

Humanitarian Crisis in Syria

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- High civilian casualties are being reported in the Syrian regime's offensive to retake Eastern Ghouta from the rebels.

\n

- The UN has called for a 30-day cease-fire, but that looks unlikely.

\n

\n\n

How is the ground situation?

\n\n

\n

- Eastern Ghouta, is a locality on the outskirts of the capital city of Damascus, with an estimated population of 4 lakh.

\n

- It was taken over by the rebels during the early phase of the civil war (7 years ago) and is currently one of the last significant areas held by them.

\n

- A wide range of militant groups are believed to be active here, which including the Saudi and Qatar funded groups, and the Syrian branch of al-Qaeda.

\n

- While the areas were under a government blockade for years, it now appears to have been surrounded by ground forces who are preparing for the final assault.

\n

- The government says the city is occupied by terrorists from these groups and that the few civilians remaining there are used as human shields.

\n

- But despite the government's assertions, the rebels appear to have largely lost their momentum in the war and are on the run.

\n

- Nonetheless, the government narrative is problematic as it seems to be pinning the blame on all the residents for the rebel occupation.

\n

\n\n

How deep is the humanitarian crisis?

\n\n

\n

- The recent airstrikes and bombardments launched by government forces to wash out the rebels from here saw at least 270 die in the past 3 days.

\n

- Significantly, it was also here that chemical weapons were used in 2013, killing hundreds of people and highlighted the brutality of the war.

\n

\n\n

\n

- Also, the years-long blockade has deprived Eastern Ghouta of food and medicines, and the bombing is only expected to worsen the plight further.

\n

- While it is a certainty that Eastern Ghouta will fall to the regime's assault, the cost in terms of lives is proving to be morally unacceptable.

\n

- Notably, from very early in the war, strategic considerations have dominated the narrative and there has been very little concern for human lives.

\n

- After 7 years of war and over 4 lakh deaths, the Syrian regime seems to be parading to victory with little worry about the devastation it had co-precipitated.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

\n

