

## East Ghouta Talking Points for Meetings/Conversations with Policy Makers

The protracted conflict in Syria has led to the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II. Over 400,000 people have been killed and the country's infrastructure has been decimated.

The situation in besieged East Ghouta has precipitously declined, with its residents facing frequent aerial attacks and a crippling siege which prevents the entry of critical goods and medical equipment. Residents have no access to food, medication or fuel.

On September 25, 2017, SAMS released their latest brief, [Under Siege: The Plight of East Ghouta](#), highlighting the devastating impact of the four-year long blockade on the health sector and underscores the pressing need to break the siege. **Since then, the situation in East Ghouta has further deteriorated, with escalating attacks, and a lack of medicine and medical equipment to treat the ill and injured.**

- Currently, **400,000 people are besieged in East Ghouta, including more than 95,000 children.** Since 2012, civilians have faced ongoing aerial attacks and shelling.
- There are just 107 doctors left in the area - **one doctor for every 3,600 people.**
- More than **13,000 children in East Ghouta** are in urgent need of medical care. SAMS-supported physicians have witnessed acute malnutrition cases amongst children, but they do not have access to supplies or micronutrients to treat these cases. **The rate of malnutrition has reached 12%, the highest seen throughout the Syrian conflict.**
- Currently, over 695 cases are in need of medical evacuation, including 65 under the age of 5, and 225 patients in need of surgery. 19 patients have died while waiting to be medically evacuated.
- In **August 2017 alone**, four children died awaiting evacuation. In August 2017, 9-year-old Sara passed away while negotiations for her evacuation were underway. She suffered from bilateral retinoblastoma, and she needed urgent chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and surgery. In the same month, 6 month old Kenan passed away from leukemia while awaiting medical evacuation.
- In **September 2017**, 5-year-old Osama lost his life due to acute herpetic encephalitis. Acyclovir, the antiviral medication needed to save his life, was available just kilometers away in Damascus.
- In **December 2017**, 9-year-old Batoul passed away while waiting to be evacuated to access treatment for tuberculosis.
- Due to the decimated health infrastructure, **contagious and preventable diseases such as measles and tuberculosis have appeared and spread rapidly.**
- Patients with chronic diseases are among the most affected by the crippling siege. Thousands of patients with **cardiovascular conditions, diabetes, kidney failure, asthma, and epilepsy** face the risk of death as they are not able to access treatment.

This is a critical moment for U.S. leadership on the humanitarian crisis in Syria. We press Members of Congress to take action on the following:

**1. Work with the Administration to prioritize immediate civilian protection and a lifting of the siege in East Ghouta and other besieged communities across Syria.**

**2. Prioritize the immediate entry of a humanitarian convoy and urgent medical evacuations.**

The United States must call for an end to the siege in East Ghouta and all besieged communities across Syria, as well as the immediate entry of aid convoy with most needed supplies based on an impartial needs assessment, and a guarantee that government forces will not extract needed supplies. Convoys should include international monitors to assess and document the delivery of aid in order to ensure that the supplies are reaching the assigned areas.

The United States must also prioritize the evacuation of medical cases for most critical patients.

**3. Make a floor speech about the need for U.S. leadership to resolve the Syrian humanitarian crisis.**

We call on all Members of Congress to make a floor speech about the humanitarian crisis in Syria, particularly in East Ghouta, and the urgent need for U.S. leadership in prioritizing immediate civilian protection, a lifting of the siege, the entry of humanitarian supplies, and a renewed pursuit for a sustainable political solution to the crisis.