities, shops, and markets are allowed to operate between 7 am to 7 pm and travel between districts, but not between governorates, is permitted. Only humanitarian personnel are allowed to enter and exit the area, however preliminary authorization has been granted for staff who work in humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to cross into North East Syria. The Tell Abiad and Ras Al-Ain border crossings, the main border crossings for humanitarian organizations, are reported to be partially open for some commercial and humanitarian shipments. All meetings and public events are prohibited but religious centres are allowed to open after they have been disinfected. Next, all schools, universities and other educational institutions will be closed indefinitely. Local authorities in NES relaxed some preventive measures over the holy month of Ramadan (April 24 – May 24). Takeaway/delivery food services were allowed to open from May 26, but all other restaurants, cafes, and sport halls remain closed. The preventive measures remain in place until at least June 5 such as keeping social distance, urging people who are not feeling well or show symptoms of COVID-19, the elderly and anyone with pre-existing medical conditions are to avoid attending any events (see for updates on regulations ***Resources*** [North East Syria](#)).

North West Syria

The main authority in the Idlib region, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), placed the city of Idlib, North West Syria under curfew on May 29 2020. The HTS called upon civilians to adhere to the curfew without revealing the reasons. They also imposed a curfew for hours in the town of al-Dana, while launching a campaign against ISIS. Especially in Idlib, the curfew is impossible to maintain because one third of the three million people in the area live in overcrowded camps, where hygiene measures and social distancing are next to impossible to uphold (see for updates on regulations ***Resources*** [North West Syria](#)).

Society

The consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak have significantly impacted on the social, psychological, and cultural aspects of Syrian society.

Mental health

The ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in massive population displacement and growing needs for humanitarian services including mental health care inside Syria. The prevalence of emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression can double in a humanitarian crisis, and people with pre-existing mental health problems are especially vulnerable. More than 38,000 people appealed to the United Nations in 2013 alone for help after facing sexual assault or other gender-based violence.⁷ Depression and other mental health problems are rampant across Idlib, where half of the population exists of refugees and IDPs.

Even before the war began, the country of 22 million had just 100 psychiatrists but around half of them have since fled the country. Today, the national mental health services are overburdened by the demands placed on them by the Syria crisis. Health facilities which previously provided integrated mental health services in Syria have themselves become casualties of war, with most either destroyed, damaged or not functioning. The shortage of trained mental health care providers is viewed as critical. The U.N. Population Fund released figures that illustrated that it provided psychological first aid and/or support for such violence to 33,430 people in Syria in the first 11 months of the conflict in 2013 and to another 4,800 in December of that same year.

Studies show that conflict-affected Syrians have problems that express themselves in a wide range of emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioural and social problems (See ***Resources Other resources*** - *International Medical Corps* - Addressing Regional Mental Health Needs and Gaps in the Context of the Syria Crisis; *International Rescue Committee (IRC)* - A look into the mental health crisis in Syria). These problems do not necessarily indicate mental disorders but are more the result of the circumstances under which the people live. Therefore, improvement of living conditions may contribute significantly to improving mental health, in many cases more so than any psychological or psychiatric intervention. Next to individual strategies, social activities are important to cope with tension and stress. A few NGOs like the International Rescue Committee and the International Medical Corps are providing help in some areas in Syria (see ***Resources Other Resources***). Strengthening and expanding the national mental health services is crucial for Syria's longer term recovery because the need for treatment will last for years after the war ends (also see ***Resources Other Resources*** - *World Health Organisation* - Looking after our mental health and Mental health care in Syria: another casualty of war).

Domestic violence

Domestic violence against women and girls is not a recent issue in Syria, traditionally a dominant patriarchal country where men provide the main source of income and women run the home. In 2006 the first countrywide domestic violence survey showed that 10% to 25% of the married women experienced domestic violence. Four years later another survey found a serious increase of gender-based violence; then 33% of the women were subjected to physical violence within their family environment. Syrian law does not place legal controls protecting women from domestic violence. The penal code stipulates that husbands disciplining their wives in a form permitted by general custom is not a crime. To close this gap in Syrian law, civil organizations drafted the "Family Law" suggesting legislative measures to tackle domestic violence against women. It was presented to the parliament in 2007 with no further action taken due to the lack of a political will. This makes it very difficult to address and combat domestic violence legally.

In a violent conflict women have always been disproportionately affected. Most of the casualties in the Syrian conflict have been men therefore women increasingly constitute the heads of their households. This affects the traditional division of gender roles and left women to face progressively more and diversified vulnerabilities. In a recent report by Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) (see ***Resources Other resources for Syria***) the authors observe that —Syrian women and girls have not been accidental victims of the conflict, but have rather been directly and deliberately targeted. Female activists who continue to play an essential role since the uprising since 2011, have been deliberately targeted and others just because they are women. Thousands of Syrian women were thrown into regime's prisons, yet the exact numbers are unknown.

Among the various types of violations, torture and sexual abuse of women have become a war strategy for the government in Damascus. The goal is to break the women, and thus the family and with it opposition in society. All armed groups are involved in cases of violence against women — and the Syrian government heads that list. For example, women are used as a human shield, forced to strip naked and walk on all sides of army tanks (see **Resources Other resources for Syria** *SYRIAPAGEBYPAGE* - Domestic Violence In Syria).

The impact of COVID-19 on women in Syria cannot be separated from their exposure to the violence and trauma of war and displacement. The pandemic has reinforced an unjust gender divide and revealed deep structures of injustice, inequality, and years of structural violence. A rise in the risk of physical violence for females was especially noticeable during the lockdown and travel ban. Women and girls were facing already specific barriers to access the limited health facilities that are available, but now these facilities were completely out of reach. In particular, women and children in IDP centers and refugee camps who are in the majority, suffer seriously from all kinds of abuse. The displacement leads to a rapid rise in domestic violence that includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, along with cases of neglect. As they are living outside their home communities, their support system is confined to their tent and their home is no longer a safe place. Women who have access to electricity and internet lack the privacy needed to seek online consultation. Children lack the resources for schooling at home and leave their education at an early age, forcing them into child labour, early marriages or unknowingly into sexual slavery. Female breadwinners seeking basic services are subjected to physical violence and sometimes are forced by local aid workers to trade food and lifts for sexual favours (see **Resources Other resources for Syria** – United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) -Whole of Syria Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility. Voices from Syria 2018 - Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview). Women and children are not the only victims. Gay and bisexual men as well as transgender women, are also subjected to extreme sexual violence by government troops and non-state armed groups (see **Resources Other resources for Syria** - Human Rights Watch —They Treated Us in Monstrous Ways Sexual Violence Against Men, Boys, and Transgender Women in the Syrian Conflict). While the violence against Syrian women is omnipresent, women and girls living in the rural parts of Syria and those in the North and Northeast of the country are more affected (see also **Resources Other resources UNFPA** - Survivors of sexual violence need healing and justice even amid pandemic, leaders assert and Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start).

The shame culture associated with violence against women, often restrain women to report abuse to the authorities and also prevents them to seek appropriate help. Family members will stop women to do so as it affects the honour of the entire family. Besides, there are no safe complaint mechanisms for the victims nor through government agencies, nor through hospitals, police departments and the public prosecution. That is why the discourse of women's right organisations on the impact of COVID-19 has shifted from protecting women in the public sphere to protecting them at home. Like most CSOs they shifted to online modalities. Other organisations have started implementing emergency and humanitarian work such as providing sanitary and hygiene kits for women. Kvinna till Kvinna, a Swedish CSO, send out a survey to its Syrian partners to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on women and girls and assist them to adapt their respond to the crisis (see **Resources Other resources for Syria** *Kvinna till Kvinna*). Today, Syria accommodates many different organisations working on gender-based violence operating in all 14 governorates and 198 sub-districts (see **Resources Other resources for Syria** *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)* - Whole of Syria - Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility. Voices from Syria 2020 - Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (Draft).

The Syrian CSO *Women now for Development* runs 5 women centers in Syria (see ***Resources*** *Other resources*). The *International Medical Corps* includes protection principles in all programs, delivering focused gender-based violence prevention and response programs to address specific protection needs in Syria and to provide care and support for survivors (see ***Resources*** *Other resources for Syria*).

The CSO *Abaad* offers a “Playing for Gender Equality” Program and an online learning course - Gender-Based Violence Case Management in Emergency Settings (see ***Resources*** *Other resources*). For more see ***Resources*** *Other resources for Syria* - *Syria Middle East Domestic Violence Agency*; *UN Women* - National hotline Syria; *Other sources* *United Nations* - Policy Brief. The impact of COVID-19 on women; *UN Women* - Global Database on Violence against Women, The Shadow Pandemic: Domestic violence in the wake of COVID-19 (Video), - Virtual Knowledge Centre to end violence against women and girls: Helpline Syria; *Women now for Development*; *World Health Organisation* - Displaced or refugee women are at increased risk of violence. What can WHO do? and Strengthening the health system response to violence against women [video]).

Stigma

A traditional and patriarchal society as Syria is organized around strict norms and values that are maintained by rigid social control. Stigmas, marks of disgrace that set a person or a group apart, are one way to uphold the societal order. Anybody who does not fit the firm social order, either willingly or unwillingly, can count on disapproval or discrimination. Social stigmas are commonly related to culture, religion, gender, race, intelligence, and health. Since the civil war Syrian women and girls who have already a weak position in society, encounter social stigma to an increasing degree. Females who suffer from sexual assault, especially rape, experience discrimination and social exclusion (see ***Resources*** *Other resources for Syria* - *Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights* - Understanding Gender, Gender Based Violence and Stigma in Syrian Communities. A mapping of three different Syrian communities by Syrian First Responders. 2017-2018). Female survivors of detention, believed to have been raped, are regularly ostracized. A woman's punishment is double: social punishment on one side, which could lead her family to disown her on the basis that she sinned, or the fear that she could pass stigma on to her children, as well as psychological punishment on the other side, as Rahaf Mohieddin, a Syrian psychiatrist, explains.⁸ Another problem is the stigma for divorced women, stigma associated with mental health, stigma for the gay community and Syrian Arab women battling the Islamic State.^{9, 10, 11} For a group of people who already carry such a heavy burden, stigma is an unacceptable addition to their pain. It seems understandable, then, that the great majority of the victims do not speak out about their experience with stigma, posing a further barrier to people seeking care.

It seems that the COVID-19 pandemic has provoked social stigma and discriminatory behaviours. The change of gender roles and isolation of already weakened communities, especially in IDP and refugee camps, stigma are taken a turn for the worst. The same is true for people who have or are perceived to have been in contact with the virus, as well as their caregivers, family, friends, and communities. They are discriminated upon for something that lies out of their control. To avoid stigma, some conservative families will not allow female members to be taken to the quarantine centers, even to visit the hospital or for other family members to get tested for Corona. Next to a lack of knowledge of the spread of the Coronavirus, public health officers consider the stigma associated with illness and quarantine as one of the biggest obstacles in fighting COVID-19.

For more information see ***Resources*** Other resources for Syria - The Syrian Initiative's Campaign to Reduce Societal Stigma of SGBV Survivors in Syria - A Repeated Suffering: Societal Refusal of Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (video) and Other Resources *World Health Organisation - A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19* and *What can you do to fight stigma associated with COVID-19?* (Video).

People on the move

The Syrian war has led to a rise in the number of internally displaced Syrian people. Millions of people have left their homes behind - the majority women and children. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the UNHCR estimated (2019) that about 6.2 million Syrians, of the 22 million, had been internally displaced - more than a third of them children - and over 5.6 million were officially registered as refugees (see ***Resources*** Other resources for Syria - UNHCR - Syrian situation). They all had to face unimaginable difficulties and hardships while trying to make their way to safer places; lacking water, food, basic health services and electricity in the camps and no way of paying their basic needs. More than half of the officially registered Syrian refugees live in Lebanon and the rest mainly in Jordan and Turkey. In the host countries they suffer from exploitation (working for a pittance), sexual abuse, and discrimination. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 the position of both refugees and IDPs worsened.¹²

The host countries experience deep economic crises themselves, Lebanon more than others, and the Coronavirus once again emphasized the weak economic systems. For the humanitarian organizations this means that their ability to continue to provide assistance to Syrian refugees is hampered. In addition, due to fear of social stigma and deportation, refugees with symptoms similar to COVID-19 are afraid to seek medical help. The hostilities in the province of Idlib, which are under control of different opposing forces, drove nearly a third of the inhabitants of North West Syria to the border with Turkey and significantly weakened the health infrastructure in the area. Taking advantage of the recent temporary ceasefire agreement, thousands of internally displaced persons decided to return to more safe and secure places where less difficult conditions than in the border camps exist. Yet, as the civil war continues and the frontlines keep changing, people will continue to be on the move, which in a pandemic threatens the lives of thousands of Syrians (also see ***Resources*** Other COVID-19 Resources on Syria *International Organization for Migration (IOM) - Displacement Tracking Device - Dashboard Covid-19*).

Humanitarian aid

Since the conflict started in 2011, Syria has become a destitute country and depends, for the greatest part, on humanitarian aid. Approximately half of the population (11.1 million of the 22 million Syrians) is in need of some form of humanitarian assistance in 2020 and half of those are in acute need. The war economy and the world economic crisis resulted in an unstable Syrian pound and led to an upsurge in the need for humanitarian assistance. The trade sanctions and restrictions imposed by the European Union and the US have, without a doubt, had a negative influence on providing humanitarian aid to Syria.^{13, 14} In addition to all this, the crisis caused by COVID-19 has played a major role in increasing the number of people in need whilst humanitarian programmes were temporarily delayed. UN agencies have reported critical funding gaps to support and sustain current levels of response to these humanitarian needs.¹⁵ Until June 2020, Syria received only 22.1% of their total budget needed for a COVID-19 response. By the end of this year Syria will need almost 2 billion dollars according to the UN to sustain its humanitarian support requirements and

to respond to COVID-19 pandemic. The UN established a COVID-19 Crisis Coordination Committee for Syria led by the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator that includes the WHO representative. Though based in Damascus the Committee tries to cover other regions in Syria as well but UN organisations can, by their own regulations, only work with nation states. The WHO holds regular meetings to monitor the implementation of their COVID-19 preparedness and response plan. Nonetheless, weekly operational calls to North East Syria and North West Syria are on-going, including discussions on the development of strategies to deal with COVID-19 responses.

In general, since the outbreak of the pandemic in March there has been a worrying lack of coordination and transparency at all levels: within the country between the different areas, between the Syrian government and the Syrian people (the people do not trust the government), and between UN organizations working in Syria and the Syrian CSOs. This prohibits the organisation of an effective and efficient national action plan for dealing with COVID-19. In July 2020, the UN Security Council Resolution 2504, the mechanism which has allowed the UN to deliver humanitarian aid from Turkey into North West Syria, expired.¹⁶ Since, the border crossing between Turkey and North West Syria at Bab al-Salameh has been closed. Undoubtedly, this will threaten the import of food aid, medicine, and other critical supplies.

Since the civil war Syria has an increasingly strong representation of civil society organisations in the country both locally, regionally and internationally. They work on various important issues and some of them work specifically on providing humanitarian aid. Syrian civil society has served millions of men, women, and children with relief, medical care, education, empowerment, economic support, and protection. However, many CSOs shifted their priorities to respond to the emerging needs and added COVID-19 related activities. The resilience of Syrian grassroots organisations to fast changing contexts as a result of COVID-19 and other overlapping crises has been truly inspiring. That the degree of organisation in the CSO sector is high is proven by the many CSO platforms, see *Badael*; the ‘Map of Organizations in Syria’ and ‘Syrian Civil Society Organizations Reality and Challenges’ by *Citizens for Syria*; the ‘NGO Directory of Syria’ by *Arab.org*; *The Syria International NGO Regional Forum (sirf)*; *Syrian NGO Alliance (SNA)*; *We exist - The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Syrians: An analysis by Syrian Civil Society at [Resources Other resources for Syria](#)*.

For international humanitarian organisations see *Aga Khan Development Network. Syria; Cordaid. Syria; Humanitarian Response. Syria; International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) Syria; International Rescue Committee (ICR). Syria; International Medical Corps. Syria; Near East Foundation (NEF) Syria; Reliefweb. Syria; Ummah Welfare Trust. Syria; UNDP and the United Nations System in Syria; UNOCHA - Humanitarian Response: COVID-19 - Syria. Weekly situation reports; UNPFA - Syria country office COVID-19 humanitarian response. Flash update # 3 May 2020 at [Resources Other resources for Syria](#). At [Resources Other resources](#) see *UNOCHA - Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*.*

Heritage

Much of Syria’s significant cultural heritage has fallen victim to the conflict. Many historical landmarks have been damaged or destroyed, and hundreds of archaeological sites and museums have been systematically plundered and looted.

The destruction of Syrian heritage is huge. Many Syrian and international initiatives have documented the damage, including the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), the Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA), the Syrian Heritage Archive Project, Syrian Heritage in Danger (SHIRIN), and Heritage for Peace (HfP) (see for their websites [*Resources Other resources for Syria*](#)). Through its Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI) programme, the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) compiled a comprehensive account of the damage to Syria's archaeological sites, museums, and listed buildings between 2014 and 2018. For four years the initiative documented many incidents of looting, theft, damage, and destruction. The records include military and human activities such as illegal excavations, and agricultural and urban encroachment. In addition, many actors in the Syrian conflict have deliberately targeted the country's heritage, most famously the so-called Islamic State. All CHI reports are available online (see [*Resources Other resources for Syria - American Schools of Oriental Research \(ASOR\) - Cultural Heritage Initiatives \(CHI\) \(report\)*](#)). Now the only group in Syria who is documenting damage is DGAM and Syrians for Heritage (SIMAT), a CSO from Idlib that collaborates with the Idlib Antiquities Center. During 2020 they realized different reports on documenting the damage (see [*Resources Other resources for Syria - Syrians for Heritage*](#)). To keep oneself abreast of the latest developments, follow the news on the aforementioned heritage organisations (also see [*Resources Other resources for Syria Ettijahat*](#) and [*Other resources Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage \(ANSCH\)*](#) and [*UNESCO - Culture and COVID-19*](#)). Heritage for Peace is publishing a monthly Damage Newsletter (see [*Resources Other resources for Syria*](#)).

The breakup of the Syrian heritage community caused by the civil war has impeded professional networking, the personal development of young professionals, and the ability of cultural managers to recruit and partner with young talent. The COVID-19 crisis will likely isolate and weaken the potential for productive connectivity between the various communities even more. In addition, as in healthcare, many experienced heritage workers have left the country since the conflict began, leaving the heritage sector struggling. Significant funding has also been diverted away from the heritage sector since 2011. In all, this leaves heritage at high risks due to neglect, lack of resources, widespread economic difficulties, and lack of management, to say nothing of the risks from the violent conflict.

Since the pandemic control measures were implemented in March, the state of the heritage sector in Syria has grown worse. The Syrian government closed down the offices of the DGAM in Damascus and all of its offices in the rest of the Syrian provinces: some were semi-closed and some were expected to re-open. All the DGAM's main activities have been put on hold; restoration work has stopped, as well as archaeological field research. Since 20th March, all museums, archaeological sites, historic monuments, libraries, and archives have been closed in the areas under the control of the Syrian Government. The same measures were implemented in North East Syria; the Authority of Culture that is responsible for cultural heritage in the region stopped functioning from late March to the end of May 2020 because of the pandemic control measures. In addition, since the lockdown was put in place, CSOs have moved online and stopped their main in-situ activities such as organizing tours and lectures in big cities like Aleppo and Damascus, thus leaving many heritage workers in tourism jobless.

The DGAM has launched the 'Virtual Museum of Syrian Cultural Heritage', after they closed down, which shows examples of artefacts on display in various Syrian museums, and examples of archaeological sites.¹⁷ This virtual exhibit will help academics, researchers and students to access information easily when the DGAM library is closed. In late June, the National Museum of Damascus opened after two months of closure.

Several restoration projects have restarted, such as the restoration of the Great Umayyad Mosque in Aleppo and the restoration of the souks in Aleppo.



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Recommendations

Heritage Emergency Funding

In the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) *Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19*, there is no cluster for Culture or Heritage and much humanitarian aid today is redirected towards fighting COVID-19 and assistance to the most vulnerable. Many aid budgets have been reduced, including in the heritage sector. While several countries created emergency funds for their own heritage sector, recognising the devastating impact of COVID-19, very few international organisations will fund heritage organisations in the present crisis elsewhere. Still, we found a few examples (for more see ***Resources*** Other resources - *Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (ANSCH)* - COVID-19):

- *ALIPH Foundation (International Alliance for the protection of heritage in conflict areas)*: ALIPH supports a wide variety of projects to protect heritage that is endangered, under threat, or which has suffered from negligence brought about by conflict. See: <https://www.aliph-foundation.org/>
- *British Council. Cultural Protection Fund*: It is aimed at helping to create sustainable opportunities for economic and social development through building capacity to foster, safeguard and promote cultural heritage. See: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/culture-development/cultural-protection-fund>

- *Gerda Henkel Foundation. Funding Initiative Patrimonies:* The Patrimonies funding initiative considers projects that focus on the preservation of historical cultural heritage first and foremost in crisis regions and, in some cases, will enable scientific research in the fields of history, archaeology, and art history. See: <https://www.gerda-henkel-stiftung.de/en/patrimonies>
- *Global Heritage Fund: Global Heritage Solidarity Fund.* Putting people first in our response, we protect cultural heritage now — and ensure that coming generations will survive to protect heritage in the future. See: <https://globalheritagefund.org/global-heritage-solidarity-fund/>
- *International Institute for the Conservation of Museum Objects (ICC). Opportunities Fund:* This fund is for helping to create a sustainable and resilient conservation community. However, you need to join ICC first. See: <https://www.iiconservation.org/about/awards/opportunities>
- *Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development. Cultural Emergency Response (CER):* The Cultural Emergency Response programme (CER) helps protect threatened heritage. See: <https://princeclausfund.org/save-heritage-now>
- *UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund:* The fund is meant for UNESCO member states, and thus government organisations, to enable them to respond quickly and effectively to crises resulting from armed conflicts and disasters caused by natural and human-made hazards all over the world. See: <https://en.unesco.org/themes/protecting-our-heritage-and-fostering-creativity/emergencyfund2>
- *World Heritage Fund:* The World Heritage Fund provides about US\$4 million annually to support activities requested by States Parties in need of international assistance in managing their World Heritage sites. It is, therefore, only for governments and for World Heritage sites. See: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/funding/>
- *World Monuments Relief Fund:* No information available. See: <https://www.wmf.org/world-monuments-relief-fund>

Humanitarian assistance for heritage staff

Many heritage workers have lost their jobs and are struggling to make ends meet. For them, as with others, humanitarian aid in cash assistance, food assistance and the like, can be applied for at charitable (religious) organisations and humanitarian organisations. If you are a heritage worker and you are considering applying for aid, be aware that in order to improve your chances of a successful application, it is best to apply as a group - the larger the group the better e.g. all museum staff in a city. (For a list of a few international humanitarian organisations with country offices in Syria, see below at **Resources Other resources for Syria**). Staff that are still employed and need medical supplies and/or personal protection equipment can also turn to one of these humanitarian organisations.

Income generating projects

One way to survive the double crisis is to consider income-generating activities. Such projects consist of small community-level businesses, managed by a group of people to increase their household income through livelihood diversification. Such projects are well-known in agriculture and arts and crafts, but the idea can be applied to any sector. It is different from commercial activities organised by the cultural institutions themselves, like opening a museum shop to sell arts and crafts products or publications. In the case of income generating activities, the revenues go directly to the group of people who started the project.

When a member of staff is considering an income generating project, it is important to realize what the Unique Selling Point is. It could be producing copies of iconic artefacts (assuming permissions are granted), production of publications, organizing online training or other courses, or online cultural activities. As traveling is, at the least, very difficult or forbidden, products need to be offered online. However, staff could also set up projects outside the heritage sector, like producing masks or disinfectants. Alternatively, projects could be started that indirectly benefit the institution staff. One good example is to start community-based income generating activities based around a local archaeological site. This will mitigate subsistence looting in the area, a way to supplement the income of community members. Clearly these kinds of projects require a lot of creative thinking. For funding staff, you could propose an income generating project at humanitarian organisations (see below at **Resources** Other resources for Syria). See for more on income generation projects:

- *Food and Agriculture Organisation*. Income generating activities (IGAs): <http://www.fao.org/3/x0206e/x0206e03.htm>
- *Museum and Heritage*. Income generation: <https://advisor.museumsandheritage.com/features/income-generation-how-to-increase-revenue-in-museums/>

Expertise

Some staff or organisations feel they need expert advice. In that case, see under the specific heritage sector in Part I of these Guidelines. It should be noted, however, that many people underestimate the knowledge and expertise that is around them, in their own country or another MENA country. Local expertise has no language barrier, you deal with a more culturally sensitive organisation, and, often, the suggested advice is appropriate to the region.

In short, seek advice as close to home as possible. If that is not possible, it is best to target one (foreign) heritage institution you feel comfortable with. Develop a relation with that institution where you can reach out with all kinds of questions. If you are seeking academic knowledge, for the latest academic articles in a specific heritage field you can consider:

- Academia at <https://www.academia.edu/>
- ResearchGate at <https://www.researchgate.net/login>

Both require an account, but will not pass on your details, and many academics use them to share their work. In addition, many UK universities now have an Institutional Research Data Repository, where they place copies of any articles written by their staff for free access.

Tasks

A crisis can sometimes be an opportunity but staff can still work on alternative tasks during lockdown, such as conducting overdue maintenance and completing essential conservation tasks. Managers could consider whether it could be a good time to provide extra training for staff or to encourage them to diversify their responsibilities and experience by learning about and taking on essential non-job related tasks like security, site monitoring, or public relations. Switching tasks can give staff a chance to learn more about the work processes of the organisation, which can be very advantageous for the whole team. In addition, while an institution is closed, the management team can make new plans and design new strategies related to running the organisation, develop and update the institution's online presence, evaluate data collected on visitor experiences and respond to feedback, develop educational material relating to your institution, or even plan future work that needs to be done.

Make sure to start an awareness-raising campaign, so that people become aware of what you are doing, how important your work is, and about the role of heritage in society (see also Part III of the Guidelines - *Basic Digital Tools*).

Further assistance

The potency of laymen is often underestimated. Groups organized around different issues could have experience with issues your organization is struggling with, like awareness-raising campaigns, the use of digital tools, networking, and marketing strategies. Think of youth groups, women's organisations, nature conservation groups, students, local peace committees and community groups. It may be worthwhile contacting them and putting out a call for assistance. You could also combine an awareness-raising campaign with a call for assistance, for example, to join a neighbourhood watch. For this purpose, you should open an emergency number. In the recent past, imams, mosque visitors and entire neighbourhoods have helped cultural institutions to move their collections voluntarily, protected repositories and cultural institutions, and communities have also defended archaeological sites. The latter is very important as guards and antiquities police, often involuntarily, have been forced to leave sites unprotected. If security forces or police are not protecting an institution or archaeological site you could, of course, always request that they do so.

Networking

The Syrian government is not able to offer any financial compensation for the Syrian people. As a result, local initiatives and solidarity networks have been formed in different areas to gather donations and to help poor people by providing food and services to those in needs. In these times of pandemic it will be very difficult to acquire funds for heritage emergencies. Many of the problems, however, might be solved through cooperation. Crossing the divide and leaving political, religious, and ethnic differences behind will provide more possibilities for solving some of your problems.

Heritage is not, in itself, political - people make it political. Similarly, bringing partners from diverse heritage sectors together is very rewarding as many heritage workers face the same, or similar, problems, and it is a great learning opportunity. Networks can be created on a "horizontal" level – between, for example, staff in similar roles, like conservators, librarians, archaeologists – or on a vertical level, heritage wide, such as all museum staff. Today, social media can be very useful to connect, enabling people to communicate quickly with each other and organise themselves in small groups, via, for example, WhatsApp or Telegram. You can also create (closed) discussion groups on Facebook, or LinkedIn, or you could join already existing groups. There are downsides to this: 1) many of them are not safe and anybody can "listen in"; 2) your data will often be used for commercial purposes without your knowledge. Be on the alert for Privacy and Safety concerns. If you want a safer internet connection, you can use a Virtual Private Network (VPN) that can protect your privacy from hackers. (For more information, see Part III of the Guidelines - *Basic Digital Tools*). Find some examples for networking below:

- *Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (ANSCH)*. Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/ANSCH-110334927271070/?ref=search&_tn=%2Cd%2CP-R&eid=ARDdn0BQitlUMWW53VQBUZuL6tGY9alFi-zB9R8wtOiKMt-4cOqFBcjtf5WzwZWeMX_jOB1xYQZfpf9
- *Cultural leaders*: <https://www.weforum.org/communities/cultural-leaders>
- *Cultural Heritage Conservation Science. Research and practice*. LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/140198/>
- *Heritage for All*. Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/214091372432295/?ref=br_rs

- *ICOM Arab*. Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1207313432621070/>
- *ICOMOS*. LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1623567/>
- Syria Discovery Initiative. LinkedIn Group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4084744/>
- *World Economic Forum* - Arts & Culture Global Solidarity Network: <https://www.weforum.org/covid-action-platform/projects/arts-culture-global-solidarity-network>

Resources

Daily updates

- *Corona Tracker*. Syria: <https://www.coronatracker.com/country/syria/>
- *Government of Syria*: <http://www.moh.gov.sy/Default.aspx?tabid=246&language=en-US>
- *Worldometers*. Syria: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/syria/>
- *World Health Organisation*. Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region: <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiN2ExNWl3ZGQtZDk3My00YzE2LWFjYmQtNGMwZjk0OWQ1MjFhIiwidCI6ImY2MTBjMGI3LWJkMjQtNGIzOS04MTBiLTNkYzI4MGFmYjU5MCIsImMiOj9>

Government of Syria

- *Syrian Ministry of Health*: <http://www.moh.gov.sy/Default.aspx?tabid=246&language=en-US>

North East Syria

- *Defence of Emergency*: <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/05/05/covid-19-in-northeast-syria/>

North West Syria

- *Reliefweb*. Flashupdate: <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/recent-developments-northwest-syria-flash-update-29-may-2020>

Other COVID-19 Resources on Syria

- *Human Rights Watch* <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/28/syria-aid-restrictions-hinder-covid-19-response>
- *International Committee of the Red Cross*. COVID-19 in Syria: <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/covid-19-syria-icrc-continues-assisting-millions-and-adapts-combat-virus>
- *International Organization for Migration (IOM)*. Displacement Tracking Device – Dashboard Covid-19: <http://syria.dtm.iom.int/COVID19>
- *United Nation Population Fund (UNPFA)*.
 - COVID-19 Situation Report No. 5 for UNPFA, Arab States (30 June 2020): <https://www.unpfa.org/resources/covid-19-situation-report-no-5-unpfa-arab-states>
 - Syria country office COVID-19 humanitarian response. Flash update # 3 May 2020: <https://www.unpfa.org/resources/syria-country-office-covid-19-humanitarian-response-flash-update-3>

- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)*. Humanitarian Response: COVID-19 - Syria. Weekly situation reports: <https://www.unocha.org/story/syria-un-continues-cross-border-humanitarian-response-amid-covid-19>
- *Wikipedia*. COVID-19 pandemic in Syria. Statistics updated daily: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_in_Syria
- *World Health Organisation*:
 - Dynamic Dashboard for Syria: <https://extranet.who.int/publicemergency>
 - Country Office Syria: <https://www.who.int/countries/syr/en/>
 - Mental health care in Syria: another casualty of war: <http://www.emro.who.int/syr/syria-news/mental-health-care-in-syria-another-casualty-of-war.html>
- *World Health Organisation*. Office of Eastern Mediterranean Region: <http://www.emro.who.int/index.html>

Other resources for Syria

- *Aga Khan Development Network*. Syria: <https://www.akdn.org/where-we-work/middle-east/syria>
- *Arab.org*. NGO Directory of Syria: <https://arab.org/countries/syria/>
- *American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR)*
 - Homepage: <http://www.asor.org/about-asor/>
 - Cultural Heritage Initiatives (CHI) (report) <https://www.asor.org/chi/reports/special-reports/Palmyra-Heritage-Adrift>
- *Association for the Protection of Syrian Archaeology (APSA)*
 - <https://www.facebook.com/apsa2011> Facebook Group
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIB311HqkXU> YouTube Group
- *Badael*
www.badael.org
- *Citizens for Syria*.
 - Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/CitizensForSyria>
 - Map of Organizations in Syria: <https://citizensforsyria.org/syrian-cso-capacity/map/>
 - Syrian Civil Society Organizations Reality and Challenges: [https://citizensforsyria.org/OrgLiterature/Syrian CSOs Reality and challenges 2017-CfS EN.pdf](https://citizensforsyria.org/OrgLiterature/Syrian%20CSOs%20Reality%20and%20challenges%2017-CfS%20EN.pdf)
 - Twitter Group: <https://twitter.com/cfsyria>
- *Cordaid*. Syria: <https://www.cordaid.org/en/countries/syria/>
- *Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM)*
 - <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/dgam.syria> Facebook Group
 - <https://www.youtube.com/user/DGAMSyria> YouTube Group
- *Ettijahat*
<https://www.ettijahat.org/site/index?lang=1>
- *Heritage for Peace (HfP)*. Damage Newsletters (Syria) <http://www.heritageforpeace.org/syria-culture-and-heritage/damage-to-cultural-heritage/previous-damage-newsletters/>

- *Human Rights Watch*. They Treated Us in Monstrous Ways. Sexual Violence Against Men, Boys, and Transgender Women in the Syrian Conflict:
https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/08/syria0720_web.pdf
- *Humanitarian Response*. Syria:
<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/syria>
- *International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC)* Syria:
<https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/middle-east/syria>
- *International Rescue Committee (IRC)*.
 - A look into the mental health crisis in Syria. March 19, 2018 (report):
<https://www.rescue.org/article/look-mental-health-crisis-syria>
 - Syria: <https://www.rescue.org/country/syria>
- *International Medical Corps*.
 - Syria: <https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/country/syria/>
 - Addressing Regional Mental Health Needs and Gaps in the Context of the Syria Crisis (2015) (report):
<https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Syria-Crisis-Addressing-Mental-Health.pdf>
- *Kvinna till Kvinna* (27 May 2020). Building a grassroots and women-led response to COVID-19 in Syria. A Covid-19 Snapshot:
<https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Covid-19-Snapshot-by-Kvinna-till-Kvinna.pdf>
- *Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights* (October 2018). Understanding Gender, Gender Based Violence and Stigma in Syrian Communities. A mapping of three different Syrian communities by Syrian First Responders. 2017-2018:
<http://ldhrights.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/LDHR-Gender-GBV-and-Stigma-Mapping-Report-FINAL.pdf>
- *Near East Foundation (NEF)*. Syria:
<https://www.neareast.org/where-we-work/syria/>
- *Reliefweb*. Syria:
<https://reliefweb.int/country/syr>
- *The Syria International NGO Regional Forum (sirf)*.
<https://sirf.ngo/>
- *Syria Middle East Domestic Violence Agencies*:
<https://www.hotpeachpages.net/mideast/#Syria>
- *Syrian Heritage Archive Project*
<https://syrian-heritage.org/>
- *Syrians for Heritage (SIMAT)*
<https://syriansforheritage.org/>
- *The Syrian Initiative's Campaign to Reduce Societal Stigma of SGBV Survivors in Syria*. A Repeated Suffering: Societal Refusal of Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (video)
<https://youtu.be/6X344xkX1KE>
- *Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR)* (Sunday, March 8, 2020). Brief Report: On International Women's Day... Syrian Women Continue to Suffer from the Worst Types of Violations:
<http://sn4hr.org/wp-content/pdf/english/On International Womens Day Syrian Women Continue to Suffer from the Worst Types of Violations en.pdf>

- *Ummah Welfare Trust*. Syria:
<https://uwt.org/where-we-work/syria/>
- *United Nation Development Fund*. UNDP and the United Nations System in Syria:
<https://www.sy.undp.org/content/syria/en/home/about-us/undp-and-the-un.html>
- *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*. Syrian situation
<https://reporting.unhcr.org/syriasituation>
- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)*. Syria:
<https://www.unocha.org/syria>
- *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*.
 - Whole of Syria - Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility. Voices from Syria 2018 - Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview:
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/gbv.pdf>
 - Whole of Syria - Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility. Voices from Syria 2020 - Assessment Findings of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (Draft):
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/voices_from_syria_2020_final_draft.pdf (EN)
https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/voices_from_syria_2020_arabic_final_draft.pdf (AR)
- *UN Woman*.
 - National hotline Syria: **Tel 00963 11 3120447**
- *We exist*
 - <https://weexist-sy.org/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/weexist.sy> Facebook Group
 - <https://twitter.com/WeExistSyria> Twitter Group
 - The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Syrians: An analysis by Syrian Civil Society
<https://weexist-sy.org/wp-content/uploads/20200410-COVID19-in-Syria-Comprehensive-Briefing-3.pdf>

Other resources

- *Abaad*.
 - Playing for Gender Equality Program
<https://www.abaadmena.org/game>
 - Gender based violence case management online course
<http://gbvcm-course.abaadmena.org/>
- *Aga Khan Development Network*. COVID-19 information:
 - Information on homemade and disposable masks:
<https://www.akdn.org/publication/covid-19-information-homemade-and-disposable-masks>
 - Staying safe at home and work: <https://www.akdn.org/publication/staying-safe-home-and-work>
- *Aga Khan University* - CoronaCheck. (via Google Play):
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.edu.aku.akuhccheck>
- *Arab Network for Safeguarding Cultural Heritage (ANSCH)*- COVID-19:
<https://ansch.heritageforpeace.org/guidelines/>
- *Disaster Ready*. Understanding Burnout During COVID-19. Self-Care & Resilience (AR):
<https://ready.csod.com/ui/lms-learning-details/app/material/82ac32f9-1892-483a-87e0-2f8005ffe51d>

- *Speetar*: <https://speetar.com/>
Android: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.speetar.app&hl=en>
Apple: Not currently available
- *UNESCO*. Culture and COVID-19:
<https://en.unesco.org/news/culture-covid-19-impact-and-response-tracker>
- *United Nations*. Policy Brief. The impact of COVID-19 on women:
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>
- *United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)*. Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19:
<https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/952/summary>
- *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*.
 - Survivors of sexual violence need healing and justice even amid pandemic, leaders assert:
<https://www.unfpa.org/news/survivors-sexual-violence-need-healing-and-justice-even-amid-pandemic-leaders-assert>
 - Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start
<https://www.unfpa.org/news/former-child-bride-once-sold-pay-debts-finds-new-start>
- *UN Women*.
 - Global Database on Violence against Women
<https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/syrian-arab-republic?pageNumber=2>
 - *The Shadow Pandemic: Domestic violence in the wake of COVID-19* (Video)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llNP_bW-o0
 - Virtual Knowledge Centre to end violence against women and girls:
Helpline Syria: <https://www.endvawnow.org/en/need-help>
- *Women now for Development*
<https://women-now.org/>
- *World Health Organisation*
 - A guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19 (24 February 2020)
<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/a-guide-to-preventing-and-addressing-social-stigma-associated-with-covid-19>
 - About COVID-19: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/about-covid-19.html>
 - COVID-19 - Questions and answers: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/questions-and-answers.html>
 - Displaced or refugee women are at increased risk of violence. What can WHO do?
<https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/displaced-refugee-women-violence-risk/en/>
 - Health Alert on WhatsApp (Arabic): wa.me/41225017023?text=
 - Looking after our mental health: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/healthyathome/healthyathome---mental-health>
 - Myth busters: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/myth-busters.html> and <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>
 - Protect yourself and others: <http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/protect-yourself-and-others.html>

- Strengthening the health system response to violence against women (video): https://youtu.be/Qc_GHITvTmI
- What can you do to fight stigma associated with COVID-19? (Video). <https://youtu.be/vinh0IIG1p0>

¹ See <https://www.unhcr.org/sy/internally-displaced-people>

² See for example <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/02/syria-health-workers-lack-protection-pandemic>

³ See <https://tcf.org/content/report/un-made-list-hospitals-syria-now-theyre-bombed/?agreed=1>

⁴ See <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html>

⁵ See <https://www.who.int/emergencies/crises/syr/en/>

⁶ See <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2020/05/05/covid-19-in-northeast-syria/>

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¹³ Measures imposed by the European Union through the [Council Decision](#) are 2013/255/CFSP and [Council Regulation](#) (EU) No 36/2012.

¹⁴ See US Caesar Law <https://www.state.gov/caesar-syria-civilian-protection-act/>

¹⁵ See https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/critical_funding_gap_june2020.pdf

¹⁶ See <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2504>

¹⁷ See <http://www.dgam.gov.sy/index.php?d=177&id=2557>