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.
Hama province is located 210 km to the north of the capital Damascus. Located in the middle of Syria, Hama connects the north and the south, the east and the west of Syria. It has a surface area of around 8860 km², which makes it the seventh largest city in Syria. Hama has a population of 2.1 million according to 2010 statistics. The province is divided into five administrative units: “Masyaf”, “Al-Ghab”, “SALAMIYA”, “MUHARDEH”, and “HAMA city”, which is located at the center of the province on the banks of Orontes river and considered to be its capital with a population of around 850,000 as per 2010 statistics.

Economy in Hama:

The economic activity in Hama varies. Agriculture is the province’s most important activity, as 47.9% of labor work in agriculture, while 22.4% work in industry, and the remaining 29.7% work in other activities (trade and services). The main agricultural crops in Hama can be named as follow: wheat with its fluctuating production since it depends on rain, and barley that comes in second place. Irrigated crops that have great economic value can be named as follow: cotton, beetroot, onion, tobacco. In addition to potato, corn, and various vegetables. Cultivation of fruit trees has expanded as well, especially olive and pistachio trees, in addition to apple, pear, plum, peach and others. Animal breeding is a very important alternative activity to agriculture, mainly breeding sheep, goats, poultry and bees. In the second quarter of the twentieth century, industry in Hama has witnessed a great development in terms of both quality and quantity, especially in the public sector. Industry mostly depends on local raw materials, such as “Salhab” sugar plant, the factory for drying onions and vegetables in Salamiya, oil factory that depends on cotton oil seeds, cotton grinning factory, the cement plant in “Kafar Buhum”, shoes factory in “Masyaf”, porcelain plant, factory for cotton and wool yarning in south Hama, the General Establishment for Iron and Steel including its three factories (the iron bars plant, the scrap melting and sponge iron plant, and the metal tubes plant) in northern Hama, Hama tobacco plant, and “Afamia” tires plant located on “Salamiya” road. In addition to the above mentioned, there is a great number of factories and plants in the private sector, some are small workshops while others are big facilities, that has witnessed great developments, such as industries of desserts, pastries, soda, ice cream, candy, textile, wool, cotton, rugs, carpets, gowns, and horse saddles. Hama is the capital of chemical and manufacturing industries in Syria.

Hama province during the Syrian Revolution:

Hama province has suffered the most from the regime of Bashar Assad and his father Hafez Assad. Hama witnessed injustice and massacres by the father’s regime during the eighties of the last century who destroyed the city and committed massacres that killed thousands of people. The first sparks of the Syrian revolution was the opportunity people of Hama waited for three decades to take their revenge from the Assad regime. There were protests in all Hama neighborhoods and a number of its rural areas, the protests continued to reach their peak in June 2011, where Assad forces used firearms against protesters on the 3rd of June killing more than seventy martyrs. Soon after, Hama declared civil disobedience making all security forms disappear from the city. The city witnessed the greatest protest in the Syrian revolution that took place in Al-Assi Square in July 2011. After the mass civil disobedience and the protesters sit-in in Al-Assi Square, the Syrian regime mobilized its army to the city’s outskirts in preparation to break in, which took place in August 2011, as army tanks broke into Hama city, and over a hundred martyrs fell from the very beginning of the attack. Since then, the regime forces took control over the whole city. In Hama countryside, central areas are divided between the regime forces and the Free Syrian Army forces. The FSA controls vast areas in the western countryside, except for some villages on the slopes of Al-Ghab Plain that are still under the regime control. While FSA controls most areas in the northern countryside, including “Kafriabouda’, “Al-Hbeit”, “Latamina”, “Khan Sheikhoun”, and all villages of “Shahshabo” mountain. As for the southern and eastern countryside of Hama, they are in support of the regime and under its control.

Current conditions in the province of Hama, beginning of 2015:

The Syrian Economic Forum (SEF) trained several Syrian people as liaisons inside Syria in the liberated areas to collect data on the economic and social reality in Syria, in the following governorates: Aleppo, Idlib, Lattakia countryside, Deir Ezor, Raqqa, Hama, Homs, and Damascus Countryside. Data was collected from these governorates. The collected data is categorised into three categories: daily data (bread, baby formula, diesel, gasoline, kerosene, gas, dollar exchange rate, bulgur, rice, lentil, chickpeas, olive oil, sunflower oil, meat, beef,
grease, chicken, eggs, sugar, tea), monthly data (the average household consumption of: electricity, diesel, gasoline, gas, firewood, water, in addition to data of relief aid, security, household properties, health, education, and industry), and seasonal data (agricultural hardships, expenses, and pests). Knowing that we have one liaison in Hama countryside. The data collected from Hama countryside is presented as follows:

**Prices of basic goods in Hama**

1- **U.S. dollar exchange rate:**
   
   As shown in Figure (1), U.S. dollar exchange rates fluctuated during the period from December 2014 to May 2015. The value of the Syrian pound deteriorated from 200 to 292 SP. Meanwhile, the Central Bank fixed the official U.S. dollar exchange rate at 232 SP per dollar.

![Diagram 1](image1.png)

2- **Gas cylinder prices:** Gas cylinder prices fluctuated from December 2014 to May 2015. Figure (2) below shows that the value of a gas cylinder rose from 5,000 SP to 7,000 SP, and then decreased to 3,100 SP. Although prices declined, the price of a gas cylinder is still very high when compared to its official price, which is 1,250 SP.

![Diagram 2](image2.png)

3- **Fuel Prices (Diesel, Gasoline, Kerosene):** As shown in Figure (3), fuel prices fluctuated during the period from December 2014 to May 2015. One can note the decrease in the prices of gasoline from 400 to 260 SP per litre, knowing that its official price is 125 SP. As for diesel, price is almost stable at 125 SP per litre, which is higher than its official price of 85 SP. As for kerosene, its price decreased from 100 to 85 SP per litre.

![Diagram 3](image3.png)

4- **Meat and Eggs Prices:** Our liaison has collected data on the prices of chicken, meat, beef and eggs during the period between December 2014 and May 2015, as shown in figure (4). Prices of lamb meat have increased from 1300 to 2000 SP, while beef prices increased from 1000 to 1700 SP, and chicken prices increased from 380 to 430 SP, which is close to its official price of 450 SP. The price of a box of eggs increased from 550 to 700 SP and then dropped to 600 SYP, which is higher than its official price of 525 SP.

![Diagram 4](image4.png)
5- Prices of Grains (Burgul, Rice, Lentil and Chickpeas):
Our liaison has collected data on the prices of burgul, rice, lentil and chickpeas during the period between December 2014 and May 2015, as shown in figure (5). Burgul price increased from 65 to 90 SP per kilo, knowing that its official price is 85 SP. Rice price increased from 125 to 265 SP per kilo, knowing that its official price is 170 SP. Lentil price increased from 65 to 150 SP per kilo, then decreased to 100 SP. While the price of a kilo of chickpeas remained at 200 SP and did not change during the studied period.

6- Prices of Sugar and Tea:
Our liaison has collected data on the prices of sugar and tea during the period between December 2014 and May 2015, as shown in figure (6). The price of sugar rose from 140 to 165 SP per kilo, knowing that its official price in the regime-controlled areas reached 130 SP. While the price of tea has increased from 1200 to 1500 SP per kilo, knowing that its official price is 950 SP.
Livelihood conditions of families in the province of Hama

1- Availability of electricity:

The average usage of electricity for households in the province of Hama is 16 hours per day. Electricity comes from three sources: the public network, private generators, or by buying Amperes (large generators that belong to the private sector). Figure (7) shows the sources of electricity, irrespective of consumption hours.

2- Availability of diesel:

Households consume an average of 120 liters of diesel per month, with an average monthly cost of 12,375 SP. Diesel fuel is generally available in markets.

3- Availability of petrol:

Households consume an average of 45 liters of petrol per month, with an average monthly cost of 8,375 SP. Petrol is 80% available in local markets and is mostly used as fuel for generators.

4- Availability of gas:

Households consume an average of 10.3 liters of gas per month, which is almost equal to one gas cylinder, with an average monthly cost of 3,733 SP. Gas is 60% available in markets at a high cost.

5- Availability of firewood:

Households consume an average of 340 kg of firewood per month, with an average monthly cost of 7,360 SP. Firewood is generally available in markets and is specifically used for heating.

6- Availability of water:

As shown in Figure (8), the main water sources for households in Hama are the public network, private wells, or by buying water from water tankers. We can note from Figure (8) that 100% of households in the province of Hama receive water from the public network with an average monthly cost of 300 SP. We can note that families do not depend on private wells as a source of water.

7- Housing conditions:

Basic services are available in 98% of households. 90% of residents confirmed that their houses are safe. Approximately 25% of residents live in apartment-style housing, and 75% in Arab-style housing. Household ownership statistics show that 100% of residences are owned by their residents.

8- Availability of humanitarian assistance:

No organizations provide humanitarian assistance. Families confirmed that humanitarian assistance is insufficient, while 20% of families found that humanitarian assistance is sufficient. From the families’ perspective, the obstacles that hinder the arrival of aid include distributors without integrity (20%), 80% of families did not indicate obstacles affecting the arrival of humanitarian aid. The most important organizations that provide humanitarian assistance in the province of Hama are Gul Organization (20%), the Syrian Red Crescent (40%) and other organizations (20%).

9- Security status of residential areas:

100% of families found their area of residence to be safe and 20% unsafe. This security is relative because 50% confirmed that there are no hostile actions in the region, and 100% confirmed that they have not found mines or explosives in the region. Most residents confirmed that there are no missile strikes. We can note from residents’ evaluation in Hama that security in the province is only relative security because bombings, mines and hostile actions are considered small threats, while airstrike shelling is considered a great threat. Despite the situation, a large proportion of the population in northern and western rural Hama stayed in their homes and did not leave their areas.
Status of industrial facilities in Hama

Our liaisons collected data on the availability of basic production elements and the state of safety in factories. The surveyed facilities, which are small-sized factories, are still functioning. On the other hand, a large number of factories, which were not included in the study, have been abandoned by their owners, as shown in figure (9). As shown in Figure (9), 90.9% of surveyed factory owners confirmed the availability of workers. This is due to the fact that a large proportion of residents in these areas did not leave their houses and are in need any work that guarantees them a decent life. 81.8% of the surveyed factory owners also confirmed the availability of raw materials. These materials are available by imports from Turkey through Idlib, as this area is open to Turkish market products. Demand for products produced exceeds 95.8%. As for the availability of electricity, the surveyed factory owners confirmed that it is available by 71% from various sources, but with a very low average number of daily hours. As for health services, 60% of factory owners have confirmed that they can be secured but with difficulty. In addition, 18.2% found it very difficult to secure emergency services. Demand for products produced exceeds 81%. 64% of factory owners found that security is not available. Despite the dangerous situation and the lack of security, a number of factories continue to operate. This is because the owners did not leave their homes and need to provide an income for their workers and themselves, in addition to the pressing need for the products produced to meet the needs of the Syrian people.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the Syrian Economic Forum recommends Local Councils to do the following:

1. Due to the acute deterioration in the value of the Syrian pound, Local Councils in coordination with supporting organizations should spread awareness among citizens about the need to replace the Syrian pound with a more stable currency (such as the U.S. dollar) in the liberated areas.
2. Raise awareness among citizens on the importance of depending on chicken and eggs to secure their basic needs of fat and proteins because of the high prices of lamb meat and beef. Provide street lighting and home electricity through projects that use old car batteries and LEDs in order to reduce the cost of using electricity.
3. Provide training sessions in coordination with supporting organizations on domestic agricultural economy projects, especially those related to growing crops and raising livestock and poultry to secure meat, eggs, bulgur, and other essential materials.
4. Finally, the Syrian Economic Forum noted that the livelihood conditions in Hama countryside are more stable than they are in other liberated areas.

Sources of Data

1. Data collected by the liaison in the province of Hama.
2. The market list of prices for items in the sales galleries in the province of Hama.
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