IUMUN'25
IOM
STUDY GUIDE

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY–GENERAL

Dear Honourable Delegates,

It is my utmost pleasure to welcome you to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at IUMUN 2025. As this year's Secretary-General, I am thrilled to see such passionate and thoughtful delegates come together to address one of the most sensitive and complex problems of our time: The Syrian Question – Prevention of Probable Recurring Migrant Crises

This is not only a timely topic—it is a deeply human one. The war in Syria has created one of the greatest displacement crises of recent times for over a decade. The world has moved on, yet millions remain in transit or limbo, between borders, policies, and politics. In this committee, you are invited to look beyond statistics and explore the faces of the individuals behind the so-called "migrant crisis." Your work will demand empathy, diplomacy, and creativity.

What is noteworthy in this agenda is its focus on prevention. Rather than reacting to crises after they occur, you will explore how the international community can detect early warning signs, build regional cooperation, and put in place sustainable frameworks that address both the root causes of displacement and the gaps in global migration governance. This is your opportunity to demand solutions that are not just reactive, but truly proactive.

I would also like to acknowledge the thanks of Under-Secretary-General Armanç Kaan Budak and Academic Assistant Mehmet Efe Arsun for the excellent preparation of the study guide. Their dedication and careful treatment of this topic have provided you with a solid and thought-provoking foundation on which to build your debates.

The IOM is not just a technical committee but a place where policy meets humanity. I trust that you will try your utmost, interact with open minds, and speak not only for your countries, but for those whose voices are very often not heard.

On behalf of the entire Secretariat, I extend a warm welcome to you to this important journey. May your IOM experience be intellectually rewarding and deeply meaningful.

Best regards,

Secretary-General

Öykü Taş

LETTER FROM THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL

Distinguished representatives and academic team,

I am filled with pride and gratitude to see you all again at IUMUN25. This year, the IOM committee will take an in-depth look at an issue that has been on our agenda for years and is of direct concern to almost all of us in the country where our conference is being held. Syria, Turkey's neighbour, has witnessed one of the greatest massacres and expulsions in post-Cold War history. The Syrian civil war, now entering its 15th year, has begun a new path since November last year, leaving behind a trail of destruction. The opposition group Tahrir Al-Sham took advantage of the situation created by the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has been ongoing since 2022, changing Russia's foreign policy and power balances, and overthrew the 54-year-old Assad regime, which had received post-war support from Russia. After the overthrow of the regime, all eyes were on whether all opposition groups in Syria can come together on common ground and establish a new political structure. However, Syria's demographic structure, political institutional history, and the proxy wars that have been going on for years between major powers over the country raise legitimate doubts about the possibility of establishing a unitary structure in the country. The Assad regime was strongest in the northern coastal strip, where the Arab Alawite population is concentrated, while the southern coastal strip is home to the Druze and Christian populations neighbouring Israel. In the northeast, the AANES structure, which is predominantly Kurdish and Syriac, controlled the most territory in the country for years after the Assad regime until its overthrow. The Sunni Arab regions in the west and central region of the country, including the majority of the country and the former capital Aleppo, the presence of Iran and Hezbollah-backed Shiites, and the presence of countless jihadist organisations throughout the country confirm how unpredictable the country's fate is. In this guide, we have tried to provide you with all the necessary information in a concise manner. My only request from all of

you is to set aside any reprehensible preconceptions you may have about Syria and Syrians, prepare yourself appropriately for the seriousness of the question and the ethical responsibilities of a delegate, and come to the committee. Apparently, Syria's experiences cannot be explained by complications of primitiveness or poverty, and it is a country that can produce numerous meanings and conclusions not only in its own context but also for modern world history, and from which we can learn lessons. Because we must not forget that human history began in Syria, where humanity today is on the brink of extinction. Syria is at the root of everything related to our existence as human beings. I wish you a productive conference, hoping that you will be able to appreciate this reality. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (armanckaan@gmail.com) and our academic assistant, Mehmet Efe Arsun (tedmehmetarsun@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Under-Secretary-General

Armanç Kaan Budak

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction of the Committee: International Organization for Migration

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is an entity that is closely affiliated with the United Nations. Established in 1951 and headquartered in Switzerland, IOM consists of 175 member states and 8 observer states. Currently, IOM has offices in 550 locations across 172 countries. As one of the oldest organizations within the United Nations, IOM has been actively working for 75 years in collaboration with member states, experts, the private sector, NGOs, and goodwill ambassadors to address humanitarian issues, particularly concerning diasporas living outside their home countries, as well as to support donors. IOM also serves as a guiding mechanism for member states regarding international migration law and provides services to migrants.

IOM is deeply engaged with international migration law and uses it as a reference while conducting operations, always respecting state sovereignty, human rights, and equality. The organization aims to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10.7, which seeks to facilitate orderly, safe, regular, and responsible migration and mobility of people through the implementation of well-managed migration policies. To reach this objective, IOM organizes workshops and academic conferences and collaborates with professionals.

IOM strives to ensure dignity, meet basic needs, and provide protection and safety for migrants in regions affected by crises. The organization is currently active in countries such as Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Lebanon, and Sudan. IOM focuses not only on broader migration issues but also on specific areas like the protection of child migrants, the safety of women, combating human trafficking, and

providing psychological support for migrants. Additionally, IOM supports individuals displaced by climate change and natural disasters, labour migrants seeking employment, and diasporas aiming to integrate into new countries. The organization is dedicated to creating legal and regulated migration pathways and taking action to prevent irregular and disorderly migration.

IOM is considered one of the most innovative organizations within the UN system. It actively employs the latest technological tools in its projects and publishes annual activity reports on its website. These reports highlight IOM's commitment to maximizing the number of migrants whose lives are positively impacted each year through regular data analysis. By 2025, IOM aims to assist nearly 55 million currently migrating individuals and an additional 45 million people in need of migration support, totalling 101 million people requiring urgent professional assistance.

1.2. Introduction of the Agenda Item: Syrian Question: Prevention of Probable Recurring Migrant Crises

The civil war that began in Syria in 2011 forced various communities to migrate at different intervals during the first ten years of the conflict. The intensity, routes, and responsible parties behind these successive waves of migration have constantly varied. When examining the demographics of the migrants, the majority are Sunni Arabs and Kurds who oppose the Assad regime or are fleeing from ISIS terrorism. The numbers of Arab Alawites, Druze, Turkmens, and Arab Christians among the migrants are relatively small, reflecting their low proportion within the country's total population.

Since the onset of Baathist rule, despite the criticisms directed at it, public opinion generally holds that the country's administration and economy are largely controlled by Arab Alawites, who predominantly reside in the northwest, one of the

most socioeconomically developed regions in Syria. Although the Arab Alawite population is small compared to the overall population, the number of people from this group who have been forced to migrate since the start of the civil war is even smaller. Various explanations could account for this data; however, with the potential collapse of the Alawite-led Assad regime and the takeover by Sunni forces, many media sources suggest that this situation could reverse.

There is concern that the new government may pose a legal security threat to cities where Arab Alawites and Arab Christians reside, particularly in the western coastal region, potentially triggering a new wave of migration involving Alawites and Christians.

Additionally, while some conspiracy theories claim that the new administration is an Israeli project and ally, it remains unclear whether the regime has resolved or has any plans to address the ongoing military and political tensions with Israel and Iran, which were left unresolved from the Assad era. This is especially true in the southern provinces of Quneitra and Suwayda, where the Golan Heights are located. Consequently, a potential Druze migration crisis could impact Israel, Lebanon, and Jordan in the event of a conflict, and this scenario cannot be overlooked.

Moreover, the contributions of international organizations, particularly the UNHCR and IOM within the United Nations, could be crucial in preventing new migrant crises envisaged under these scenarios. For the new regime to achieve a constitutional and democratic character that guarantees the rights of all social groups within the country, it is essential for the international community, especially academia and diplomatic entities, to engage in a comprehensive and enriched endeavour.

2. TERMINOLOGY

2.1. Glossary of International Relations and Int–Law

If we attempt to write all the terms under this heading, we would have to allocate as many pages as a book. For this reason, we will share with you only the part of the terminology of these sciences that should be known within the scope of the agenda comprehension and the activities to be carried out during the committee.

These necessary terms are as follows:

UN Charter: The United Nations' founding international treaty. The Charter outlines the responsibilities and areas of responsibility of the United Nations as an international organization, as well as the rights and duties of its member states. The prohibition of using force is one of the many things that the Charter upholds. One unique aspect of the Charter is that it supersedes other international treaty obligations in terms of the duties it imposes on member states, such as the application of Security Council sanctions. Although there isn't a formal constitution in international law, this feature gives the Charter the appearance of one.

Bilateralism: This term refers to discussions or negotiations between two parties on foreign policy issues. Bilateral relations can equally involve one state and an international organization, even though the term typically refers to relations between two states.

Convention: Multilateral agreements, also known as multilateralism, are typically concluded within the framework of an international organization and govern matters pertaining to international law and relations.

Aggression: Aggression is when a state uses armed force to violate another state's political independence, territorial integrity, or sovereignty. Despite the fact that using military force is generally forbidden by international law, there are two exceptions: military self-defence under specific conditions or in the context of actions to preserve or restore global peace and security based on a decision made by the United Nations Security Council in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

Crimes against humanity: Crimes against humanity are defined as acts that are part of a systematic or widespread attack against a civilian population with the intent to cause significant suffering or a major impairment of physical or mental health. Persecution on political, racial, nationalist, ethnic, cultural, religious, or gender-specific grounds, apartheid, forced disappearances, torture, rape, sexual enslavement, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, and other forms of severe sexual violence are specifically included in this, as are murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, deprivation of freedom in violation of fundamental principles of international law, and similar forms of sexual violence.

Ad Hoc Tribunals: Ad hoc tribunals are short-term courts set up to handle particular cases of major international crimes, like war crimes and genocide, in particular situations. These tribunals, which are separate from permanent courts and concentrate on specific cases that call for legal accountability for atrocities, are established by the UN or other international organizations. In order to ensure that justice is done and victims' rights are respected, they are frequently established in response to urgent situations where the current legal system is insufficient.

Depositary: An international treaty's depositary is a state or an international organization whose responsibilities are similar to those of a notary public. These responsibilities include document certification and safekeeping, as well as the acceptance, transmission, and storage of messages, declarations, and reservations.

Customary International Law: Custom, alongside international conventions is one of the primary sources of rights and obligations for states (sources of international law). States that adopt particular attitudes in the belief that they are acting in accordance with an obligation are said to be acting in accordance with customary international law. Two conditions must be met for customary law to emerge: States must consistently exhibit the same pattern of behaviour and believe they are acting in accordance with an international legal norm (rather than arising from morality or civility).

Collective Security: An approach to maintaining peace where all participating states agree, as a fundamental principle, to refrain from using military force against one another and instead use collective coercive measures against an aggressor. The aggressor may be a state that is also a member of the organization for collective security, which sets it apart from a purely defensive alliance. This kind of collective security system is therefore directed both internally and externally. One of the best examples of such an organization is the United Nations, which does not require participation in coercive military actions.

Human Rights: Human rights refer to the freedoms that all individuals are entitled to, regardless of their race, nationality, political or religious beliefs, social status, age, or gender. In addition to customary international law, human rights are safeguarded by a system of agreements, conventions, resolutions, and declarations of international organizations.

Pacta sunt servanda: The Latin maxim, "Treaties are to be honoured" refers to the obligation of states and international organizations to uphold treaty provisions. One of the primary principles of the international legal system is this idea. "Any treaty in

force binds the Parties and must be executed by them in good faith," according to the 1969 and 1986 Vienna Conventions on the Law of Treaties.

Recognition: A declaration made by one state that a new state has been established. Recognizing a newly independent territory indicates a state's willingness to engage in intergovernmental relations.

Terrorism: There is no definition of "terrorism" in international law. Many terrorism-related acts and activities are prohibited under international law, including human rights and humanitarian law. International humanitarian law (IHL) prohibits acts of terrorism, including attacks on civilians, indiscriminate attacks, and hostage-taking, in both international and non-international armed conflicts. Furthermore, IHL prohibits acts or threats of violence whose primary goal is to instil fear among civilians.

War Crimes: War crimes are violations of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 that protect individuals and assets, as well as other laws and customs in international or non-international armed conflicts. War crimes include wilful killing, torture, deportation, ill treatment, unlawful detention, hostage taking, attacks on civilians and objects, recruitment of children into armed forces, and pillage. States have an obligation to prosecute or extradite individuals suspected of committing war crimes on their territory.

Sovereignty: At the international level, a state is considered sovereign if it is independent of other entities subject to international law (e.g., other states or international organizations). As a result, the State has no obligations other than those

it created for itself and those imposed by mandatory international law norms (> Jus cogens).

Jus Cogens: Denotes peremptory rules of customary international law that must be followed in all circumstances. Any international treaty or other legal act that violates ius cogens will be considered null and void. Unlike the related concept of erga omnes rules (which all members of the international community must follow), ius cogens focuses on the content of norms and their relative precedence by specifying more particular regulations.

Immunity: An essential principle of international law that states that no state or its highest authorities are subject to another state's jurisdiction. In spite of a head of state appreciating immunity for actions taken in an official capacity, even after leaving office, recent events suggest that there may be exceptions to this rule in cases of grave human rights violations. Immunity does not exist when a state's actions are comparable to commercial transactions.

2.3. Attribution Methods of National/International Law

In law, citation procedures used when creating documents and debating differ from country to country, reflecting the unique aspects of each national legal system. While some countries have standardized these procedures into commonly accepted guidelines, others lack such uniformity. When referring to your own country's legislation and jurisprudence, you should first confirm and research whether a commonly accepted citation procedure exists in your country.

If your country does not have a widely recognized procedure, it is advisable to research and adopt citation methods from countries that have similar legal

structures, both in legislation and jurisprudence. For international law purposes, you may use the summarized and simplified citation procedures found on the following web page to fulfil your committee tasks.

Additionally, we have included a PDF of the Bluebook, which is the citation manual for national law in the USA, as an example of standardized citation practices.

https://guides.library.ubc.ca/legalcitation/intlaw

https://www.scribd.com/document/547963424/Bluebook-21-Ed-2020 (USA)

3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1. Dissolution and Partition of Turkish–Ottoman Syria

3.1.1. Vilayets of Aleppo and Damascus (1866–1918)

The Vilayet Law was enacted in 1864, leading to significant administrative changes in the region. As local intellectuals became more aware of historical developments, the new provincial law was implemented in Damascus in 1865. The reformed province was named Suriyya (or Suriye). Instead of reporting directly to Damascus, Jerusalem was designated as an independent sanjak, separating it from the rest of the province. Additionally, in 1864, Mount Lebanon was transformed into an independent mutessarifat.

The Turkish Empire established the Vilayet of Aleppo in 1866, which remained officially valid until its abolition at the end of World War I. Compared to the previous administrative organization, the province's borders were extended northwards to include the predominantly Turkmen cities of Marash, Antep and Urfa. This equalized the Arab and Turkmen populations in the ethnic composition of the region and also included the Armenian minority in these regions within the province.

Under the Turkish Empire, Aleppo was of strategic importance due to its favourable position on the trade route linking Anatolia to the east. Although it lost much of its former splendour and importance to Damascus with the opening of the Suez Canal, it is still remembered as the second most important city of the state after Istanbul.

In the past, Aleppo and its neighbouring provinces were economically and culturally more cohesive and homogenous than Damascus. Even today, the marked cultural differences between Aleppo and Damascus and the inability of Damascus to

continue the legacy of Aleppo as a whole, even though Damascus is the capital, are evident.

Although France promised Cilicia to become an Armenian state after the occupation, the Turkish state reclaimed Cilicia and most of the province of Aleppo as a result of the Anatolian War of Independence, which started with the struggle of the Anatolian national forces and then with the centralized army under the control of the Ankara government. In addition, with the Treaty of Sevres, the French abandoned the Armenian state project and started to pursue the policy of a Syrian state under the French mandate.

In this struggle against the French, the overwhelming majority of the Arabs and Kurds in the region supported the Turks, unlike the minority separatist and mandatory elements. The main reason for this is that the homogenous Sunni Muslim structure of the region was seen as a religious homeland defence against the Christian superpower West and its local collaborator, Christian Armenians. One of the most important examples of this was Ibrahim Hanano, who worked closely with Atatürk and supplied him with weapons.

The result, however, was unfortunately disastrous for Aleppo, as the 1921 Franco–Turkish Treaty of Ankara and the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne made most of the Aleppo province part of Turkey, with the exception of Aleppo and Iskenderun. As a result, Aleppo was cut off from its northern satellites and the Anatolian cities vital to its trade. Aleppo's economy was further damaged by the Sykes–Picot partition of the Middle East, which isolated it from most of Mesopotamia.

The loss of the port of Iskenderun in 1939, together with the incorporation of Antioch into Turkey, meant that Aleppo lost its primary port of Iskenderun and became completely isolated within Syria, further worsening its situation.

The Vilayet of Syria, also known as the Vilayet of Damascus, was a first-level administrative division (vilayet) of the Turkish Empire with an exclusive territory from Aleppo, proceeding from 1865 to 1918, the same as Aleppo.

Table 1: Syria's administrative history[1]

Diagram of states under the mandate
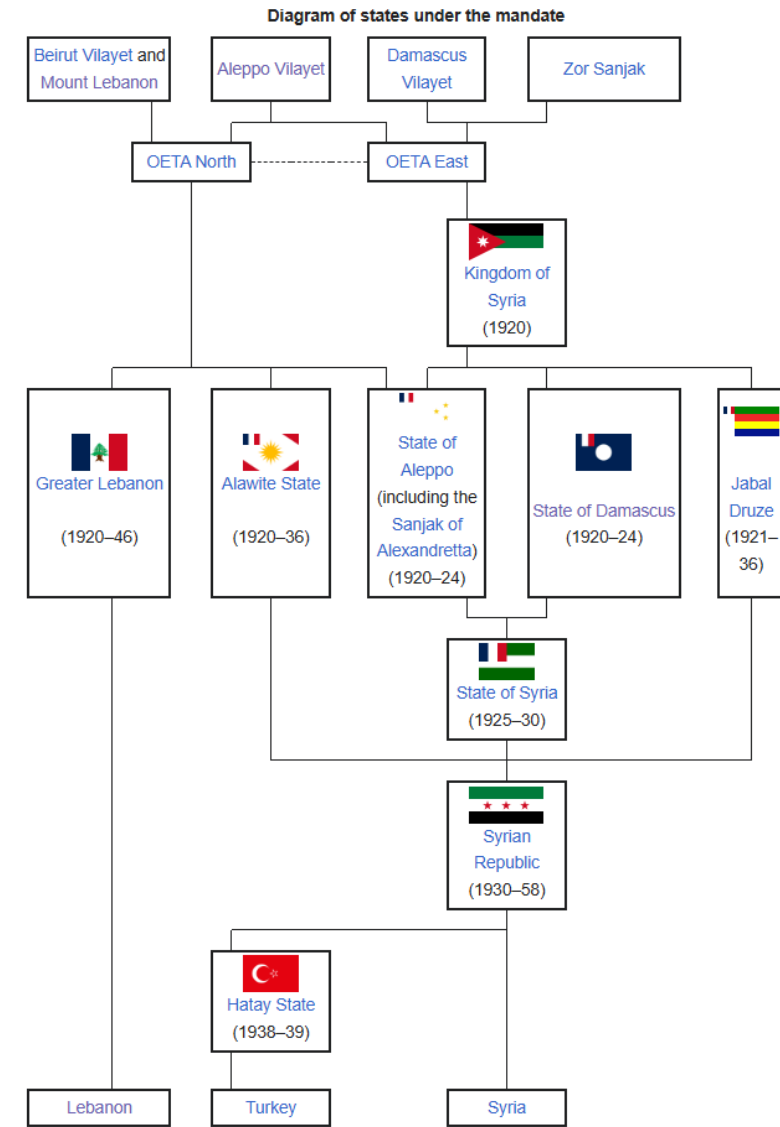
[1] (Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon, 2021)

A new administrative region with its centre at Ma'an was established in 1872, but it was shut down the following year because its expenses greatly exceeded its income. Although nothing came of it, the governor of Damascus proposed in 1884 to create a new vilayet of southern Syria.

The coastal regions of the vilayet of Syria were combined to establish the vilayet of Beirut in 1888. Another plan for a Ma'an-centred regional administration was put forth in May 1892, and it was accepted in August. The southernmost point of Ottoman administration in the Syrian vilayet was reached in mid-1895 when the centre of this mutasarrifiyya was relocated to Karak (Mutessarifat of Karak).

Damascus, Hama, Hauran, and Karak were the four sanjaks that made up Vilayet Syria as of 1897. Damascus served as the capital of the vilayet.

3.1.2. OETA and Arab Kingdom of Syria (1917–1920)

On 23 October 1918, after the British and Arab armies defeated the Ottoman Empire, Field Marshal Edmund Allenby declared that Ottoman Syria would be divided into three administrative sub-units, which closely resembled the former Ottoman divisions.

Of these three regions, OETA North, South and East, the North was renamed West two months later, and the new "OETA North" was declared following the occupation of the region of Cilicia, consisting of the Adana Vilayet, separately.

In OETA East, British governance concluded with the evacuation of British troops from the region in November 1919, followed by the proclamation of the Arab Kingdom of Syria over the same territory. Following the French victory against King Faisal in July 1920, the region was divided into two; the northern section was merged

with the French–administered OETA West, which the French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon was put into effect thereafter, while the southern section transformed into a no man's land, subsequently evolving into the Emirate of Transjordan.

The administration in OETA West, including the then sanjak of Latakia province in present-day Syria, terminated in 1920, subsequent to the allocation of the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon.

3.1.3. Syrian Federation and State of Syria (1922–1930)

Subsequently, four states were established on Syrian territory under the mandate in 1920: the States of Aleppo, Damascus, Jabal Druze and of the Alawites. In 1922, three of these states (Alawite, Damascus and Aleppo) were united into autonomous states under the name of the Syrian Federation. In 1925, the states of Damascus and Aleppo merged to form the state of Syria, while keeping on under the French mandate. The Alawite State did not join this state.

3.1.4. First Syrian Republic (1930–1950)

By 1930, the Syrian State had become the First Syrian Republic. In 1936, efforts were made to achieve independence from France but failed, and the provisions of the **Viénot Accords** that included the Jabal Druze and Alawite states in the Republic remained in force.

Adolf Hitler's emergence as a menace raised concerns that France would be outflanked by Nazi Germany if it abandoned its colonies in the Middle East. The combination of persistent imperialist tendencies within some factions of the French government prompted France to reassess its commitments and decline to ratify the treaty.

Furthermore, in 1938, France detached the Syrian Sanjak of Alexandretta despite its territory being assured as part of Syria in the **Viénot Accords** and established it as Hatay State, which acceded to Turkey in June 1939.

Although it was promised to the Syrian state in the **Viénot Accords**, according to Article 7 of the 1921 Treaty of Ankara, which ends the Franco-Turkish War, this region was already committed to be separated autonomously from the Aleppo state, but in 1923 it was re-attached to the Aleppo state, so it re-detached in 1938 by France.

According to some authors, the transfer of Hatay to Turkey was within the scope of France's policy to draw Turkey to its side in the context of a possible World War II against the Nazi threat.

Syria has not acknowledged the annexation of Hatay by Turkey, and the matter remains contentious to this day.

Riots erupted once more, Atassi (Syrian politician and statesman who served as the President of the Republic on three occasions from 1936 to 1939, 1949 to 1951 and 1954 to 1955) resigned, and Syrian independence was postponed until after World War II, following the withdrawal of the last French forces in 1946.

The declaration of independence occurred in 1944, but the Syrian Republic was not de jure recognized by the United Nations until October 1945; it attained de facto sovereignty on 17 April 1946, following the withdrawal of French forces.

3.1.5. Second Syrian Republic (1950–1963)

The Second Syrian Republic was established with the approval of a new constitution on 5 September 1950, which was suspended from 1950 to 1954 during Adib Shishakli's authoritarian rule, and subsequently when Syria united with the Republic of Egypt to form the United Arab Republic in 1958.

The Second Republic commenced with Syria's withdrawal from the union in 1961. of 1963, the Syrian Ba'athist Party ascended to power by a bloodless military coup (8 March Revolution), establishing the framework for the political system of Ba'athist Syria.

The green, white, black, and red flag is the inaugural flag of the Syrian Arab Republic, utilized for the briefest period from 1961 to 1963. The flag served as the emblem of the Syrian opposition during the Syrian civil war and was reinstated as the official flag of Syria in 2025.

3.2. Transition to Ba'ath Regime

3.2.1. Military Regime (1963–1971)

The authoritarian regime was established in 1963 following a coup d'état orchestrated by Alawite Ba'athist military officials. Following the 1963 coup d'état by its Military Committee, the Ba'ath Party governed Syria as a totalitarian dictatorship.

The Ba'athists dominated the nation's politics, education, culture, and religion, while monitoring all facets of civil society through their formidable Mukhabarat (secret police). The Syrian Arab Armed Forces and secret police were amalgamated with the Ba'ath Party apparatus following the elimination of old civilian and military elites by the new dictatorship.

A further coup in 1966 resulted in Salah Jadid emerging as the de facto leader, while Nureddin al-Atassi took on the presidency.

3.2.2. Hereditary Assadist Regime (1971–2024)

In 1970, Hafez al-Assad overthrew Jadid and al-Atassi during the Corrective Movement. In the subsequent year, Assad assumed the presidency following the victory in fraudulent elections. Upon seizing power, Assad restructured the state along sectarian lines, with Sunnis and other groups serving as nominal leaders of political institutions, while Alawites dominated the military, intelligence, bureaucracy, and security forces.

During the Lebanese civil war, Ba'athist Syria held a significant portion of Lebanon, while an Islamist insurrection against Assad's authority led to the perpetration of the Hama killings in 1981 and 1982. The regime was deemed one of the most oppressive in contemporary history, ultimately attaining totalitarian levels, and was frequently classified among the 'worst of the worst' in Freedom House indices.

Hafez al-Assad passed away in 2000 and was succeeded by his son Bashar al-Assad, who kept a comparable hold on power. The regime fostered an extensive cult of personality surrounding the Assad family and garnered widespread denunciation for its harsh domestic repression and war crimes.

Following the collapse of Ba'athist Iraq, Syria remained the last nation ruled by neo-Ba'athists. The killing of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri in 2005 prompted the Cedar Revolution, resulting in the regime's withdrawal from Lebanon.

Significant protests against Ba'athist governance in 2011, amid the Arab Spring, precipitated the Syrian civil war involving opposition factions, the government, and subsequently Islamist groups such as ISIS, which undermined the Assad regime's territorial authority.

Nevertheless, the Ba'athist administration sustained its presence and control over extensive territories, subsequently regaining additional ground in following years with the assistance of Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah.

The Syrian civil war is a protracted conflict that commenced in March 2011, initiated by the Syrian Revolution, which arose from widespread dissatisfaction with the Ba'athist regime led by Bashar al-Assad, resulting in extensive protests and pro-democracy demonstrations throughout Syria as part of the broader Arab Spring movements in the region. The Assad regime reacted to demonstrations with deadly force, igniting a civil war that resulted in the country's collapse in December 2024. All revolutionary factions consolidated under the Syrian caretaker government by 12 March 2025.

Historically, the Syrian opposition to Bashar al-Assad initiated an insurgency, establishing units such as the Free Syrian Army. Anti-Assad factions obtained weaponry from nations including Qatar and Turkey. Pro-Assad troops obtained financial and military assistance from Iran and Russia; Iran initiated a military engagement in support of the Syrian regime in 2013, followed by Russia in 2015.

By this period, rebels had formed the Syrian Interim Government following their conquest of the regional capitals of Raqqa in 2013 and Idlib in 2015. In 2014, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) captured Eastern Syria and Western Iraq, leading to a United States-led coalition initiating an aerial bombing campaign against ISIS, alongside offering ground support and supplies to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish-dominated coalition directed by the People's Defence Units (YPG).

In 2016, Turkey initiated an incursion into northern Syria, prompted by the establishment of the SDF, concurrently forming the Syrian National Army (SNA) to combat ISIS and pro-Assad factions. The December 2016 triumph of pro-Assad

troops in the four-year Battle of Aleppo signified the reclamation of Syria's largest city prior to the conflict.

In Idlib Governorate, the Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) militia established the Syrian Salvation Government, a technocratic Islamist administration that administered the province from 2017 to 2024. ISIS was vanquished in Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor. In December 2019, regime forces initiated an offensive in Idlib province, culminating in a truce that lasted from 2020 until November 2024.

During this period, there were frequent confrontations between pro-Assad forces and HTS. HTS initiated a significant offensive on 27 November 2024, with assistance from the SNA. Aleppo capitulated in three days, providing impetus to revolutionaries across. Southern insurgents started their onslaught, seizing Daraa and Suwayda. HTS seized Hama, while the Syrian Free Army and the SDF started their respective offensives in Palmyra and Deir ez-Zor.

Before Assad's downfall, Syria was positioned as the fourth most fragile state in the 2024 Fragile States Index and was among the most perilous locations globally for journalists. The press's freedom was severely restricted, and the nation was positioned as the second-worst in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index. It was the most corrupt nation in the MENA region and was ranked second-worst worldwide on the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index. Syria has emerged as the epicentre of an Assad-sponsored Captagon business, exporting billions of dollars in illicit drugs annually, so establishing itself as one of the major narco-states globally.

On 8 December, Bashar al-Assad sought refuge in Moscow as Homs and Damascus succumbed to the revolutionaries; his prime minister delegated authority to the new government, and Israel initiated an incursion into Syria's Quneitra Governorate, encompassing the UN buffer zone, following its 58-year occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights.

3.3. Post-Assad Regime

3.3.1. Transitional Government (2024-Today)

After the collapse of the Assad regime, Assad's ninth prime minister, Mohammad Ghazi al-Jalali, retained his position in a caretaker role with the backing of the opposition and Ahmed al-Sharaa until a caretaker administration led by Mohammed al-Bashir was established the next day. Al-Jalali advocated for new elections to enable the Syrian populace to select their leaders.

Before the collapse of the Assad administration, Mohammed al-Bashir led the Syrian Salvation Government (SSG), established in the Idlib province by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), the Islamist militant group that orchestrated Assad's defeat in December 2024. The establishment of the Transitional Government represented an expansion of the SSG "to encompass all of Syria," as the new government's composition closely mirrored that of the SSG. A report by the Syrian Network for Human Rights indicates that critics and adversaries of the HTS faced repression through enforced disappearances and torture.

Following the collapse of the Assad administration, Israel initiated a land invasion of the Purple Line buffer zone adjacent to the Golan Heights and launched a series of airstrikes targeting Syrian military depots and naval stations. The Israeli Defence Forces asserts that it is dismantling Ba'athist military infrastructure, including chemical weapons facilities, to prevent their utilization by rebels.

Notwithstanding the disintegration of the Assad administration, Turkish-supported Syrian National Army combatants in northern Syria persisted in their assault against U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) until a truce was established on 11 December. In February 2025, the SDF and the Autonomous

Administration convened and resolved that the SDF would amalgamate with the Syrian Armed Forces. The International Coalition against ISIS expressed endorsement for ongoing discussions between the SDF and the newly established Syrian government.

Mohammed al-Bashir, the prime minister of the transitional administration, has pledged to permit Christians and other minorities to practice their religion without obstruction. This has been regarded with scepticism, given some rebel factions have had prior affiliations with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. The adoption of a variant of the Tawhid flag by the new government, in conjunction with the opposition flag, has elicited concerns regarding the potential decrease in secularism of the new state. Aisha al-Dibs was designated as the Minister of Women's Affairs on 22 December 2024.

On 12 December 2024, a representative of the transitional government informed Agency France-Presse that during the government's three-month tenure, the constitution and parliament would be suspended, and a 'judicial and human rights committee' would be formed to evaluate the constitution before implementing amendments.

During the Syrian Revolution Victory Conference at the Presidential Palace in Damascus on 29 January 2025, the new government declared the disbandment of various armed militias and their incorporation into the Syrian Ministry of Defence, alongside the appointment of former HTS leader Ahmed al-Sharaa as president of Syria.

In March 2025, the UK-based SOHR alleged that Syrian security forces and pro-government combatants perpetrated a massacre of about 1500 Alawite civilians amid confrontations in western Syria.

On 10 March 2025, the SDF consented to amalgamate with the Syrian Armed Forces following a meeting between SDF leader Mazloum Abdi and al-Sharaa. Three days later, al-Sharaa executed an interim constitution encompassing a five-year transitional period.

By 12 March 2025, the Syrian peace process incorporated all revolutionary factions into the newly established Syrian governmental institutions.

On 29 March 2025, Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa unveiled the Syrian transitional administration during a ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Damascus, when the new ministers were sworn in and presented their agendas. The government supplanted the Syrian caretaker administration established after the collapse of the Assad dictatorship on December 8, 2024. Subsequently, many of Western governments, including the United States and the European Union, cancelled or promised for cancellation of sanctions against Syria, despite the US State Department's statements and expressions of concern about the possibility of renewed escalation of the civil war.

4. MAJOR ISSUES AND RISKS

4.1. Factors of Inner Conflicts

4.1.1. Proxy Wars

A proxy war is a military confrontation wherein one or more third parties provide direct or indirect support to state or nonstate fighters to affect the conflict's outcome, either advancing their own strategic objectives or undermining those of their adversaries. Third parties in a proxy conflict do not engage in the real combat to any considerable degree, if at all.

Proxy conflicts allow big nations to circumvent direct conflict while vying for influence and resources. Direct support from third parties includes military aid and training, economic help, and even restricted military operations utilizing surrogate soldiers. Indirect methods of support have encompassed blockades, sanctions, trade embargoes, and many techniques aimed at undermining a competitor's aspirations.

Proxy wars possess a lengthy historical context in global relations. Nations and empires have employed them as military and foreign policy strategies to influence or subjugate neighbouring powers. The Byzantine Empire (330–1453) fostered proxy wars by intentionally inciting animosities among various factions inside competing states. It then supported the most formidable faction when civil war erupted.

In World War I, Britain and France employed a comparable tactic by endorsing the Arab Revolt (1916–18) against the Ottoman Empire. The Spanish Civil War (1936–39) was a proxy battle between Republican troops, backed by the Soviet

Union, and Nationalist forces, supported by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Germany utilized the civil war to experiment with novel weaponry technology on the Spanish populace.

In the 1980s, following the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan to establish a communist regime, the United States intervened as a third party in a proxy conflict between Afghan and Soviet forces and Islamic guerrillas, who received arms and military supplies from the U.S. government. Meanwhile, the financial burden of the Afghan War from 1978 to 1992 debilitated the Soviet Union and played a role in its final collapse.

Proxy conflicts have persisted into the 21st century. Prominent instances encompass the civil war in Yemen, which commenced in 2014, with a significant confrontation between the militant Houthi movement, backed by Iran, and Yemeni government troops, supported by Saudi Arabia and its allies.

Subsequent to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the United States and its NATO allies functioned as third-party supporters of Ukraine, providing substantial military aid and enacting economic sanctions against Russia, whereas China and Iran served as third-party supporters of Russia.

Participating in proxy conflicts entails considerable moral and strategic hazards, especially for democratic nations that advocate for constitutional governance and human rights. The aforementioned dangers encompass:

- Enabling the establishment of a political or military dictatorship. Antidemocratic regimes may arise from a successful proxy war if the objectives of the surrogate conflict with the democratic values and ethics of its sponsor.

- Escalating regional military conflicts. Providing arms, military apparatus, and more supplies to proxies may lead to the loss or clandestine sale of such matériel to alternative violent organizations.

- Inability to attain strategic or foreign policy objectives, resulting in diminished influence and resources. China, the United States, and Russia have all incurred losses when vanquished in proxy conflicts.

- Mitigating the motivation for surrogates to engage in diplomacy or participate in peace discussions. The expectation of ongoing support from external parties sometimes motivates surrogates to persist in their struggles, resulting in catastrophic consequences in their home countries. Proxy conflicts have led to extensive hunger, population displacement, and cultural destruction.

Notwithstanding these hazards, the financing of proxy conflicts is expected to persist as major countries endeavour to advance their strategic interests without resorting to conventional, direct conflict.

Numerous factions engaged in the Syrian conflict obtain diverse forms of assistance from foreign nations and organizations external to Syria. The persistent conflict in Syria is characterized as a succession of interwoven proxy conflicts involving regional and global powers, chiefly between the United States and Russia. between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Table 2: Local, regional and international actors involved in the Syrian civil war prior to the fall of the Assad regime.[2]
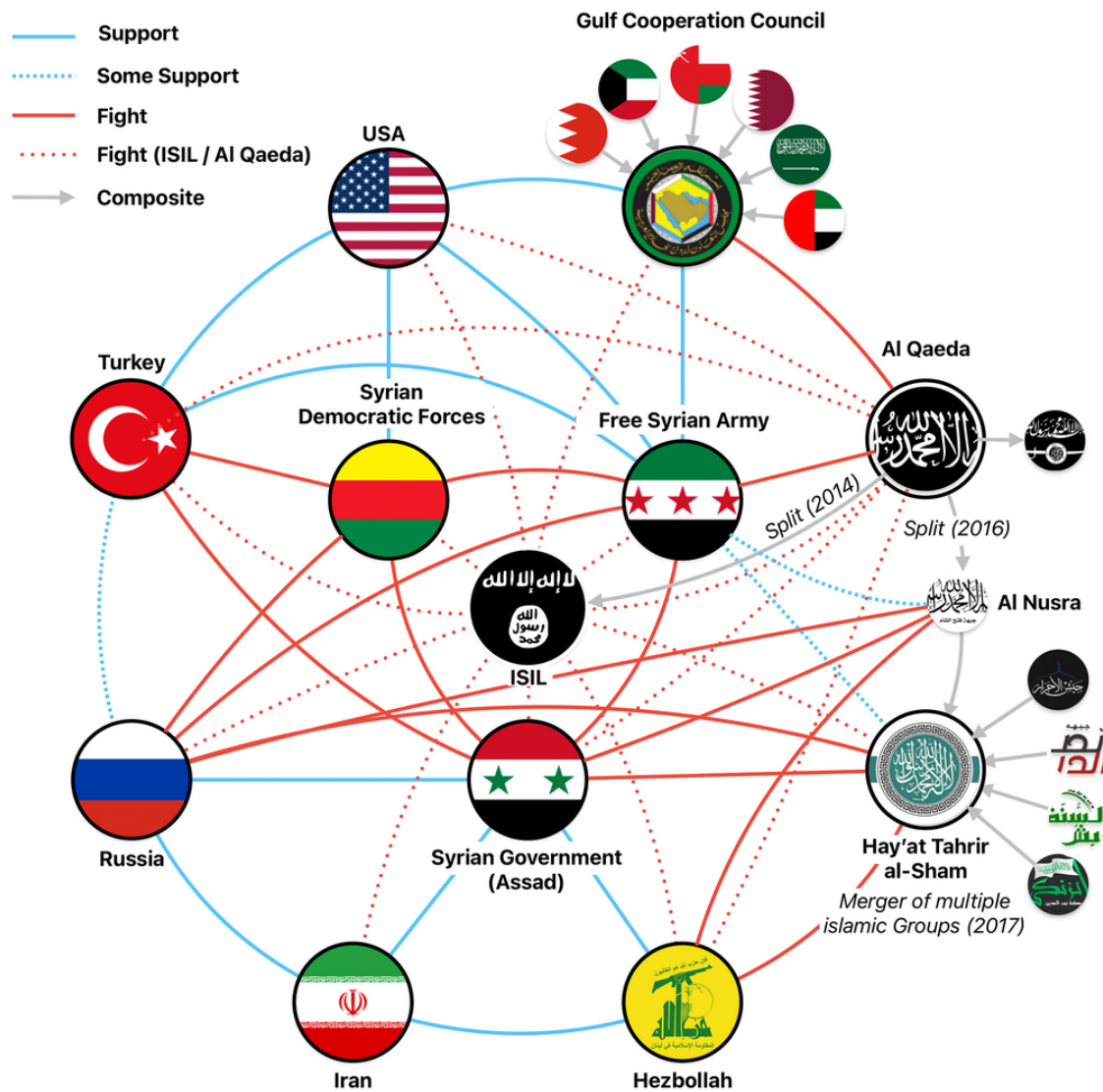
The Syrian Ba'athist dictatorship, led by President Bashar al-Assad, receives political and military backing from Iran and Russia, as well as active support from the Lebanese Hezbollah, the Syrian-based Palestinian group PFLP-GC, among

others. Since 30 September 2015, Russia has publicly deployed its military resources in Syria and has conducted an extensive aerial assault against anti-government factions, in support of and at the behest of the Assad administration. The military operations of Russia in Syria have faced condemnation from the US and its regional allies; Turkey explicitly engaged in conflict with the Russian military in November 2015 regarding the purported infringement of its airspace by a Russian aircraft, as well as concerning Russia's bombardment of territories controlled by anti-government factions backed by Turkey.

The Syrian opposition, represented officially by the Syrian National Coalition, obtains financial, logistical, political, and occasionally military assistance from prominent Sunni nations in the Middle East aligned with the U.S., including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. Since the initial phases of the Syrian crisis, prominent Western nations, including the U.S., France, and the UK, have extended political, military, and logistical assistance to the opposition and its affiliated rebel factions in Syria.

However, with the emergence of ISIS and the SDF, Western states transferred most of their support for this national coalition to the SDF, and the national coalition began to partially lose its influence over the Syrian opposition.

Between 2014 and October 2017, a substantial portion of Syria was under the control of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Syria (ISIS), an organization designated as terrorist by the international community. Several Western nations, particularly the U.S., Russia, Britain, and France, engaged in direct military operations against ISIS in both Syria and Iraq.

One of the examples of armed organisations receiving international support in the context of proxy wars in Syria is the SDF, which is used by the US especially in the fight against ISIS.

Turkey, on the other hand, strongly opposed the support for the SDF with the main idea that 'you cannot use a terrorist organization to end another terrorist organization' to the US and the European public opinion because it considers the SDF as a terrorist organization and carried out cross-border operations against both ISIS and the SDF in northern Syria in order to exercise its rights arising from border security and international law. It also supported the Syrian opposition, especially the former FSA and now the SNA, and cooperated with them in these cross-border operations.

A thesis written at Leiden University explains the basic mechanisms of proxy wars in the Syrian context and provides clues for interpreting the process. We can find enlightening information in the abstract:

"This thesis analyses the emergence of the Syrian proxy war by examining the actions and motivations of international actors supporting either the Assad regime or the opposition forces. It categorizes these actors into 'first movers,' which include Iran and Russia, and 'second movers,' namely Saudi Arabia and the United States. The involvement of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Russia is primarily driven by their perceptions of threats and interests related to regime security, ideology, and the pursuit of power.

The U.S. involvement is linked to its political and ideological objectives in the Middle East. This research explores how these interests and rivalries influence

the decisions to engage with opposing parties by supporting a preferred side in the Syrian conflict. The analysis indicates that Iran's support for Assad has prompted Saudi Arabia to back the opposition forces. Furthermore, both countries—particularly Iran—tend to increase their support following setbacks for their proxies, which aligns with the principles of balance of risk theory.

This dynamic leads to escalating stakes in the conflict, compelling these rivals to intensify their backing of their chosen sides, thus creating a cycle of response between them. Additionally, the Russian government's actions are closely tied to the potential threat posed by increasing U.S. involvement or direct military intervention aimed at regime change in Syria.

Consequently, this analysis suggests that Russia is likely to ramp up its efforts whenever it perceives a rise in U.S. involvement in the Syrian conflict. The thesis concludes by asserting that these interrelations not only shape the actions of external actors but also contribute to the prolongation and escalation of the Syrian civil war."

– The Syrian Proxy War, Douwe van der Meer, Leiden University.[3]

4.1.2. Class Conflict

In fact, class struggle is a concept that Marxists emphasise the most in academia though all socialist factions refer to this concept. Therefore, they interpret and try to explain not only Syria but also all historical conflicts in the world on the basis of class struggle theories. When we scan the literature, it is possible to access the analyses of prominent figures of Marxist parties (Leninist, Maoist, Trotskyist,

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[3] (Meer, 2020)

Hoxhaist, Titoist, etc.) of various factions and other socialist factions (Left-Liberal, Social Liberal, Social Democratic, Democratic Socialists etc.) from different countries. Many of these analyses include refutations and criticisms of each other. However, in this guide, we will only summarise the main findings of the analyses on Syria in terms of how classes have been shaped and transformed historically and the flexibility of their boundaries. For those who would like to explore in more detail, we have provided links to these socialist analyses in the further reading section.

As mentioned in the historical background section, once in power, the Assad family expropriated most property and restructured the organisation of the state along sectarian lines, indirectly transferring the running of these properties to the organisation; Sunnis and other groups became the nominal leaders of political institutions, while Alawites dominated the army, intelligence, bureaucracy and security forces.

The Assad regime has used land, property management, and selective reconstruction to enrich and control the deprived communities in rebel-held areas like Homs, rural Damascus, and Aleppo. This has been a practice since the 1950s, targeting large Sunni landowners and building the "Arab belt" in Northeast Syria to reduce the Kurdish proportion in the country's wealthiest region. Following the 1982 Hama massacre, the regime demolished houses and replaced them with loyalists, thereby enhancing political control and self-enrichment. This history of politicization and manipulation highlights the regime's use of land and property issues for political gain.

Since Russia's intervention in Syria in 2015 and the proliferation of Iranian-backed militias in 2013, the Syrian regime has achieved numerous military victories,

improving Bashar al-Assad's political survival prospects. This "triple alliance" has employed various military and political tactics to defeat rebellious communities in Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. Local Reconciliation Truces (LRTs) are a keystone of the regime's project to restore control over opposition-held areas, involving agreements between the regime and its allies and besieged rebel-held towns. These "truces" can include ceasefires, sieges, and evacuations.

Forced displacement is a primary factor influencing the dynamics of the Syrian conflict. The UNHCR reports almost six million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Syria, in addition to more than five million refugees abroad, collectively constituting half of the nation's overall population. The likelihood of these displaced individuals returning to their former residences has become markedly jeopardized. Before 2011, fewer than 50% of land parcels in Syria were formally registered, and one-third of the population resided in informal settlements (40% in Damascus and 50% in Aleppo). A multitude of dwellings were constructed without official permissions, especially in impoverished and informal settlement regions surrounding the cities, where the extent of destruction has been intentionally greater throughout the conflict.

The Syrian regime has enacted numerous laws and decrees to enable the manipulation and transfer of HLP ownership, including Decree No. 5 of the 1982 Urban Planning Law, Law No. 15 of 2008 facilitating foreign land ownership, Decree No. 8 of 2007 permitting large-scale developmental projects, and Law No. 26 of 2000 (subsequently replaced by Law No. 23 of 2015) which "regulates" state expropriation of lands in urban centres, a process commonly referred to as "regulation," often concerning slums and "unauthorized" housing. The recently enacted Law No. 10 of 2018 permits the establishment of new local administrative units that enable the

state to confiscate property without compensation if the owner does not register and substantiate their ownership within 30 days, later extended to one year—a prevalent situation for many internally displaced persons and refugees. This legislation faced extensive international condemnation, as it jeopardizes the repatriation of refugees and internally displaced persons, despite the regime ostensibly advocating it as a strategy for the redevelopment of informal settlements and conflict-affected regions.

The current Law No. 10 of 2018 is predicated on the prior Law No. 66 of 2012, which sought to develop "unauthorized" dwellings and informal residential settlements, converting them into upscale commercial and residential redevelopment projects. The primary obstacle encountered by owners attempting to assert ownership or authorize a representative through power of attorney is the limited timeframe provided, which is particularly inadequate for refugees residing overseas, as many require "security clearance" prior to undertaking any bureaucratic procedures, in addition to the considerable fees they must incur. Women IDPs and refugees, particularly widows, encounter significant legal, social, and economic obstacles that hinder their ability to assert their housing, land, and property rights, particularly concerning inheritance.

Decree No. 63 of 2012 authorizes the Ministry of Finance to confiscate (im)movable assets and property from those subject to Law No. 19 of 2012, the terrorist legislation. Human Rights Watch asserts that the previous legislation offers an excessively expansive definition of terrorism, unjustly criminalizing a significant portion of the populace without due process or the right to a fair trial.

These legal provisions grant the regime complete authority to expropriate lands and properties or to transfer their ownership for political, security, and commercial purposes. The Syrian crisis offers the regime significant possibilities to execute its pre-war strategies for socio-economic transformations in many metropolitan centres, hence enhancing economic advantages for its political and financial patronage networks. The dynamics of LRTs involve besieging, shelling, and evacuating slums and impoverished communities under the pretexts of "reconciliation" and "combating terrorism" to achieve these objectives. Following the Syrian regime's initiation of its economic liberalization program in the 1990s, the merchant class has re-emerged to reestablish its historical alliance with the state bureaucracy, supplanting the working class that briefly profited from the populist regimes of the socialist post-independence period. This shift marginalized a significant portion of society that lost its social welfare safety net.

The socio-economic aspect is prominently evident in Homs, the rural suburbs of Damascus, and Aleppo, where the revolt predominantly focused on the underprivileged rural suburbs and regions inhabited by the impoverished and informal working class. These regions endured the regime's extensive aerial bombardment and military actions, subsequently resulting in coerced population relocations.

4.1.3. Demographic Composition and Societal Diversity

Although the data on Syria's ethnic and religious-sectarian demography is controversial in terms of its clarity, most statistics are accurate, with no serious margin of error. According to these data, Arabs constitute the majority of the country's ethnic structure. Kurds constitute the ethnic minority with the largest

population. Other minorities are mainly Turkmens, Assyrians, Circassians, Armenians and other peoples.

Most of the ethnic minorities in the country, especially the Turkmen (especially the Muslim ones), have been Arabised and assimilated. When we examine the religious-sectarian structure of the country's inhabitants, we see that 75% are predominantly Sunni Muslims, followed by around 10-15% Arab Alawite-Nusayri (and other Shiite sects), 10% Christian and around 3% Druze.

There are many maps showing where these communities predominantly live in the territory of the country, but we will present you a demographic mapping covering pre-civil war Syria.
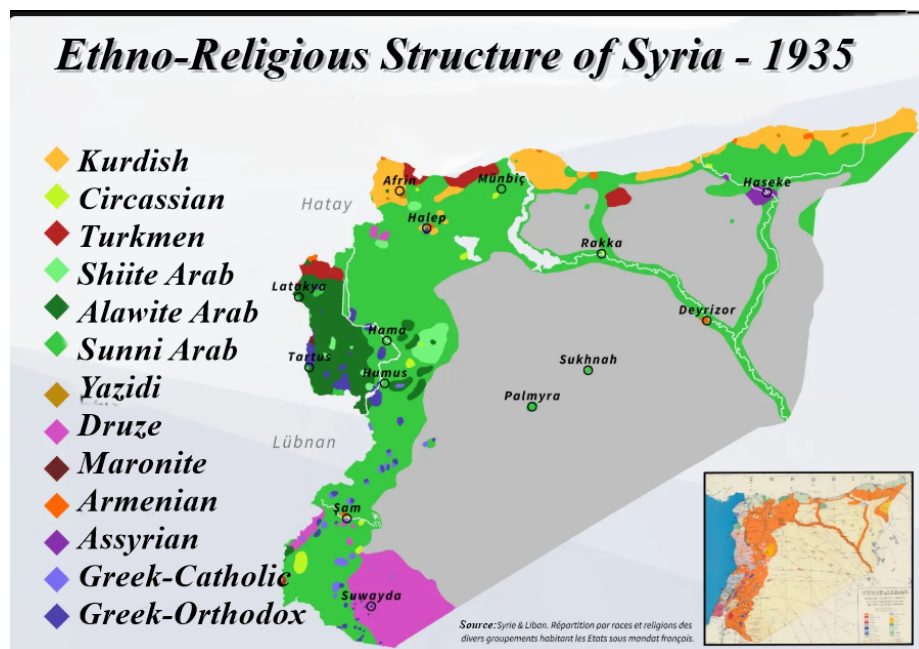

Table 3: Ethno-Religious Map of Syria in 1935[4]

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[4] (Filiz-Nişanyan, 2021)

4.2. Risks of Socio-Political and Economic Degradation for Nearby Countries

As of December 2022, around 6.7 million refugees have been compelled to escape Syria, with almost 5.5 million Syrian refugees currently residing in the five neighboring countries of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Germany accommodates the highest refugee population among non-bordering countries, over 850,000 Syrian refugees.

4.2.1. Middle Eastern Countries

Turkey hosts around 3.7 million Syrian refugees. A multitude of refugees resides in a network of twelve Syrian refugee camps controlled directly by the Turkish Government. Satellite imagery verified that the initial Syrian camps emerged in Turkey in July 2011, shortly following the sieges of the towns of Deraa, Homs, and Hama. The substantial and prolonged presence of Syrian refugees has incited animosity among Turkish nationals and individuals across the political spectrum. They have used as scapegoats amid national crises. Measures have been implemented to "expel them," including increased costs for utilities like water and services such as marriage licenses. There has been a rise in assaults directed at Syrian refugees within the nation. However, the accurate public opinion is obvious that the Turkish nation is the most hospitality-characteted one with being host to millions of refugees for more than a decade which appeals Turkey the first country in hosted refugee number around the world. The Sunni Islamic practice of the general demography of the refugees also contributed to this optimist approach and behaviour and hospitality of the Turkish nation towards them.

President Erdogan stated that Turkey anticipates resettling approximately 1 million refugees in the "buffer zone" under its supervision. Erdogan asserted that

Turkey has expended billions on about five million refugees now residing in the country and urged for increased financial support from affluent nations and the EU.

Jordan hosted 670,000 refugees according to UNHCR data and more than 1.3 million according to unofficial sources. Especially in the northern provinces of the country, Mafraq and Irbid, institutions such as hospitals and schools were under serious pressure due to the sudden influx. The Jordanian government faced serious difficulties in areas where international aid was limited. In short, the situation in Jordan has gone down in history as one of the most observable examples of the increase in social tension both in terms of security and material terms. When we analyse the current situation, it is seen that the Jordanian government is still financially dependent on foreign countries for its support to refugees, that refugees can be employed in a limited number of sectors with high unemployment rates even though they have work permits, and that social tension and integration are limited even though educational support is provided.

Lebanon has experienced a severe demographic crisis as the highest refugee-receiving country relative to its population. Having received around 1.5 million refugees (25% of the total population), the country is already in a deep political crisis, with an economic liquidity crisis that it has been dealing with since 2019, exacerbated by the 2020 COVID pandemic and the Beirut Explosion. All public services, especially infrastructure and institutional services, have become inefficient year after year and their capacities have shrunk. Moreover, the general Shiite character of the country and the fact that it is a Shiite crescent country has increased the pro- and anti-Assad conflicts and tensions among the groups in the country. When we look at the latest situation, we can observe that over the years, the Lebanese government has been calling for the forced return of Syrians without any commitment to security, there have been fights over access to resources due to

anti-Syrian sentiments and discrimination, sometimes reaching violent levels, and more than 90 percent of Syrian refugees in the country live below the poverty line.

The Syrian government has proposed a legislation referred to as "law 10," which may revoke property rights from refugees, including damaged real estate. Some refugees harbour concerns that returning to reclaim their property may result in adverse repercussions, including forced conscription or imprisonment. The Syrian government has faced criticism for employing this law to reward its supporters. The administration asserted that this remark is untrue and has indicated its desire for the repatriation of refugees from Lebanon. In December 2018, reports indicated that the Syrian government commenced property seizures using an anti-terrorism statute, adversely impacting government adversaries, resulting in numerous individuals losing their properties. Certain individuals' pensions have also been revoked.

Although Iraq has received relatively fewer refugees than other countries (250-300,000), it has faced internal displacement (Internally Displaced People) due to direct exposure to ISIS terrorism. Most of the refugees were settled in camps controlled by the autonomous administration in northern Iraq. Although the situation of migrants residing in the northern Iraqi region, where the majority are Syrian Kurds, is more stable than in other parts of the country and other countries due to ethno-social cohesion and relatively low population, similar problems and dependence on international aid for material resources persist. Meanwhile, the ongoing Peshmerga (Kurdish Northern Iraqi Forces)-PKK and Turkey-PKK conflicts in the northern border region of the country have exacerbated the problems with the Syrian refugee crisis and increased security threats and tensions within the territorial integrity.

Egypt, which has received 150,000 refugees according to UNHCR and 500-600,000 according to unofficial sources, has hosted Syrians in metropolitan cities rather than establishing camps. The country, which has similar problems as

other countries, supported the Syrian opposition during the Morsi era, but has taken a more neutral and pro-Assad line with the Sisi administration after the coup.

Israel did not allow Syrian refugees to enter the country but organized a large-scale 5-year humanitarian aid program and campaign called "Operation Good Neighbour" in the southern border areas of Syria. Israel's main concern has been its control over the Golan Heights in southern Syria, which is also the focus of Iran and Lebanese Hezbollah. Israel has carried out numerous airstrikes in this region against the Iranian and Hezbollah threat. Finally, Israel has assumed de facto security control of the Golan Heights and continues to target key Iranian military targets. Moreover, in the context of diplomatic relations, Israel has been cooperating with Sunni Arab states such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE, albeit informally, against the Iranian threat.

Although Palestine is not directly affected by refugees due to border crossing restrictions and internal government instability, Palestinian refugees, who numbered close to half a million before the outbreak of the war in Syria, have been forcibly expelled from their camps and have suffered mass casualties. The most prominent of these camps is the Yarmouk camp near Damascus, which is also in the frame of the famous photograph. Most of these migrants were forced to migrate to Lebanon and Jordan, but in some cases, they were treated as stateless citizens, even worse than Syrian migrants, and had to continue their struggle for survival. Reports and data on their current humanitarian situation are scarce. The fate of this mostly unregistered Syrian-Palestinian diaspora is one of the most hidden phenomena.

In addition, Palestinian political structures have been divided on taking sides in the civil war, with Hamas initially supporting the Syrian opposition, but Fatah and other structures remaining neutral or leaning towards Assadist tendencies.

Saudi Arabia has taken very few refugees and has been widely publicly condemned for withholding aid from migrants despite its financial resources and infrastructural capacity. This fact aside, Saudi Arabia was an early supporter of the anti-Assad rebels, providing financial, military and political support to the Sunni Islamist factions in the country with a subtext of a call for unity. It has played an active role in Syria, which it sees as a battlefield where it can continue its proxy war against Iran. Saudi Arabia, which is currently pursuing a more restrained policy, has made and received diplomatic efforts to reinstate Syria in the Arab League and has begun to establish more stable relations with Iran.

In 2014, Greek Catholic Patriarch Gregorios III Laham asserted that about 450,000 Syrian Christians have been displaced due to the fighting.

The unrest in Syria coincided with a severe drought from 2006 to 2011, leading to crop failures, rising food costs, and a significant migration of agricultural families to urban areas. The drought, linked to human-induced global warming, has been contested, and insufficient water supply remains a critical issue in the ongoing civil conflict.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of 2022, Syria has 6.2 million internally displaced persons. Of the total, 2.5 million are minors. In 2017, at least 1.8 million individuals were relocated, with many experiencing displacements for the second or third time.

Numerous boys are being detained by ISIS. On 25 January 2022, The New York Times reported that the conflict regarding a prison in northeastern Syria has highlighted the situation of thousands of foreign children, who were taken to Syria by

their parents to join the Islamic State caliphate and have been incarcerated for three years in camps and prisons in the area, neglected by their countries of origin.

An estimated 40,000 foreign nationals, including minors, travelled to Syria to combat for the caliphate or to serve its interests. Numerous individuals had accompanied their young children. Additional children were also born there. Following ISIS's loss of its final enclave in Syria, Baghuz, three years ago, surviving women and young children were confined in camps, while suspected militants and boys, some as young as ten, were incarcerated.

Moreover, when reaching adolescence, the boys in the camps are typically relocated to Hasaka's Sinaa prison, where they are confined in cramped cells devoid of sunlight. Prison guards in the vicinity report a deficiency in food and medical care. Upon reaching the age of 18, the lads are transferred to the general prison population, where injured ISIS members are accommodated three to a bed.

The conflict's expansion throughout Syria has led to a surge in criminal activity, as hostilities have precipitated the collapse of the civilian infrastructure, resulting in the cessation of operations at numerous police stations. The incidence of theft escalated, with perpetrators pillaging residences and establishments. The incidence of kidnappings has also escalated. Rebel combatants were observed appropriating vehicles and, in one case, vandalizing a restaurant in Aleppo where Syrian military had been spotted dining.

Local National Defence Forces leaders frequently participated in war profiteering via protection rackets, looting, and organized crime. Members of the NDF have been implicated in several killings, robberies, thefts, kidnappings, and extortions

in government-controlled regions of Syria since the organization's inception in 2013, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

Both the government and the opposition have utilized criminal networks during the conflict. Confronted with international sanctions, the Syrian government depended on criminal organizations to facilitate the smuggling of products and currency across its borders. The economic decline resulting from the conflict and sanctions also resulted in reduced wages for Shabiha members. Consequently, several Shabiha members commenced the appropriation of civilian assets and participated in abductions. Insurgent factions occasionally depend on illicit networks to acquire armaments and provisions. The prices of black-market weapons in countries near Syria have markedly risen since the onset of the crisis. To procure funding for armament acquisition, certain rebel factions have resorted to extortion, theft, and abduction.

Syria has emerged as the primary site for the production of Captagon, an illicit amphetamine. Pharmaceuticals produced in Syria have traversed the Gulf, Jordan, and Europe, although they have occasionally been stopped. In January 2022, a Jordanian army officer was fatally shot, and three military soldiers were injured following a confrontation between drug traffickers and the army. The Jordanian military reported that it intercepted and downed a drone in 2021, which was employed for the illicit transportation of a significant quantity of narcotics across the Jordanian frontier.

The World Health Organization has shown that 35% of the nation's hospitals are non-operational. Hostilities hinder the execution of standard immunization initiatives. The displaced migrants may also provide a disease risk to

the countries to which they have sought asylum. From April 2013 until April 2018, the Siege of Eastern Ghouta isolated four hundred thousand inhabitants, leading to severe malnutrition among children, as reported by United Nations Special Advisor Jan Egeland, who called for medical evacuations from the area. Fifty-five thousand inhabitants are confined in the Rukban refugee camp, situated between Syria and Jordan, where access to humanitarian aid is severely impeded by the hostile desert environment. Humanitarian assistance enters the camp intermittently, occasionally requiring three months between deliveries.

Previously uncommon infectious diseases have proliferated in rebel-controlled regions due to inadequate sanitation and declining living conditions. The illnesses have predominantly impacted youngsters. These encompass measles, typhoid, hepatitis, dysentery, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, and the disfiguring dermatological condition leishmaniasis. Poliomyelitis, which is both contagious and debilitating, is of significant concern. By late 2013, physicians and global public health organizations had documented over 90 instances. Government critics assert that, prior to the revolt, it exacerbated the proliferation of sickness by deliberately limiting access to vaccinations, sanitation, and clean water in regions deemed politically unfavourable.

In June 2020, the United Nations stated that after almost nine years of conflict, Syria was descending into a more profound catastrophe and economic decline due to the COVID-19 epidemic. As of 26 June, there were 248 confirmed COVID-19 cases, resulting in nine fatalities. Import restrictions on medical supplies, constrained access to key equipment, diminished external help, and persistent assaults on medical facilities have jeopardized Syria's health infrastructure, rendering

it incapable of addressing the demands of its populace. Syrian villages were experiencing unparalleled levels of hunger crisis.

In September 2022, the UN envoy in Syria announced that multiple districts in the country were experiencing a cholera outbreak. UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Imran Riza urged an immediate action to mitigate the spread, stressing that it represents "a significant threat to the population in Syria". The outbreak was associated with the utilization of contaminated water for agricultural purposes and the dependence of individuals on dangerous water sources.

4.2.2. European Countries

European nations, particularly those within the EU, have focused on economic, sociological, and political concerns. Debates have arisen regarding incidents in Syria, reflecting similar issues across Europe. Following the Syrian Civil War, Europe experienced a significant influx of migrants from the region, entering through borders such as Türkiye, Russia, and the Mediterranean. This wave of migration has had diverse impacts across Europe. Socio-political observations indicate a clear correlation between the rise of Islamophobia, anti-migrant sentiments, and the increasing influence of right-wing parties in Europe, which can be linked to both the direct and indirect effects stemming from the Syrian Civil War.

4.2.2.1. Southern and Eastern Europe

Eastern and Southern European nations are primarily concerned with becoming a stopover on the illicit migrant route for individuals attempting to reach European soil. These countries, particularly Italy and Greece, not only serve as transit points for migrants but also bear the political and economic burdens associated with

the Syrian refugee crisis. In 2015, a refugee boat pushback incident on the Aegean coast involving Greek border patrol boats heightened tensions in global politics.

The tragic image of 3-year-old Aylan Kurdi's lifeless body washed ashore in Bodrum raised serious questions about Greece's compliance with international law and the EU's human rights standards. In response to the migrant influx, European nations attempted to strengthen these countries' capacities to handle the crisis by implementing measures in collaboration with EU neighbouring nations. This situation significantly impacted the domestic politics of these countries, leading to a rise in popularity for right-wing parties across Southern and Eastern Europe.

In Italy, far-right candidate Giorgia Meloni effectively employed anti-immigrant rhetoric to appeal to voters through a nationalist perspective. Years after the civil war, these nations began to shape their relations with Türkiye and Middle Eastern countries based on the ongoing migrant crisis. They established agreements such as the 2016 Türkiye-Syria migrant deal, and events like the 2020 Idlib migrant crisis further strained Türkiye-Greece relations. As a result, the foreign policies of Southern and Eastern Europe have been defined by the EU's overarching concerns regarding migration.

4.2.2.2. Western and Northern Europe

European nations' relations with the Assad regime in Syria were primarily shaped by the interests of Western European countries and NATO member states, focusing on maintaining the status quo. The United States and the European Union supported similar actors and shared political and economic interests in Syria, opposing the Ba'athist Assad regime, which was aligned with the Eastern bloc. The primary concerns of Western nations included the Russian presence in the Mediterranean, the threat to Western political dominance in the Middle East and North Africa (MEA) region, and the emergence of terrorist groups that posed a threat

to the West. The instability of Assad's regime, which was unable to ensure meaningful political inclusion in Syria, contributed to these concerns.

Between 2015 and 2017, ISIS was responsible for killing 347 people in terrorist attacks in the EU, underscoring the importance of political and social inclusion for EU nations to safeguard their interests and combat terrorism. Assad's inability to maintain stability and foster ethnic and sectarian harmony contributed to the collapse of solidarity in Syria following the Arab Spring. The political failures of the Assad regime directly triggered terrorist activities within Syria, and groups like ISIS began to emerge from the region.

After the civil war, many civilians affected by the conflict sought refuge in welfare states located in Western and Northern Europe. This refugee movement led to various challenges, including rising Islamophobia, the growth of far-right movements, increased crime rates in metropolitan areas, and difficulties in cultural adaptation for refugees. In response, Western nations such as Norway, France, and the UK initiated policies in 2019 aimed at facilitating the return of Syrian refugees to their homeland.

Additionally, former German Chancellor Angela Merkel implemented integration policies to accommodate refugees, despite resistance from segments of the German workforce. However, as these policies faced challenges and mainstream politicians began to lose popularity, the economic burden exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic complicated the situation further. Subsequently, countries like Norway, the UK, and France started to implement return programs as the situation in Syria improved and conditions became more secure.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section of the Guide presents the committee-specific ethical guidelines to adhere to throughout the conference process, encompassing both committee discussions and document creation. Apart from the general rules that are valid throughout IUMUN and that bring warning procedures to the agenda when violated, the specific norms to adhere to within this committee, particularly concerning the agenda, are outlined below in a clear and sequential manner:

- Any form of factionalism, fanaticism, sectarianism, ethnic chauvinism, and racist-xenophobic rhetoric and behaviour.
- Forming confrontational coalitions in contrary of diplomatic ethics
- Attempting to manipulate any delegate, whether individually or collectively, to the degree that the committee's operations are impeded.
- Engaging in the ideological and practical support of an entity designated as a terrorist organization by the international community or any nation (in particularly SDF-PYD-YPG, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, El-Nusra etc.)
- To participate in dialogue and actions that oppose the core tenets of the United Nations, specifically the advancement and preservation of human rights and democracy.
- Participating in hate speech that targets or degrades any delegate, bloc, gender, language, religion, sect, area, ethnic origin, or class, as well as vocalizing political slogans.

It is strictly forbidden to commit or attempt any of these acts, with the presumption of immediate sanction.

6. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THE NGO'S ROLE

The issues that come to the fore in the context of international cooperation and the role of NGOs are humanitarian aid, employment counselling, legal support, data collection through sustainable field observation mechanisms and reporting, and the identification and establishment of safe zones and making the necessary optimal infrastructure investments accessible and providing the financial support required for all these under transparent and predictable market conditions.

Humanitarian assistance can be categorised as short-medium-long term requirements in terms of their urgency. Immediate needs include food, water, shelter and health services that need to be provided in refugee camps and urban areas where supply and logistics conditions are more favourable. More specific but comprehensive and medium-term requirements include mental and maternal health services, the provision of vaccines against epidemics of particular importance in the region, and the employment of trained psychologists and surgeons who have obtained special consent to work in the region for individuals and families who have suffered physical or mental trauma, especially for individuals and families with PTSD and injuries.

For long-term needs, security support may be provided as a preventive measure against the risk of abuse, exploitation and violence, particularly for women, children, the elderly, the chronically ill and persons with disabilities in terms of their risk of harm.

In the context of legal support, in accordance with international law (1951 Refugee Convention), legal support for counselling and advocacy, on an individual

basis, and on a socio–political basis, lobbying through NGOs and diplomatic channels for the countries in the region to develop asylum and resettlement policies and take action can be counted among the steps that can be taken.

Additionally, addressing the perceptual selectivity aspect of xenophobia and misinformation through awareness efforts in host countries, particularly focusing on biases against the double standards of governments and international organizations concerning the status of refugees in comparison to the vast majority of nations.

Incentives for infrastructure investments such as hospitals and schools to provide education and health services, the creation of commercial areas, the regulation of market conditions, and the provision of communication channels to prevent conflicts with the people of the migrated region through language schools, financial literacy trainings to be able to read local market conditions, and social–cultural activities are among the other steps that can be taken.

In addition, it is important to cooperate in coordination with local governments, central governments, other operating NGOs, UN agencies and international organizations in the region for immunity against the negative effects of feedback mechanisms that may be disrupted during the execution of all these activities, such as overlaps, delays, casualties that may arise from incorrect timing and location notifications.

And last but not least, making the international funds required for these activities accessible through a transparent interface open to everyone's support, providing accurate and straightforward feedback to migrants who want to return to their country of origin about the situation in the region they will return to, and

establishing communication lines to provide transportation and security support on the return route are other comprehensive methods that can be referred.

7. QUESTIONS TO BE COVERED

- What steps can be taken for the inclusive resolution of conflicts between Alawite–Sunni, Arab–Kurdish, Salafi–Sunni, Druze–Islamic, Assadist–Anti-Assadist rebels, Muslim–Christian, jihadist–jihadist (different factions) in order to establish a democratic basis in Syria?

- What measures can be taken to prevent a new wave of Alawite, Druze or Christian Arab immigration?

- Is it possible to settle the proxy wars being waged in Syria by superpowers such as Iran, Russia, the USA, Israel, Turkey and neighbouring countries through diplomatic relations, and if so, which channels are open and what are the UN's powers and responsibilities in this regard?

- At what level and in what ways can IOM expand or redirect its current work of data collection, monitoring and international humanitarian assistance?

- What kind of exploratory and regulatory cooperation can be established with host countries and local governments in Syria in the context of international law to protect the legal security of Syrians in Syria and Syrian refugees?

8. FURTHER READINGS

- https://www.e-ir.info/pdf/92044

- https://docs.iza.org/dp14023.pdf

- https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/rest/bitstreams/199290/retrieve
  https://www.academia.edu/45051525/Arab_Marxism_and_National_Liberation

- https://www.academia.edu/6251459/The_Sectarian_Narrative_A_Critical_Analysis_of_Sectarianism_in_the_Syrian_Conflict

- https://www.academia.edu/35277353/The_Class_Oriented_Rationale_Uncovering_the_Sources_of_the_Syrian_Civil_War

- https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3243886/view
  https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A3190945/view

- https://www.jstor.org/stable/4282454

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