



The Syrian Arab Republic

MAL FACT SHEET

SUMMARY

The Syrian Arab Republic borders the Mediterranean Sea, lies between Lebanon and Turkey, and is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the south. Chief of State of the interim government: President Ahmed al-Sahraa Capital: Damascus

Gov Type: presidential republic

Population: 23,865,423

History: Syria was part of the Ottoman Empire from 1516 until the empire's decline during World War I. With the Ottoman Empire's collapse, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 set the borders for Syria. In 1920, the League of Nations mandated France to govern Syria. Although the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 promised Syrian independence, it was never implemented. In 1943, elections were held, and Shukri al-Quwatli became Syria's first president, though full independence wasn't until April 17, 1946. The post-independence period began with a series of military coups in 1949. Between 1958 and 1961, Syria briefly merged with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic, but dissolved following a Syrian coup. In 1963, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party seized power, but struggled with tensions between progressives and nationalists in the coalition. In 1970, nationalist Hafez al-Assad took control of the party. Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad brutally ruled Syria from 1970 to December 8th 2024, when opposition forces took control of the capital, Damascus.

GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The Republic of Tunisia is about 187,437 sq km in total area and has 1,550 sq km of water and has 193 km of coastline.

The climate is mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers and mild, rainy winters along coast; cold weather with snow periodically in Damascus. The terrain is mostly desert plateau with narrow coastal plains and mountains in west.

Natural resources include petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, and hydropower

Executive Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DEMOGRAPHICS

Noun: Syrian(s)

Adjective: Syrian

Ethnic Groups: Arab ~50%, Alawite ~15%, Kurd ~10%, Levantine ~10%, other ~15% (includes Druze, Ismaili, Imami, Nusairi, Assyrian, Turkoman, Armenian)

Religion: Muslim 87% (official; includes Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%), Christian 10% (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian), Druze 3% (note: the Christian population may be considerably smaller as a result of Christians fleeing the country during the ongoing civil war)

Literacy: 86.4% (Male 91.7%, Female 81%)

Population growth is at 1.67%

ECONOMY AND GDP

Syria's economy is described as a low-income Middle Eastern economy; prior infrastructure and economy devastated by 11-year civil war; ongoing US sanctions; sporadic trans-migration during conflict; currently being supported by World Bank trust fund; ongoing hyperinflation

Real GDP (Purchasing Power Parity): \$107 billion (2022), \$99 billion (2021), \$79 billion (2020)

Real GDP Growth Rate: 0.7% (2022), 1.9% (2021), -0.7% (2020)

Real GDP Per Capita: \$4772.5 (2024)

GDP (Official Exchange Rate): \$8.97 billion (2021)

Inflation Rate (Consumer Prices): 28.1% (2017), 47.3% (2016)

GDP - Composition: agriculture: 20% (2017), industry: 19.5% (2017), services: 60.8% (2017)

Unemployment Rate: 13.81% (2022), 15.08% (2021), 15.28% (2020)

Youth Unemployment: 26.2% (2021)

MAIN POLITICAL CONTENTIONS

The Assad family has ruled Syria since 1970, when Hafez al-Assad seized power in a coup. His son, Bashar al-Assad, took over in 2000. The Assad family belongs to the Alawite sect, a minority in Syria, which has led to tensions with the Sunni majority and other minority groups. Syria is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Christians, Druze, and others.

Pro-democracy protests erupted in 2011 as part of the Arab Spring, demanding political reforms and the end of Assad's rule. The regime's violent crackdown on protesters led to a civil war. The civil war has seen various factions vying for control. The conflict has caused a massive humanitarian crisis, with hundreds of thousands killed, millions displaced, and widespread destruction of infrastructure. Various non-state actors, including the Islamic State, have utilized the unrest and power vacuum during the civil war to seize control over parts of Syria. Additionally, many foreign actors, including Iran and Hezbollah, backed the Assad regime, and Russia has been accused of committing war crimes in the region alongside Assad's forces.

In November 2024, opposition forces mounted a strong offensive campaign in the governorate of Idlib, east of Aleppo. Three days later, the opposition took control of the fiercely contested and second-largest city, Aleppo. As these opposition groups, alongside Turkish-backed forces, took control of Hama and Homs and advanced towards the South, members of al-Assad's military and police force abandoned their weapons and fled their posts. With a weakened Iran and Russia struggling in Ukraine, al-Assad's weaknesses showed. On December 8, 2024, al-Sharaa and his rebel forces took control of Damascus, and he currently leads the interim government and plans to transition to a democratic government.

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