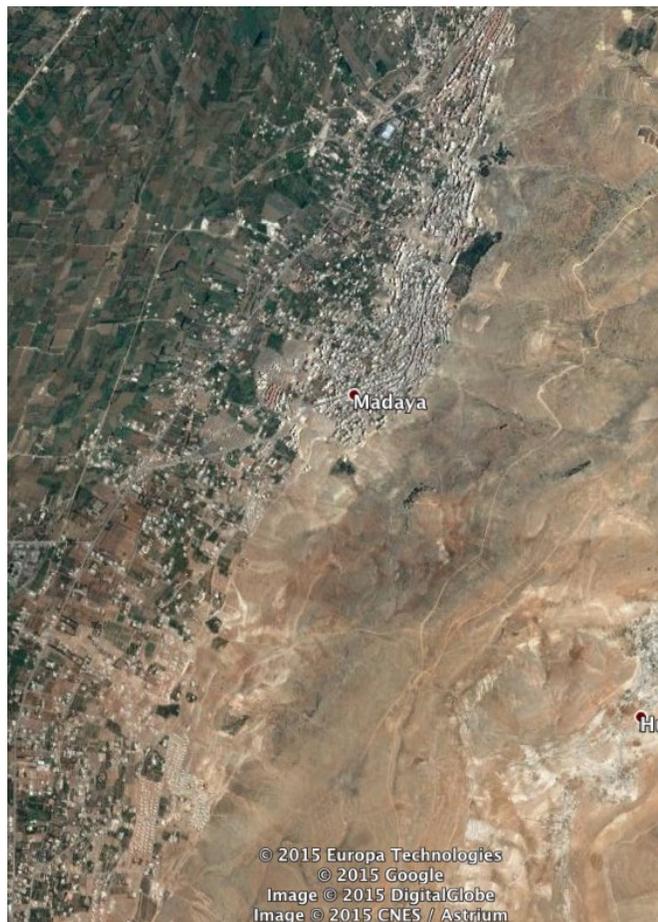
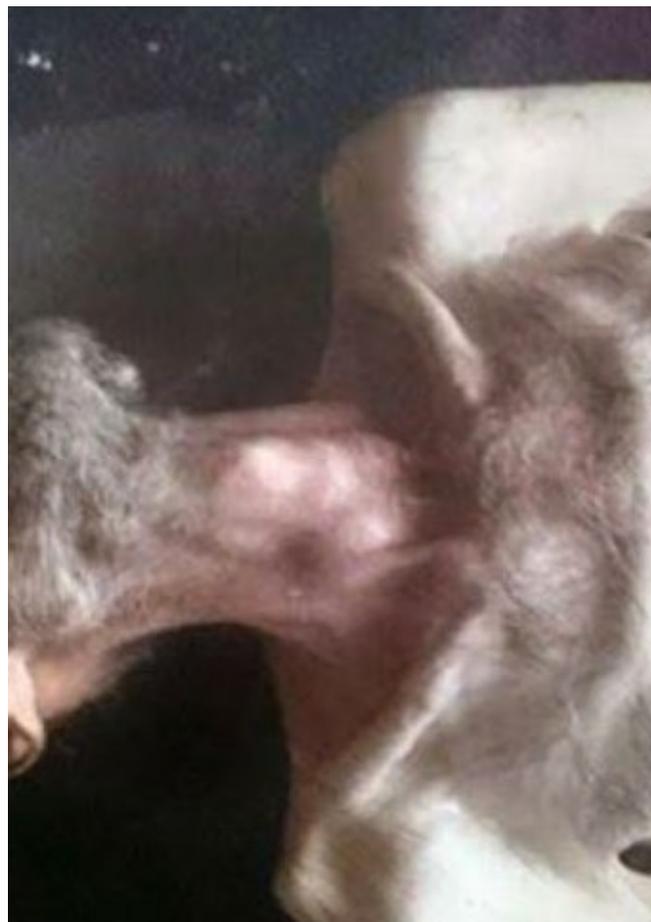


# Madaya: Starvation Under Siege



Google Earth



## Madaya Under Siege

**“Please spread the word of the death in Madaya.”  
—Dr. Khaled, medical practitioner in Madaya**

Madaya is a village in the Zabadani administrative sector in Rural Damascus province. It lies about 25 miles northwest of Damascus in the Qalamoun Mountain chain. In early 2015, Madaya had a population of about 16,780, with approximately 17,000 additional internally displaced persons entering Madaya, most of whom fled from Zabadani.

Madaya and the neighboring town of Beqqin were in a truce with the Syrian government from mid-2012 until mid-2015. The truce was violated multiple times by all parties.

Since July 2015, the Syrian government has enacted a complete siege over Madaya, increasing checkpoints around Madaya, banning civilians from exiting the town, and preventing food and aid from reaching it. Additionally, government and allied Hezbollah forces have put landmines around Madaya and Beqqin towns, making it incredibly dangerous and difficult for civilians to leave or for anyone to smuggle food into the towns. There have been at least 30 civilians who were killed by the explosion of government-implanted landmines or by sniper operations. Snipers surround the towns, and medical

*This report is based on information from Syrian American Medical Society field staff in Lebanon and in coordination with health workers in Madaya, Syria.*



staff have confirmed that since September 2015, the rate of sniper injuries coming from government checkpoints has increased, both during the night and day. The government has bombed Madaya multiple times, but there is not currently active bombing of the town.

Civilians are unable to leave the besieged area and humanitarian convoys are not able to bring food and life-saving assistance into Madaya. Snow is covering the ground in Madaya, and as electricity is non-existent, many people are using what is left of their destroyed houses for heating purposes. Dr. Khaled,

a medical practitioner in Madaya, said, "The winter had a severe impact on starvation and it is a killer because there is no availability of any fuel, cooking gas, wood, or even electricity for heating, which caused a heavy burden on the locals. Knowing that Madaya is a mountain area and will be covered by snow throughout January and February, this will have a very negative impact on civilians along with the starvation." Thousands of people are at an increased risk of developing hypothermia. Locals widely describe besieged Madaya as resembling a prison.

## Starvation and Slow Death

**"What do you want to eat the most?" "Anything is good."  
—7 year old Mohamed Essa, who has not eaten in 7 days**

Since mid-September 2015, the siege of Madaya has led to mass starvation. Crops and stored food supplies have been depleted, and the government-imposed siege has banned any new food from entering. The remaining food in the town has become so expensive that most people simply cannot afford to buy food to eat.

Up to 40,000 civilians are starving to death after living under siege for six months. With severe food shortages, desperate men, women, and children have resorted to eating plants, insects, dirt, and even cats in order to survive. This is not the only instance where hunger has been used as a weapon of war in Syria—**there are over 640,000 people under siege in Syria**, affected by the government's "surrender or starve" policy.

In December 2015, civilian starvation from lack of food and nutrition grew to mass levels and the rate of



Eating leaves to survive

Mohamed Essa

### Prices of some food elements in Madaya on 12/22/2015

- **1 kg of rice:** 32000 SP/ roughly \$85
- **1 kg of flour:** 35000 SP/ roughly \$92
- **1 kg of groats:** 27000 SP/ roughly \$80
- **1 kg of raw hummus:** 27000 SP/ roughly \$80
- **1 kg of sugar:** 35000 SP/ \$92

It is noteworthy that as of 1/5/2016, the price of 1 kg of rice has been raised from \$85 to \$250; prices for food continue to rise.

mortality increased significantly. Protein impairment diseases and malnourishment appeared among the population along with skin diseases and Hepatitis A. Civilians in the town have been reduced to skeletons, with protruding ribs and sunken eyes. The rate of land-mine injuries increased in December because extreme hunger forced many people to try to smuggle food in from neighboring areas and make the dangerous attempt to escape from the western side of the town toward Zabadani.

Civilians in Madaya were anxiously awaiting food that was supposed to be delivered by a Red Crescent team on December 29 as part of a truce that involved wounded prisoner exchange—however, the assistance did not come.

## Deaths in December

Since the beginning of December 2015, a Madaya medical team tracked the deaths of 31 civilians in the town. Six of those who died were infants less than 1 year old, 12 were between 20–45 years old, and 13 were over 45 years old. The majority of these deaths were a result of protein deficiency or malnutrition. Unless support reaches Madaya quickly, medical teams estimate that at least 20,000 people will die within a few weeks' time. SAMS's Dr. Ammar Ghanem, originally from Rural Damascus, said, "If this siege does not break within a few weeks, the whole group of people inside this large prison will die."



## Mortality in Madaya in December 2015

#	Name	Age	Date of death	Cause of death
1	Child from Ezidden family	6 months	12/1/2015	Severe protein deficiency due to lack of formula
2	Mohamad A.	29 y	12/1/2015	Landmine explosion during food smuggling
3	Child from Nassif family	3 months	12/2/2015	Severe protein deficiency due to lack of formula
4	Child from Dalati family	7 months	12/8/2015	Severe protein deficiency due to lack of formula
5	Sarah H.	60 y	12/16/2015	Severe protein deficiency
6	Ali M.	45 y	12/17/2015	Severe protein deficiency
7	Hafiz H.	58 y	12/16/2015	Severe protein deficiency
8	Mahmoud A.	42 y	12/19/2015	Severe protein deficiency
9	Mohamad H.	50 y	12/20/2015	Severe protein deficiency
10	Saleh A.	66 y	12/22/2015	Severe protein deficiency
11	Mohamad J.	64 y	12/22/2015	Severe protein deficiency
12	Ali Y.	55 y	12/22/2015	Severe protein deficiency
13	Child from Alawad family	3 days	2/24/2015	IUGR, maternal malnutrition
14	Mohamad K.	39 y	12/24/2015	Handicapped, malnutrition
15	Jihad A.	24 y	12/24/2015	Landmine injury
16	Wael M.	23 y	12/24/2015	Landmine injury
17	Abdo I.	40 y	12/25/2015	Handicapped, severe malnutrition
18	Ali R.	45 y	12/25/2015	Severe malnutrition
19	Mohamad K.	67 y	12/25/2015	Severe malnutrition
20	Asaad Y.	23 y	12/25/2015	Landmine injury
21	Child of Alshekh family	1 day	12/26/2015	IUGR, maternal malnutrition
22	Bahaa A.	36 y	12/26/2015	Sniper injury
23	Ali S.	25 y	12/26/2015	Sniper injury
24	Child from Rahma family	12 days	12/27/2015	IUGR, maternal malnutrition
25	Mohamad K.	43 y	12/27/2015	Severe malnutrition
26	Refaat H.	26 y	12/27/2015	Sniper injury
27	Abdelelah A.	20 y	12/27/2015	Sniper injury
28	Mohamad D.	55 y	12/28/2015	Severe malnutrition
29	Mohamad G.	60 y	12/28/2015	Severe malnutrition
30	Laiwal A.	57 y	12/28/2015	Severe malnutrition
31	Jameel A.	45 y	12/29/2015	Severe malnutrition

# Injuries That Led to Amputation in December 2015

#	Name	Age	Injury
1	Hassan A.	30 y	Left lower extremity 10 cm below the knee amputation due to a missile
2	Noah S.	23 y	Lower extremity 5 cm above the ankle amputation
3	Abdo N.	25 y	Lower extremity 5 cm above the ankle amputation
4	Mayzer M.	26 y	Lower extremity 10 cm below the knee amputation
5	Hussen A.	37 y	Left lower extremity metatarsal amputation
6	Child from Alloush family	11 y	Below knee amputation of both lower extremities (patient was transferred to Lebanon)

There are extremely limited health services in the town, and medical equipment is drastically undersupplied. There is only one field clinic in Madaya, with an emergency department, operation room, nursing department, lab, and recovery room. Dr. Khaled, a medical practitioner in Madaya, said, "We conduct general surgeries, minor surgeries, caesarian sections, and amputations in the clinic. Over the last month, we noticed increasing numbers of malnutrition. In the last 10 days, it has become more and more of a disaster. We received more than 200 cases of malnutrition of all ages, specifically children. The treatment for them is done only through providing sugar water and some salt. What is the most depressing part is the infants because we cannot provide milk to feed them." There are only five trained medical personnel in Madaya, as well as several other assisting technicians and communications workers. One of the only practicing medical professionals in Madaya is a veterinarian who is now operating on humans for the first time. The field hospital sees around 300 patients a day, half under the age of 10, and the majority of whom



More than 200 cases of malnutrition in 10 days

suffer from malnutrition. Hypoglycemia is also rampant, and the majority of hospital patients ask for food. Dr. Khaled said, "What is needed is international pressure to unlock this siege on Madaya and allow in humanitarian assistance and open a humanitarian path to move out the patients to be treated in central hospitals. Through this siege we have exhausted all supplies in the hospital, from medicine to daily necessities."

As of January 2016, SAMS began supporting the field hospital in Madaya and launched the Madaya Food Fund to bring in high priority food items into the town. These items include formula milk for babies and high-calorie foods like grain, fava beans, wheat, and bread. However, what is needed most is *consistent and sustained* humanitarian access into Madaya based on the needs of the town and safe and immediate allowance for civilians to exit the town of their own accord. Dr. Khaled said, "There must be serious international pressure on the Syrian regime to allow hospital and emergency supplies and assistance into Madaya, and open the humanitarian channels leading to the town. There are more than 500 cases of severe need and follow up from medical specialists, as well as the need for equipment, food, and other items. We thank every person who has tried to bring Madaya a voice to the world."

