

**Committee:** Security Council

**Topic:** The question of foreign invasions in the Syrian republic

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## I) Introduction

### A brief introduction to Syria

The **Syrian Arab Republic**, is a Western Asian country, bordering *Turkey* to the north, *Lebanon* and the *Mediterranean Sea* to the west, *Jordan* to the south, *Israel* to the southwest, and *Iraq* to the east.



The modern Syrian state was established in mid-20th century after centuries of *Ottoman* and a brief period *French mandate*, and represented the largest Arab state to emerge from the formerly Ottoman-ruled Syrian provinces.

This country gained its independence from the French mandate on 24 October 1945 when it joined the United Nations. As such it is fully entitled as a recognized UN member state with all its rights. Just after the declaration of its independence a large number of military coups and coup attempts shook the country in the period 1949–71. In 1958, Syria entered a brief union with Egypt called the United

Arab Republic, which was terminated by the 1961 Syrian coup d'état.

The republic changed its name into the Arab Republic of Syria after a constitutional referendum in 1961. The political situation became increasingly unstable until the *1963 Ba'athist coup d'état*, since which the **Ba'ath Party** has maintained its power. Syria was under Emergency Law from 1963 to 2011, effectively suspending most constitutional protections for citizens. **Bashar al-Assad** has been president since 2000 and was preceded by his father Hafez al-Assad, who was in office from 1971 to 2000.

Since *March 2011*, Syria has been embroiled in an armed conflict, with a number of countries in the region and beyond involved militarily or otherwise.

## II) The issue:

All UN member states are entitled to different rights:

The rights are those of independence, comprehending the right of the State to exercise freely all its legal powers, including the choice of its form of government; of jurisdiction over State territory in accordance with international law; of equality in law; and of self-defence, individual or collective, against armed attack.

### Syrian Civil War

The unrest in Syria, part of a wider wave of the 2011 **Arab Spring** protests, grew out of discontent with the Assad government and escalated to an armed conflict after protests calling for his removal were violently suppressed. The character of the protest was not always peaceful, it's difficult to establish when the protest turned violent and when the Islamist radical groups took the lead of them.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/syria-civil-war-rebellion-isis-assad-western-intervention-arms-a7921526.html>

#### Countries that support the Syrian Ba'athist government

*Main:* Hezbollah

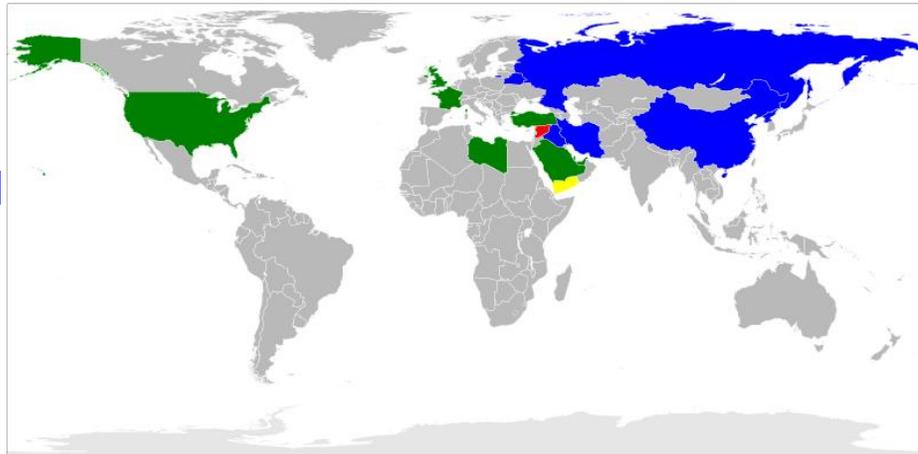
(Lebanon)

Iran

Russia (from 2015)

Iraq (from 2018)

China



#### Countries that support the Syrian Opposition

**Main:**

**Turkey (from 2016) United States (2011–17) Saudi Arabia (2012–2017) Qatar**

**Islamic Front / SIF (2012–15) France**

**England**

**Ba'athist Syria and Syrian Armed Forces** and its international allies:

**Russia** supports Syria because it has strong ties with this nation. Russia has the access to the important port of Tartus/Latakia which represent its main support structure in the Mediterranean area.

**Iran** supports Syria as a lay state permitting to Shia Islamist communities to live in peace. They are threatened by the extremist Sunni terrorists.

**Lebanon** The Hezbollah Party of Lebanon ( a government party) supports Syria because of its anti Israel policies.

A loose alliance of majorly Sunni opposition rebel groups (including the **Free Syrian Army**), the majority-Kurdish **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**, Salafi jihadist groups (including **al-Nusra Front**), and the **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)** two extremist Sunni Islamist organisations which became famous for the murdering of thousand of Islamists, Christians and members of sexual minorities , with a number of countries in the

region and beyond being either directly involved or providing support to one or another faction.

### III) Who controls what

#### Syrian government:

The main cities under government control are: Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, Latakia, Tartus, Palmyra, Albu Kamal.

#### Free Syrian Army (FSA):

The Free Syrian Army is a loose conglomeration of armed brigades formed in 2011 by defectors from the Syrian army and civilians aiming to topple President Bashar al-Assad.

Since the battle of Aleppo, the FSA has retained control of limited areas in northwestern Syria.

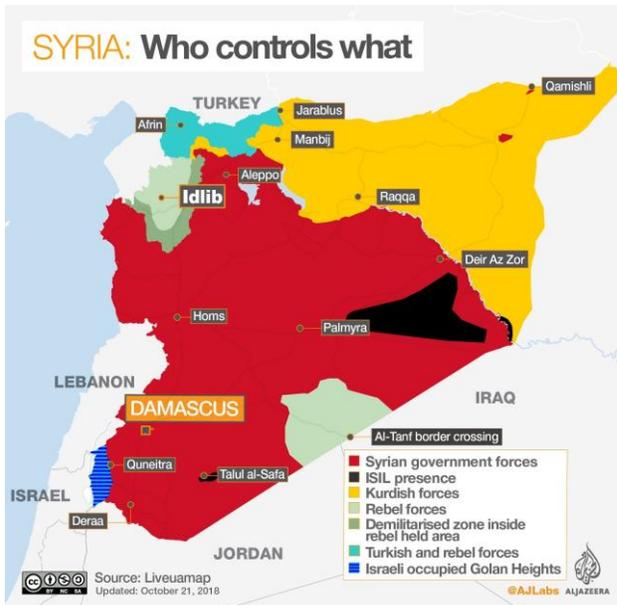
The main area it controls is: Idlib province. Fighters of this group tend to switch

#### Kurdish control:

The main cities under Kurdish control are: Raqqa, Qamishli, Hasakah.

#### ISIL control:

After the battle for Raqqa, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) remains in control



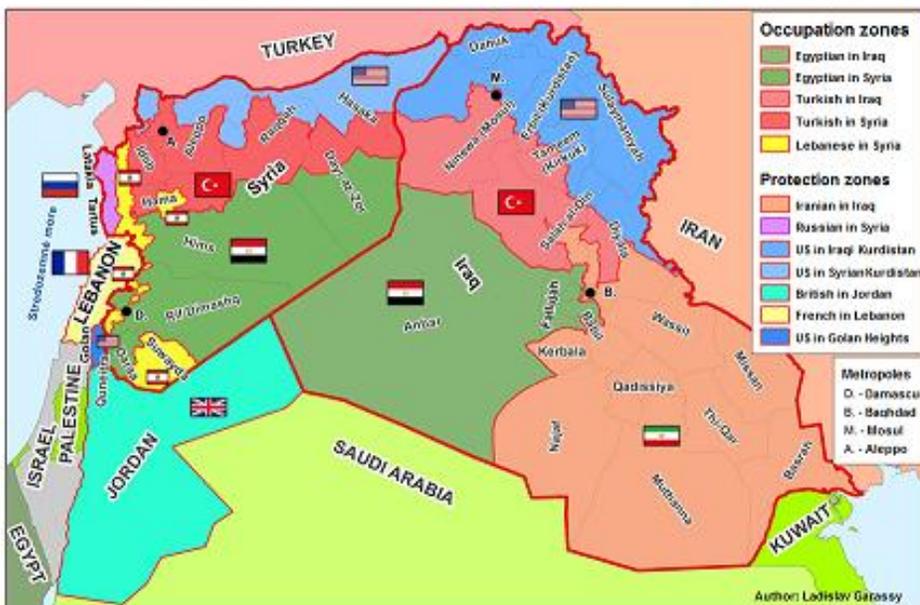
of an area near Albu Kamal, surrounded by government forces westward and Kurdish forces in the east.

#### Other groups:

Other groups fighting in Syria include Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, Iran-backed Hezbollah and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG).

#### Foreign states occupying Syrian territory:

#### OCCUPATION AND PROTECTION ZONES IN SYRIA AND IRAQ



**Israel:** In the southern part of Syria (the Golan Heights) During the Yom Kippur War in 1973, Syrian forces overran much of the southern Golan, before being pushed back by an Israeli counterattack. Israel and Syria signed a ceasefire agreement in 1974 that left almost all the Heights in Israeli hands. The 1974 ceasefire agreement between Israel and Syria delineated a demilitarized zone along their frontier and limited the number of forces each side can deploy within 25 kilometers (15 miles) of the zone.[95] East of the 1974 ceasefire line lies the Syrian controlled part of the Heights, an area that was not captured by Israel (500 square kilometres or 190 sq mi) or withdrawn from (100 square kilometres or 39 sq mi). This area forms 30% of the Golan Heights.[96] Today it contains more than 40 Syrian towns and villages. In 1975, following the 1974 ceasefire agreement, Israel returned a narrow demilitarised zone to Syrian control. UN blue helmets. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golan\\_Heights#De\\_facto\\_annexation\\_by\\_Israel\\_and\\_civil\\_rule](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golan_Heights#De_facto_annexation_by_Israel_and_civil_rule)

**Turkey:** Occupied a portion of Syrian territory in the North. The reason for this occupation are security measures to avoid the infiltration of Kurdish fighters in the Kurdish part of Turkey where Kurdish militant organisations have strong links to the armed Kurdish fighters.

**U.S.A.:** There are approximately 1,500–2,000 U.S. Marine and Special Operations Forces in Syria, spread across 12 different facilities, being used as training bases for Kurdish rebels. In the south, there is the base of Al-Tanf used to train antigovernment rebels.

**France:** Some 1,100 French soldiers have been serving in the Middle East, the military said. Anadolu Agency reported previously that since March 30, the French Army has expanded its military action spots from five to nine in Syria. According to reliable local sources, roughly 200 French soldiers have coordinated with YPG/PKK terrorists. But France had previously denied military presence in northern Syria.

It is necessary to add the presence of non governmental foreign fighters operating in Syria fighting with different groups:

Jihadists/ Freedom Fighters from all over the world

Europeans supporting the Kurds

## IV) Key Nations, NGOs and UN organizations

### Ba'ath Party

The Ba'ath party is an Arab political party, in Syria and in Iraq. Its main ideological objectives are *secularism*, *socialism*, and *pan-Arab unionism*.

In 1963



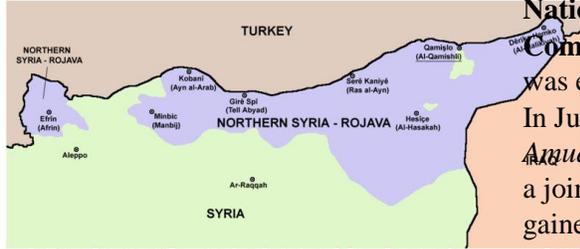
a military coup crowned the Ba'ath to power in Syria, and it embarked on a course of large-scale *nationalization*. From 1963 the Ba'ath was the only legal Syrian political party, but factionalism and intraparty splintering led to an unstable political condition. In 1966 a military junta representing the more radical elements in the party displaced the more moderate wing in power.

Subsequently the main line of division was drawn between the so-called progressive faction, led by **Nureddin Atassi**, which gave priority to the firm establishment of a one-party state and to neo-Marxist economic reform, and the so-called nationalist group, led by Gen. **Hafez al- Assad**. Assad's following was less doctrinaire about socialism, favoring a **militant posture on the Arab union and hostility toward Israel**. Despite constant maneuvering and government changes, the two factions remained in an uneasy coalition of power until 1970, when, in another coup, Assad succeeded in ousting Atassi as prime minister. Assad and the Ba'athist party remained at Syria's political helm until 2000, when he was succeeded by Bashar al- Assad, his son.

### The Kurds

In 2012, in the early stages of the Syrian Civil War, Syrian government forces withdrew from three mainly Kurdish areas, leaving control to local militias. Existing underground Kurdish political parties,

namely the **Democratic Union Party (PYD)** and the **Kurdish National Council (KNC)**, joined to form the **Kurdish Supreme Committee (KSC)** and the **People's Protection Units (YPG)** militia was established to defend Kurdish-inhabited areas in northern Syria.



In July 2012, the YPG established control in the towns of *Kobani*, *Amuda* and *Afrin*, and the Kurdish Supreme Committee established a joint leadership council to administer the towns. Soon YPG also gained control of the cities of *Al-Malikiyah*, *Ras*

*al-Ayn*, *al-Darbasiyah*, and *al-Mnabbih* and parts of *Hasakah* and *Qamishli*.

The Kurdish Supreme Committee was dissolved in 2013, when the PYD abandoned the coalition with the KNC and established the Movement for a Democratic Society (TEV-DEM) coalition.

From September 2014 to spring 2015, the YPG forces in Kobani Canton, supported by some secular **Free Syrian Army** militias and leftist international and **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)** volunteers, fought and finally repelled an assault by the **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)** during the Siege of Kobani, and in the YPG's Tell Abyad offensive of summer of 2015, the regions of *Jazira* and *Kobani* were connected.

## **V) Main international players**

### ***Russia:***

Russia is a military ally of Syria since 1956, and during the Syrian Civil War it continued supplying Assad's government with arms, sending military and technical advisers to train Syrian soldiers to use the Russian-made weapons, and it helped repair and maintain Syrian weapons.

If Assad were to fall, Russia would lose its foothold in the Middle East, it would also lose Tartus, its only Mediterranean port.

### ***Iran:***

Iran and Syria are close strategic allies, and Iran has provided significant support for Syria in the Syrian Civil War. This is said to include technical support, some combat troops, and \$9bn in financial support. Iran views the civil war as a critical front in an existential battle that directly relates to its geopolitical security. In fact for Iran it's fundamental to counter the influence of its main regional rival, Saudi Arabia, and to reinforce its own influence.

### ***USA:***

US involvement in the conflict started in 2012 under the Obama administration. In late November 2017, the US government made it known that they intended to use the presence of US troops in northern Syria, deployed there in support of the Kurdish-dominated SDF, to pressure president Assad to make concessions at the talks in Geneva. It is also alleged that there are 9 American military bases on Syrian soil that were set up illegally, that is to say violating the Syrian Arab Republic Sovereignty by not asking permission to the central government. In December 2018 president Trump affirmed that he would withdraw US troops from Syria. By now this did not happen.

### ***United Kingdom:***

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In August 2014 French President François Hollande confirmed that France had delivered arms to Syrian rebels.

In mid-November 2015 France significantly intensified its airstrikes in Syria, closely coordinating with the US military.

### ***Arab League:***

Sunni Arab states are concerned that the Iranian arms transfers are changing the balance of power in the region.

On 6 March 2013, the Arab League gave its members the "green light" to arm the Syrian rebels.

### ***Individual foreign actors in the region:***

It is well known that in the last decades many foreign individuals have arrived in the region to take part in the conflict. It is difficult to locate them and it is not always possible to understand "which side they are on", some are mercenaries and arms-traffickers, others declare themselves fighters for peace. What is sure

is that they should be taken into account as they can pose a threat to the stability in the region. Furthermore, it is important to note that foreign government's interference goes beyond military intervention (that to today includes Turkey, USA, UK, France, Germany, Israel), but it also involves intelligence operations.

There has been speculation on the presence of "spies" in the middle east for quite some time but it was recently confirmed by the Syrian ambassador to the UN, Dr. Bashar Al-Ja'afari. According to him, Syrian government possess information about foreign military intelligence officers who were captured by the regular Syrian army inside the remaining jihadist-held pocket in the eastern part of Aleppo and he even presented a list with names and nationality.

Reference:

<https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/video-syrian-ambassador-un-discloses-names-foreign-intelligence-agents-remaining-east-aleppo/>

## **VI) Key events:**

### **2011:**

15 March 2011: Dubbed the "day of rage" by activists, hundreds staged protests in Damascus and Aleppo, calling for democratic reforms, demanding for greater civil liberties and freedom for political prisoners after 40 years of brutal rule by the Assad family.

18 March 2011: Security forces open fire on a protest in Daraa, killing four people in what activists say was the first deaths of the uprising. Demonstrations spread, as does the crackdown by Assad's forces.

April 2011: Security forces raid a sit-in in Syria's third-largest city, Homs, where thousands of people tried to create the mood of Cairo's Tahrir Square, the epicentre of protests against Egypt's autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

June 2011: Police and soldiers in Jisr al-Shughour in northeastern Syria join protesters they were ordered to shoot, and the uprising claims control of a town for the first time. Elite government troops, tanks and helicopters retake the town within days.

August 2011: President Barack Obama calls on Assad to resign and orders Syrian government assets frozen.

### **2012:**

July 2012: A bombing at the Syrian national security building in Damascus during a high-level government crisis meeting kills four top officials, including Assad's brother-in-law and the defence minister.



Summer 2012: Fighting spreads to Aleppo, Syria's largest city and its former commercial capital. Over time, rebels seize control of about half of the city, but the battle there rages to this day, leaving much of Aleppo in ruins.

August 2012: Kofi Annan quits as UN-Arab League envoy after his attempts to broker a cease-fire failed. Obama says the

use of chemical weapons in Syria would be a "red line" that would change his thinking about military action.

November 2012: The Syrian National Coalition is created, bringing together the main opposition factions. The umbrella group is hampered from the outset by infighting and accusations that its members are out-of-touch exiles.

**2013:**

March 2013: That month, the number of UN-registered Syrian refugees tops 1 million, half of them children.

June 5: The Syrian army recaptures the key border town of Qusayr, in an assault led by fighters from Lebanon's Hezbollah.

August 2013: the regime is accused of killing more than 1,400 people, according to the United States, with chemical weapons in two rebel-held zones near Damascus.

September 2013: Around a dozen rebel groups abandon the Syrian National Coalition and reject its calls for a civil, democratic government. Seven of them later form their own alliance, the Islamic Front, intended to eventually create a state governed by Islamic law.

October 2013: Syria destroys its chemical weapons production equipment. The number of Syrian refugees registered with the UN tops 2 million.

**2014:**

January 2014: Infighting among rebels spreads, pitting a variety of Islamists groups and moderate factions against the al-Qaida-breakaway calling itself Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

February 2014: Two rounds of peace talks led by UN-Arab League mediator Lakhdar Brahimi in Geneva end without a breakthrough.



09 May 2014: Rebels withdraw from the old quarter of the central city of Homs in a significant symbolic victory for the government, putting the area that had been under siege for more than a year firmly in government hands.

13 May 2014: Brahimi resigns as UN-Arab League envoy to Syria, marking a second failure by the United Nations and Arab League to end the civil war.

3 June 2014: Syrians in government areas vote in presidential elections. Assad, one of three candidates, overwhelmingly wins with 88.7 percent.

June 2014: So called Islamic State group, as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant is now known, seizes large parts of northern and western Iraq. In control of around a third of Syria and Iraq, it declares a self-styled Islamic caliphate.

3 July 2014: Islamic State group takes control of Syria's largest oil field, al-Omar, after fierce battles with

the Nusra Front, al-Qaida's branch in Syria.

10 July 2014: Italian-Swedish diplomat Staffan de Mistura is named new UN envoy to Syria.

19 August 2014: Islamic State militants release video of the beheading of American journalist James Foley, the first of five Westerners to be beheaded by the IS group.

24 August 2014: Islamic State fighters capture Tabqa military air base in northeastern Syria, eliminating the last government-held outpost in Raqqa province.

23 September 2014: US-led coalition begins airstrikes against Islamic State group targets in Syria.

Mid-September 2014: IS begins offensive to take Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani, on the Turkish border.

### **2015:**

January 2015: UN estimates Syria's conflict has killed at least 220,000 people and uprooted nearly a third of the prewar population of 23 million from their homes.

26 January 2015: With the help of US-led airstrikes, Kurdish fighters take control of Kobani.

3 February 2015: IS releases a video of captured Jordanian pilot Muath al-Kaseasbeh being burned to death in a cage, sparking outrage in Jordan, which launches new strikes targeting the militants.

6 February 2015: IS claims a Jordanian airstrike kills American hostage Kayla Jean Mueller. US officials later confirm her death, but say it wasn't caused by a Jordanian airstrike.

25-28 February 2015: IS overruns several Christian villages in Syria's eastern Hassakeh province, taking at least 220 Assyrian Christians hostage.

2015 September - Russia carries out its first air strikes in Syria, saying they target the Islamic State group, but the West and Syrian opposition say it overwhelmingly targets anti-Assad rebels.

2015 December - Syrian Army allows rebels to evacuate remaining area of Homs, returning Syria's third-largest city to government control after four years.

### **2016:**

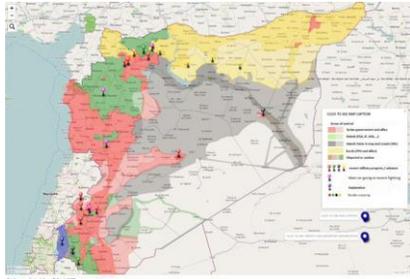
2016 March - Syrian government forces retake Palmyra from Islamic State with Russian air assistance, only to be driven out again in December.

2016 August - Turkish troops cross into Syria to help rebel groups push back so-called Islamic State militants and Kurdish-led rebels from a section of the two countries' border.

2016 December - Government troops, backed by Russian air power and Iranian-sponsored militias, recapture Aleppo, the country's largest city, depriving the rebels of their last major urban stronghold.

### **2017:**

2017 January - Russia, Iran and Turkey agree to enforce a ceasefire between the government and non-Islamist rebels, after talks between the two sides in Kazakhstan.



2017 April - US President Donald Trump orders a missile attack on an airbase from which Syrian government planes allegedly staged a chemical weapons attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun.

2017 May - US decides to arm the YPG Kurdish Popular Protection Units. These fight alongside the main opposition Syrian Democratic Forces, which captures the important Tabqa dam from Islamic State.

2017 June - US shoots down Syrian fighter jet near Raqqa after it allegedly dropped bombs near US-backed rebel Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

2017 July - The Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and the Syrian army launch a military operation to dislodge jihadist groups from the Aarsal area, near the Lebanese-Syrian border. Islamic State retreats

2017 October-November - The Islamic State group is driven from Raqqa, its de-facto capital in Syria, and Deir al-Zour.

## **2018:**

2018 January - Turkey launches an assault on northern Syria to oust Kurdish rebels controlling the area around Afrin.

2018 April - Claims of a new chemical attack in Eastern Ghouta's main town of Douma prompt the US, Britain and France to carry out a wave of punitive strikes on Syrian targets.

2018 July - Syrian army recaptures almost all of the south of the country, up to the borders with Jordan and Israeli-held territory.

2018 September-December - Kurdish-led SDF forces launch offensive that reduces Islamic State territory to a tiny enclave on the Iraqi border.

## **2019:**

2019 January - After announcing plan to withdraw US troops from Syria, President Trump warns Turkey of punitive economic measures if it goes ahead with plan to attack US Kurdish allies in northern Syria.

## **VII) Key terms or useful links:**

<https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/civil-war-in-syria>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2015/05/syria-country-divided-150529144229467.html>

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian\\_Civil\\_War](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War)

<https://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/27/world/meast/syria-civil-war-fast-facts/index.html?no-st=9999999999>

<https://www.bloomberg.com/quicktake/syrias-civil-war>

<https://www.reddit.com/r/syriancivilwar/>

<https://syriancivilwarmap.com/>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/a-timeline-of-the-us-involvement-in-syrias-conflict/2019/01/11/68fe5746-15c8-11e9-ab79-30cd4f7926f2\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.63e12903d9ec](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/a-timeline-of-the-us-involvement-in-syrias-conflict/2019/01/11/68fe5746-15c8-11e9-ab79-30cd4f7926f2_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.63e12903d9ec)

<https://m.dw.com/en/syria-civil-war-timeline-a-summary-of-critical-events/a-40001379>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42818353>

<https://m.dw.com/en/syria-conflict-what-do-the-us-russia-turkey-and-iran-want/a-41211604>