

Now in its eighth year, the Syrian conflict has caused devastation to thousands of families and reduced much of the country to rubble. In 2011 peaceful protests in Daraa, inspired by the Arab Springs in neighbouring countries, campaigned for a pro-democratic government, however, these were soon quashed by President Assad and a full-blown civil war ensued.

Key Individuals and Groups

President Bashar Assad: Current president of Syria

Supporters of the Syrian government:

- Pro-government militia;
- Russia;
- Iran

Supporters of Syrian rebels:

- Turkey;
- US;
- Saudi Arabia

Kurds: ethnic minority in Syria. Aim to defend predominantly Kurdish territory in the north-east; have supported US against ISIS

Hezbollah: Iranian-backed Lebanese militant group in support of Russian offensives in Syria

ISIL: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Have capitalised on the war in Syria in spreading their own ideology and determination for Sharia law

Key dates

Sep. 1980: Start of Iran-Iraq war, Syria backs Iran.

June 2000: President Hafez al-Assad dies, succeeded by his son Bashar al-Assad.

May 2004: US sanctions on Syria for supposed terrorism.

Mar. 2011: Security forces shoot dead protestors in Daraa

May 2011: Army tanks enter cities and suburbs to crush regime protests.

Aug. 2013: At least 1,300 die from chemical attack in Ghouta. Forces loyal to President Assad believed to be responsible.

Sept. 2014: US and 5 Arab countries launch air strikes against IS.

Dec. 2016: Government troops backed by Russia and Iran recapture Aleppo

Feb. 2018: Government launches assault on rebel-held Eastern Ghouta.

April. 2018: US, Britain and France carry out strikes following claims of a new chemical attack in Eastern Ghouta.

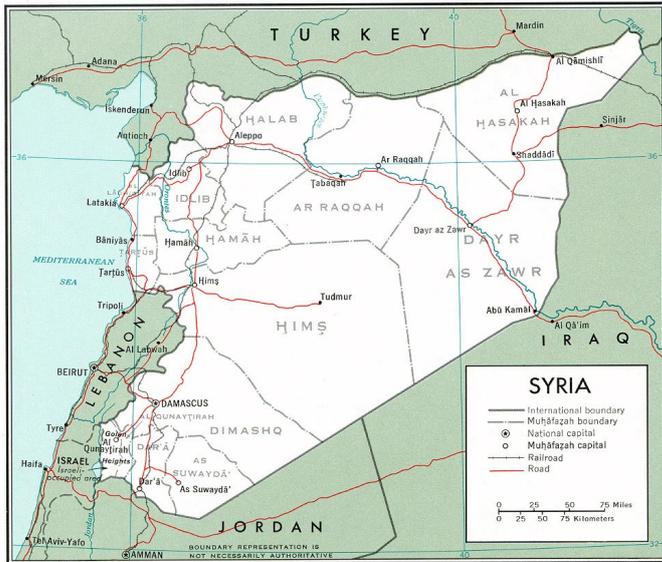
Conflict

Inspired by the Arab Springs, peaceful protests calling for a democratic government in March 2011 were quickly quashed when the Syrian Army opened fire.

Protests turned into an armed rebellion after months of military battles and the Syrian Army firing on demonstrators, resulting in a civil war.

The Syrian government are mainly supported by Russia and Iran, whilst Qatar and Saudi Arabia provided arms to the rebels.

In 2013, the Syrian regime used chemical weapons against the rebels. Condemned by the international community, the US and France were provoked into imposing sanctions on Syria.



Map of Syrian Governorates

Impact on civilians

Over 450,000 people have been killed since the beginning of the war, and more than half of the country's 22 million population have been displaced.

Syrian refugees live in extreme poverty, and few Syrian children have access to education. Those who remain in Syria are difficult to access by international aid organisations.

Over 2.9 million individuals are now estimated to be living in the contested areas in Idlib Governorate and in adjacent Governorates (Hama, Aleppo, and Latakia), over 1.4 million of whom are IDPs. Idlib is the last major rebel stronghold, however, large portions are also controlled by jihadist groups, thus a target for a potential all-out offensive.

HART's Partner in Syria

St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee (EPDC)

EPDC has been supporting those displaced by conflict since 2003. Projects include vocational training, psychological support programs, healthcare, and financial aid. EPDC advocates for a cross-cultural and religious environment for all to access the necessary assistance.

HART supports EPDC to empower women to combat food insecurity, enabling these women to prepare and conserve excess seasonal food to be available for the winter months - ensuring an available food supply as well as creating jobs for 20 women.

Some useful links for more information

Human Rights Watch - <https://www.hrw.org/middle-east/n-africa/syria>

Syrian Observatory For Human Rights - <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/>

UN OCHA - <https://www.unocha.org/syria>

Live map of Syrian War - <https://syria.liveuamap.com/>

Reuters - <https://uk.reuters.com/places/syria>

HART - <https://www.hart-uk.org/locations/syria/>

EPDC - <http://www.epdc-syria.org/index.php>

If you have any queries, please visit www.hart-uk.org or contact office@hart-uk.org