[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Pp-semi-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-semi-indef) [Template:Pp-move-indef](/wiki/Template:Pp-move-indef) [Template:Use dmy dates](/wiki/Template:Use_dmy_dates) [Template:Coord](/wiki/Template:Coord) [Template:Infobox country](/wiki/Template:Infobox_country) **Syria** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en); [Template:Lang-ar](/wiki/Template:Lang-ar) or [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), *Sūriyā* or *Sūrīyah*), officially the **Syrian Arab Republic**, is a country in [Western Asia](/wiki/Western_Asia). [*De jure*](/wiki/De_jure) Syrian territory borders [Lebanon](/wiki/Lebanon) and the [Mediterranean Sea](/wiki/Mediterranean_Sea) to the west, [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) to the north, [Iraq](/wiki/Iraq) to the east, [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan) to the south, and [Israel](/wiki/Israel) to the southwest, but the government's control now extends to approximately 30–40% of the *de jure* state area and less than 60% of the population.[[1]](#cite_note-1) A country of fertile plains, high mountains, and deserts, Syria is home to [diverse ethnic and religious groups](/wiki/Demographics_of_Syria), including [Syrian Arabs](/wiki/Syrian_people), [Greeks](/wiki/Greeks), [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians_in_Syria), [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians_in_Syria), [Kurds](/wiki/Kurds_in_Syria), [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians_in_Syria),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Mandeans](/wiki/Mandeans)[[2]](#cite_note-2) and [Turks](/wiki/Syrian_Turks). Religious groups include [Sunnis](/wiki/Islam_in_Syria#Sunni_Islam), [Christians](/wiki/Christianity_in_Syria), [Alawites](/wiki/Alawites), [Druze](/wiki/Druze#In_Syria), [Mandeans](/wiki/Mandaeism), [Shiites](/wiki/Shiites), [Salafis](/wiki/Salafi), and [Yazidis](/wiki/Yazidis). Sunni Arabs make up the largest population group in Syria.

In English, the name "Syria" was formerly synonymous with the [Levant](/wiki/Levant) (known in Arabic as *al-Sham*), while the modern state encompasses the sites of several ancient kingdoms and empires, including the [Eblan](/wiki/Ebla) civilization of the 3rd millennium [BC](/wiki/Before_Christ). Its capital [Damascus](/wiki/Damascus) is among the [oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world](/wiki/List_of_cities_by_time_of_continuous_habitation).[[3]](#cite_note-3) In the [Islamic](/wiki/Islam) era, [Damascus](/wiki/Damascus) was the seat of the [Umayyad Caliphate](/wiki/Umayyad_Caliphate) and a provincial capital of the [Mamluk Sultanate](/wiki/Mamluk_Sultanate_(Cairo)) in Egypt.

The modern Syrian state was established after the end of centuries of [Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Syria) control in [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I) as a [French mandate](/wiki/French_Mandate_for_Syria_and_Lebanon), and represented the largest Arab state to emerge from the formerly [Ottoman](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire)-ruled Arab Levant. It gained independence as a [parliamentary republic](/wiki/Parliamentary_republic) on 24 October 1945 when Syria became a founding member of the United Nations, an act which legally ended the former French Mandate – although French troops did not leave the country until April 1946. The post-independence period was tumultuous, and a large number of [military coups](/wiki/Military_coup) 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](/wiki/United_Arab_Republic), which was terminated by the [1961 Syrian coup d'état](/wiki/1961_Syrian_coup_d'état). The Arab Republic of Syria came into being in late 1961 after [December 1 constitutional referendum](/wiki/Syrian_constitutional_referendum,_1961), and was increasingly unstable until the [Ba'athist coup d'état](/wiki/1963_Syrian_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, and its system of government is considered to be non-democratic by American NGO [Freedom House](/wiki/Freedom_House).[[4]](#cite_note-4) [Bashar al-Assad](/wiki/Bashar_al-Assad) has been president since 2000 and was preceded by his father [Hafez al-Assad](/wiki/Hafez_al-Assad), who was in office from 1970 to 2000.[[5]](#cite_note-5) Syria is a member of one international organization other than the United Nations, the [Non-Aligned Movement](/wiki/Non-Aligned_Movement); it is currently suspended from the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League)[[6]](#cite_note-6) and the [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](/wiki/Organisation_of_Islamic_Cooperation),[[7]](#cite_note-7) and self-suspended from the [Union for the Mediterranean](/wiki/Union_for_the_Mediterranean).[[8]](#cite_note-8) Since March 2011, Syria has been embroiled in an [uprising](/wiki/Civil_uprising_phase_of_the_Syrian_Civil_War) against Assad and the [Ba'athist](/wiki/Arab_Socialist_Ba'ath_Party_–_Syria_Region) government as part of the [Arab Spring](/wiki/Arab_Spring), a crackdown that contributed to the [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War) and to Syria's becoming one of the most violent countries in the world.[[9]](#cite_note-9) The [Syrian Interim Government](/wiki/Syrian_Interim_Government) was formed by the opposition umbrella group, the [Syrian National Coalition](/wiki/Syrian_National_Coalition), in March 2013. Representatives of this [alternative government](/wiki/Government_in_exile#Alternative_governments_of_current_states) were subsequently invited to take up Syria's seat at the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League).<ref name=guardian.co.uk>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

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## Etymology[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The name *Syria* is derived from the 8th century BC [Luwian](/wiki/Luwian) term "Sura/i", and the derivative [ancient Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) name: [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), or [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), both of which originally derived from Aššūrāyu ([Assyria](/wiki/Assyria)) in northern [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia).[[10]](#cite_note-10)[[11]](#cite_note-11) However, from the [Seleucid Empire](/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) (323–150 BC), this term was also applied to [The Levant](/wiki/The_Levant), and from this point the Greeks applied the term without distinction between the [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians) of Mesopotamia and [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans) of the Levant.[[12]](#cite_note-12)[[13]](#cite_note-13) Mainstream modern academic opinion strongly favours the argument that the Greek word is related to the cognate [Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang), [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl), ultimately derived from the [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian_language) [*Template:Transl*](/wiki/Template:Transl).[[14]](#cite_note-14) In the past, others believed that it was derived from *Siryon*, the name that the [Sidonians](/wiki/Sidon) gave to [Mount Hermon](/wiki/Mount_Hermon).[[15]](#cite_note-15) However, the discovery of the [Çineköy inscription](/wiki/Çineköy_inscription) in 2000 seems to support the theory that the term *Syria* derives from [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria), whose ancient homeland was located in modern northern [Iraq](/wiki/Iraq).

The area designated by the word has changed over time. Classically, Syria lies at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, between [Arabia](/wiki/Arabia) to the south and [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor) to the north, stretching inland to include parts of Iraq, and having an uncertain border to the northeast that [Pliny the Elder](/wiki/Pliny_the_Elder) describes as including, from west to east, [Commagene](/wiki/Commagene), [Sophene](/wiki/Sophene), and [Adiabene](/wiki/Adiabene).[[16]](#cite_note-16) By Pliny's time, however, this larger Syria had been divided into a number of provinces under the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire) (but politically independent from each other): [Judaea](/wiki/Iudaea_Province), later renamed [Palaestina](/wiki/Palestina_(region)) in AD 135 (the region corresponding to [modern-day Israel](/wiki/Modern_Israel), the Palestinian Territories, and Jordan) in the extreme southwest; [Phoenice](/wiki/Phoenice_(Roman_province)) (established in 194 AD) corresponding to modern Lebanon, Damascus and Homs regions; [Coele-Syria](/wiki/Coele-Syria) (or "Hollow Syria") south of the [Eleutheris river](/wiki/An_Nahr_al_Kabir), and Iraq.[[17]](#cite_note-17)

## History[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main)

### Ancient antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

[thumb|upright|Female figurine, 5000 BC.](/wiki/File:FemaleFigurineSyria5000BCE.jpg) [Ancient Orient Museum](/wiki/Ancient_Orient_Museum). [thumb|upright|God head, the kingdom of](/wiki/File:God_Head_Djabul_Louvre_AO10831.jpg) [Yamhad](/wiki/Yamhad) (c. 1600 BC)[[18]](#cite_note-18) Since approximately 10,000 BC, Syria was one of centers of [Neolithic](/wiki/Neolithic) culture (known as [Pre-Pottery Neolithic A](/wiki/PPNA)) where agriculture and cattle breeding appeared for the first time in the world. The following Neolithic period ([PPNB](/wiki/PPNB)) is represented by rectangular houses of [Mureybet](/wiki/Mureybet) culture. At the time of the pre-pottery Neolithic, people used vessels made of stone, gyps and burnt lime ([Vaisselle blanche](/wiki/White_Ware)). Finds of [obsidian](/wiki/Obsidian) tools from [Anatolia](/wiki/Anatolia) are evidences of early trade relations. Cities of [Hamoukar](/wiki/Hamoukar) and [Emar](/wiki/Emar) played an important role during the late Neolithic and Bronze Age. [Archaeologists](/wiki/Archaeologist) have demonstrated that [civilization](/wiki/Civilization) in Syria was one of the most ancient on earth, perhaps preceded by only those of [Mesopotamia](/wiki/Mesopotamia).

#### Eblaites and Amorites[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|left|Ebla royal palace c. 2400 BC](/wiki/File:Ebla6.JPG) [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) The earliest recorded indigenous civilisation in the region was the Kingdom of [Ebla](/wiki/Ebla)[[19]](#cite_note-19) near present-day [Idlib](/wiki/Idlib), northern Syria. Ebla appears to have been founded around 3500 BC,[[20]](#cite_note-20)[[21]](#cite_note-21)[[22]](#cite_note-22)[[23]](#cite_note-23)[[24]](#cite_note-24) and gradually built its fortune through trade with the [Mesopotamian](/wiki/Mesopotamian) states of [Sumer](/wiki/Sumer), [Assyria](/wiki/Assyria) and [Akkad](/wiki/Akkad_(city)), as well as with the [Hurrian](/wiki/Hurrian) and [Hattian](/wiki/Hattians) peoples to the northwest, in [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor).[[25]](#cite_note-25) Gifts from [Pharaohs](/wiki/Pharaoh), found during excavations, confirm Ebla's contact with [Egypt](/wiki/Ancient_Egypt).

One of the earliest written texts from Syria is a trading agreement between Vizier [Ibrium](/wiki/Ibrium) of Ebla and an ambiguous kingdom called [Abarsal](/wiki/Abarsal) c. 2300 BC.[[26]](#cite_note-26)[[27]](#cite_note-27) Scholars believe the [language of Ebla](/wiki/Eblaite_language) to be among the oldest known written [Semitic languages](/wiki/Semitic_languages) after [Akkadian](/wiki/Akkadian), Recent classifications of the Eblaite language have shown that it was an [East Semitic language](/wiki/East_Semitic_language), closely related to the [Akkadian language](/wiki/Akkadian_language).[[28]](#cite_note-28) Ebla was weakened by a long war with [Mari](/wiki/Mari,_Syria), and the whole of Syria became part of the Mesopotamian [Akkadian Empire](/wiki/Akkadian_Empire) after [Sargon of Akkad](/wiki/Sargon_of_Akkad) and his grandson [Naram-Sin's](/wiki/Naram-Sin_of_Akkad) conquests ended Eblan domination over Syria in the first half of the 23rd century BC.[[29]](#cite_note-29)[[30]](#cite_note-30) By the 21st century BC, [Hurrians](/wiki/Hurrians) settled the northern east parts of Syria while the rest of the region was dominated by the [Amorites](/wiki/Amorite), Syria was called the Land of the Amurru (Amorites) by their Assyro-Babylonian neighbors. The [Northwest Semitic](/wiki/Northwest_Semitic_languages) language of the [Amorites](/wiki/Amorite_language) is the earliest attested of the [Canaanite languages](/wiki/Canaanite_language). [Mari](/wiki/Mari,_Syria) reemerged during this period, and saw renewed prosperity until conquered by [Hammurabi](/wiki/Hammurabi) of Babylon. [Ugarit](/wiki/Ugarit) also arose during this time, circa 1800 BC, close to modern [Latakia](/wiki/Latakia). [Ugaritic](/wiki/Ugaritic_language) was a Semitic language loosely related to the Canaanite languages, and developed the [Ugaritic alphabet](/wiki/Ugaritic_alphabet).[[31]](#cite_note-31) the Ugarites kingdom survived until its destruction at the hands of the marauding Indo-European [Sea Peoples](/wiki/Sea_Peoples) in the 12th century BC.

[Yamhad](/wiki/Yamhad) (modern [Aleppo](/wiki/Aleppo)) dominated northern Syria for two centuries,[[32]](#cite_note-32) although Eastern Syria was occupied in the 19th and 18th centuries BC by the [Old Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Old_Assyrian_Empire) ruled by the Amorite Dynasty of [Shamshi-Adad I](/wiki/Shamshi-Adad_I), and by the [Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Babylonian_Empire) which was founded by Amorites. Yamhad was described in the tablets of Mari as the mightiest state in the near east and as having more vassals than Hammurabi of Babylon.[[32]](#cite_note-32) Yamhad imposed its authority over [Alalakh](/wiki/Alalakh),[[33]](#cite_note-33) [Qatna](/wiki/Qatna),[[34]](#cite_note-34) the [Hurrians](/wiki/Hurrians) states and the Euphrates Valley down to the borders with Babylon.[[35]](#cite_note-35) The army of Yamhad campaigned as far away as [Dēr](/wiki/Der_(Sumer)) on the border of [Elam](/wiki/Elam) (modern Iran).[[36]](#cite_note-36) Yamhad was conquered and destroyed, along with Ebla, by the [Indo-European](/wiki/Indo-European) [Hittites](/wiki/Hittites) from [Asia Minor](/wiki/Asia_Minor) circa 1600 BC.[[37]](#cite_note-37) From this time, Syria became a battle ground for various foreign empires, these being the [Hittite Empire](/wiki/Hittite_Empire), [Mitanni](/wiki/Mitanni) Empire, [Egyptian Empire](/wiki/Egyptian_Empire), [Middle Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Middle_Assyrian_Empire), and to a lesser degree [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia). The Egyptians initially occupied much of the south, while the Hittites, and the Mitanni, much of the north. However, Assyria eventually gained the upper hand, destroying the Mitanni Empire and annexing huge swathes of territory previously held by the Hittites and Babylon.

#### Arameans and Phoenicians[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|250px|](/wiki/File:Amrit01.jpg)[Amrit](/wiki/Amrit) Phoenician Temple [thumb|250px|Reliefs from](/wiki/File:Gerettetegötter_löwen.JPG) [Tel Halaf](/wiki/Tel_Halaf) dating to the Aramean kingdom of [Bit Bahiani](/wiki/Bit_Bahiani) Around the 14th century BC, various Semitic peoples appeared in the area, such as the semi-nomadic [Suteans](/wiki/Suteans) who came into an unsuccessful conflict with [Babylonia](/wiki/Babylonia) to the east, and the [West Semitic](/wiki/West_Semitic_languages) speaking [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans) who subsumed the earlier Amorites. They too were subjugated by Assyria and the Hittites for centuries. The Egyptians fought the Hittites for control over western Syria; the fighting reached its zenith in 1274 BC with the [Battle of Kadesh](/wiki/Battle_of_Kadesh).[[38]](#cite_note-38)[[39]](#cite_note-39) The west remained part of the Hittite empire until its destruction c. 1200 BC,[[40]](#cite_note-40) while eastern Syria largely became part of the Middle Assyrian Empire,[[41]](#cite_note-41) who also annexed much of the west during the reign of [Tiglath-Pileser I](/wiki/Tiglath-Pileser_I) 1114–1076 BC.

With the destruction of the Hittites and the decline of Assyria in the late 11th century BC, the Aramean tribes gained control of much of the interior, founding states such as [Bit Bahiani](/wiki/Bit_Bahiani), [Aram-Damascus](/wiki/Aram-Damascus), [Hamath](/wiki/Hamath), [Aram-Rehob](/wiki/Aram-Rehob), [Aram-Naharaim](/wiki/Aram-Naharaim), and [Luhuti](/wiki/Luhuti). From this point, the region became known as [Aramea](/wiki/Aramea) or [Aram](/wiki/Aram_(biblical_region)). There was also a synthesis between the Semitic Arameans and the remnants of the Indo-European [Hittites](/wiki/Hittites), with the founding of a number of [Syro-Hittite](/wiki/Syro-Hittite) states centered in north central Aram (Syria) and south central Asia Minor (modern Turkey), including [Palistin](/wiki/Palistin), [Carchemish](/wiki/Carchemish) and [Sam'al](/wiki/Sam'al).

A [Canaanite](/wiki/Canaanite_languages) group known as the [Phoenicians](/wiki/Phoenicians) came to dominate the coasts of Syria, (and also Lebanon and northern [Palestine](/wiki/Palestine_(region))) from the 13th century BC, founding city states such as [Amrit](/wiki/Amrit), [Simyra](/wiki/Simyra), [Arwad](/wiki/Arwad), [Paltos](/wiki/Arab_al-Mulk), [Ramitha](/wiki/Latakia#Ancient_settlement_and_founding) and [Shuksi](/wiki/Tell_Sukas). From these coastal regions they eventually spread their influence throughout the [Mediterranean](/wiki/Mediterranean), including building colonies in [Malta](/wiki/Malta), Sicily, the [Iberian peninsula](/wiki/Iberian_peninsula) (modern Spain and [Portugal](/wiki/Portugal)), the coasts of North Africa, and most significantly, founding the major city state of [Carthage](/wiki/Carthage) (in modern [Tunisia](/wiki/Tunisia)) in the 9th century BC which was much later to become the center of a major empire, rivaling the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire).

Syria and the entire [Near East](/wiki/Near_East) and beyond then fell to the vast [Neo Assyrian Empire](/wiki/Neo_Assyrian_Empire) (911 BC – 605 BC). The Assyrians introduced [Imperial Aramaic](/wiki/Imperial_Aramaic) as the [lingua franca](/wiki/Lingua_franca) of their empire. This language was to remain dominant in Syria and the entire [Near East](/wiki/Near_East) until after the [Arab](/wiki/Arab) [Islamic](/wiki/Islamic) conquest in the 7th and 8th centuries AD, and was to be a vehicle for the spread of Christianity. The Assyrians named their colonies of Syria and Lebanon [Eber-Nari](/wiki/Eber-Nari). Assyrian domination ended after the Assyrians greatly weakened themselves in a series of brutal internal civil wars, followed by an attacking coalition of their former subject peoples; the [Medes](/wiki/Medes), [Babylonians](/wiki/Babylonians), [Chaldeans](/wiki/Chaldea), [Persians](/wiki/Persian_people), [Scythians](/wiki/Scythians) and [Cimmerians](/wiki/Cimmerians). During the fall of Assyria, the [Scythians](/wiki/Scythians) ravaged and plundered much of Syria. The last stand of the Assyrian army was at [Carchemish](/wiki/Carchemish) in northern Syria in 605 BC.

The Assyrian Empire was followed by the [Neo-Babylonian Empire](/wiki/Neo-Babylonian_Empire) (605 BC – 539 BC). During this period, Syria became a battle ground between Babylonia and another former Assyrian colony, that of [Egypt](/wiki/Egypt). The Babylonians, like their Assyrian relations, were victorious over Egypt.

### Classical antiquity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Ancient city of](/wiki/File:Temple_of_Bel,_Palmyra_15.jpg) [Palmyra](/wiki/Palmyra)

The [Achaemenid](/wiki/Achaemenid) [Persians](/wiki/Persian_people) took [Syria](/wiki/Eber-Nari) from Babylonia as part of their hegemony of Southwest Asia in 539 BC. The Persians, having spent four centuries under Assyrian rule, retained Imperial Aramaic as diplomatic language in the [Achaemenid Empire](/wiki/Achaemenid_Empire) (539 BC- 330 BC), and also the Assyrian name of the satrapy of Aram/Syria [Eber-Nari](/wiki/Eber-Nari).

Syria was conquered by the [Greek](/wiki/Ancient_Greek) [Macedonian Empire](/wiki/Macedonian_Empire), ruled by [Alexander the Great](/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) circa 330 BC, and consequently became [Coele-Syria](/wiki/Coele-Syria) province of the [Greek](/wiki/Greeks) [Seleucid Empire](/wiki/Seleucid_Empire) (323 BC – 64 BC).

It was the Greeks who introduced the name "Syria" to the region. Originally an Indo-European corruption of "Assyria" in northern Mesopotamia, the Greeks used this term to describe not only Assyria itself but also the lands to the west which had for centuries been under Assyrian dominion.[[42]](#cite_note-42) Thus in the [Greco-Roman](/wiki/Greco-Roman) world both the [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans) of Syria and the [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians) of Mesopotamia to the east were referred to as "Syrians" or "Syriacs", despite these being distinct peoples in their own right, a confusion which would continue into the modern world. Eventually parts of southern Seleucid Syria were taken by [Judean](/wiki/Judean) [Hasmoneans](/wiki/Hasmoneans) upon the slow disintegration of the Hellenistic Empire.

Syria briefly came under [Armenian](/wiki/Armenians) control from 83 BC, with the conquests of [Tigranes the Great](/wiki/Tigranes_the_Great), who was welcomed as a savior from the Seleucids and Romans by its people. The Armenians retained control of Syria for two decades before being driven out by the Romans.

[thumb|](/wiki/File:Sy_bosra_divadlo_hlediste.jpg)[Roman theatre](/wiki/Roman_theatre_(structure)) of [Bosra](/wiki/Bosra) in the province of [Arabia](/wiki/Arabia_Petraea), present-day Syria [Pompey the Great](/wiki/Pompey_the_Great) of the [Roman Empire](/wiki/Roman_Empire), who captured [Antioch](/wiki/Antioch) in 64 BC, turning [Syria](/wiki/Syria_(Roman_province)) into a Roman province. [thumb|alt=Map of the Palmyrene empire|The Palmyrene empire in 271 AD](/wiki/File:Palmyra_imposed.png) [Palmyra](/wiki/Palmyra), a rich and sometimes powerful native [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic)-speaking kingdom arose in northern Syria in the 2nd century; the Palmyrene established a trade network that made the city one of the richest in the Roman empire. Eventually, in the late 3rd century AD, the Palmyrene king [Odaenathus](/wiki/Odaenathus) defeated the Persian emperor [Shapur I](/wiki/Shapur_I) and controlled the entirety of the Roman East while his successor and widow [Zenobia](/wiki/Zenobia) established the [Palmyrene Empire](/wiki/Palmyrene_Empire), which briefly conquered Egypt, Syria, Palestine, much of Asia Minor, Judah and Lebanon, before being finally brought under Roman control in 273 AD.

The northern Mesopotamian [Assyrian](/wiki/Neo-Assyrian) kingdom of [Adiabene](/wiki/Adiabene) controlled areas of north east Syria between 10 AD and 117 AD, before it was conquered by Rome.[[43]](#cite_note-43) The Aramaic language has been found as far afield as [Hadrians Wall](/wiki/Hadrians_Wall) in [Ancient Britain](/wiki/Ancient_Britain), with inscriptions written by [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyria) and [Aramean](/wiki/Aramean) soldiers of the Roman Empire.[[44]](#cite_note-44) Control of Syria eventually passed from the [Romans](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) to the [Byzantines](/wiki/Byzantine_Empire), with the split in the Roman Empire.[[25]](#cite_note-25) The largely [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic)-speaking population of Syria during the heyday of the Byzantine empire was probably not exceeded again until the 19th century. Prior to the *Arab Islamic Conquest* in the 7th century AD, the bulk of the population were [Arameans](/wiki/Arameans), but Syria was also home to [Greek](/wiki/Greek_people) and [Roman](/wiki/Ancient_Rome) ruling classes, [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_people) still dwelt in the north east, [Phoenicians](/wiki/Phoenicians) along the coasts, and [Jewish](/wiki/Jewish) and [Armenian](/wiki/Armenians) communities was also extant in major cities, with [Nabateans](/wiki/Nabateans) and *pre-Islamic* [Arabs](/wiki/Arabs) such as the [Lakhmids](/wiki/Lakhmids) and [Ghassanids](/wiki/Ghassanids) dwelling in the deserts of southern Syria. [Syriac Christianity](/wiki/Syriac_Christianity) had taken hold as the major religion, although others still followed [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), [Mithraism](/wiki/Mithraism), [Manicheanism](/wiki/Manicheanism), [Greco-Roman Religion](/wiki/Greco-Roman_Religion), [Canaanite Religion](/wiki/Canaanite_Religion) and [Mesopotamian Religion](/wiki/Mesopotamian_Religion). Syria's large and prosperous population made Syria one of the most important of the Roman and Byzantine provinces, particularly during the 2nd and 3rd centuries (AD).[[45]](#cite_note-45) The Roman Emperor [Alexander Severus](/wiki/Alexander_Severus), who was emperor from 222 to 235, was an Aramean from Syria. His cousin [Elagabalus](/wiki/Elagabalus), who was emperor from 218 to 222, was also from Syria and his family held hereditary rights to the high priesthood of the Aramean sun god [El-Gabal](/wiki/El-Gabal) at [Emesa](/wiki/Emesa) (modern [Homs](/wiki/Homs)) in Syria. Another Roman emperor who was a Syrian was [Philip the Arab](/wiki/Philip_the_Arab) (Marcus Julius Philippus), emperor from 244 to 249.[[45]](#cite_note-45) Syria is significant in the [history of Christianity](/wiki/History_of_Christianity); Saulus of Tarsus, better known as the [Apostle Paul](/wiki/Apostle_Paul), was converted on the [Road to Damascus](/wiki/Road_to_Damascus) and emerged as a significant figure in the Christian Church at [Antioch](/wiki/Antioch) in ancient Syria, from which he left on many of his missionary journeys. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Middle Ages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

#### During Muhammad's era[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Muhammad's](/wiki/Muhammad) first interaction with the people and tribes of Syria was during the [Invasion of Dumatul Jandal](/wiki/Invasion_of_Dumatul_Jandal) in July 626 [[46]](#cite_note-46) where he ordered his followers to Invade Duma, because Muhammad received intelligence that some tribes there were involved in highway robbery and preparing to attack Medina itself.[[47]](#cite_note-47) [William Montgomery Watt](/wiki/William_Montgomery_Watt) claims that this was the most significant expedition Muhammad ordered at the time, even though it received little notice in the primary sources. [Dumat Al-Jandal](/wiki/Dumat_Al-Jandal) was [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) from Medina, and Watt says that there was no immediate threat to Muhammad, other than the possibility that his communications to Syria and supplies to Medina being interrupted. Watt says "It is tempting to suppose that Muhammad was already envisaging something of the expansion which took place after his death", and that the rapid march of his troops must have "impressed all those who heard of it".[[48]](#cite_note-48) [William Muir](/wiki/William_Muir) also believes that the expedition was important as Muhammad followed by 1000 men reached the confines of Syria, where distant tribes had now learnt his name, while the political horizon of Muhammad was extended.[[46]](#cite_note-46)

#### Islamic Syria (al-Sham)[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Arabischer_Maler_um_730_002.jpg)[Fresco](/wiki/Fresco) from [Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbî](/wiki/Qasr_al-Hayr_al-Gharbî), built in the early 7th century By AD 640, Syria was conquered by the [Arab](/wiki/Arab_people) [Rashidun army](/wiki/Rashidun_army) led by [Khalid ibn al-Walid](/wiki/Khalid_ibn_al-Walid). In the mid-7th century, the [Umayyad dynasty](/wiki/Umayyad_dynasty), then rulers of the empire, placed the capital of the empire in Damascus. The country's power declined during later Umayyad rule; due mainly to totalitarianism, corruption and the resulting revolutions. The Umayyad dynasty was then overthrown in 750 by the [Abbasid dynasty](/wiki/Abbasid_dynasty), which moved the capital of empire to [Baghdad](/wiki/Baghdad).

[Arabic](/wiki/Arabic_language) – made official under Umayyad rule – became the dominant language, replacing [Greek](/wiki/Greek_language) and [Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic_language) of the Byzantine era. In 887, the Egypt-based [Tulunids](/wiki/Tulunids) annexed Syria from the Abbasids, and were later replaced by once the Egypt-based [Ikhshidids](/wiki/Ikhshidid_dynasty) and still later by the [Hamdanids](/wiki/Hamdanid) originating in Aleppo founded by [Sayf al-Dawla](/wiki/Sayf_al-Dawla).[[49]](#cite_note-49)

#### Crusaders, Ayubids, Mamluks and Nizaris[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[thumb|left|The 1299](/wiki/File:BattleOfHoms1299.JPG) [Battle of Wadi al-Khazandar](/wiki/Battle_of_Wadi_al-Khazandar). The Mongols under [Ghazan](/wiki/Ghazan) defeated the Mamluks. Sections of Syria were held by French, English, [Italian](/wiki/Italians) and German overlords between 1098 and 1189 AD during the [Crusades](/wiki/Crusades) and were known collectively as the [Crusader states](/wiki/Crusader_states) among which the primary one in Syria was the [Principality of Antioch](/wiki/Principality_of_Antioch). The coastal mountainous region was also occupied in part by the [Nizari Ismailis](/wiki/Nizaris), the so-called [Assassins](/wiki/Assassins), who had intermittent confrontations and truces with the Crusader States. Later in history when "the Nizaris faced renewed Frankish hostilities, they received timely assistance from the Ayyubids."[[50]](#cite_note-50) After a century of Seljuk rule, Syria was largely conquered (1175–1185) by the [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_people) warlord [Saladin](/wiki/Saladin), founder of the [Ayyubid](/wiki/Ayyubid) dynasty of Egypt. [Aleppo](/wiki/Aleppo) fell to the [Mongols](/wiki/Mongols) of [Hulegu](/wiki/Hulegu) in January 1260, and Damascus in March, but then Hulegu was forced to break off his attack to return to China to deal with a succession dispute.

A few months later, the Mamluks arrived with an army from Egypt and defeated the Mongols in the [Battle of Ain Jalut](/wiki/Battle_of_Ain_Jalut) in [Galilee](/wiki/Galilee). The Mamluk leader, [Baibars](/wiki/Baibars), made Damascus a provincial capital. When he died, power was taken by [Qalawun](/wiki/Qalawun). In the meantime, an emir named Sunqur al-Ashqar had tried to declare himself ruler of Damascus, but he was defeated by Qalawun on 21 June 1280, and fled to northern Syria. Al-Ashqar, who had married a Mongol woman, appealed for help from the Mongols. The [Mongols](/wiki/Mongols) of the [Ilkhanate](/wiki/Ilkhanate) took the city, but Qalawun persuaded Al-Ashqar to join him, and they fought against the Mongols on 29 October 1281, in the [Second Battle of Homs](/wiki/Second_Battle_of_Homs), which was won by the Mamluks.[[51]](#cite_note-51) In 1400, the Muslim [Turco-Mongol](/wiki/Turco-Mongol) conqueror [Timur Lenk](/wiki/Timur_Lenk) ([Tamurlane](/wiki/Tamurlane)) invaded Syria, sacked Aleppo and captured Damascus after defeating the Mamluk army. The city's inhabitants were massacred, except for the artisans, who were deported to [Samarkand](/wiki/Samarkand) Timur-Lenk also conducted specific massacres of the [Aramean](/wiki/Aramean) and [Assyrian](/wiki/Assyrian_people) Christian populations, greatly reducing their numbers.[[52]](#cite_note-52)[[53]](#cite_note-53) By the end of the 15th century, the discovery of a sea route from Europe to the Far East ended the need for an [overland trade route](/wiki/Silk_Road) through Syria.

### Ottoman Syria[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[thumb|left|1803](/wiki/File:Cedid_Atlas_(Syria)_1803.jpg) [Cedid Atlas](/wiki/Cedid_Atlas), showing [Ottoman Syria](/wiki/Ottoman_Syria) labelled as "[Al Sham](/wiki/Al_Sham)" in yellow [Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Syrian women, 1683](/wiki/File:Syrian_women,_Description_de_L'Universe_(Alain_Manesson_Mallet,_1683)_(cropped).jpg) In 1516, the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) invaded the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt, conquering Syria, and incorporating it into its empire. The Ottoman system was not burdensome to Syrians because the Turks respected Arabic as the language of the [Quran](/wiki/Quran), and accepted the mantle of defenders of the faith. Damascus was made the major entrepot for [Mecca](/wiki/Mecca), and as such it acquired a holy character to Muslims, because of the beneficial results of the countless pilgrims who passed through on the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca.[[54]](#cite_note-54) Ottoman administration followed a system that led to peaceful coexistence. Each [ethno-religious](/wiki/Ethno-religious) minority – [Arab](/wiki/Arab) [Shia Muslim](/wiki/Shia_Muslim), [Arab](/wiki/Arab) [Sunni Muslim](/wiki/Sunni_Muslim), [Aramean](/wiki/Aramean)-[Syriac Orthodox](/wiki/Syriac_Orthodox), [Greek Orthodox](/wiki/Greek_Orthodox), [Maronite Christians](/wiki/Maronite_Christians), [Assyrian Christians](/wiki/Assyrian_Christians), [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians), [Kurds](/wiki/Kurds) and [Jews](/wiki/Jews) – constituted a [millet](/wiki/Millet_(Ottoman_Empire)).[[55]](#cite_note-55) The religious heads of each community administered all personal status laws and performed certain civil functions as well.[[54]](#cite_note-54) In 1831, [Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt](/wiki/Ibrahim_Pasha_of_Egypt) renounced his loyalty to the Empire and overran [Ottoman Syria](/wiki/Ottoman_Syria), capturing Damascus. His short-term rule over the domain attempted to change the demographics and social structure of the region: he brought thousands of Egyptian villagers to populate the plains of [Southern Syria](/wiki/Southern_Syria), rebuilt [Jaffa](/wiki/Jaffa) and settled it with veteran Egyptian soldiers aiming to turn it into a regional capital, and he crushed [peasant](/wiki/Peasant) and Druze rebellions and deported non-loyal tribesmen. By 1840, however, he had to surrender the area back to the Ottomans.

From 1864, [Tanzimat](/wiki/Tanzimat) reforms were applied on Ottoman Syria, carving out the provinces (vilayets) of [Aleppo](/wiki/Aleppo_Vilayet), [Zor](/wiki/Sanjak_of_Zor), [Beirut](/wiki/Beirut_Vilayet) and [Damascus Vilayet](/wiki/Damascus_Vilayet); [Mutasarrifate of Mount Lebanon](/wiki/Mutasarrifate_of_Mount_Lebanon) was created, as well, and soon after the [Mutasarrifate of Jerusalem](/wiki/Mutasarrifate_of_Jerusalem) was given a separate status.

[thumb|Survivors of the](/wiki/File:Armenian_woman_kneeling_beside_dead_child_in_field.png) [Armenian Genocide](/wiki/Armenian_Genocide) of 1915 During [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), the [Ottoman Empire](/wiki/Ottoman_Empire) entered the conflict on the side of Germany and the [Austro-Hungarian Empire](/wiki/Austro-Hungarian_Empire). It ultimately suffered defeat and loss of control of the entire [Near East](/wiki/Near_East) to the [British Empire](/wiki/British_Empire) and [French Empire](/wiki/French_colonial_empire). During the conflict, [genocide](/wiki/Genocide) against indigenous Christian peoples was carried out by the Ottomans and their allies in the form of the [Armenian Genocide](/wiki/Armenian_Genocide) and [Assyrian Genocide](/wiki/Assyrian_Genocide), of which [Deir ez-Zor](/wiki/Deir_ez-Zor), in Ottoman Syria, was the final destination of these death marches.[[56]](#cite_note-56) In the midst of [World War I](/wiki/World_War_I), two [Allied](/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_I) diplomats (Frenchman [François Georges-Picot](/wiki/François_Georges-Picot) and [Briton](/wiki/British_people) [Mark Sykes](/wiki/Mark_Sykes)) secretly agreed on the post-war division of the Ottoman Empire into respective zones of influence in the [Sykes-Picot Agreement](/wiki/Sykes-Picot_Agreement) of 1916. Initially, the two territories were separated by a border that ran in an almost straight line from Jordan to [Iran](/wiki/Iran). However, the discovery of oil in the region of [Mosul](/wiki/Mosul) just before the end of the war led to yet another negotiation with France in 1918 to cede this region to 'Zone B', or the British zone of influence. This border was later recognized internationally when Syria became a [League of Nations](/wiki/League_of_Nations) mandate in 1920[[57]](#cite_note-57) and has not changed to date.

### French Mandate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [left|thumb|The inauguration of President](/wiki/File:Hashim_Atassi_Inauguration_1936.jpg) [Hashim al-Atassi](/wiki/Hashim_al-Atassi) in 1936 In 1920, a short-lived independent [Kingdom of Syria](/wiki/Kingdom_of_Syria) was established under [Faisal I](/wiki/Faisal_I) of the [Hashemite](/wiki/Hashemite) family. However, his rule over Syria ended after only a few months, following the [Battle of Maysalun](/wiki/Battle_of_Maysalun). French troops occupied Syria later that year after the [San Remo conference](/wiki/San_Remo_conference) proposed that the League of Nations put Syria under a French mandate. General Gouraud had according to his secretary de Caix two options: "Either build a Syrian nation that does not exist... by smoothing the rifts which still divide it" or "cultivate and maintain all the phenomena, which require our abitration that these divisions give". De Caix added "I must say only the second option interests me". This is what Gouraud did.[[58]](#cite_note-58)[[59]](#cite_note-59) [thumb|Syrian rebels in Ghouta during the](/wiki/File:Ghouta_rebels_in_1925.jpg) [Great Syrian Revolt](/wiki/Great_Syrian_Revolt) against French colonial rule in the 1920s In 1925, [Sultan al-Atrash](/wiki/Sultan_al-Atrash) led [a revolt](/wiki/Great_Syrian_Revolt) that broke out in the [Druze Mountain](/wiki/Jabal_al-Druze) and spread to engulf the whole of Syria and parts of Lebanon. Al-Atrash won several battles against the French, notably the [Battle of al-Kafr](/wiki/Battle_of_Kafr-el-Dawwar) on 21 July 1925, the [Battle of al-Mazraa](/wiki/Battle_of_al-Mazraa) on 2–3 August 1925, and the battles of Salkhad, [al-Musayfirah](/wiki/Al-Musayfirah) and Suwayda. France sent thousands of troops from Morocco and Senegal, leading the French to regain many cities, although resistance lasted until the spring of 1927. The French sentenced Sultan al-Atrash to death, but he had escaped with the rebels to Transjordan and was eventually pardoned. He returned to Syria in 1937 after the signing of the Syrian-French Treaty.

Syria and France negotiated a [treaty of independence](/wiki/Franco-Syrian_Treaty_of_Independence_(1936)) in September 1936, and [Hashim al-Atassi](/wiki/Hashim_al-Atassi) was the first president to be elected under the first incarnation of the modern republic of Syria. However, the treaty never came into force because the French Legislature refused to ratify it. With the fall of France in 1940 during [World War II](/wiki/World_War_II), Syria came under the control of [Vichy France](/wiki/Vichy_France) until the British and Free French occupied the country in the [Syria-Lebanon campaign](/wiki/Syria-Lebanon_campaign) in July 1941. Continuing pressure from Syrian nationalists and the British forced the French to evacuate their troops in April 1946, leaving the country in the hands of a republican government that had been formed during the mandate.[[60]](#cite_note-60)

### Independent Syrian Republic[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Aleppo in 1961](/wiki/File:Syrien_1961_Aleppol_1.jpg) Upheaval dominated Syrian politics from independence through the late 1960s. In May 1948, Syrian forces invaded [Palestine](/wiki/Palestine_(region)), together with other Arab states, and immediately attacked Jewish settlements.[[61]](#cite_note-61) Their president [Shukri al-Quwwatli](/wiki/Shukri_al-Quwwatli) instructed his troops in the front, “to destroy the Zionists".[[62]](#cite_note-62)[[63]](#cite_note-63) The Invasion purpose was prevention of the establishment of the State of Israel.[[64]](#cite_note-64) Defeat in this war was one of several trigger factors for the [March 1949 Syrian coup d'état](/wiki/March_1949_Syrian_coup_d'état) by Col. [Husni al-Za'im](/wiki/Husni_al-Za'im), described as the first military overthrow of the [Arab World](/wiki/Arab_World)[[64]](#cite_note-64) since the start of the Second World War. This was soon followed by another overthrow, by Col. [Sami al-Hinnawi](/wiki/Sami_al-Hinnawi), who was himself quickly deposed by Col. [Adib Shishakli](/wiki/Adib_Shishakli), all within the same year.[[64]](#cite_note-64) Shishakli eventually abolished multipartyism altogether, but was himself overthrown in a [1954 coup](/wiki/1954_Syrian_coup_d'état) and the parliamentary system was restored.[[64]](#cite_note-64) However, by this time, power was increasingly concentrated in the military and security establishment.[[64]](#cite_note-64) The weakness of Parliamentary institutions and the mismanagement of the economy led to unrest and the influence of [Nasserism](/wiki/Nasserism) and other ideologies. There was fertile ground for various [Arab nationalist](/wiki/Arab_nationalist), [Syrian nationalist](/wiki/Syrian_nationalism), and socialist movements, which represented disaffected elements of society. Notably included were religious minorities, who demanded radical reform.[[64]](#cite_note-64) In November 1956, as a direct result of the [Suez Crisis](/wiki/Suez_Crisis),[[65]](#cite_note-65) Syria signed a pact with the [Soviet Union](/wiki/Soviet_Union). This gave a foothold for Communist influence within the government in exchange for military equipment.[[64]](#cite_note-64) [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey) then became worried about this increase in the strength of Syrian military technology, as it seemed feasible that Syria might attempt to retake [İskenderun](/wiki/İskenderun). Only heated debates in the United Nations lessened the threat of war.[[66]](#cite_note-66) On 1 February 1958, Syrian President [Shukri al-Quwatli](/wiki/Shukri_al-Quwatli) and Egypt's Nasser announced the merging of Egypt and Syria, creating the [United Arab Republic](/wiki/United_Arab_Republic), and all Syrian political parties, as well as the communists therein, ceased overt activities.[[60]](#cite_note-60) Meanwhile, a group of Syrian Ba'athist officers, alarmed by the party's poor position and the increasing fragility of the union, decided to form a secret Military Committee; its initial members were Lieutenant-Colonel [Muhammad Umran](/wiki/Muhammad_Umran), Major [Salah Jadid](/wiki/Salah_Jadid) and Captain [Hafez al-Assad](/wiki/Hafez_al-Assad). Syria seceded from the union with Egypt on 28 September 1961, after a [coup](/wiki/1961_Syrian_coup_d'état).

### Ba'athist Syria[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:NixonAssad.jpg)[Hafez al-Assad](/wiki/Hafez_al-Assad) greets [Richard Nixon](/wiki/Richard_Nixon) on his arrival at Damascus airport in 1974 The ensuing instability, following the [1961 coup](/wiki/1961_Syrian_coup_d'état) culminated in the [8 March 1963 Ba'athist coup](/wiki/1963_Syrian_coup_d'état). The takeover was engineered by members of the [Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party](/wiki/Arab_Socialist_Ba'ath_Party_–_Syria_Region), led by [Michel Aflaq](/wiki/Michel_Aflaq) and [Salah al-Din al-Bitar](/wiki/Salah_al-Din_al-Bitar). The new Syrian cabinet was dominated by Ba'ath members.[[60]](#cite_note-60)[[64]](#cite_note-64) On 23 February 1966, the Military Committee carried out an [intra-party overthrow](/wiki/1966_Syrian_coup_d'état), imprisoned President [Amin Hafiz](/wiki/Amin_Hafiz) and designated a regionalist, civilian Ba'ath government on 1 March.[[64]](#cite_note-64) Although [Nureddin al-Atassi](/wiki/Nureddin_al-Atassi) became the formal head of state, [Salah Jadid](/wiki/Salah_Jadid) was Syria's effective ruler from 1966 until 1970.[[67]](#cite_note-67) The coup led to a split within the original [pan-Arab Ba'ath Party](/wiki/Ba'ath_Party): one [Iraqi-led ba'ath movement](/wiki/Ba'ath_Party_(Iraqi-led_faction)) (ruled Iraq from 1968 to 2003) and one [Syrian-led ba'ath movement](/wiki/Ba'ath_Party_(Syrian-led_faction)) was established.

In the first part of 1967, a low-key state of war existed between Syria and Israel. Conflict over Israeli cultivation of land in the Demilitarized Zone led to [7 April prewar aerial clashes](/wiki/Six_day_war#Israel_and_Syria) between Israel and Syria.[[68]](#cite_note-68) After Israel launched a [preemptive strike](/wiki/Preemptive_war) on Egypt to begin the [Six-Day War](/wiki/Six-Day_War), Syria joined the war and attacked against Israel as well. In the final days of the war, Israel turned its attention to Syria, capturing two-thirds of the [Golan Heights](/wiki/Golan_Heights) in under 48 hours.[[69]](#cite_note-69) The defeat caused a split between Jadid and Assad over what steps to take next.[[70]](#cite_note-70)[thumb|](/wiki/File:Destruction_in_the_al-Qunaytra_village_in_the_Golan_Heights,_after_the_Israeli_withdrawal_in_1974.jpg)[Quneitra](/wiki/Quneitra) village, largely destroyed before the Israeli withdrawal in June 1974.

Disagreement developed between Jadid, who controlled the party apparatus, and Assad, who controlled the military. The 1970 retreat of Syrian forces sent to aid the [PLO](/wiki/PLO) during the "[Black September](/wiki/Black_September_in_Jordan)" hostilities with Jordan reflected this disagreement.[[71]](#cite_note-71) The power struggle culminated in the November 1970 [Syrian Corrective Revolution](/wiki/1970_Syrian_Corrective_Revolution), a bloodless military overthrow that installed Hafez al-Assad as the strongman of the government.[[72]](#cite_note-72) On 6 October 1973, Syria and Egypt initiated the [Yom Kippur War](/wiki/Yom_Kippur_War) against Israel. The [Israel Defense Forces](/wiki/Israel_Defense_Forces) reversed the initial Syrian gains and pushed deeper into Syrian territory.[[73]](#cite_note-73) In early 1976, Syria entered Lebanon, beginning the thirty-year [Syrian military occupation](/wiki/Syrian_occupation_of_Lebanon). Over the following 15 years of [civil war](/wiki/Lebanese_Civil_War), Syria fought for control over Lebanon, and attempted to stop Israel from taking over in southern Lebanon, through extensive use of proxy militias. Syria then remained in Lebanon until 2005.

[thumb|left|](/wiki/File:Dmitry_Medvedev_in_Syria_10_May_2010-1.jpeg)[Dmitry Medvedev](/wiki/Dmitry_Medvedev) arriving in Damascus in May 2010

In the late 1970s, an [Islamist uprising](/wiki/Islamist_uprising_in_Syria) by the [Muslim Brotherhood](/wiki/Muslim_Brotherhood_of_Syria) was aimed against the government. Islamists attacked civilians and off-duty military personnel, leading security forces to also kill civilians in retaliatory strikes. The uprising had reached its climax in the 1982 [Hama massacre](/wiki/Hama_massacre),[[74]](#cite_note-74) when some 10,000 – 40,000 people were killed by regular [Syrian Army](/wiki/Syrian_Army) troops.

In a major shift in relations with both other [Arab states](/wiki/Arab_states) and the Western world, Syria participated in the US-led [Gulf War](/wiki/Gulf_War) against Saddam Hussein. Syria participated in the multilateral [Madrid Conference of 1991](/wiki/Madrid_Conference_of_1991), and during the 1990s engaged in negotiations with Israel. These negotiations failed, and there have been no further direct Syrian-Israeli talks since President [Hafez al-Assad's](/wiki/Hafez_al-Assad) meeting with then President [Bill Clinton](/wiki/Bill_Clinton) in Geneva in March 2000.[[75]](#cite_note-75)[Template:Syrian Civil War map](/wiki/Template:Syrian_Civil_War_map) Hafez al-Assad died on 10 June 2000. His son, [Bashar al-Assad](/wiki/Bashar_al-Assad), was elected President in [an election](/wiki/Syrian_presidential_election,_2000) in which he ran unopposed.[[60]](#cite_note-60) His election saw the birth of the [Damascus Spring](/wiki/Damascus_Spring) and hopes of reform, but by autumn 2001, the authorities had suppressed the movement, imprisoning some of its leading intellectuals.<ref name=Alan>[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)</ref> Instead, reforms have been limited to some market reforms.[[5]](#cite_note-5)<ref name=autogenerated4>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[76]](#cite_note-76) On 5 October 2003, Israel [bombed a site near Damascus](/wiki/Ain_es_Saheb_airstrike), claiming it was a terrorist training facility for members of [Islamic Jihad](/wiki/Islamic_Jihad_Movement_in_Palestine).[[77]](#cite_note-77) In March 2004, Syrian Kurds and Arabs [clashed](/wiki/2004_Al-Qamishli_riots) in the northeastern city of al-Qamishli. Signs of rioting were seen in the towns of Qameshli and Hassakeh.[[78]](#cite_note-78) In 2005, Syria ended its occupation of Lebanon.[[79]](#cite_note-79) On 6 September 2007, foreign jet fighters, suspected as Israeli, reportedly carried out [Operation Orchard](/wiki/Operation_Orchard) against a suspected [nuclear reactor](/wiki/Nuclear_reactor) under construction by [North Korean](/wiki/North_Korean) technicians.[[80]](#cite_note-80) The ongoing [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War) was inspired by the [Arab Spring](/wiki/Arab_Spring) revolutions. It began in 2011 as a chain of peaceful protests, followed by a crackdown by the Syrian Army.[[81]](#cite_note-81) In July 2011, army defectors declared the formation of the [Free Syrian Army](/wiki/Free_Syrian_Army) and began forming fighting units. The opposition is dominated by [Sunni](/wiki/Sunni) Muslims, whereas the leading government figures are [Alawites](/wiki/Alawites).[[82]](#cite_note-82) According to various sources, including the United Nations, up to 100,000 people had been killed by June 2013,[[83]](#cite_note-83)<ref name=extremetorture>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>[[84]](#cite_note-84) including 11,000 children.[[85]](#cite_note-85) To escape the violence, over 2.1 million [Syrian refugees](/wiki/Refugees_of_the_Syrian_civil_war) have fled to neighboring countries of Jordan,<ref name=news24>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> Iraq,[[86]](#cite_note-86) Lebanon, and Turkey.[[87]](#cite_note-87)[[88]](#cite_note-88) An estimated 450,000 [Syrian Christians](/wiki/Christianity_in_Syria) have fled their homes.[[89]](#cite_note-89) As the civil war has dragged on, there have been worries that the country could become fragmented and cease to function as a state.[[90]](#cite_note-90)

## Geography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|Syria map of Köppen climate classification.](/wiki/File:Syria_map_of_Köppen_climate_classification.svg) [right|thumb|](/wiki/File:Burjeslam.jpg)[Burj Islam](/wiki/Burj_Islam), a well-known beach just north of [Latakia](/wiki/Latakia) Syria lies between latitudes [32°](/wiki/32nd_parallel_north) and [38° N](/wiki/38th_parallel_north), and longitudes [35°](/wiki/35th_meridian_east) and [43° E](/wiki/43rd_meridian_east). It consists mostly of arid plateau, although the northwest part of the country bordering the Mediterranean is fairly green. The Northeast of the country "[al-Jazira](/wiki/Upper_Mesopotamia)" and the South "[Hawran](/wiki/Hauran)" are important agricultural areas.[[91]](#cite_note-91) The [Euphrates](/wiki/Euphrates), Syria's most important river, crosses the country in the east. It is considered to be one of the fifteen states that comprise the so-called "[Cradle of civilization](/wiki/Cradle_of_civilization)".[[92]](#cite_note-92) Its land straddles the "northwest of the [Arabian plate](/wiki/Arabian_plate)".[[93]](#cite_note-93) The climate in Syria is dry and hot, and winters are mild. Because of the country's elevation, snowfall does occasionally occur during winter.[[91]](#cite_note-91) Petroleum in commercial quantities was first discovered in the northeast in 1956. The most important oil fields are those of Suwaydiyah, Qaratshui, Rumayian, and Tayyem, near [Dayr az–Zawr](/wiki/Deir_ez-Zor). The fields are a natural extension of the Iraqi fields of [Mosul](/wiki/Mosul) and [Kirkuk](/wiki/Kirkuk). Petroleum became Syria's leading natural resource and chief export after 1974. Natural gas was discovered at the field of Jbessa in 1940.[[60]](#cite_note-60)

## Politics and government[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|left|upright|The](/wiki/File:Syrian_Parliament_in_mid-20th_century.jpg) [Syrian Parliament](/wiki/People's_Council_of_Syria) in the mid-20th century Syria is formally a [unitary](/wiki/Unitary_state) republic. The [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Syria) adopted in 2012 effectively transformed Syria into a [semi-presidential](/wiki/Semi-presidential) republic due to the constitutional right for the election of individuals who do not form part of the [National Progressive Front](/wiki/National_Progressive_Front_(Syria)).[[94]](#cite_note-94) The [President](/wiki/President_of_Syria) is [Head of State](/wiki/Head_of_State) and the [Prime Minister](/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_Syria) is [Head of Government](/wiki/Head_of_Government).[[95]](#cite_note-95) The legislature, the Peoples Council, is the body responsible for passing laws, approving government [appropriations](/wiki/Appropriation_(law)) and debating policy.[[96]](#cite_note-96) In the event of a [vote of no confidence](/wiki/Vote_of_no_confidence) by a simple majority, the Prime Minister is required to tender the resignation of their government to the President.[[97]](#cite_note-97) The [executive branch](/wiki/Executive_branch) consists of the president, two [vice presidents](/wiki/Vice_President_of_Syria), the prime minister, and the [Council of Ministers](/wiki/Council_of_Ministers_of_Syria) (cabinet). The constitution requires the president to be a Muslim[[98]](#cite_note-98) but does not make Islam the state religion.

The constitution gives the president the right to appoint ministers, to declare war and [state of emergency](/wiki/State_of_emergency), to issue laws (which, except in the case of emergency, require ratification by the People's Council), to declare [amnesty](/wiki/Amnesty), to amend the constitution, and to appoint civil servants and military personnel.[[99]](#cite_note-99) According to the 2012 constitution, the president is elected by Syrian citizens in a direct election.

Syria's [legislative branch](/wiki/Legislative_branch) is the unicameral [People's Council](/wiki/People's_Council_of_Syria). Under the previous constitution, Syria did not hold multi-party elections for the legislature,[[99]](#cite_note-99) with two-thirds of the seats automatically allocated to the ruling coalition.[[100]](#cite_note-100) On 7 May 2012, Syria held its first elections in which parties outside the ruling coalition could take part. Seven new political parties took part in the elections, of which [Popular Front for Change and Liberation](/wiki/Popular_Front_for_Change_and_Liberation) was the largest opposition party. The armed anti-government rebels, however, chose not to field candidates and called on their supporters to boycott the elections.

The President is currently the Regional Secretary of the [Ba'ath party in Syria](/wiki/Arab_Socialist_Ba'ath_Party_–_Syria_Region) and leader of the [National Progressive Front](/wiki/National_Progressive_Front_(Syria)) governing coalition. Outside of the coalition are 14 illegal [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurds_of_Syria) political parties.[[101]](#cite_note-101) Syria's [judicial branches](/wiki/Judicial_branch) include the [Supreme Constitutional Court](/wiki/Supreme_Constitutional_Court_of_Syria), the [High Judicial Council](/wiki/High_Judicial_Council), the [Court of Cassation](/wiki/Court_of_Cassation_(Syria)), and the [State Security](/wiki/Security_agency) Courts. [Islamic](/wiki/Islamic) jurisprudence is a main source of legislation and Syria's judicial system has elements of [Ottoman](/wiki/Mecelle), [French](/wiki/French_law), and [Islamic](/wiki/Sharia) laws. Syria has three levels of courts: courts of first instance, courts of appeals, and the constitutional court, the highest [tribunal](/wiki/Tribunal). Religious courts handle questions of personal and family law.[[99]](#cite_note-99) The Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) was abolished by President Bashar al-Assad by legislative decree No. 53 on 21 April 2011.[[102]](#cite_note-102) The Personal Status Law 59 of 1953 (amended by Law 34 of 1975) is essentially a codified sharia.[[103]](#cite_note-103) Article 3(2) of the 1973 [constitution](/wiki/Constitution_of_Syria) declares Islamic jurisprudence a main source of legislation. The Code of Personal Status is applied to Muslims by sharia courts.[[104]](#cite_note-104) As a result of the ongoing civil war, various alternative governments were formed, including the [Syrian Interim Government](/wiki/Syrian_Interim_Government), the [Democratic Union Party](/wiki/Democratic_Union_Party_(Syria)) and localised regions governed by [sharia law](/wiki/Sharia_law). Representatives of the Syrian Interim government were invited to take up Syria's seat at the [Arab League](/wiki/Arab_League) on 28 March 2013 and[[105]](#cite_note-105) was recognised as the "sole representative of the Syrian people" by several nations including the United States, United Kingdom and France.[[106]](#cite_note-106)[[107]](#cite_note-107)<ref name=usatoday.com>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

Parliamentary elections were held on 13 April 2016 in the government-controlled areas of Syria, for all 250 seats of Syria's unicameral legislature, the Majlis al-Sha'ab, or the [People's Council of Syria](/wiki/People's_Council_of_Syria).[[108]](#cite_note-108) The government increasingly relies on credit from Iran, Russia and China.[[135]](#cite_note-135) The economy is highly regulated by the government, which has increased subsidies and tightened trade controls to assuage protesters and protect [foreign currency reserves](/wiki/Foreign_currency_reserve).[[136]](#cite_note-136) Long-run economic constraints include foreign trade barriers, declining oil production, high unemployment, rising budget deficits, and increasing pressure on water supplies caused by heavy use in agriculture, rapid population growth, industrial expansion, and water pollution.[[136]](#cite_note-136) The [UNDP](/wiki/UNDP) announced in 2005 that 30% of the Syrian population lives in poverty and 11.4% live below the subsistence level.[[60]](#cite_note-60) Syria's share in global exports has eroded gradually since 2001.[[137]](#cite_note-137) The real per capita GDP growth was just 2.5% per year in the 2000–2008 period.[[137]](#cite_note-137) Unemployment is high at above 10%. Poverty rates have increased from 11% in 2004 to 12.3% in 2007.<ref name=wbgrowth10>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> In 2007, Syria's main exports include crude oil, refined products, raw cotton, clothing, fruits, and grains. The bulk of Syrian imports are raw materials essential for industry, vehicles, agricultural equipment, and heavy machinery. Earnings from oil exports as well as remittances from Syrian workers are the government's most important sources of foreign exchange.[[60]](#cite_note-60) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Al-Hamidiyah_Souq_02.jpg)[Al-Hamidiyah Souq](/wiki/Al-Hamidiyah_Souq) in Damascus in 2010

Political instability poses a significant threat to future economic development.[[138]](#cite_note-138) Foreign investment is constrained by violence, government restrictions, economic sanctions, and international isolation. Syria's economy also remains hobbled by state bureaucracy, falling oil production, rising budget deficits, and inflation.<ref name=ief>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

Prior to the civil war in 2011, the government hoped to attract new investment in the tourism, natural gas, and service sectors to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil and agriculture. The government began to institute economic reforms aimed at liberalizing most markets, but those reforms were slow and ad hoc, and have been completely reversed since the outbreak of conflict in 2011.[[139]](#cite_note-139) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), because of the ongoing Syrian civil war, the value of Syria's overall exports has been slashed by two-thirds, from the figure of US$12 billion in 2010 to only US$4 billion in 2012.[[140]](#cite_note-140) Syria's GDP declined by over 3% in 2011,[[141]](#cite_note-141) and is expected to further decline by 20% in 2012.[[142]](#cite_note-142) [Template:As of](/wiki/Template:As_of), Syria's oil and tourism industries in particular have been devastated, with US$5 billion lost to the ongoing conflict of the civil war.[[140]](#cite_note-140) Reconstruction needed because of the ongoing civil war will cost as much as US$10 billion.[[140]](#cite_note-140) Sanctions have sapped the government's finance. US and European Union bans on oil imports, which went into effect in 2012, are estimated to cost Syria about $400 million a month.<ref name=shortap>[Template:Cite news](/wiki/Template:Cite_news)</ref>

Revenues from tourism have dropped dramatically, with hotel occupancy rates falling from 90% before the war to less than 15% in May 2012.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Around 40% of all employees in the tourism sector have lost their jobs since the beginning of the war.[[143]](#cite_note-143) In May 2015, ISIS captured Syria's phosphate mines, one of the Assad regime's last chief sources of income.[[144]](#cite_note-144) The following month, ISIS blew up a gas pipeline to Damascus that was used to generate heating and electricity in Damascus and Homs; "the name of its game for now is denial of key resources to the regime" an analyst stated.[[145]](#cite_note-145) In addition, ISIS is closing in on Shaer gas field and three other facilities in the area—Hayan, Jihar and Ebla—with the loss of these western gas fields having the potential to cause Iran to further subsidize the Assad regime.[[146]](#cite_note-146)

### Petroleum industry[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

[thumb|Oil refinery in](/wiki/File:Oil_refinery_in_Homs,_2010.jpg) [Homs](/wiki/Homs) Syria's petroleum industry has been subject to sharp decline. In September 2014, ISIS was producing more oil than the regime at [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) compared to the regime's [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) with the Syrian Oil Ministry stating that by the end of 2014, oil production had plunged further to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert); ISIS has since captured a further oil field, leading to a projected oil production of [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert).<ref name=revenues\_shrink>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> In the third year of the Syrian Civil War, the deputy economy minister Salman Hayan stated that Syria's two main oil refineries were operating at less than 10% capacity.[[147]](#cite_note-147) Historically, the country produced heavy-grade oil from fields located in the northeast since the late 1960s. In the early 1980s, light-grade, low-sulphur oil was discovered near [Deir ez-Zor](/wiki/Deir_ez-Zor) in eastern Syria. Syria's rate of oil production has decreased dramatically from a peak close to [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) (bpd) in 1995 down to less than [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) in 2012.[[148]](#cite_note-148) Prior to the uprising, more than 90% of Syrian oil exports were to EU countries, with the remainder going to Turkey.[[143]](#cite_note-143) Oil and gas revenues constituted around 20% of total GDP and 25% of total government revenue.<ref name=economyhang>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

[thumb|Expressway M5 Near Al-Rastan](/wiki/File:جسر_الرستن_الكبير.jpg)

### Transport[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Syria has four international airports (Damascus, Aleppo, Lattakia and Kamishly), which serve as hubs for [Syrian Air](/wiki/Syrian_Air) and are also served by a variety of foreign carriers.

The majority of Syrian cargo is carried by [Chemins de Fer Syriens](/wiki/Chemins_de_Fer_Syriens) (the Syrian railway company), which links up with [Turkish State Railways](/wiki/Turkish_State_Railways) (the Turkish counterpart). For a relatively underdeveloped country, Syria's railway infrastructure is well maintained with many express services and modern trains.[[149]](#cite_note-149) The road network in Syria is 69,873 km long, including 1,103 km of expressways. The country also has 900 km of navigable but not economically significant waterways.[[150]](#cite_note-150)

### Water supply and sanitation[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Syria is a semiarid country with scarce water resources. The largest water consuming sector in Syria is [agriculture](/wiki/Agriculture). Domestic water use stands at only about 9% of total water use.[[151]](#cite_note-151) A big challenge for Syria is its high population growth with a rapidly increasing demand for urban and industrial water. In 2006 the population of Syria was 19.4 million with a growth rate of 2.7%.[[152]](#cite_note-152)

## Demographics[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Historical populations](/wiki/Template:Historical_populations) Most people live in the [Euphrates River](/wiki/Euphrates_River) valley and along the coastal plain, a fertile strip between the coastal mountains and the desert. Overall population density in Syria is about 99 per square kilometre (258 per square mile). According to the *World Refugee Survey 2008*, published by the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Syria hosted a population of refugees and asylum seekers numbering approximately 1,852,300. The vast majority of this population was from Iraq (1,300,000), but sizeable populations from [Palestine](/wiki/Palestine_(region)) (543,400) and [Somalia](/wiki/Somalia) (5,200) also lived in the country.[[153]](#cite_note-153) In what the UN has described as "the biggest humanitarian emergency of our era",[[154]](#cite_note-154) about 9.5 million Syrians, half the population, have been displaced since the outbreak of the [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War) in March 2011;[[155]](#cite_note-155) 4 million are outside the country as [refugees](/wiki/Refugees_of_the_Syrian_civil_war).[[156]](#cite_note-156)

### Ethnic groups[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|left|Children in Aleppo](/wiki/File:Umayyad_Mosque,_Aleppo,_Syria_(5077865830).jpg) [thumb|Damascus, traditional clothing](/wiki/File:Damascus,_traditional_clothing_(6364877017).jpg) Syrians are an overall indigenous [Levantine](/wiki/Levant) people, closely related to their immediate neighbours, like [Lebanese](/wiki/Lebanese_people) people, [Palestinians](/wiki/Palestinians), [Iraqis](/wiki/Iraqi_people), [Maltese](/wiki/Maltese_people) and [Jordanians](/wiki/Jordanians).[[157]](#cite_note-157)[[158]](#cite_note-158) Syria has a population of approximately [Template:Sigfig](/wiki/Template:Sigfig) (2014 est.)[[159]](#cite_note-159) [Syrian Arabs](/wiki/Syrian_people), together with some 600,000 [Palestinian](/wiki/Palestinians_in_Syria) Arabs, make up roughly 74% of the population (if [Syriac Christians](/wiki/Names_of_Syriac_Christians#Aramean_identity) are excluded).<ref name=autogenerated3>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

The indigenous Christian [Western Aramaic](/wiki/Western_Neo-Aramaic)-speakers and [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrians_in_Syria) are numbered around 400,000 people,[[160]](#cite_note-160) with the Western Aramaic-speakers living all over the country, particularly in major urban centers, while the Assyrians mainly reside in the north and northeast (Homs, Aleppo, Qamishli, Hasakah). Many (particularly the Assyrian group) still retain several [Neo-Aramaic](/wiki/Neo-Aramaic) dialects as spoken and written languages, while villagers of [Ma'loula](/wiki/Ma'loula), [Jubb'adin](/wiki/Jubb'adin) and [Bakh'a](/wiki/Al-Sarkha_(Bakhah)) still retain [Western Aramaic](/wiki/Western_Aramaic).[[161]](#cite_note-161) The second largest ethnic group in Syria are the [Kurds](/wiki/Kurds_in_Syria). They constitute about 9% of the population, or approximately 1.6 million people.[[162]](#cite_note-162) Most Kurds reside in the northeastern corner of Syria and most speak the [Kurmanji](/wiki/Kurmanji) variant of the [Kurdish language](/wiki/Kurdish_language).

[thumb|The ethno-religious composition of Syria.](/wiki/File:Syria_Ethno-religious_composition..jpg) Syria is also a home to several other ethnic groups mainly the [Turkmens](/wiki/Syrian_Turks) (number around 100,000),[[163]](#cite_note-163) [Circassians](/wiki/Circassians_in_Syria) (number some 100,000),[[164]](#cite_note-164) [Greeks](/wiki/Greeks_in_Syria),[[165]](#cite_note-165) and [Armenians](/wiki/Armenians_in_Syria) (number approximately 100,000), most arrived during the [Armenian Genocide](/wiki/Armenian_Genocide). Syria holds the [7th largest Armenian population in the world](/wiki/Armenian_diaspora). They are mainly gathered in Aleppo, [Qamishli](/wiki/Qamishli), Damascus and [Kesab](/wiki/Kesab).

Syria was once home to a substantial population of [Jews](/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Syria), with large communities in Damascus, Aleppo, and Qamishii. Due to a combination of persecution in Syria and opportunities elsewhere, the Jews began to emigrate in the second half of the 19th century to Great Britain, the United States, and Israel. The process was completed with the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. Today only a few Jews remain in Syria.

The largest concentration of the [Syrian diaspora](/wiki/Syrian_diaspora) outside the [Arab world](/wiki/Arab_world) is in [Brazil](/wiki/Brazil), which has millions of people of Arab and other Near Eastern ancestries.[[166]](#cite_note-166) Brazil is the first country in the Americas to offer humanitarian visas to Syrian [refugees](/wiki/Refugee).[[167]](#cite_note-167) The majority of [Arab Argentines](/wiki/Arab_Argentine) are from either Lebanese or Syrian background.[[168]](#cite_note-168)

### Religion[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Template:Pie chart](/wiki/Template:Pie_chart) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Omayad_Mosque_of_Aleppo_Syria.jpg)[Great Mosque of Aleppo](/wiki/Great_Mosque_of_Aleppo), [Aleppo](/wiki/Aleppo) Sunni Muslims make up about 74% of Syria's population and Sunni Arabs account for 59–60% of the population, most Kurds (9%) and Turkomen (3%) are Sunni, while 13% are Shia ([Alawite](/wiki/Alawite), [Twelvers](/wiki/Twelvers), and [Ismailis](/wiki/Ismailis) combined),[[169]](#cite_note-169) 10% Christian[[169]](#cite_note-169) (the majority Antiochian Orthodox, the rest including Greek Catholic, Assyrian Church of the East, Armenian Orthodox, Protestants and other denominations), and 3% [Druze](/wiki/Druze).[[169]](#cite_note-169) Druze number around 500,000, and concentrate mainly in the southern area of [Jabal al-Druze](/wiki/Jabal_al-Druze).[[170]](#cite_note-170) President Bashar al-Assad's family is Alawite and Alawites dominate the government of Syria and hold key military positions.[[171]](#cite_note-171) In May 2013, [SOHR](/wiki/Syrian_Observatory_for_Human_Rights) stated that out of 94,000 killed during the [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War), at least 41,000 were Alawites.[[172]](#cite_note-172) Christians (2.5 million), a sizable number of whom are found among Syria's population of [Palestinian](/wiki/Palestinians) refugees, are divided into several groups. [Chalcedonian](/wiki/Council_of_Chalcedon) [Antiochian Orthodox](/wiki/Antiochian_Orthodox_Church) make up 45.7% of the Christian population; the Catholics ([Melkite](/wiki/Melkite_Greek_Catholic_Church), [Armenian Catholic](/wiki/Armenian_Catholic_Church), [Syriac Catholic](/wiki/Syriac_Catholic_Church), [Maronite](/wiki/Maronite_Church), [Chaldean Catholic](/wiki/Chaldean_Catholic_Church) and [Latin](/wiki/Latin_liturgical_rites)) make up 16.2%; the [Armenian Apostolic Church](/wiki/Armenian_Apostolic_Church) 10.9%, the [Syriac Orthodox](/wiki/Syriac_Orthodox_Church) make up 22.4%; [Assyrian Church of the East](/wiki/Assyrian_Church_of_the_East) and several smaller Christian denominations account for the remainder. Many Christian [monasteries](/wiki/List_of_Monasteries_in_Syria) also exist. Many Christian Syrians belong to a high socio-economic class.[[173]](#cite_note-173)

### Languages[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [Arabic](/wiki/Modern_Standard_Arabic) is the [official language](/wiki/Official_language). Several modern [Arabic dialects](/wiki/Varieties_of_Arabic) are used in everyday life, most notably [Levantine](/wiki/Levantine_Arabic) in the west and [Mesopotamian](/wiki/Mesopotamian_Arabic) in the northeast. [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_language) (in its [Kurmanji](/wiki/Kurmanji) form) is widely spoken in the [Kurdish](/wiki/Kurdish_people) regions of Syria. [Armenian](/wiki/Armenian_language) and [Turkish](/wiki/Turkish_language) ([South Azeri](/wiki/South_Azeri_language) dialect) are spoken among the [Armenian](/wiki/Armenians) and [Turkmen](/wiki/Syrian_Turkmen) minorities.

[Aramaic](/wiki/Aramaic_language) was the [lingua franca](/wiki/Lingua_franca) of the region before the advent of [Arabic](/wiki/Classical_Arabic), and is still spoken among [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_people), and [Classical Syriac](/wiki/Syriac_language) is still used as the liturgical language of [various Syriac Christian denominations](/wiki/Syriac_Christianity). Most remarkably, [Western Neo-Aramaic](/wiki/Western_Neo-Aramaic) is still spoken in the village of [Ma'loula](/wiki/Ma'loula) as well as two neighboring villages, [Template:Convert](/wiki/Template:Convert) northeast of Damascus.

English and French are widely spoken as a second language, but English is more often used.

### Largest cities[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Largest cities of Syria](/wiki/Template:Largest_cities_of_Syria)

## Culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) Syria is a traditional society with a long cultural history.[[174]](#cite_note-174) Importance is placed on family, religion, education, self-discipline and respect. Syrians' taste for the traditional arts is expressed in dances such as the al-Samah, the [Dabkeh](/wiki/Dabkeh) in all their variations, and the sword dance. Marriage ceremonies and the births of children are occasions for the lively demonstration of folk customs.[[175]](#cite_note-175)

### Arts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

[thumb|upright|Art gallery in Damascus](/wiki/File:Kunstgalerie_in_Damaskus,_Syrien.JPG) The [literature of Syria](/wiki/Literature_of_Syria) has contributed to [Arabic literature](/wiki/Arabic_literature) and has a proud tradition of oral and written poetry. Syrian writers, many of whom migrated to Egypt, played a crucial role in the [nahda](/wiki/Nahda) or Arab literary and cultural revival of the 19th century. Prominent contemporary Syrian writers include, among others, [Adonis](/wiki/Ali_Ahmad_Said), [Muhammad Maghout](/wiki/Muhammad_al-Maghut), [Haidar Haidar](/wiki/Haidar_Haidar), [Ghada al-Samman](/wiki/Ghada_al-Samman), [Nizar Qabbani](/wiki/Nizar_Qabbani) and [Zakariyya Tamer](/wiki/Zakariyya_Tamer).

Ba'ath Party rule, since the [1966 coup](/wiki/1966_Syrian_coup_d'état), has brought about renewed censorship. In this context, the genre of the historical novel, spearheaded by [Nabil Sulayman](/wiki/Nabil_Sulayman), [Fawwaz Haddad](/wiki/Fawwaz_Haddad), [Khyri al-Dhahabi](/wiki/Khyri_al-Dhahabi) and [Nihad Siris](/wiki/Nihad_Siris), is sometimes used as a means of expressing dissent, critiquing the present through a depiction of the past. Syrian [folk narrative](/wiki/List_of_folklores), as a subgenre of historical fiction, is imbued with [magical realism](/wiki/Magical_realism), and is also used as a means of veiled criticism of the present. [Salim Barakat](/wiki/Salim_Barakat), a Syrian émigré living in Sweden, is one of the leading figures of the genre. Contemporary Syrian literature also encompasses science fiction and futuristic [utopiae](/wiki/Utopia) ([Nuhad Sharif](/wiki/Nuhad_Sharif), [Talib Umran](/wiki/Talib_Umran)), which may also serve as media of dissent.

### Popular culture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

[The Syrian music scene](/wiki/Music_of_Syria), in particular that of Damascus, has long been among the Arab world's most important, especially in the field of [classical Arab music](/wiki/Classical_Arab_music). Syria has produced several pan-Arab stars, including [Asmahan](/wiki/Asmahan), [Farid al-Atrash](/wiki/Farid_al-Atrash) and singer [Lena Chamamyan](/wiki/Lena_Chamamyan). The city of Aleppo is known for its [muwashshah](/wiki/Muwashshah), a form of [Andalous](/wiki/Andalous) sung poetry popularized by [Sabri Moudallal](/wiki/Sabri_Moudallal), as well as for popular stars like [Sabah Fakhri](/wiki/Sabah_Fakhri).

[Television](/wiki/Television_in_Syria) was first introduced to Syria in 1960, when Syria and Egypt (which adopted television that same year) were part of the [United Arab Republic](/wiki/United_Arab_Republic). It broadcast in black and white until 1976. [Syrian soap operas](/wiki/Syrian_soap_operas) have considerable market penetration throughout the eastern Arab world.[[176]](#cite_note-176) Nearly all of [Syria's media](/wiki/Media_of_Syria) outlets are state-owned, and the Ba'ath Party controls nearly all newspapers.[[177]](#cite_note-177) The authorities operate several intelligence agencies,[[178]](#cite_note-178) among them [Shu'bat al-Mukhabarat al-'Askariyya](/wiki/Military_Intelligence_(Syria)), employing a large number of operatives.[[179]](#cite_note-179) Since the [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War) many of Syria's artists, poets, writers and activists have remained incarcerated, including famed cartoonist [Akram Raslam](/wiki/Akram_Raslam).[[180]](#cite_note-180)

### Sports[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

The most popular sports in Syria are [football](/wiki/Association_football), basketball, swimming, and tennis. Damascus was home to the fifth and seventh [Pan Arab Games](/wiki/Pan_Arab_Games). Many popular football teams are based in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Latakia, etc.

The [Abbasiyyin Stadium](/wiki/Abbasiyyin_Stadium) in Damascus is home to the [Syrian national football team](/wiki/Syria_national_football_team). The team enjoyed some success, having qualified for four [Asian Cup](/wiki/Asian_Cup) competitions. The team had its first international on 20 November 1949, losing to [Turkey](/wiki/Turkey_national_football_team) 7–0. The team was ranked 138th in the world by [FIFA](/wiki/FIFA_World_Rankings) as of May 2013.

### Cuisine[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=36)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|right|](/wiki/File:Fattoush.JPG)[Fattoush](/wiki/Fattoush), an example of Syrian cuisine Linked to the regions of Syria where a specific dish has originated, Syrian cuisine is rich and varied in its ingredients. Syrian food mostly consists of Southern Mediterranean, Greek, and Southwest Asian dishes. Some Syrian dishes also evolved from Turkish and French cooking: dishes like [shish kebab](/wiki/Kebab), stuffed zucchini/courgette, [yabra'](/wiki/Yabra') (stuffed grape leaves, the word yapra' derıves from the [Turkish](/wiki/Turkish_language) word 'yaprak' meaning leaf).

The main dishes that form Syrian cuisine are [kibbeh](/wiki/Kibbeh), [hummus](/wiki/Hummus), [tabbouleh](/wiki/Tabbouleh), [fattoush](/wiki/Fattoush), [labneh](/wiki/Strained_yogurt), [shawarma](/wiki/Shawarma), [mujaddara](/wiki/Mujaddara), [shanklish](/wiki/Shanklish), [pastırma](/wiki/Pastırma), [sujuk](/wiki/Sujuk) and [baklava](/wiki/Baklava). [Baklava](/wiki/Baklava) is made of [filo](/wiki/Filo) pastry filled with chopped nuts and soaked in [honey](/wiki/Honey). Syrians often serve selections of appetizers, known as [meze](/wiki/Meze), before the main course. [Za'atar](/wiki/Za'atar), [minced beef](/wiki/Minced_beef), and cheese [manakish](/wiki/Manakish) are popular [hors d'œuvres](/wiki/Hors_d'œuvres). The Arabic flatbread [khubz](/wiki/Khubz) is always eaten together with [meze](/wiki/Meze).

Drinks in Syria vary, depending on the time of day and the occasion. [Arabic coffee](/wiki/Arabic_coffee), also known as [Turkish coffee](/wiki/Turkish_coffee), is the most well-known hot drink, usually prepared in the morning at breakfast or in the evening. It is usually served for guests or after food. [Arak](/wiki/Arak_(distilled_beverage)), an alcoholic drink, is also a well-known beverage served mostly on special occasions. More examples of Syrian beverages include [Ayran](/wiki/Ayran), [Jallab](/wiki/Jallab), [White coffee](/wiki/White_coffee), and a locally manufactured beer called Al Shark.[[181]](#cite_note-181)

## Education[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=37)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) [thumb|](/wiki/File:Damascus_university_internal_view.jpg)[University of Damascus](/wiki/University_of_Damascus) Education is free and compulsory from ages 6 to 12. Schooling consists of 6 years of primary education followed by a 3-year general or [vocational](/wiki/Vocational) training period and a 3-year academic or vocational program. The second 3-year period of academic training is required for university [admission](/wiki/University_and_college_admissions). Total enrollment at [post-secondary](/wiki/Post-secondary) schools is over 150,000. The [literacy](/wiki/Literacy) rate of Syrians aged 15 and older is 90.7% for males and 82.2% for females.[[182]](#cite_note-182)[[183]](#cite_note-183) Since 1967, all schools, colleges, and universities have been under close government supervision by the [Ba'ath Party](/wiki/Arab_Socialist_Ba'ath_Party_–_Syria_Region).[[184]](#cite_note-184) There are 6 state universities in Syria[[185]](#cite_note-185) and 15 private universities.[[186]](#cite_note-186) The top two state universities are [University of Damascus](/wiki/University_of_Damascus) (180,000 students)[[187]](#cite_note-187) and [University of Aleppo](/wiki/University_of_Aleppo).[[188]](#cite_note-188) The top private universities in Syria are: [Syrian Private University](/wiki/Syrian_Private_University), [Arab International University](/wiki/Arab_International_University), [University of Kalamoon](/wiki/University_of_Kalamoon) and [International University for Science and Technology](/wiki/International_University_for_Science_and_Technology). There are also many higher institutes in Syria, like the [Higher Institute of Business Administration](/wiki/Higher_Institute_of_Business_Administration), which offer undergraduate and graduate programs in business.[[189]](#cite_note-189) According to the [Webometrics Ranking of World Universities](/wiki/Webometrics_Ranking_of_World_Universities), the top-ranking universities in the country are [Damascus University](/wiki/Damascus_University) (3540th worldwide), the [University of Aleppo](/wiki/University_of_Aleppo) (7176th) and [Tishreen University](/wiki/Tishreen_University) (7968th).[[190]](#cite_note-190)

## Health[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=38)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) In 2010, spending on healthcare accounted for 3.4% of the country's GDP. In 2008, there were 14.9 physicians and 18.5 nurses per 10,000 inhabitants.[[191]](#cite_note-191) The life expectancy at birth was 75.7 years in 2010, or 74.2 years for males and 77.3 years for females.[[192]](#cite_note-192)

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=39)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Index of Syria-related articles](/wiki/Index_of_Syria-related_articles)
* [Outline of Syria](/wiki/Outline_of_Syria)
* [Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Syrian_Civil_War)
* [Refugees of the Syrian Civil War](/wiki/Refugees_of_the_Syrian_Civil_War)
* [International recognition of the Syrian National Council](/wiki/International_recognition_of_the_Syrian_National_Council)
* [Federation of Northern Syria – Rojava](/wiki/Rojava)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=40)]

Footnotes

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

General references

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## Further reading[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=41)]

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* [Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book)
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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=42)]

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* [Template:CIA World Factbook link](/wiki/Template:CIA_World_Factbook_link)
* [Template:Dmoz](/wiki/Template:Dmoz)
* [Template:GovPubs](/wiki/Template:GovPubs)
* [Syria profile](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14703856) from the [BBC News](/wiki/BBC_News)
* [Template:ArabDecision](/wiki/Template:ArabDecision)
* [Template:Wikiatlas](/wiki/Template:Wikiatlas)

[Template:Geographic location](/wiki/Template:Geographic_location) [Template:Syria topics](/wiki/Template:Syria_topics) [Template:Navboxes](/wiki/Template:Navboxes) [Template:Navboxes](/wiki/Template:Navboxes) [Template:Second Journey of Paul of Tarsus](/wiki/Template:Second_Journey_of_Paul_of_Tarsus) [Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Syria](/wiki/Category:Syria) [Category:Arabic-speaking countries and territories](/wiki/Category:Arabic-speaking_countries_and_territories) [Category:Eastern Mediterranean](/wiki/Category:Eastern_Mediterranean) [Category:Member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Organisation_of_Islamic_Cooperation) [Category:Member states of the Union for the Mediterranean](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_Union_for_the_Mediterranean) [Category:Member states of the United Nations](/wiki/Category:Member_states_of_the_United_Nations) [Category:Mesopotamia](/wiki/Category:Mesopotamia) [Category:Middle Eastern countries](/wiki/Category:Middle_Eastern_countries) [Category:Near Eastern countries](/wiki/Category:Near_Eastern_countries) [Category:States and territories established in 1946](/wiki/Category:States_and_territories_established_in_1946) [Category:Western Asia](/wiki/Category:Western_Asia) [Category:Western Asian countries](/wiki/Category:Western_Asian_countries) [Category:Muslim-majority countries](/wiki/Category:Muslim-majority_countries) [Category:Republics](/wiki/Category:Republics)