

Arab League

MetMUNC XLIX

Topic: Syrian Civil War

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Since 1970, when Hafez al-Assad seized control of Syria and centralized power in the presidency, there has been widespread dissatisfaction throughout the country.¹ This is because Assad led an autocratic regime, which distributed shares of political patronage to people, and used the military to suppress uprisings with brute force.¹ This was demonstrated in Assad's response to a Muslim Brotherhood uprising in the city of Hama, where more than twenty-five thousand were killed. The dissatisfaction that resulted from this turned to protests, which were brutally suppressed. The military conducted mass arrests, sieged cities using



This picture depicts airstrikes against the Islamic State in Syria.

tanks, and killed unarmed protestors. This occurred in multiple cities across Syria, with the first one being Deraa. Soon after, opponents of the regime began to arm themselves, and the protests turned to civil war in 2011.

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The Syrian Civil war is between the Assad government and the rebels that oppose it, with both sides backed by different foreign powers. The rebels are backed by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S., while the government is backed by Russia and Iran.² In addition to these groups, the Islamic State and Al-Qaeda were also involved in the Syrian civil war. Al-Qaeda wanted to capitalize on the chaos in Syria, and they called for Sunni's in the region to join a jihad against the Assad regime in 2012.¹ After this, the Islamic state emerged in 2013, and seized control of territory in Syria.² In 2015, the Islamic State coordinated terrorist attacks across Europe, and in response, the U.S., UK, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and others expanded their air campaign to include Syria.² Following this, over eleven thousand airstrikes have been conducted against the Islamic State in Syria by these countries.² This topic is greatly important, due to the millions of internally displaced people and refugees. According to UN reports, more than 5.6 million people have fled the country and more than 6 million have been internally displaced.² In addition to this, immense amounts of people have been killed, estimates are around 400,000 since the start of the war.²

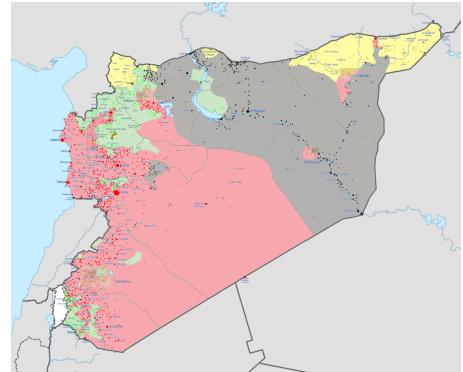
At the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, the opposition included two main groups, the FSA and SNC. The FSA, or Free Syrian Army, was formed by defectors from Assad's army, The



This image depicts the SNC, or Syrian National Coalition.

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FSA found difficulty centralizing command and coordinating operations, and was both disorganized, and outgunned by the regime. Because of this, and inadequate resources, they would at times steal from the people. Another main group is the SNC, or Syrian National Coalition, who claimed to be the government in exile of Syria. The U.S., Turkey, and others recognized the SNC as the Syrian people's legitimate representative.¹ The SNC was succeeded by the National Coalition, but both could not provide significant support to the opposition.¹ Greater battlefield successes against the regime were achieved by Islamic Brigades, who had funding and arms from Gulf donors.¹ Under many of these groups, people have been negatively affected. People under the Islamic State, the FSA, and pro-regime militias suffer abuse.¹ Civilians have been consistently targeted by rebels and Assad's forces, with 1400 civilians killed by the Assad regime's chemical weapons, deployed in 2013.¹ Great civilian casualties has also resulted from the conventional arms utilized by the Assad Regime.¹ Another group involved in the Syrian Civil War is the Kurds, who want to create an autonomous region in northern Syria.¹ In 2014, the Kurds defended the town Kobani from the Islamic State, with help from U.S. forces.¹ After this, The U.S. continued to provide air support and weapons to the Kurdish led Syrian Democratic Forces.¹ The Kurdish YPG has been linked to the Turkey based PKK, which is designated as a terrorist



This image depicts a map of the Syrian Civil War

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organization by Turkey and the U.S.¹ In 2019, the U.S. sided with Turkey over the YPG, and removed its troops from the Turkish border, allowing Turkey to launch a military offensive against the Kurds.¹ Turkey also deployed their military in 2016 to block the Kurds from linking their two cantons in a contiguous territory.¹ According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies seized towns and villages in 2019 after U.S. troops were removed, resulting in the SDF turning to the Syrian government for help.¹ Due to the Syrian Civil War, millions of people are displaced or fleeing, and neighboring countries are forced to host them. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, Lebanon is hosting more than a million Syrians, Jordan has over half a million, and Turkey hosts over three million.¹

The CFR states that this strains government resources, and that the millions of refugees journeying to Europe are contributing the largest migrant and refugee crisis since World War 2.¹ The CFR also states that there has been disputes over how to settle refugees across the EU. In 2016, the economically valuable city of Aleppo had been captured by the regime, a city which had been contested since 2012.¹ This defeat for the rebels had isolated them in northern Idlib, parts of



This image shows refugees from Syria



This image depicts the battle of Aleppo

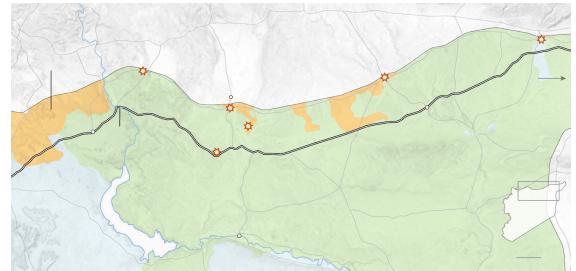
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the south, and small enclaves around Damascus and Homs, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.¹ This is one success the Syrian government has had as they have steadily regained territory from the opposition with help from Iran and Russia.² The Syrian Civil War is also impacted by the U.S., which has been the largest single donor to the humanitarian response in Syria, with over 10.6 billion dollars provided according to the department of state.¹⁰ According to the U.S. department of state, the U.S. government has also worked closely with the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, since its rise in 2014.¹⁰ The department of state describes a territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria in March 2019, and states that the Coalition remains committed to ISIS's enduring defeat.¹⁰ The U.S. has also provided help to the Syrian opposition, by supporting local activists and civil society organizations, and by strengthening the education sector in opposition held areas.¹⁰ Recently, the economy of Syria has been struggling greatly with the Syrian pound being 3500 to the dollar according to the New York Times.¹¹ The New York times also states that prices for imported staples such as sugar, coffee, flour, and rice have doubled or tripled.¹¹ It is estimated that 80 percent of Syrians are currently living in poverty, and that 40 percent were unemployed at the end of 2019.¹¹ The Civil War has caused the Syrian economy to be reduced to a third of its prewar size.¹¹

The Syrian Civil War appears to be gradually ending, with the rebels being almost entirely backed into the Idlib province, having no good strategy to fight back.¹² Recently, the

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U.S. has increased tariffs on Turkish steel. This has been done following the invasion of the Kurds in late 2019, and because of the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Turkey. In addition to this, the U.S. has also threatened to increase tariffs on Syrian businesses. Also in late 2019, EU foreign ministers agreed to stop selling arms to Turkey.¹³ In addition to this, the EU condemned Turkey's invasion into northern Syria, describing how it results in more civilian suffering and impedes humanitarian assistance.¹³ Even with all of this, the Turkish president states that his troops will continue supporting an invasion of parts of northern Syria, according to the New York Times.¹³ This is where the committee session comes in, delegates from the Arab League must coordinate the most appropriate response to the recent Turkish invasion, and to the Syrian Civil War in its entirety. Delegates can do this by debating how the Arab League can respond to issues such as civilian suffering, and by coming together in blocs to create resolutions. The goal of the committee session is to pass a resolution outlining a realistic strategy for the Arab League to deal with the Syrian Civil War and the Syrian government.



This image is a map of Northern Syria where the Turks have invaded the Kurds.

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Questions to Consider:

1. To what extent has the Syrian Civil War created instability in the region?
2. How has the Syrian Civil War been different from other post Cold War Civil Wars?
3. How has the Syrian Civil War altered the living conditions of citizens?
4. How will the destruction caused by the Civil War affect Syria in the future?
5. Why has it been so difficult to create lasting peace in Syria?
6. How can another resurgence of the Islamic State be prevented?

Helpful Links:

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