The SEF is an innovative think tank dedicated to building a free, pluralistic, and independent homeland that rests on a strong economy to ensure a life of freedom and dignity for all Syrians. The organization will serve as an information resource for all matters relating to the Syrian economy, and its members will conduct economic research and publish scholarly reports. Beyond those attributes typically associated with a traditional think tank, the SEF will organize the private sector to advocate for the economic reforms needed in post-Assad Syria. The organization will develop policy proposals necessary for the birth of a free market economy that upholds equal opportunities of access for the welfare and prosperity of all Syrians. The days are coming when a free Syria will be governed by laws and not men, and the SEF will be at the forefront of economic restructuring that will restore the status, dignity, and rights of the Syrian homeland and people.
About Aleppo

Aleppo is the largest city in Syria and serves as the capital of Aleppo Governorate, the most populous Syrian governorate. With an official population of 2,132,100 (2004 census), it is also one of the largest cities in the Levant. For centuries, Aleppo was the Syrian region’s largest city and the Ottoman Empire’s third-largest, after Constantinople and Cairo.

Aleppo is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world; it has been inhabited since perhaps as early as the 6th millennium BC. Excavations at Tell as-Sawda and Tell al-Ansari, just south of the old city of Aleppo, show that the area was occupied since at least the latter part of the 3rd millennium BC. This is also when Aleppo is first mentioned in cuneiform tablets unearthed in Ebla and Mesopotamia, in which it is noted for its commercial and military proficiency. Such a long history is probably due to its being a strategic trading point midway between the Mediterranean Sea and Mesopotamia (i.e., modern Iraq).

The city’s significance in history has been its location at the end of the Silk Road, which passed through Central Asia and Mesopotamia. When the Suez Canal was inaugurated in 1869, trade was diverted to sea and Aleppo began its slow decline. At the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, Aleppo ceded its northern hinterland to modern Turkey, as well as the important railway connecting it to Mosul. Then in the 1940s it lost its main access to the sea, Antioch and Alexandretta, also to Turkey. Finally, the isolation of Syria in the past few decades further exacerbated the situation, although perhaps it is this very decline that has helped to preserve the old city of Aleppo’s medieval architecture and traditional heritage. It won the title of the “Islamic Capital of Culture 2006” and has also witnessed a wave of successful restorations of its historic landmarks, until the start of the Syrian revolution in 2011 and the Battle of Aleppo.

Aleppo During the Syrian Revolution

The city witnessed many events after the start of protests in Syria in 2011, as the first protest against the regime was in March 25, 2011, then protests took place on weekly basis and sometimes daily. These protests spread till June 30, 2011, when protests broke out in more than ten locations in the city. One person was killed after the regime forces used fire against peaceful protestors, which made people more furious and caused additional protests all around the city.

Since the beginning of 2012, the peaceful protests became crowded and daily in Aleppo.

They were focused in many neighborhoods, including Salah Aldin, Al-Sikary, Bustan Al-Qasr, and inside Aleppo University, as well as many areas in the countryside.

Tens of people were killed each week in protests.

In June 2012, the first armed clashes or fights took place inside Aleppo city between the Syrian regime army and the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Later, the regime started its violent bombing and shelling of the towns in the Aleppo countryside and neighborhoods in the city.

This shelling killed over 4,000 people (mostly civilians) after a few months of these battles.

Over 200,000 people left Aleppo since the beginning of these battles.

FORCES CURRENTLY CONTROLLING ALEPPO:

Four major forces are controlling different areas of the governorate. Assad forces control a part of the city and parts of the north and north-east of the countryside. The FSA controls the remaining parts of the city, parts of the north and west of the countryside, and some parts of the southern countryside. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) controls most of the eastern countryside, and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) controls the rest of the areas. The fighting between KDP and ISIS on one hand and between Assad and FSA on the other hand are considered to be the greatest in the governorate. There are four borderlines between Aleppo and Turkey; FSA controls two borders, KDP controls one border, and ISIS controls one border. There is no direct path to connect the areas controlled by FSA and areas controlled by Assad forces. Moving between both areas in Aleppo would usually take minutes. Now it takes approximately fourteen hours, as it requires reaching Hama and coming back around to areas under the control of FSA, which adds to the suffering faced by people in Aleppo.
Economy in Aleppo

Trade in Aleppo: The existence of the city depended mainly on its important geographical location on the most important trade routes from India and China to Europe, and from the Levant and the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea and Turkey. Aleppo city was the third in terms of commercial activity in the age of the Ottoman Empire after Istanbul and Cairo. Business traditions are deeply rooted in the city. It is famous through history with its traders. Aleppo Chamber of Commerce, which was founded in 1885, is considered as one of the oldest chambers of commerce in the Middle East and the Arab world.

Traditional industries in Aleppo: Ancient handicrafts, such as engraving on glass and copper art crafts, have been very well preserved in parts of the Old City. Aleppo is also an important center for gold and gemstones designing.

The laurel soap in Aleppo gained an international fame. It is considered the finest and best type of harsh soaps produced in the world, which is still manufactured in the traditional soap factories in the same ways inherited from Syrians’ ancestors.

The city was a pioneer in the export of food products and food manufacturing industries because of being surrounded by fields of olive, laurel, and pistachios that are famous worldwide. Aleppo is also known for industries related to olive oil, especially from olives of Efrin area, which has many fields of olive trees, as well as the Royal Aleppo thyme.

Modern Industries

Sheikh Najjar neighborhood is the basic industrial area in the city. It spreads over 4,412 hectares, making it one of the largest industrial districts in the region. The volume of investments was estimated to be over $2 billion by the end of 2009, and there are many ongoing projects to build luxury hotels, exhibition centers, and a number of industrial facilities.

Aleppo’s economy depends mostly on textiles, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, light food, electrical, engineering, and tourism. It is the primary manufacturing center in Syria; it contains more than 50% of both the industrial labor and the export share.

List of basic industries:
- Electrical industry, especially household electrical appliances.
- Electronic industry and industrial control circuits.
- Various engineering industries (e.g., industrial refrigerators, solar energy generators, and heaters).
- Fabrics and textile industry.
- Yarn and cotton ginning industry.
- Garment industry.
- Vegetable oil industry.
- Pharmaceutical industry.
- Chemical industry.
- Power lines and cables industry.
- Medical equipment industry.
- Various food industries (e.g., dairy).
- Leather tanning.

The Syrian Economic Forum (SEF) trained several Syrian people as liaisons inside Syria in several areas to collect data on the economic and social reality in Syria, in the following governorates: Aleppo, Idlib, Lattakia countryside, Deir Ezzor, Raqqa, Hama, Homs, and Damascus Countryside. Data is collected from these governorates.

The people who were selected as liaisons were trained in Gaziantep on collecting data to fill out the questionnaire. The IT staff at SEF prepared a special program for the liaisons and uploaded it to the SEF website. This allowed the liaisons to mobilize data in an easy and efficient manner, so that data arrives daily to SEF and is placed in the database suitable to their nature.

We have three focal points in the province of Aleppo, located as follows: the first in the City of Aleppo, the second in the countryside of northern Aleppo, and the third in the countryside west of Aleppo.

Aleppo Governorate Data:

1. Dollar exchange rate in Syrian pounds:

Figure (1) shows the dollar exchange rate in Syrian pounds between December 2014 and March 2015. We notice from Figure (1) the sharp deterioration in the value of the Syrian pound in the liaisons’ areas. We note that the official price of the dollar at the Central Bank was fixed at the value SP 199.8 per dollar, and the dollar exchange rate in the City of Aleppo was 249 SP in the regime controlled areas.
2. Gas cylinder price:

Figure (2) shows the fluctuating price of a gas cylinder in the liaisons’ areas between December 2014 and March 2015. We notice from the graph below that the prices of gas cylinder went down from 5000 to 3400 Syp. Even with this decline, the price is considered high compared to the official price of 1250 Syp. Note that the price of the cylinder in the regime controlled areas is between 4000 and 5500 Syp if available.

3. Diesel price:

Figure (3) shows that the price of a liter of diesel went higher during the first month, from 95 SYP to 110 SYP, and then it declined to 83 SYP during the subsequent months in the liaisons’ areas. The price of a liter of diesel is still lower than the official rate of 85. This is also lower than the price in the regime controlled areas (300 SYP), where diesel is difficult to acquire.

4. Gasoline price:

Figure (4) shows the price of a liter of gasoline in Aleppo during the period from December 12, 2014 to March 8, 2015. During this time, the price of a liter of gasoline declined from 298 SYP to 197 SYP in the liaisons’ areas. The official price of a liter of gasoline is 125 SYP, but the selling price of a liter of gasoline in the regime controlled areas reached 400 SYP.

5. Price of 1 kilogram (kg) of chicken meat:

Figure No. 5 shows the price of one kg of chicken meat in Aleppo from December 2014 to March 2015. Note from the chart below that the price of 1 kg of poultry meat is almost stable over the past three months, ranging between 550 and 580 SYP in the liaisons’ areas. The official price is 450 SYP, and the price in the regime controlled areas is 525 SYP, which is less than the price in the liaisons’ areas.
6. Egg carton price (30 eggs):

Figure No. (6) shows changes in the prices of eggs dish in Aleppo between December 2014 and March 2015. Figure (6) shows a relative stability of the price of eggs dish during the past three months, where the price ranges between 550 SYP and 580 SYP in the liaisons’ areas. The price of eggs in the regime controlled areas is much higher at 750 SYP, while the official price is 525 SYP.

7. Price of 1 kg of Bulgur:

Figure (7) shows the price range for a kg of bulgur in the liaisons’ areas between December 2014 and March 2015. We notice the stability of the price of one kg at around 80 SYP, which is less than the official price of 85 SYP and the selling price in the regime controlled area (100 SYP).

8. Price of 1 kg of rice:

The price of 1 kg of rice ranged from 192 to 240 SYP in the liaisons’ areas between December 2014 and March 2015, as shown in Figure No. (8). Despite the high price of 1 kg of rice at 240 SYP, it remains lower than the price in the regime controlled areas (300 SYP). The official price is 170 SYP.

9. Price of 1 kg of sugar:

As shown in Figure (9), the price 1 kg of sugar was high between December 2014 and March 2015, ranging between 132 SYP to 145 SYP in the liaisons’

10. Price of 1 kg of tea:

The price of 1 kg of tea increased from 1183 to 1383 SYP in the liaisons’ areas between December 2014 and March 2015, as shown in Figure No. (10). Note that the official price is 950 SYP, while the price in the regime controlled areas reached 1500 SYP.
Living Conditions of Families in Aleppo

1- Household Electricity

The data collected from our three liaisons about electricity resources and its average consumption in their areas revealed that families averaged ten hours per day of electricity in Aleppo province. Electricity has three sources in Aleppo: the public network, private generators, or buying Amperes (large generators for the private sector that sells electricity to the population). Diagram (11) displays electricity sources, regardless of consumption hours.

In Figure (11), we note that 67.7% of families in Aleppo are still connected to the regime public grid, yet rarely receive it. 74.2% of them buy electricity through Amperes and hours upon request. 9.7% of them have their own generators. Many families try to secure electricity for more than ten hours a day from the public network, by subscribing to Amperes, or through private generators, for an average monthly cost of 6,042 SYPs (nearly a quarter of a family’s monthly income).

2- Household Fuel

The data collected from our three liaisons about fuel consumption indicates the following: average consumption of fuel by one family reached 127 liters per month, with a monthly cost of 3,587 SYPs. Data shows that fuel is generally available in the market.

3- Household Gasoline

The data collected from our three liaisons about gasoline consumption shows that: average consumption of gasoline by one family reached 43 liters per month, with a monthly cost of 7,641 SYPs. Data indicates that gasoline is 91% available in the local market, and gasoline is mostly used for generators.

4- Households Gas

The data collected from our three liaisons about gas consumption shows the following: average consumption of gas by one family reached 13.3 liters per month (nearly one cylinder), with a monthly cost of 3,587 SYPs, which is almost 15% of the family income. The gathered data shows that gas is 86.7% available in the market but in very high prices.

5- Household Firewood

The data collected from our three liaisons about firewood consumption displays the following: average consumption of firewood by one family reached 97 kg, with a monthly cost of 4,000 SYPs, which is almost 15% of the family income. Data indicates that firewood is available in the market 64% of the time, and it is primarily used for heating.

6- Household Water

The data collected from our three liaisons about water resources revealed that families receive water from three primary sources: the public grid, private wells, or water tanks, as presented in Figure (12). In Figure (12), we note that 61.1% of families in Aleppo receive water from the public network yet in different amounts. 16.7% of them buy water via tanks upon request. 50% of them have their own wells. Many families seek to secure water from the public grid, private wells, or water wells, with an average monthly cost that exceeds 2,944 SYPs.

7- Housing Characteristics

The data collected from our three liaisons about housing characteristics revealed that basic services are available 88.9% of the time. The percentage of houses with many residents reached 33.3%. Insecure houses reached 44.4%, and camps at 11.2%. 55.6% of them are owned by their residents, while 44.4% of them were donated.

8- Humanitarian Aids for Families

The data collected from our three liaisons about humanitarian aid revealed that 63.2% of families said that the aid was sufficient and 36.8% confirmed their insufficiency. The families indicated that the following factors hindered aid delivery:

a) opaque distributers (21.1%),

b) conflict zones (26.3%),

c) insecure areas (26.3%).

26.3% of families confirmed that nothing hindered their access to aid.

The families noted that the following major humanitarian organizations are working in Aleppo:

a) United Nations (5.6%),

b) Red Crescent (10.5%),

c) IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation (26.3%),

d) ACU (10.5%),

e) Sham Body Relief (15.8%),

f) Al-Birr Organization (5.3%),

g) Al-Ehsan Organization (5.3%), and

h) 20.7% others.

9- Neighborhood Safety

The data collected from our three liaisons about neighborhood safety revealed that 38.9% of the families confirmed that safety is unavailable where they live. 61.1% of them confirmed that their neighborhoods are relatively safe. 83.3% said that there were no hostile actions in their areas, and 94.4% said there were no mines or explosives in their areas. However, 77.8% confirmed air strikes on their areas, and 83.3% of them confirmed missile attacks on their areas.

We note that the population evaluation of safety in Aleppo is relative. While only a few faced mines, explosives, and hostile actions, a very large percentage experienced air and missile strikes. Despite the presence of these strikes, much of the northern and western countryside population had not been displaced and had not left their houses.
Factories in Aleppo Province

We collected data from our three sources about the state of factories in Aleppo, including the availability of basic production elements and safety. The studied factories are small and still operating. We did not study a large number of closed factories whose owners deserted them. Table (1) displays this reality.

### Table (1)
Factories Reality in Aleppo Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Production Elements</th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Unavailable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw Materials</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Services</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand on Production</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Figure (13), we note that 96.8% of factories owners confirmed their workers availability, because a large number of the population did not leave their areas and needed a job to secure a respectable life. 80.6% of them said that raw materials are available by importing them from Turkey since the country is open to the market of Turkish products.

As for electricity, 67.7% of factories owners confirmed its availability from different sources, yet for very few hours per day. It is extremely difficult to secure health services (29% available), and emergency services (6.5% available).

Demand on production is very high and exceeds 77.4%. 80.6% of the factories owners said that their areas are unsafe. Despite the dangerous circumstances and insecurity, many factories are still operating because their owners did not leave, they need to secure their and their workers incomes, and there is a desperate need for production to fulfill the Syrian people’s needs.
Recommendations

According to the results of the above report, the SEF recommends the local councils and the civil society organizations to do the following:

1) Seek to establish an economic office represented by members of the local councils and the civil society organizations, and concerned in economic and living affairs of locals within their authorities.

2) Work on securing drinking water by drilling artesian wells, in mutual coordination between the local councils and the external support organizations.

3) Local councils work on lighting the streets and houses through projects which use used cars batteries and LEDs, and thereby reduce the citizens' electricity expenses.

4) Secure gas through simple domestic projects to compress houses organic waste and extract methane gas. The local councils organize all and secure the houses needs.

5) The local councils allocate humanitarians aids within rules to achieve fair distribution.

6) The local councils work on securing vehicles to deport garbage, trainings and maintenance workshops for sanitation, water and electricity networks.

7) In coordination with the supporting organizations, the local councils work on training civil defense teams on quick rescue in their areas in case of any shelling.

8) In coordination with the supporting organizations, the local councils work on training internal security forces in order to achieve some sort of security for the citizens in their areas.

9) In coordination with the civil society organizations, the local councils establish training courses for the citizens on some projects in domestic agricultural economy; especially domestic farming, livestock, and poultry to secure meat, egg, bulgur… etc; and encourage small investment projects; such as sewing workshops and domestic food industries.

10) The local councils work on constructing prefabricated houses to secure houses for the displaced families, or those living in tents now after they lost their houses by the shelling.

11) Due to the Syrian pound sharp collapse, and to save the population cash savings, the local councils should coordinate with the external support organizations to educate the citizens about the necessity to replace dealing in the Syrian pounds with a more stable currency in the liberated areas (like $ or TL).

12) Finally, because of Aleppo geographic location next to Turkey borders, we recommend organizing and unifying the economic work between all concerned parties; (local councils – interim government – opposition sides). This could be done by setting a unified work strategy to benefit from the cross-border with Turkey, signing bilateral agreements in order to secure all basic materials and oil derivatives from Turkey, and exporting the agricultural and industrial supply from Aleppo to the world through Turkish borders.

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