

**Forum:** Security Council (SC)

**Issue:** The Situation in Syria

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## INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Syria which originally emerged from democracy and freedom protests, became a proxy war between regional powers such as Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and world powers like the U.S. and Russia, alongside forces such as Hezbollah. United Nations (UN) mediation attempts repeatedly failed in the Security Council, due to opposing views from the United States' position against the Assad regime, and China and Russia's support to Assad.

Both Assad and rebel groups targeted civilians, deploying chemical weapons and conventional arms. UN aid was politicized by the Assad regime, with humanitarian aid only being allowed to be deployed in government-controlled areas. The weakness of Syrian governance led to the emergence of rebel extremist groups, notably the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)<sup>1</sup>. USA's counterterrorism effects proved effective against ISIS, blocking the group to a marginally smaller area than they used to hold. Hence, Turkish forces were able to escalate against the Kurdish threat.

While Lebanon, Jordan, and Türkiye have been overcome with the largest portion of the refugee burden, more than a million asylum seekers have made their way to the European Union, creating the largest refugee crisis since World War II. Those remaining in Syria faced an economic crisis brought by international sanctions, with over 90% of the population living under poverty. The 2023 earthquake impacting Türkiye and Syria again strike the non-government held areas, with sanctions upon HTS hindering international aid<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> "The nexus of conflict and illicit drug trafficking Syria and the wider region." Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/The-nexus-of-conflict-and-illicit-drug-trafficking-Syria-and-the-wider-region.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> "Syria's War and the Descent Into Horror." Council on Foreign Relations, 20 December 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>.

December 2024 saw the backfall of Assad, as the leading rebel force Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) liberated Damascus. Thus, the Syrian civil war came to an end<sup>3</sup>. However, as the UN Special Envoy to Syria has stated, the conflict cannot be declared fully over yet. Clashes between Turkish and Kurdish fighters in the Syrian border before a ceasefire was accomplished created concern regarding the escalation of violence in the region. The ascendance of HTS and the formation of a more repressive government is still feared with cynicism, while several terrorist groups remain in control of territories in Syria. The Security Council has called for a democratic political process to be implemented in the meanwhile, alongside an end to all sanctions on Syria<sup>4</sup>.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### *Al- Qaeda*

Al-Qaeda was founded by Osama bin Laden in the late 1980s. It aimed to aid the Muslims who were fighting against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USASR) during the Afghan War. Consequent to the Soviet withdrawal, the organization continued to oppose corrupt Islamic regimes and foreign presence in Islamic territories. It was re-established in Afghanistan in 1996 under the Taliban militia. The 9/11 attacks were planned by 19 militants associated with al-Qaeda<sup>5</sup>.

### *Caliphate*

Caliphate, as a general term, refers to the political-religious state of the Muslim community that follows the Prophet Muhammed<sup>6</sup>. The history of caliphates is complicated and the basis of sects under Islam, beginning with Umayyads and Abbasids. Emperors of the Ottoman Empire used to hold caliph status, which they exercised over the Arab world with the hope of reuniting Muslims. However this effort proved useless during World War I, when the

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<sup>3</sup> "Syria | Map, Civil War, Rebels, Religion, & History." Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Syria>.

<sup>4</sup> "Syrian Conflict 'Has Not Ended': UN." RFI, RFI, 18 Dec. 2024, [www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20241217-un-envoy-to-syria-warns-conflict-not-over](http://www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20241217-un-envoy-to-syria-warns-conflict-not-over).

<sup>5</sup> Jenkins, Philip. "Al-Qaeda | History, Meaning, Terrorist Attacks, & Facts." Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/al-Qaeda>.

<sup>6</sup> "Caliphate - Abbasid, Islamic Empire, Sunni." Britannica, 16 May 2025, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Caliphate/The-Abbasid-caliphate>.

ummahism ideology failed to succeed. The Caliphate was abolished in 1924, when Türkiye was founded.

However, ISIS declared its caliphate in 2014, after taking control of eastern Syria and western Iraq. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was named caliph, but this claim has been rejected by Muslims outside the extremist circles.

### ***Jihad***

Jihad in Islam refers to the holy act of war against individuals, groups or countries that are enemies of Islam and Islamic tradition. War aiming to spread the religion, or war against threats to the religion are considered jihad, a holy obligation of the whole of the Muslim community.

### ***Syrian National Coalition***

The National Coalition states itself to be political opposition factions come together to overthrow the Assad regime; hence ending the suffering of Syrian people and transitioning toward a free and democratic country<sup>7</sup>. The coalition has been recognized as the "legitimate representative of the Syrian people" in 2012<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Ummahism (Pan-Islamism)***

Pan-Islamism, a widely implemented ideology by the Ottoman Empire during World War I, referred to Muslim solidarity against European colonialism. As Islamic belief suggests a Muslim community should exist under the name of ummah, this ideology used this fact to vouch for solidarity in the Muslim world<sup>9</sup>. Efforts of ISIS to revive caliphate, as well as al-Qaeda's actions, have been recognized as Pan-Islamist threats by the Counter Extremism Project<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Spare. "Mission Statement and Goals." Syrian National Coalition Of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, 24 Dec. 2020, [en.etilaf.org/about-us/goals](http://en.etilaf.org/about-us/goals).

<sup>8</sup> "National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces." UNTERM, United Nations, [unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/UNHQ/95585a0d-2a40-4958-a44d-c149aaf2e71c](http://unterm.un.org/unterm2/en/view/UNHQ/95585a0d-2a40-4958-a44d-c149aaf2e71c).

<sup>9</sup> Alp Yenen: Pan-Islamism (Ottoman Empire), in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2020-04-14. DOI: 10.15463/ie1418.11460.

<sup>10</sup> "Pro-Pan-Islamism." Counter Extremism Project, [www.counterextremism.com/rhetoric-category/pro-pan-islamism](http://www.counterextremism.com/rhetoric-category/pro-pan-islamism).

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### *Historical Background*

Syria, being a country situated in the Middle East, has a deep history of conflict and political instability that brought the country to the tipping point, that is the Civil War. In 1920, a Syrian congress rejected the Balfour Declaration and chose the king for a united Syria, which included Palestine. However, the World War I Allies' separation of the area deemed that Lebanon and Syria would be under French mandate while Palestine would be held under British mandate<sup>11</sup>.

In 1958, due to the fragility of Syria, a union was implemented with Egypt to create the United Arab Republic. Following a defense agreement of three years prior, the union wished to strengthen cooperation against perceivable threats of Israel and the global rise of communism. The pan-Arab nationalist ideologies of the union called for other Arab states to join. The Egyptian dominance in the union led Syria to disengage from the union in 1961<sup>12</sup>. The new rule in Syria was not recognized by Egypt.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, the biggest hotspot of the war was the Israeli-Syrian border<sup>13</sup>. The Golan Heights territory was seized by Israel on the last stretch of the Six-Day War. During the war, most of the Arabic inhabitants had to flee the area. The Israel military gained control over the area and subsequently a settlement in the region began. The strategic importance of the area arises from the high visibility of Southern Syria and their capital Damascus from the hills, and hence Israel could observe the actions of the Syrian military while the topography provided natural cover<sup>14</sup>. As Israel targets the Iranian presence in Syria, including military infrastructure, they aimed to keep Iranian forces away from the Golan Heights armistice. The Assad regime would face risks against retaking the territory from rebellious forces in the coming years<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> "Palestine - Split Admin, West Bank, Gaza Strip." Britannica,

<https://www.britannica.com/place/Palestine/Split-administration-of-the-West-Bank-and-the-Gaza-Strip>.

<sup>12</sup> Heller, Peter B. "Syria and Egypt Form the United Arab Republic." EBSCO,

<https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/politics-and-government/syria-and-egypt-form-united-arab-republic>.

<sup>13</sup> Bowen, Jeremy. "1967 war: Six days that changed the Middle East." BBC, 5 June 2017,

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39960461>.

<sup>14</sup> "Golan Heights profile." BBC, 29 August 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14724842>.

<sup>15</sup> "Golan Heights and South/West Syria." International Crisis Group, 2 July 2025,

<https://www.crisisgroup.org/trigger-list/iran-usisrael-trigger-list/flashpoints/golan-heights-and-southwest-syria>.

## ***Assad's Rise to the Regime***

The political climate after the 1967 war, including the increasing number of coups and uprising occurring in Syria allowed for Assad to overthrow the government in 1970. Hafez al-Assad, taking over from the military junta regime, centralized the power in the country. In 1982, the Assad regime, for the first time, used brute force to settle down an uprising. This created a model for Bashar al-Assad to cope with dissent in the future. With Assad's death in 2000, Bashar took the presidency spot with no opponents, beginning the succession line.

2010 was the beginning of the Arab Spring movement, with protests throughout many countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen setting the groundwork for greater action in the Middle East. The initial protest in Syria hence erupted with school children writing on the walls, stating that the faith of Assad is the same as other leaders in the region. They were arrested and tortured, and protests began with a broader aspect: a regime change was just the beginning, but civilians aspired for the release of political prisoners, an end to the half-century state of emergency, greater freedoms, and an end to corruption.

Assad preferred to respond to these protests by force. Human right monitors not only reported mass arrest and firing of unarmed protesters, but also torture and executions. Certain areas were under siege, with civilians cut off from access to humanitarian aid<sup>16</sup>.

## ***ISIS, FSA and the Internationalized Civil War***

In 2011, those leaving the Assad government's armed forces founded the FSA in Türkiye, with the National Coalition representing a nationwide resistance organization against the Assad regime<sup>17</sup>. The Islamic State considers FSA to be a nationalist faction, working against the best of state, that is ummahism. Western powers have often considered FSA as their ally in Syria, whereas ISIS argued FSA has found allies in al-Qaeda and the Kurdish forces of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).

Al-Qaeda's Syrian leg al-Nusra emerged in 2012, and called for Sunni muslims to join the jihad against the regime. They started to fight against rival opposition groups. The Islamic

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<sup>16</sup> "The Syrian teenager who sprayed four words on a wall and started an uprising." NBC News, 22 February 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/syrian-teenager-sprayed-four-words-wall-started-uprising-rcna188357>.

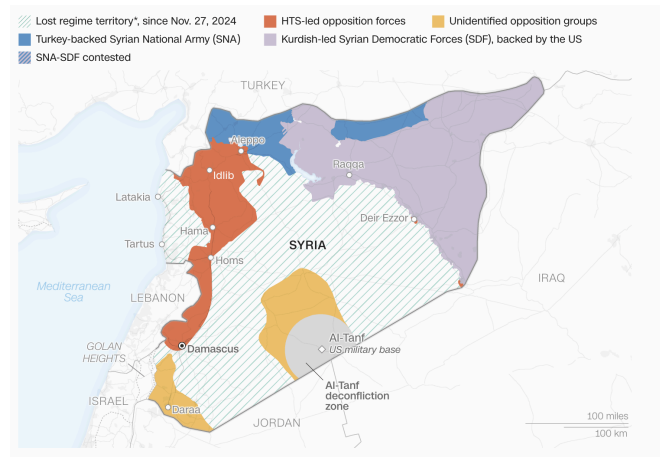
<sup>17</sup> "The Free Syrian Army: A decentralized insurgent brand | Brookings." Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-free-syrian-army-a-decentralized-insurgent-brand/>.

State of Iraq formed separately, from the ashes of al-Qaeda in Iraq. They started to establish control over territories in Syria and Iraq.

These actors associated with the conflict, including Al-Qaeda and ISIS, generally funded themselves illicitly, through methods including drug trafficking. While terrorist groups, ISIS alike, had used oil as a primary source of finance, the global fall of oil prices caused such groups to turn to illicit drug trafficking. Captagon production and trafficking in the region exploded to meet the financial needs while demand from the Arabian Peninsula and Syria increased.

The figure<sup>18</sup> shows which groups held territories prior to the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, with many different opposing sides holding stakes over the territory.

The weakening army of Assad relied on support coming from Iran and Russia. Iran wished to protect the land route to Hezbollah, and hence both advised the military of Assad and sent military forces. The USA was training and supporting rebel forces, whereas France and the UK were key logistic partners.



### ***Post-Peace Era Conflict and Humanitarian Considerations***

The December 2024 news that the Assad regime has fallen and the HTS is now leading the interim government have been taken as good news by the international community. HTS was formed in 2011 under the name Jabhat al-Nusra, as a direct affiliate of al-Qaeda. The founder of ISIS, al-Baghdadi, was also involved in the formation, which raged against the Assad regime. Jabhat al-Nusra has been recognized as a terrorist group by the United Nations, the USA and Türkiye. HTS was the successor of al-Nusra, and was said to have cut ties with al-Qaeda<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Figure 2: Control areas as of Dec. 8, 2024 at 2 p.m. ET, The Institute for the Study of War with AEI's Critical Threats Project, CNN reporting, Lou Robinson and Henrik Pettersson.

<sup>19</sup> "Who are Syrian rebels Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, HTS?" BBC, 8 December 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce313jn453zo>.

While international actors were the basis of this change of events, resulting in a HTS government, they continue to hold stakes in how the new regime in Syria will be. All proxy actors wish to have a say in shaping the future of the country, creating a state of stalemate.

Despite the peace made inside the country, the crisis in the Middle East is yet to be solved. The tension among Syria's neighboring countries, primarily the Israel-Iran War, are still affecting the country. A stable environment is yet to be established, with the Kurdish issue remaining yet to be resolved. International forces such as the USA and Russia have not entirely left the country, creating another obstacle in negotiation. The drug reliant production throughout the civil war has caused an intertwined industry, which in itself is another threat to the wellbeing of individuals.

Even more concerningly, the refugee crisis and humanitarian situation is alarming. While many refugees from the European Union and Türkiye have begun returning to their country, the situation awaiting them is unclear, with a high risk of poverty at a time of economic instability. Over 300,000 refugees and 700,000 internally displaced persons have returned to their homes since December 2024. UNHCR urges all returns to be voluntary and safe<sup>20</sup>. In addition, those fleeing from Israeli attacks from Lebanon are now finding refuge in Syria. European Union decisions on asylum are at a stall until the political environment clears<sup>21</sup>.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### *Russia*

Russia has been a supporter of the Assad regime since its military intervention in 2015, bringing the backfall of the regime in 2024 a failure for the Russian forces in the territory. Russia aimed to hold influence over the Middle East by putting forward its support for the Assad regime<sup>22</sup>. It also aimed to rebuff the Western influence in the region, hence showing Russia's ability to subvert international narrative, especially against the USA's calls for a regime change.

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<sup>20</sup> "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained." USAA for UNHCR, 13 March 2025, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>.

<sup>21</sup> "What do recent events in Syria mean for Syrian refugees?" UNHCR, 11 December 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/what-do-recent-events-syria-mean-syrian-refugees>.

<sup>22</sup> "How Do the Events in Syria Affect Russia?" The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, 11 Dec. 2024, [www.belfercenter.org/research-analysis/how-do-events-syria-affect-russia](http://www.belfercenter.org/research-analysis/how-do-events-syria-affect-russia).

The main justification provided by the state regarding the military involvement in Syria is that counterterrorist efforts against al-Nusra and ISIS are necessary. Radical Islamist expansion in the region was considered a vital threat against Russian stability<sup>23</sup>.

Russia's aims at mediation, against the Geneva peace process, was generally excluding the UN and the USA. Russia backed the Assad regime during its besiegement of Aleppo and other regions. Russia's advisory and military support made possible for the Islamic State's "caliphate" to be narrowed down<sup>24</sup>.

Hence, the fall of the regime while bringing negative news for the Russian ally forces, has not led to Russia backing out of the region. The continued Russian pressure in Syria provides a counterweight to the growing Turkish presence, which could help keep the HTS remain weak and decentralized. However, outbreak of violence continues in the region, posing suspicion regarding Russia's ongoing involvement<sup>25</sup>.

## **Türkiye**

Prior to the protests against the regime, Türkiye held close economic and geopolitical ties with Syria alongside other countries in the Middle East. However, as political outbreak occurred, Türkiye chose to back not the regime in power, but the opposition forces. Certain attempts at democratizing the Assad regime failed, causing Türkiye to depend on the backfall of the Assad government. Both the Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army established their forces in Türkiye, taking advantage of the welcoming Turkish political view.

As 2015 saw the diplomatic isolation of Türkiye, with key powers such as Russia and Iran continuing to back up the Assad regime, the foreign policy shifted. Türkiye called for international dialogue with Syria, namely, the Assad government. Dialogue also began with Russia, breaking prior tension. Yet, as the same international forces allied with Türkiye became

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<sup>23</sup> Jorge Trujillo, Raquel. "Russia's Foreign and Security Policy in Syria: Historical Relations, Cold War Paradigms, and Contemporary Geopolitics." *Frontiers in Political Science*, vol. 7, 2025, p. 1489285, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2025.1489285>.

<sup>24</sup> Hamilton, Robert, et al. "RUSASIA'S INTERVENTION IN SYRIA:." Foreign Policy Research Institute, <https://www.fpri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/report-1-hamilton-stein-miller.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Caspar Hobhouse, et al. "Geopolitical Miscalculations: The Case against Russia's Presence in Syria." European Union Institute for Security Studies, 14 Mar. 2025, [www.iss.europa.eu/publications/commentary/geopolitical-miscalculations-case-against-russias-presence-syria](http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/commentary/geopolitical-miscalculations-case-against-russias-presence-syria).

allied with Kurdish forces against the Islamic State, Türkiye became at a contradiction with its official stance being the PKK was the same as the Islamic State.

Hence, the missions in Northern Syria began to establish a democratized region along the border while pushing back on Kurdish forces. When the USA backed their support of the Kurdish forces in 2019, Türkiye had the chance to push them back. Despite the fall of the Assad regime, the Kurdish issue persists, with the with the fate of regions held by Kurdish autonomy undecided<sup>26</sup>.

The HTS toppling the Assad regime was backed by Turkish forces, approving and opening the floor for HTS to attack were essential in the downfall. Due to proxy relations along the border, Türkiye had been in dialogue with HTS for a long time, giving it leverage over the new regime. As the dominant economic actor in Northern Syria, Türkiye also holds economic benefit from reconstruction efforts and build the international image as the economic sanctions are lowered<sup>27</sup>.

### **United States**

The diplomatic relations between the USA and Syria began when the nation founded its independence, however, the Six Day War put them on opposing sides. Syria, according to the USA Department of State, has been on the list of state sponsors of terrorism for the past 55 years due to “its continued support of terrorism and terrorist groups, its former occupation of Lebanon, its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and missile programs and use of chemical weapons, and its ongoing efforts to undermine U.S. and international stabilization activities in Iraq and Syria”<sup>28</sup>.

The USA's official statement has been that there is no military solution to the situation in Syria, and that peaceful dialogue and UN mediation is the only solution. It has specifically fought against the rise of ISIS. The USA has also been committed to providing humanitarian assistance to the region, and have provided assistance to the forces of the Free Syrian Army. The USA maintained a steady stream of sanctions on Syria, which have only been lifted in May

<sup>26</sup> Billion, Didier. “Turquie – Syrie : brève anatomie d'une relation compliquée.” CAREP Paris, 20 January 2025, <https://carep-paris.org/recherche/varia/turquie-syrie-breve-anatomie-dune-relation-compliquee/>.

<sup>27</sup> Aydıntaşbaş, Aslı. “Topple, Tame, Trade: How Turkey Is Rewriting Syria's Future.” ECFR, 6 Feb. 2025, [ecfr.eu/article/topple-tame-trade-how-turkey-is-rewriting-syrias-future/](https://ecfr.eu/article/topple-tame-trade-how-turkey-is-rewriting-syrias-future/).

<sup>28</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. “U.S. Relations With Syria.” U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, 17 Oct. 2023, [2021-2025.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-syria/](https://2021-2025.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-syria/).

2025, with the groundbreaking Caesar Act<sup>29</sup>. It has also removed the terrorist designation for HTS<sup>30</sup>.

### ***Democratic Union Party (PYD)***

The PYD, which is the Syrian arm of PKK, imposed itself on all other Syrian Kurdish groups and proclaimed its autonomy in 2013. PYD is recognized as a terrorist entity by the very state bordering most of its territories, Türkiye. By fighting against ISIS, PYD has received international command by Western states. Hence, the Kurdish issue in the Syrian borders have become even more complicated.

The autonomy Kurds receive in Syria will have direct implications on Kurds in Türkiye, posing threats against the centralized government. The remaining USA forces in Syria prohibits Turkish forces from fully stressing the Kurdish forces, giving them a higher negotiating position regarding the resolution of the issue. The HTS government agrees that Kurdish rule should be minimized, and PKK involved individuals should be abolished from the country. European Union and Israel, on the other hand, back the minority rights and self-determination as well as a more secular rule promised by the Kurds.

Specifically for PKK, discussions between imprisoned Abdullah Öcalan and the Turkish state have led to a possibility of PKK to self-dissolve, which will change the stakes for PYD. The first formal disarmament ceremony is set to take place in July 2025<sup>31</sup>.

### ***League of Arab States (LAS)***

The LAS was founded in 1945 as a confederation of 22 Arab nations and Palestine, becoming the first regional cooperation in the Middle East<sup>32</sup>. It focuses on increasing regional cooperation while supporting each Member State's independence and autonomy. Pan-Arabic

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<sup>29</sup> "Providing for the Revocation of Syria Sanctions – The White House." The White House, 30 June 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/06/providing-for-the-revocation-of-syria-sanctions/>.

<sup>30</sup> Walsh, Joe. "U.S. ending terrorist designation for Syrian rebel group whose leader now runs Syria." CBS News, 7 July 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-end-terrorist-designation-syria-hayat-tahrir-al-sham-al-sharaa/>.

<sup>31</sup> Council on Foreign Relations. "The PKK and Turkey's Kurdish Conflict." <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-between-turkey-and-armed-kurdish-groups>.

<sup>32</sup> "Cooperation with the League of Arab States." UNHCR Egypt, [www.unhcr.org/eg/cooperation-league-arab-states#:~:text=The%20League%20of%20Arab%20States%20\(LAS\)%20is%20the%20oldest%20regional.on%20matters%20of%20common%20interest](http://www.unhcr.org/eg/cooperation-league-arab-states#:~:text=The%20League%20of%20Arab%20States%20(LAS)%20is%20the%20oldest%20regional.on%20matters%20of%20common%20interest).

cooperation has been considered essential for the region's development, which is in the mission statement of LAS<sup>33</sup>.

In November 2011, the LAS voted to suspend and implement sanctions on Syria. However, in 2023, the leaders decided to reinstate the membership, seeing that political isolation had no effect in the worsening state of the country. The membership would allow not only for easier passage for humanitarian aid, but also for Syrian refugees to return home<sup>34</sup>.

With the end of the armed conflict, the role LAS holds for development in Syria is crucial, as echoed by the foreign minister of the country. Energy and infrastructure development, alongside regional control, requires the help of the LAS Member States<sup>35</sup>.

### ***The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)***

The Chemical Weapons Convention of 1997 established OPCW to head the international chemical weapons disarmament regime. While post-World War II disarmament efforts generally focused on nuclear weapons, the OPCW's specific focus allowed for it to recognize mass destruction by chemical weapons<sup>36</sup>. Syria became a party to the convention and a Member State of the OPCW in 2013. The Syrian government cooperated with the OPCW and UN's mission to remove and destroy all declared chemical weapons. The SC previously held special missions in cooperation with the OPCW to find non-compliant actors that used chemical weapons in the territory<sup>37</sup>.

Latest reports of the OPCW following the Assad regime's fall out in December 2024 suggest that more than a hundred chemical weapon facilities remain in the area. The HTS regime has expressed their disapproval of the use of chemical weapons by the prior

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<sup>33</sup> "League of Arab States (LAS) and the EU." EEAS, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/league-arab-states-las-and-eu\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/league-arab-states-las-and-eu_en).

<sup>34</sup> Green, Mark A. "Syria and the Arab League." Wilson Center, 6 June 2023, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/syria-and-arab-league>.

<sup>35</sup> "Syria Seeks to Regain Arab League Membership, Prepares for Comprehensive National Conference." Anadolu Ajansı, [www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-seeks-to-regain-arab-league-membership-prepares-for-comprehensive-national-conference/3454468](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/syria-seeks-to-regain-arab-league-membership-prepares-for-comprehensive-national-conference/3454468).

<sup>36</sup> "History | OPCW." Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, <https://www.opcw.org/about-us/history>.

<sup>37</sup> "Syria and the OPCW | OPCW." Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, <https://www.opcw.org/media-centre/featured-topics/opcw-and-syria>.

government, and has been committed to being more transparent and open regarding the chemical weapon facilities toward international organizations, OPCW alike<sup>38</sup>.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS<sup>39</sup>

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
1 October 1918	Damascus is captured from the 400 year Ottoman rule by Arab troops.
1919-1920	Versailles Peace Conference and the end of World War I, puts Syria and Lebanon under French mandate.
1925-1926	Nationalist uprising begins.
7-18 July 1943	Presidential elections are held and the country progresses toward independence.
22 February 1958	The United Arab Republic is founded, Syrian political parties are ordered to dissolve.
28 September 1961	Syria disengages from the United Arab Republic due to the domination of Egypt.
February 1966	A coup attempt allows Assad to become Minister of Defense.

<sup>38</sup> "OPCW Says More than 100 Chemical Sites Remain in Syria." OPCW Says More Than 100 Chemical Sites Remain in Syria | Arms Control Association, [www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-05/news/opcw-says-more-100-chemical-sites-remain-syria](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2025-05/news/opcw-says-more-100-chemical-sites-remain-syria).

<sup>39</sup> "Syria profile - Timeline." BBC, 14 January 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>.

5-10 June 1967	The Six-Day War occurs with Israel occupying the West Bank, Gaza, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem <sup>40</sup> .
13 November 1970	Assad overthrows the presidency.
6-25 October 1973	The Yom Kippur War breaks out between Syria-Egypt and Israel, over the Golan Heights territory.
31 May 1976	Syria intervenes in the Lebanese civil war.
14 December 1981	Israel formally annexes the Golan Heights territory.
10 June 2000	The death of Assad leads to his succession by his son.
2 November 2011	The Arab League suspends Syria and introduces sanctions.
March 2012	Kofi Annan's Six Point Peace Plan is introduced and accepted by the Syrian government.
December 2012	USA, United Kingdom, France, Türkiye and other states recognize the National Coalition as "the legitimate representative of Syrian people".
2013-2014	The UN destroys chemical weapons stock with the permission of the Syrian government.

<sup>40</sup> Radford, Antoinette. "The Assad regime ruled Syria for 50 years. Here's how it fell in less than two weeks." CNN, 9 December 2024, <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/12/09/middleeast/timeline-syria-assad-regime-toppled-intl>.

29 June 2014	ISIS declares its caliphate.
January 2015	Kurdish forces and ISIS clash on the border of Türkiye.
May 2023	The Arab League reinstates the Syrian government, hoping to cooperate on return of Syrian refugees <sup>41</sup> .
8 December 2024	HTS announces liberation of 4 Syrian cities, as well as the capital of Damascus, with Assad fleeing to Moscow.
29 January 2025	The HTS establishes an interim government and calls for the dissolution of all armed groups, including itself.
March 2025	Syrian Democratic Forces and the government come to an agreement to integrate Kurdish militia into the new government.

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### *Kofi Annan Six Point Peace Plan*

In February 2012, Kofi Annan was named the Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. Hence, he prepared the said plan as a basis of ensuring peace in the region. The plan pushed for the cessation of hostilities, and for the concerns of Syrian people to be recognized. The Assad government agreed to the plan, however, by May, both sides in Syria were violating the cease-fire and armistice continued<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> "Syrian Civil War | Syrian history." Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War/Uprising-in-Syria-2011>.

<sup>42</sup> "Kofi Annan Syrian peace plan - Wikipedia." Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi\\_Annan\\_Syrian\\_peace\\_plan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofi_Annan_Syrian_peace_plan).

**[Geneva Communiqué \(2012\) / Final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria - Geneva, Saturday 30 June 2012<sup>43</sup>](#)**

The Geneva Communiqué was signed during what would be called the Geneva I Syria Group. The communiqué called for clear steps to be taken for a safe and stable environment for the whole of Syria. Any political settlement as provisioned by the communiqué should offer a perspective shared by everyone in Syria, and have a clear timetable. The communiqué called for a transitional governing body to include both the government and the opposition, aiming to reach mutual consent. A constitutional review was called for, alongside fair elections<sup>44</sup>. The communiqué, being an opinion of experts, was never applied despite peace talks that aimed to urge parties to implement it.

**[Security Council Resolution 2118 \(2013\) / adopted by the Security Council at its 7038th meeting, on 27 September 2013<sup>45</sup>](#)**

This Security Council resolution called for the scheduled destruction of the chemical weapons of Syria. The UN aimed to investigate the perpetrators of chemical attacks in Syria, and the resolution outlines how Syria's inclusion on the OPCW requires certain deadlines and the cooperation of both governmental and nongovernmental organizations. The international body urged for the end of all violence. This resolution was in itself only considered a building block and a piece to prohibit chemical attacks, rather than a whole solution attempt<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> "Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria - Geneva, Saturday 30 June 2012." The United Nations Office at Geneva, [www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/press-release/2012/06/final-communique-action-group-syria-geneva-saturday-30-june-2012](http://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/press-release/2012/06/final-communique-action-group-syria-geneva-saturday-30-june-2012).

<sup>44</sup> "What is the Geneva II conference on Syria?" BBC, 22 January 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24628442>.

<sup>45</sup> S/RES/2118 (2013), [www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2118.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2118.pdf).

<sup>46</sup> "Security Council Requires Scheduled Destruction of Syria's Chemical Weapons, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2118 (2013) | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, [press.un.org/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm](http://press.un.org/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm).

**[Security Council Resolution 2139 \(2014\) / adopted by the Security Council at its 7116th meeting, on 22 February 2014<sup>47</sup>](#)**

This Security Council resolution aimed to ease aid delivery into Syria<sup>48</sup>. The fact that a resolution on humanitarian aid was necessary was stated with concern, as parties did not distribute UN aid in an equitable way, similar to the current situation in Palestine. Noticing certain resolutions failed due to China and Russia's aims of directing the aid going into the country to Assad-controlled areas only, it is important that this resolution has passed unanimously. Again, this was not an entire solution to the conflict, but a necessary step to ensure the vital aid reached the citizens.

**[Security Council Resolution 2209 \(2015\) / adopted by the Security Council at its 7401st meeting, on 6 March 2015<sup>49</sup>](#)**

This Security Council resolution again prohibits the use of chemical weapons, specifically chlorine gas, as a weapon of mass destruction in Syria. Due to the findings of the OPCW, the Security Council had to denounce the use of chlorine gas, seeing that Syria did not comply with Resolution 2118. The use of sanctions would be needed in case of findings regarding continued chemical weapon use, the Council stated with concern<sup>50</sup>. Again this resolution is a mechanism to stop an end to the chemical weapon use, rather than the conflict.

**[Security Council Resolution 2401 \(2018\) / adopted by the Security Council at its 8188th meeting, on 24 February 2018<sup>51</sup>](#)**

The Syrian government attacked Eastern territories it had besieged previously, killing a large number of people in an event that received international attention as a "massacre". This Security Council resolution hence demands a month long ceasefire, which was implemented.

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<sup>47</sup> S/RES/2139 (2014),

[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2139.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2139.pdf)

<sup>48</sup> "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2139 (2014) to Ease Aid Delivery to Syrians, Provide Relief from 'chilling Darkness' | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, [press.un.org/en/2014/sc11292.doc.htm](https://press.un.org/en/2014/sc11292.doc.htm).

<sup>49</sup> S/RES/2209 (2015),

[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2209.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2209.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> "Adopting Resolution 2209 (2015), Security Council Condemns Use of Chlorine Gas as Weapon in Syria | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, [press.un.org/en/2015/sc11810.doc.htm](https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc11810.doc.htm).

<sup>51</sup> S/RES/2401 (2018),

[https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_res\\_2401.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2401.pdf)

Yet, Türkiye considered itself to not be considered among the parties of the demanded ceasefire, and operations in Northern Syria continued, proving the ceasefire's lack of solution<sup>52</sup>.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### *Group of Friends of Syrian People*

The Friends of Syria group was formed as an international diplomatic collective to discuss and resolve issues regarding Syria outside of the Security Council, against the Chinese and Russian vetoes on resolutions condemning Syria. The group, founded by France, held a series of summits in 2012<sup>53</sup>. The second conference in İstanbul was attended by 83 countries and organizations that included the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Syrian National Council. The group called for the Kofi Annan plan to be implemented, while expressing regret against the fact that armed activities continued. The people of Syria were considered separate from the regime, with the group calling for them to not participate in the atrocities<sup>54</sup>. Syria said that those attending the conferences would be considered enemies of the Syrian state, hence not putting an effort on implementing the plan or findings.

### *2014 Geneva Conference on Syria*

After the chemical weapon attacks of 2013 and the passing of Resolution 2118, the necessity for a Geneva II conference was stated by the UN and Russia. The Syrian government affirmed their participation in the talks, but stated they would focus on eliminating terrorism, referring to the opposing groups of the Assad regime. The National Coalition, despite initial resistance to do so, announced they would be attending Geneva II, which brought by outlash from the participants of its own, and for the Syrian National Council to withdraw from the coalition, saying they would not go back on their commitment to not negotiate until Assad stepped back from the regime. Due to the lack of involvement of inter-Syria actors, a solution was no way near aside from international discussion.

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<sup>52</sup> Talmon, Stefan. "Interpreting Security Council Resolution 2401 (2018) - GPIL - German Practice in International Law." GPIL, 27 Apr. 2022, [gpil.jura.uni-bonn.de/2018/03/interpreting-security-council-resolution-2401-2018/](https://www.gpil.jura.uni-bonn.de/2018/03/interpreting-security-council-resolution-2401-2018/).

<sup>53</sup> "Friends of Syria Group." Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 Feb. 2025, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends\\_of\\_Syria\\_Group#:~:text=The%20Group%20of%20Friends%20of%20Security%20Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friends_of_Syria_Group#:~:text=The%20Group%20of%20Friends%20of%20Security%20Council)

<sup>54</sup> "The Friends' Group reaffirmed its determination to support the just cause of the Syrian people." Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/the-friends-group-reaffirmed-its-determination-to-support-the-just-cause-of-the-syrian-people.en.mfa>.

## ***UN Envoys and Mediation***

As stated before, the Security Council resolutions were highly inconclusive due to the votes of Russia and China. While the Special Envoys aimed to foster a ground for mediation and discussion between parties, they were unable to do so because of reasons outlined above. The proxy powers intertwined to the situation in Syria made certain parties to be pushed to be involved in peaceful dialogue, while others resisted until the backfall of the Assad regime. It was impossible to have a platform that represented the best interests of the Syrian people, in an immensely divided territory.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

### ***Strengthening the Centralized Government***

The HTS government faces challenges in ruling a highly fragmented Syria. Violence against the religious minority Assad belongs to continues. ISIS fighters remain active, with an increasing number of attacks. HTS hence has been negotiating with rebellious groups to integrate them into the army and create unity. However, as different international actors are backing different groups, solely the HTS' agreement is not enough to ensure peace<sup>55</sup>.

While Türkiye has stated they ordered their forces to dissolve as well, it is still pushing a joint national defense agreement that would deploy air bases in Syria. This requires the approval of Russia regarding the defense mechanisms that will emerge in the region. On the other hand, USA vouches for an inclusive military that will integrate foreign fighters as well<sup>56</sup>. Thus, it is visible that excessive multilateral dialogue is necessary, yet it is not certain to sway how the government will shape its alliances and internal structure.

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<sup>55</sup> Mehra, Tanya. "The Threat of ISIS in a Fragmentated Syria." International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, 16 May 2025, <https://icct.nl/publication/threat-isis-fragmentated-syria>.

<sup>56</sup> al-Ahmed, Samer, et al. "Building Syria's New Army: Future Plans and the Challenges Ahead." Middle East Institute, 2 July 2025, [www.mei.edu/publications/building-syrias-new-army-future-plans-and-challenges-ahead](http://www.mei.edu/publications/building-syrias-new-army-future-plans-and-challenges-ahead).

### ***Counter-terrorism and Minority Governance***

Disarmament within Syria is only possible with their compliance with OPCW, which the new government is inclined to do so<sup>57</sup>. Counter-terrorism efforts to be held should address this facet of the issue, while ensuring continued cooperation with both the OPCW, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCTT). A national counter terrorism strategy in accordance with the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and regional frameworks would be key to establishing this.

The Kurdish issue in itself is another aspect of counterterrorism which requires multilateral discussion. The negotiations with Türkiye and the Turkish branch PKK will impact the YPG and the fate of Kurds in Syria. International powers could consider giving economic incentives to the states in exchange for a defined solution to the minority governance issue, which would still require extensive swaying on Türkiye's side.

As the government reinvents itself, national legislation should be strengthened regarding terrorism, with a key focus on law enforcement mechanisms. Human rights monitoring should be implemented in the region to ensure all state and non-state actors comply with international law.

### ***Refugee Crisis and Humanitarian Aid***

UNHCR policies should be withheld both by Syria and host countries to ensure the return of those willing, and the continued support to all asylum seekers. Physical and trauma-aware psychological health coverage, humanitarian aid and financial compensation for those displaced can be set up in cooperation with host countries.

While Türkiye has taken the large portion of the burden of infrastructure, energy and reconstruction based development in the country, Syria requires the assistance of the wider international community until it has the finances and stability necessary to do it individually. This development is essential to ensure that refugees have a stable environment to return to, and those residing there can have stable living conditions, access to education, healthcare, and adequate jobs.

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<sup>57</sup> "International Support Key to Fully Eliminate Syria's Chemical Weapons, Disarmament Chief Tells Security Council, Welcoming Interim Authorities' Commitment | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases." United Nations, United Nations, [press.un.org/en/2025/sc16080.doc.htm](https://press.un.org/en/2025/sc16080.doc.htm).

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