



TOPIC B

Syrian Civil War



Head Chair: Julieta Cárdenas
Deputy Chair: Sebastián Martínez

Security Council

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Introduction

The Syrian Civil War, now in its second decade, stands as one of the most devastating and complex conflicts of the 21st century. What began in 2011 as a peaceful uprising against authoritarian rule quickly escalated into a multifaceted war involving domestic factions, regional powers, and international actors. The conflict has caused immense human suffering, resulting in over 500,000 deaths, the displacement of more than half the Syrian population, and widespread destruction of infrastructure and cultural heritage. At its core, the war is driven by a combination of political repression, sectarian tensions, foreign interventions, and competing visions for Syria's future. The involvement of various groups, which include the Syrian government, rebel factions, Kurdish forces, Islamist extremists, and numerous foreign powers, has created a deeply fragmented and volatile situation on the ground. This guide aims to provide a comprehensive summary of the conflict's origins, key actors, humanitarian consequences, and ongoing diplomatic challenges.



Definition of Key Terms

- **Civil War**
A war between citizens of the same country
- **Regime**
An authoritarian government
- **Free Syrian Army (FSA)**
A major rebel group formed in the Syrian civil war, initially consisting of defected Syrian military officers and later becoming a coalition of diverse rebel factions
- **ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria)**
ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), also known as ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), is a Sunni jihadist group with a particularly violent ideology that calls itself a caliphate and claims religious authority over all Muslims.
- **Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)**
The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) is a multiethnic military coalition formed in 2015 during the Syrian Civil War, primarily to combat the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Comprising fighters from various cultural backgrounds, including Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, Assyrians, and Armenians, the SDF emerged from preexisting militias aligned with the United States.
- **Kurds**
A member of a mainly Islamic people living in parts of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, western Iran, and eastern Syria.
- **Humanitarian Corridor**
A temporary, demilitarized zone or route established to allow the safe movement of civilians, humanitarian aid, and workers through a conflict-affected area.
- **Ceasefire**
a stoppage of a war in which each side agrees with the other to suspend aggressive actions often due to mediation by a third party.



- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**

An individual that has been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, unlike refugees, they remain within their own country.

- **Refugee**

Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence.

- **War Crimes**

An act carried out during the conduct of a war that violates accepted international rules of war.

Background information

Initially sparked by peaceful protests in March 2011 during the wider Arab Spring, demonstrations against President Bashar al-Assad's regime were met with violent government crackdowns, triggering an armed uprising. What began as a domestic rebellion quickly evolved into a multifaceted war involving regional and global powers, numerous rebel factions, extremist groups such as ISIS, and Kurdish forces seeking autonomy.



The Syrian government, with substantial military backing from Russia and Iran, has gradually regained most territory, while opposition groups have lost ground or splintered. Turkey, the United States, and various Gulf States have intervened militarily or supported different factions, adding layers of geopolitical rivalry. The humanitarian toll has been staggering: over 500,000 Syrians have died, more than 6 million are internally displaced, and around 5.6 million have fled as refugees. Civilian infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, has been targeted, and the use of chemical weapons has drawn



international condemnation. Numerous ceasefires and peace initiatives, including the Geneva and Astana processes, have yielded limited progress amid ongoing violence, political deadlock, and competing foreign interests. The United Nations Security Council remains deeply divided on the issue, particularly due to repeated vetoes by permanent members, which have impeded unified action. As of 2025, the conflict continues to present urgent challenges to international peace and security, including regional instability,

counterterrorism, humanitarian access, and the long-term reconstruction of Syria.

Major Parties Involved

- **Russian Federation**



Russia is the Syrian government's primary military and diplomatic backer. It intervened directly in 2015 to support Bashar al-Assad, secure its naval base in Tartus, and reassert its influence in the Middle East.

- **United States of America**



Entered the conflict primarily to combat ISIS, and previously supported moderate rebel groups to oppose Assad.

- **Islamic Republic of Iran**



Iran supports Assad as a strategic ally in its "axis of resistance" against Western and Sunni Arab influence, and to maintain a land corridor to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

- **Syrian Arab Republic**



As the host nation, Syria is the central party to the conflict. The war began with domestic protests against President Bashar al-Assad and evolved into a full-scale civil war involving internal and external actors. The Syrian government's primary goal has been to maintain power, suppress opposition, and reclaim lost territory.

- **Turkey**



Initially supported Syrian opposition forces to oust Assad; later shifted focus to preventing the establishment of an autonomous Kurdish region near its border.

- **Israel**



Concerned about Iranian military entrenchment near its northern border and the transfer of weapons to Hezbollah.

- **Qatar**



Backed Syrian opposition groups and aimed to expand its regional influence during the Arab Spring.

- **China**



Maintains a policy of non-intervention but opposes foreign-imposed regime change; aligned with Russia diplomatically.

- **France**



Aimed to fight terrorism, oppose Assad's use of chemical weapons, and contribute to international stability.

- **United Kigndom**



Focused on counterterrorism and humanitarian concerns; opposed to the Assad regime.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. UNSC resolution 2254 (2015)

- Called for a nationwide ceasefire and negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition.
- Endorsed the Geneva process and set a timeline for constitutional reform and UN-supervised elections within 18 months.
- Supported the establishment of a transitional governing body.

2. Astana Process (2017 - Now)

- Led by: Russia, Turkey, and Iran
- Aims to create “de-escalation zones” and reduce direct conflict in key areas like Idlib, Homs, and Eastern Ghouta.
- The UN participates as an observer, and the process is intended to complement the Geneva talks, though it often competes with them in practice.
- While some localized ceasefires were achieved, most have broken down. Critics argue the Astana Process prioritizes military gains for the Syrian government and lacks genuine political engagement.

3. UN cross-border humanitarian aid mechanism (2014 - Now)

- Authorized by: UNSC Resolution 2165 (2014) and renewed annually until 2023
- It Allows the UN and partners to deliver aid into Syria without Damascus’s consent through border crossings from Turkey, Iraq, and Jordan.
- It granted a lifeline for millions in opposition-held areas. However, Russia and China have frequently vetoed efforts to extend or expand the mechanism, resulting in the reduction of authorized crossings from four to just one (Bab al-Hawa).

4. Adicional Resolutions:

- Resolution 2533 (2020): Extended one crossing for 12 months.
- Resolution 2642 (2022): Further extension, but under stricter terms and increased pressure from Russia.

Possible Solutions

1.- Expansion of cross-border aid mechanisms

Millions of Syrians depend on humanitarian aid for food, water, medicine, and shelter. The UN's cross-border aid mechanism, established by UNSC Resolution 2165 (2014), allowed aid to be delivered without approval from the Syrian government. However, due to vetoes by Russia and China, the number of crossings has been reduced from four to just one (Bab al-Hawa), severely restricting access. A possible solution to this issue could be to pass a new Security Council resolution to:

- Reauthorize and expand the number of operational border crossings (e.g., reopen Bab al-Salam and Al-Yarubiyah).
- Extend the mandate from six months to at least 12 months, to ensure operational continuity.
- Establish an independent humanitarian monitoring mechanism to ensure transparency and neutrality of aid.

2.- International monitoring of ceasefires

Many ceasefire agreements in Syria, whether brokered through the Astana Process or bilaterally by Russia and Turkey, have failed due to lack of accountability and independent verification. Ceasefires are often temporary, violated quickly, and used tactically by warring parties. To solve this problem, the UN could implement a supervised ceasefire monitoring mechanism:

- Deployment of neutral observers (possibly from non-aligned countries) to ceasefire zones, such as Idlib or northeast Syria.
- Use technology (e.g., drones, satellite imaging) and on-ground verification to monitor violations.
- Reports of findings to the Security Council on a regular basis, with consequences for consistent violators.

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