

**Forum:** Security Council

**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). USA's counterterrorism efforts 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.

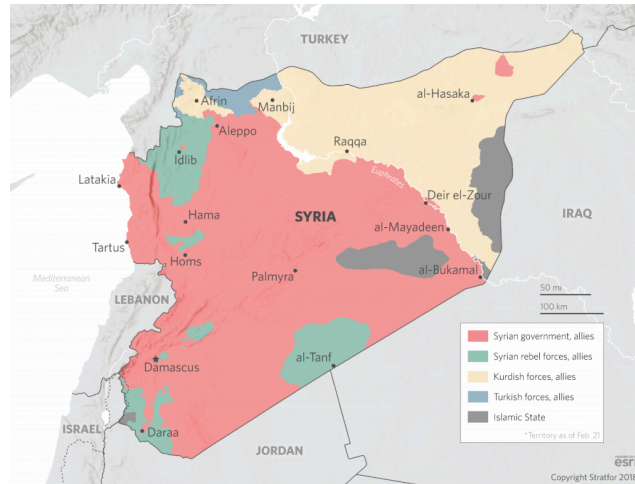


Figure 1: The flashpoints of the Syrian Civil War (Stratfor, 2018).

The Syrian situation has changed once again. The new phase of the conflict is influenced by changes in regional governance and new transitional efforts from the international community to alter the conflict's dynamics, even if the fundamental causes are not entirely resolved. Some areas show cessation of large scale hostilities, while in Syria there is a continuation of ayconflict and the humanitarian crisis. The authority is fragmented in Syria, and the political and territorial issues are even more unresolved. The socio-economic situation has deteriorated. The international community is still focused on the reconstruction, the humanitarian crisis, and the country's governance, while millions are displaced and dependent on humanitarian assistance.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Unilateral Sanctions:** Unilateral sanctions refer to a group of sanctions imposed by a single state and/or a group of states without authorization from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). They often target a government, with the aim of influencing undesirable political behavior in the context of a certain political issue.

**Sectoral Sanctions:** Sectoral sanctions are types of sanctions that target a certain industry within a state's economy. They are imposed on specific economic sectors, such as energy, finance, or construction, limiting transactions and investment without fully severing a country's access to international markets.

**Political Transition:** Political transition denotes a process through which a state undergoes institutional and governance changes intended to move away from conflict-era power structures toward a revised political framework, often involving transitional authorities and constitutional reform.

**Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Internally displaced people, referred to as IDPs, have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, they remain within the borders of their own country. There were 67.8 million internally displaced people at the end of June 2025, the most recent reporting period. They accounted for the majority of the world's forcibly displaced population (58 per cent) (UNHCR, 2026).

## General Overview

### Roots of the Issue

Syria's situation began with protests across the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. Protesters in Syria aimed for peaceful political changes, accountability of the government, and an end to economic issues. The Syrian government replied with excessive arrest and force and violent suppression of any political critique. State violence turned peaceful protests into armed opposition and the end of the government's control over territories. In 2012, the Syrian civil war began with the government, the opposition, and multiple non-state violent actors. The accelerated violence of the civil war deprived the state of initial political frameworks and led to prolonged instability in the region.

### Fragmentation of the Conflict

During this time, extremist outfits, led by the self-declared Islamic State, took large swathes of land in eastern and northern Syria. Their territorial ambitions added a new dimension to the conflict, as systematic violence against civilians, and cross-border security threats, refocused the international community's attention to counter terrorism. Military actions against these forces became a priority for many of the external actors, often focusing on these groups, regardless of the larger political or peace

processes. In the northeast, the territory was controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces, an international partner supporting the Kurdish military coalition in the battle against the Islamic State.

The SDF created local administrative and security structures in the regions they control, which operate independently from the central government in Damascus. While such structures have provided a degree of stability in some regions, they have also left unanswered questions on governance, political representation, and the territorial integrity of Syria. With the prolongation of the conflict, foreign involvement has increased. Some countries have Over the conflict's duration, foreign involvement has increased, as some countries have become involved in military operations (including the use of air power) and have provided support to local actors. The presence of foreign actors on the ground has changed the balance of power, making it less likely that any one actor will be able to achieve a decisive victory. In pursuit of their own strategic goals, foreign actors have coordinated very little, both operationally and strategically, in terms of military action. The Syrian conflict has evolved from being a primarily domestic crisis into an internationalized crisis that has been primarily defined by the overlapping security concerns and competing interests of external actors. The fragmentation of Syria and the fragmentation of the international actors have contributed to the persistence of instability and the recurring stalemate in the search for a comprehensive political solution.

### **Current Situation**

The first coordinated attempt by opposition forces in late 2024 shifted the power balance in Syria. President Bashar al-Assad lost control after having been besieged for decades by domestic, opposition-led, and foreign proxy forces as President Assad was moved out of Damascus. The collapse of the principal authorities and the subsequent opening of a national political void was created by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham opposition forces and Ahmed al-Sharaa.

In the region of South Sweida Province local armed influence leans towards an arrangement as a result of local armed influence. 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. 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.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### 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 a 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.

### United States of America

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 US 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”.

### 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, the PYD has received international command by Western states. Hence, the Kurdish issue in the Syrian borders have become even more complicated.

### 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. 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.

## Timeline of Events

<b>2 November 2011</b>	The Arab League suspends Syria and introduces sanctions.
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<b>March 2012</b>	Kofi Annan's Six Point Peace Plan introduced and accepted by the Syrian government.
<b>December 2012</b>	USA, United Kingdom, France, Türkiye and other states recognize the National Coalition as "the legitimate representative of Syrian people".
<b>2013-2014</b>	The UN destroys chemical weapons stock with the permission of the Syrian government.
<b>29 June 2014</b>	ISIS declares its caliphate.
<b>January 2015</b>	Kurdish forces and ISIS clash on the border of Türkiye.
<b>May 2023</b>	The Arab League reinstates the Syrian government, hoping to cooperate on return of Syrian refugees.
<b>8 December 2024</b>	HTS announces liberation of 4 Syrian cities, as well as the capital of Damascus, with Assad fleeing to Moscow.

## UN Involvement

### 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.

### Relevant UN Documents

#### [Geneva Communique \(2012\) / Final communiqué of the Action Group for Syria - Geneva, Saturday 30 June 2012](#)

The Geneva Communique was signed during what would be called the Geneva I Syria Group. The communique 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 communique should offer a perspective

shared by everyone in Syria, and have a clear timetable. The communique 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. The communique, 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 (S/RES/2118)**

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.

## **Treaties and Events**

### **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.

## **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

### **Group of Friends of Syrian People**

It is an international diplomacy coalition that is attempting to deal with the issues concerning Syria without going through the Security Council because of the blocking vetoes from both China and Russia to condemn Syria. With France leading, a number of conferences were held in 2012. The Istanbul Second Conference brought together 83 countries, including the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the Syrian National Council. The Group and the League of Arab States expressed regret that armed activities continued and called for the Kofi Annan plan to be implemented. While the Syrian people were viewed as not an active participant in the regime's activities, the Group called for them to not participate in the atrocities. Given that those who

attended the conferences were viewed as enemies of the Syrian state, Syria made no efforts to implement the plan or the findings.

### **2014 Geneva Conference on Syria**

Shortly after the chemical attacks took place in the Syrian conflict in 2013 and the UN Security Council introduced Resolution 2118, the UN along with Russia, began organizing the Geneva II conference. The Syrian government announced it would attend but would only discuss the issue of terrorism, referring to the opposition to the Assad government. Although the Syrian National Coalition was initially reluctant to attend the conference, they ultimately decided to do so, provoking an outlash from several conference participants, as well as leading to the Syrian National Council's withdrawal from the coalition. The Syrian National Council also stated they would not go on record to change their stance of waiting until President Assad of the Syrian government stepped down before they would enter into negotiations. With so many inter-Syria actors absent, the prospects for durable solutions were completely reliant on international maneuvering.

### **Possible Solutions**

Disarmament within Syria is only possible with their compliance with OPCW, which the new government is inclined to do so. 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.

### **Notes from the Chair**

Delegates are urged to consider that this agenda item relates to the Syrian Arab Republic's post-conflict transition, and not to the developing active nationwide civil war. Although Syria has witnessed a reduction in large-scale hostilities, the country continues to experience extreme political, humanitarian and security challenges, all of which are a result of over ten years of hostilities. Delegates are therefore advised to consider issues beyond the military dimension and to take into account issues of governance, political legitimacy, humanitarian access and stability in the long term.

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