



**IMSMUNC'19**



**United Nations  
Security Council**

***BACKGROUND GUIDE***

# **LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

This guide was created to serve as a starting point for your research and to give you a brief overview of the subject matter. It is important that you use this document as a reference point for more research and not as an end in itself. Another important aspect of your preparation will be to analyze your research. Don't just read documents; understand how they fit into the larger context of world events related to the agenda. I would suggest that you take notes on your research. This will help you refer to it during the committee as well as understand the underlying concept better once you translate it to words, you're comfortable in using. The committee, the Executive Board as well as the organizers want to make this as comfortable an experience for you as possible. Your comfort will be a priority for us at all times. Do not hesitate at any point to approach us with your doubts. As frivolous as they might sound in your head, trust me, we had them when we were starting out as well. Your confidence will grow bit by bit as you get accustomed to your surroundings in the committee. Come with an open mind, come with a willingness to observe and most importantly come with a willingness to try. I have learned that public speaking is somewhat addictive. Give yourself that first chance and it will grow on you.

I wish you all the best and hope that we can make this an enriching experience for you. We can be reached to address your doubts and queries at all hours, please don't hesitate in contacting any one of us, feel free to contact us with any doubts you have.

Regards,

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President

# Introduction to SC

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN), charged with the maintenance of international peace and security as well as approving any changes to its United Nations Charter. It is the only UN body with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states. The Security Council held its first session on 17 January 1946.

Under the United Nations Charter, the functions and powers of the Security Council are mainly:

- to maintain international peace and security in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
- to investigate any dispute or situation which might lead to international friction;
- to recommend methods of adjusting such disputes or the terms of settlement;
- to determine the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to apply economic sanctions and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take military action against an aggressor;

The Security Council is expected to meet two (sometimes conflicting) requirements: first, to make decisions that will ensure prompt and effective action to maintain international peace and security; and second, to gain the support of the wider United Nations membership for such Security Council decisions to be carried out.

The Security Council's primary responsibility is the maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 24). The Security Council takes the lead in determining the existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression. It calls upon the parties to a dispute to settle it by peaceful means and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of settlement. In some cases, the Security Council can resort to imposing sanctions or even authorize the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Chapters VI, VII, VIII and XII of the UN Charter all contain provisions pertaining to the powers of the Security Council. Chapter VI pertains to the Pacific Settlement of Disputes, within which, under articles 33 to 38, the Security Council may call upon the settlement of such disputes by the parties involved, investigate such disputes and recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment or resolution of the issue in a pacific manner. Chapter VII deals with the Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression, within which, under articles 39 to 41, the Security Council may determine any of the three aforementioned violations, call upon, parties involved to comply with provisional measures and invoke non-armed measures towards the resolution of it. Articles 42 to 50 pertain to the utilization of armed-measures, the procedures towards invoking and carrying out such measures and responsibilities and options for UN member states in light of such measures being employed. Article 51 of the same chapter VII finally iterates the inherent right of member states towards individual and collective self-defence. Chapter VIII contains only articles 52 to 54, which enshrine the practices involving regional arrangements, particularly in regards to how the Security Council may utilize such regional arrangements, but also how these will always require explicit authorization from the Security Council, should they wish to get seriously involved in matters. Finally, we have Chapter XII, which pertains to the International Trusteeship System, under whose articles 83 and 84 mentions the Security Council as the sole approver of terms regarding such trusteeship agreements, as well as the body to whom the administering authority would be obligated as a contractual partner in this agreement. It is vital to note that passage of a resolution in the Security Council is conditional on the affirmative voting of 9 member states and the absence of usage of the veto power, which a certain 5 states hold.

# Introduction

The Syrian Civil War is arguably the worst humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with over a quarter million killed, roughly the same number wounded or missing, and half of Syria's 22 million population displaced from their homes. But more than that, Syria today is the largest battlefield and generator of Sunni-Shia sectarianism the world has ever seen, with deep implications for the future boundaries of the Middle East and the spread of terrorism. It has devolved from peaceful protests against the government in 2011 in the wake of the Arab Spring to a violent insurgency that has drawn in numerous other countries. It's partly a civil war of government against people; partly a religious war pitting Assad's minority Alawite sect, aligned with Shiite fighters from Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon, against Sunni rebel groups; and increasingly a proxy war featuring Russia and Iran against the United States and its allies.

Andrew Tabler, an expert on Syria at Washington Institute for Near East Policy, summarised the conflict as follows: 'What started as an attempt by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad to shoot Syria's largest uprising into submission has devolved into a regionalized civil war that has partitioned the country into three general areas in which U.S.-designated terrorist organizations are dominant. In Syria's more diverse west, the Alawite and minority-dominated Assad regime, and a mosaic of Shia militias trained and funded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corp (IRGC), hold sway. In the centre, Sunni moderate, Islamist, and jihadist groups, such as ISIS and the al-Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al-Nusra, share control. And in the northeast, the Kurdish-based People's Protection Units (YPG) have united two of three cantons in a bid to expand "Rojava" — Western Kurdistan. As the country has haemorrhaged people, neighbouring states have carved out spheres of influence often based on sectarian agendas that tear at the fabric of Syrian society, with Iran (and now Russia) propping up the Assad regime; Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the U.A.E. supporting the Sunni-dominated opposition; and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) supporting the YPG

## Situation of civilians

The real victims of these conflicts are civilians who have suffered unimaginable atrocities and for whom, in words of Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, chairman of the United Nations panel investigating human rights abuses in Syria, 'everyday decisions – whether to visit a neighbour, to go out to buy bread – have become, potentially, decisions about life and death'. In this light, and taking into account that the conclusion of the conflict seems unlikely in the near future as currently both the US and Russia are conducting air-strikes in Syria, the international community has the responsibility to protect civilians in this conflict.

Most disgracefully, children aren't exempt from these atrocities. The UN reports asserted that armed opposition groups have also executed children, often by shooting at close range. Both government and insurgent forces have used 'weapons that are guaranteed to cause civilian damage' said Geoffrey Mock, a Middle East specialist at Amnesty International. Children account for about 20 percent of deaths from such attacks. The Syrian government has repeatedly fired imprecise rockets and unguided bombs, according to the UN and other monitoring groups. Insurgent groups have used so-called "hell cannons" – improvised artillery devices fitted with explosive gas canisters that cause widespread damage. Syrian warplanes and helicopters have blasted civilian targets like mosques, schools

and shopping markets in insurgent-controlled areas with barrel bombs – large containers filled with explosives and projectiles – and other weapons.

As the government lost control of the country, said Mr. Ahmad of the Violations Documentation Center, ‘they began using new tactics by dropping air bombs.’ More than a quarter of the dead are children. The UN and others have documented rampant use of torture by both government and opposition forces, including crimes against children targeted for appearing to be pro-government. In March, thousands of photos surfaced showing detainees who were said to have died in Syrian prisons. The photos were smuggled out of Syria by a former Syrian military photographer. Secretary of State John Kerry said that the photos showed evidence of torture. The Syrian government has been accused of using chlorine-filled barrel bombs. An attack in 2013 killed hundreds of people (some estimates were upward of 1,500) in Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus controlled by the opposition when the area was struck by several rockets containing sarin, a nerve agent known to be part of the Syrian military’s stockpile. There are also reports that the Islamic State, also known as ISIS or ISIL has used mustard gas in northern Syria.

The United Nations has accused the Syrian government of using attacks on hospitals as a “weapon of war.” Physicians for Human Rights documented nearly 300 attacks on hospitals through July, most of them carried out by pro-Assad forces in opposition-controlled areas. The death toll, documented by the Syrian American Medical Society through January 2015, does not capture the many people — estimates range from 200,000 to more than 600,000 — who have been under siege for more than a year and are at risk of starving to death or dying from other preventable causes. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights have estimated that 181 civilians have been killed in the coalition airstrike campaign against the Islamic State, as of mid-August and that 370 people have been killed by Russian warplanes since September 30. The sheer numbers are as follows: more than 4.5 million Syrians were forced to flee to neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt which together have taken in more than 4 million registered Syrian refugees, and to Europe, which received ca. 700,000 asylum applications from Syrians since 2011. While the number of civilian deaths is difficult to verify due to lack of access in areas controlled by the Islamic State, data from different reports indicates that least 28,000 civilians have died in shootings and mass killings; at least 27,000 were killed in mortar, artillery and rocket attacks; at least 19,000 were killed in Syrian government air attacks; At least 9,000 were killed after being kidnapped, detained and/or tortured; at least 1,000 were killed by exposure to chemical or toxic substances; at least 650 medical workers were killed in attacks on hospitals; at least 550 civilians died from starvation, dehydration or lack of basic medical care; and many more died from American and Russian air campaigns against ISIS and rebels. Finally, as of March 2015, the total economic loss since the start of the conflict for Syria has been estimated to be over \$200bn and four in every five Syrians to now live in poverty - 30% of them in abject poverty. Syria's education, health, and social welfare systems are also in a state of collapse.

# Block reactions

## European Union

The EU member states have been criticized for their passivity in the face of the Syrian Civil War. They only began to wake up to the magnitude of the crisis after they realized they have a large-scale refugee problem on their hands, despite Syria being one of EU’s close partners under the European Neighbourhood Policy framework. The crisis certainly exposed political divisions among European governments, which haven’t been able to reconcile their positions on how to tackle the conflict. This, in turn, has precluded the launching of peace making and crisis management missions under the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy and the use of European battle groups. Having said that, the EU has provided the most humanitarian aid to Syrian citizens: so far more than €4.2billion for relief and recovery assistance to Syrians in their country and to refugees and their host communities in neighbouring Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt. It is in the EU’s best interest to resolve the Syrian conflict as soon as possible.

## Arab League

The Arab League played the role of the mediator between The Syrian government and the opposition at the beginning of the conflict and was close to securing a peace deal. However, the deal never went through and Arab League members decided to suspend Syria's membership in the regional organization. The Arab League has also imposed economic sanctions on Syria, including an asset freeze and an embargo on investments.

## Russia

Russia is one of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's most important international backers and the survival of the regime is critical to maintaining Russian interests in the country. It has blocked resolutions critical of President Assad at the UN Security Council and has continued to supply weapons to the Syrian military despite international criticism. Moscow wants to protect a key naval facility which it leases at the Syrian port of Tartous, which serves as Russia's sole Mediterranean base for its Black Sea fleet, and has forces at an airbase in Latakia, President Assad's Shia Alawite heartland. In September 2015 Russia began launching airstrikes against rebels, saying the so-called Islamic State (IS) and "all terrorists" were targets. However, Western-backed groups were reported to have been hit. President Vladimir Putin has though said that only a political solution can end the conflict.

## USA

The US has accused President Assad of responsibility for widespread atrocities and says he must go. But it agrees on the need for a negotiated settlement to end the war and the formation of a transitional administration. The US supports Syria's main opposition alliance, the National The coalition, and provides limited military assistance to "moderate" rebels. Since September 2014, the US has been conducting airstrikes on IS and other jihadist groups in Syria as part of an international coalition against the jihadist group. But it has avoided attacks that might benefit Mr. Assad's forces or intervening in battles between them and the rebels. A program to train and arm 5,000 Syrian rebels to take the fight to IS on the ground has suffered embarrassing setbacks, with few having even reached the frontline.

## Turkey

The Turkish government has been a staunch critic of Mr. Assad since the start of the uprising in Syria. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said it was impossible for Syrians to "accept a dictator who has led to the deaths of up to 350,000 people". Turkey is a key supporter of the Syrian opposition and has faced the burden of hosting almost two million refugees. But its policy of allowing rebel fighters, arms shipments, and refugees to pass through its territory has been exploited by foreign jihadists wanting to join IS. Turkey agreed to let the US-led coalition against IS to use its airbases for strikes on Syria after an IS bomb attack in July 2015. They have though been critical of coalition support for the Syrian Kurdish Popular Protection Units (YPG) - an affiliate of the banned Turkish Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) deemed a terrorist group by Turkey, the EU, and the US.

## Saudi Arabia

The Sunni-ruled Gulf kingdom says President Assad cannot be part of a solution to the conflict and must hand over power to a transitional administration or be removed by force. Riyadh is a major provider of military and financial assistance to several rebel groups, including those with Islamist ideologies, and has called for a no-fly zone to be imposed to protect civilians from bombardment by Syrian government forces. Saudi leaders were angered by the Obama administration's decision not to intervene militarily in Syria after a 2013 chemical attack blamed on Mr. Assad's forces. They later agreed to take part in the USled coalition air campaign against IS, concerned by the group's advances and its popularity among a minority of Saudis.

## Iran

Regional Shia power Iran is believed to be spending billions of dollars a year to prop up President Assad and his Alawite-dominated government, providing military advisers and subsidized weapons, as well as lines of credit and oil transfers. Mr. Assad is Iran's closest Arab ally and Syria is the main transit point for Iranian weapons shipments to the Lebanese Shia Islamist movement, Hezbollah. Iran is also believed to have been influential in Hezbollah's decision to send fighters to western Syria to assist pro-Assad forces. Militiamen from Iran and Iraq who say they are protecting Shia holy sites are also fighting alongside Syrian troops. Iran has proposed a peaceful transition in Syria that would culminate in free, multi-party elections. It was involved in peace talks over Syria's future for the first time when world powers met in Vienna.

## Previous UN action

Various UN agencies such as the Security and Human Rights Councils, released reports on the Syrian Civil War, highlighting issues such as human rights violations. For instance, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, investigating alleged human rights violations since March 2011, reported that those on both sides of the conflict have committed war crimes - including murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances. Government and rebel forces have also been accused by investigators of using civilian suffering - such as blocking access to food, water and health services - as a method of war -

[http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session30/Documents/A\\_HRC\\_30\\_48\\_ENG.doc](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session30/Documents/A_HRC_30_48_ENG.doc)

A detailed overview of the conflict has also been provided by the UNDP - [http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/alienation\\_and\\_violence\\_impact\\_of\\_the\\_syria\\_crisis\\_in\\_2014\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/alienation_and_violence_impact_of_the_syria_crisis_in_2014_eng.pdf)

The latest findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic can be found here: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/iicisyrria/pages/independentinternationalcommission.aspx>

The UNSC released its own report in January 2014 on 'children and armed conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic' ([http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/31&referer=/english/&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/31&referer=/english/&Lang=E)), focussing particularly on crimes against children in the context of the Syrian Civil War. A month later, the UN Security Council resolution demanded all parties end the 'indiscriminate employment of weapons in populated areas'. Since then, however, more than 6,000 civilians have been killed by barrel bombs dropped by government aircraft on rebel-held areas. The UN says in some instances, civilian gatherings have been deliberately targeted, constituting massacres. The resolution can be found here: <http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2014/02/22/full-text-un-security-council-resolution-2139/>

Islamic State has also been accused by the UN of waging a campaign of terror in northern and eastern Syria. It has inflicted severe punishments on those who transgress or refuse to accept its rule, including hundreds of public executions and amputations. Its fighters have also carried out mass killings of rival armed groups, members of the security forces and religious minorities, and beheaded hostages, including several Westerners.

The Secretary-General of the UN also established several investigative bodies to assess whether certain human rights violations took place. For instance, the UN mission to Investigate Allegations of the Use of Chemical Weapons in Syria concluded the following: 'Based on the basis of the evidence obtained during the investigation of the Ghouta incident, the conclusion of the UN Mission is that on 21 August 31, chemical weapons have been used on the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic on a relatively large scale. In particular, the environmental, chemical and medical samples collected by the Mission provided clear and convincing evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in the Ghouta area of Damascus.'

The UNHCR has been very active in distributing humanitarian aid and relief to Syrian refugees both in Syria and in its neighboring countries.

Finally, in 2012, the UNSC attempted to threaten Syrian authorities with sanctions if they did not halt violence and human rights violations against rebels and civilians, but this initiative was blocked by Russia and China. The same two countries also blocked a more recent attempt on part of the UNSC to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

# Questions to be addressed by delegates

- How to protect the human rights of civilians currently living in Syria?
- How to improve access to basic provisions and welfare for Syrian civilians, including food, aid, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, and shelter?
- How to rebuild civil society in Syria and lift its citizens from poverty – one in five Syrians now live in poverty - 30% of them in abject poverty?
- How to enable access to education to Syrian children (both those who stayed in and refugees) so as not to put an entire generation at a disadvantage?
- How to best help refugees wanting to get to Europe; should there be legal ways for them to do so; as it is much cheaper to run refugee camps in the countries neighbouring Syria – some of which have already taken in a great number of refugees than in Europe, should humanitarian aid from countries around the world be allocated to funding refugee camps in Syria's close vicinity rather than on the European refugee camps?
- In what ways can the countries who have accepted a lot of refugees be helped in managing them? • How can the problem of smugglers profiteering from human trafficking Syrian citizens to Europe be addressed?