



**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** The Situation in Syria

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## **Introduction**

Despite the fact that the strongholds of the Islamic State are almost completely destroyed, and a peaceful dialogue has been established between Russia, Turkey and Iran, the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic still remains tense. For 8 years, life in the country cannot return to a peaceful course: the terrorist activities of the various movements are still at an active stage, millions of Syrians are outside their homeland and millions more are deprived of their homes, human rights are violated from all sides, sustainable peace agreements are still impossible to achieve. Although the internal circumstances gave rise to dissatisfaction of the population with the current situation in the country, it is obvious that foreign economic, political and even military interference also aggravate the situation. Ultimately, the Syrian problem has a set of problems that directly or indirectly affect the situation not only in the middle East region, but throughout the world. The existing disagreements over Syria's political future and the desire of each participating power to advance its own interests are now uncompromising, forcing the international community to develop complex measures that are characterized by their low efficiency.

## **Definition of key terms**

Al-Qaeda - a militant Sunni Islamist multi-national terroristic organization founded by Osama bin Laden in 1988 and since that time has mounted attacks on civilian and military targets in various countries, including the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings, the September 11 attacks, and the 2002 Bali bombings.

Proxy war – an armed conflict between two states or non-state actors which act on the instigation or on behalf of other parties that are not directly involved in the hostilities. In

order for a conflict to be considered a proxy war, there must be a direct, long-term relationship between external actors and the belligerents involved.

Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party – a political party founded in Syria. The party espoused Ba'athism, which is an ideology mixing Arab nationalist, pan-Arabism, Arab socialist, and anti-imperialist interests. Ba'athism calls for unification of the Arab world into a single state.

Jihad – an Arabic word which literally means *striving* or *struggling*, especially with a praiseworthy aim. It can have many shades of meaning in an Islamic context, such as struggle against one's evil inclinations, an exertion to convert unbelievers, or efforts toward the moral betterment of society, though it is most frequently associated with war. The term has gained additional attention in recent decades through its use by terrorist groups.

### **Background information**

Talking about the situation in Syria, it would be correct to say about the latest events that occurred in 2018-2019. However, for a more detailed understanding, it is necessary to consider the causes and the initial course of events in the Syrian Arab Republic.

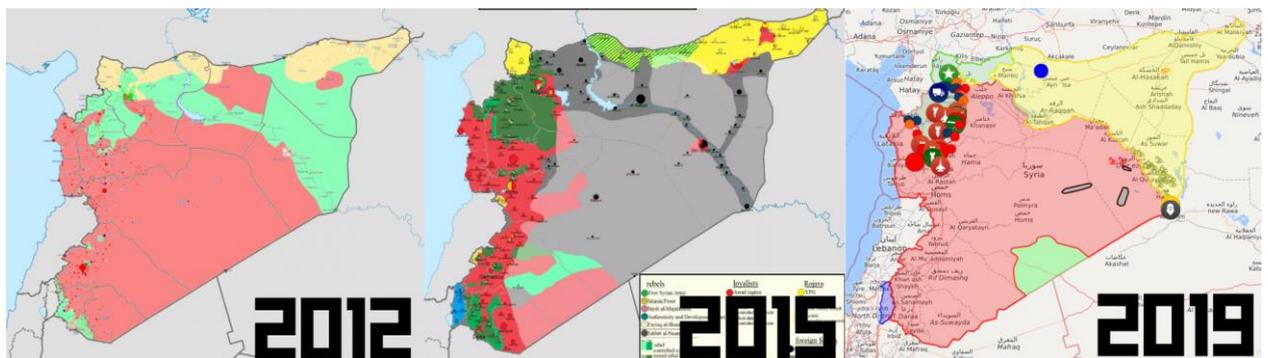
Syria, being a closed authoritarian state with a strictly centralized system, has been ruled by the Alawite family of Assad for almost 50 years. On this basis, most of the state posts in Syria are occupied by citizens from the Alawite communities and Christians, because of the secularity of the Syrian regime. At the same time, for the Sunni majority, movement on social elevators is limited, which, accordingly, has repeatedly provoked outbreaks of violence and discontent on religious grounds and contributed to the radicalization of Sunnis towards Shiites, to which according to Iranian policy alawites are also included.

It is important to mention that the Baath party is the dominant and monopolizing political sphere of the country. As Baath represents primarily the position of Arab nationalism in conjunction with socialism, in the Syrian Arab Republic under the rule of Assads before the civil war there was unofficial violation of the rights of the Kurds and the Syrian Turkomans.

In the same reasons can be added crop failure and drought in Eastern Syria, forcing many Syrians to migrate to the Western fertile areas on the Mediterranean coast, which gave rise to housing problems.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong not to mention the interference of some foreign powers, dissatisfied with the Assad regime since the confrontations in Lebanon and its desire to pursue unfavorable for them economic policy.

Anyway, in terms of the Arab spring in 2011, a Civil war broke out in Syria, during which the country was initially divided into territories under the control of the opposition and the government, and then in the territories under the control of the government, Pro-Turkish opposition, independent jihadists from HTS, ISIS and Kurdish separatists.



**Black – ISIS**

**Red – Syrian Government, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah**

**Green – Syrian Army National, Turkey, Hayat Tahrir Al Sham**

**Yellow – Syrian Democratic Forces, YPG, PYD, PKK, USA, France**

Speaking of the Syrian war, the territory is not only a zone of confrontations between Russia and the United States, Shiism and Sunnism, also the Syrian war is an integral part of the proxy-war between Israel and Iran. Considering the events of this war from April 2018 to the present day, in order to cover the latest processes, it is important to highlight the operation «House of Cards» on May 2018 in the Iranian-Israeli confrontation, during which, the Israeli air force destroyed a number of Air defense systems of Syria and military facilities of the Iranian Army. In response, Iran fired 20 missiles towards the Golan heights-Syrian territory occupied by the Israel Defense Forces. Touching upon the Israeli issue, relations between Israel and Russia have developed in a negative way as a result of air strikes on Syria, during which the Syrian s-200 anti-aircraft missile system destroyed a Russian reconnaissance aircraft. In recent times, various negotiations are held between Russia and Israel on the creation of a demilitarized zone in the Golan heights, where Iranian troops will not be allowed.

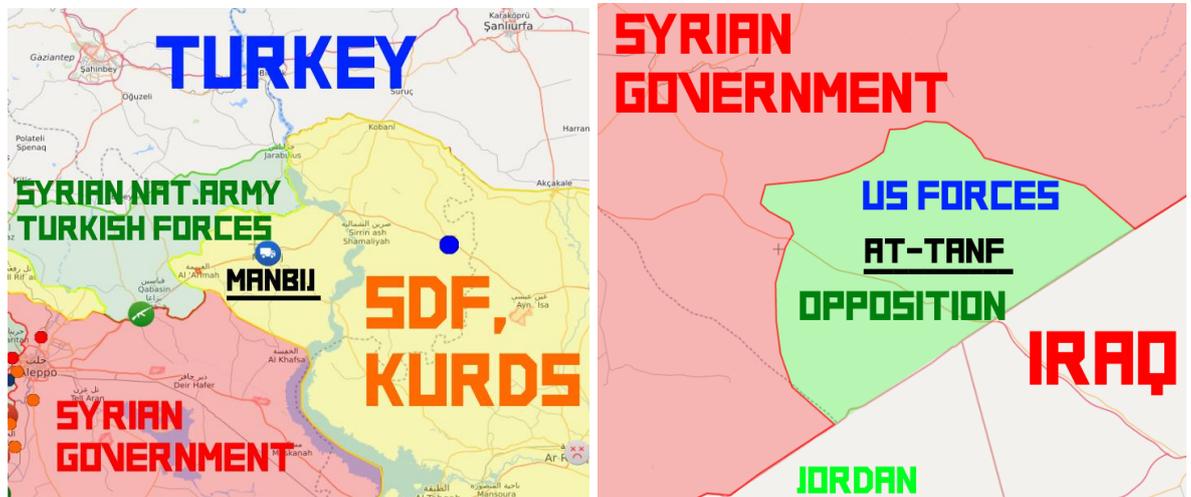


The most important part of the Syrian agenda is the Idlib issue, or rather the situation in the Idlib demilitarized zone. Turkey is interested in the preservation of Idlib under the control of the opposition, as an important region for its own military, logistics and political purposes (since Idlib is now the center of «green» resistance) seeks to prevent the offensive of the Syrian Arab Army in the region. During a series of negotiations between official Moscow, Ankara and Tehran, it was agreed that Turkey takes responsibility for disarmament and withdrawal from the line of demarcation of opposition forces. Although Turkey managed to withdraw the moderate opposition, forming from it the Syrian National Army, jihadist army “Hayat Tahrir Ash Sham” (which is supposed to be the part of Al-Qaeda) refused to follow the agreements and took control over the whole Idlib region on January 2019, what creates an awkward situation for Turkish diplomats in negotiations with Pro-government counterparts.

The world community was also stirred up by Trump's statements about the beginning of the process of the withdrawal of American troops from Syria, supporting Kurdish left-wing radical groups in the fight against the Islamic State. In terms of these news, the Turkish military command considered it necessary to launch a third operation against Kurdish forces (YPG/SDF) in Northern Syria, representing the danger for Turkey with terrorist acts.

Despite the increased preparations for this operation in Turkish Armed Forces, the Syrian government and the United States at the same time declare the inadmissibility of the Turkish military actions in the north of the country, in particular in Manbij, and call it a violation of sovereignty and an act of violence. In turn, Turkey refers to the adherence to the Adana agreements of 1998, allowing Turkish troops to conduct military operations against terrorists in Syria.

Nevertheless, American troops have not yet left the Syrian province of At-Tanf, where there is a large camp for refugees Rukban, where Russian humanitarian aid is not allowed, and inside human trafficking is flourishing.



Separately, I would like to highlight the fighting for the last piece of land of the Islamic state in the village of Baguz near the Euphrates river, where according to various sources continue to resist about 100-150 terrorists. A critical problem is the presence of women and children in this territory, the fate of which will be considered in post-war Syria is uncertain. For comparison, in Iraq, the wives of terrorists from the Islamic state are sentenced to death, while Iraqi officials have not any thoughts about the future of their children that will become orphans soon.

## Major countries and organizations involved

### *State opponents*

- Syria
- Iraq (conducts shelling of terrorists on the Syrian-Iraqi border)
- Iran (supports the Assad regime, are funding the Shia militias, are involved in a proxy war with Israel)
- NATO Members (inflict air strikes on ISIS targets, support Kurdish armed groups)
- Russia (inflicts air strikes on ISIS and jihadists, supports the Assad regime, participates in the development of a peaceful settlement)
- Turkey (fights against ISIS and SDF, supports moderate opposition, participates in the development of a peaceful settlement)
- Israel (inflicts air strikes on Syrian Arab Army and Iranian Forces, used to support Syrian opposition)

- League of Arab States (used to support Syrian opposition, inflicts air strikes on ISIS, restores relationships with Assad)
- the USA (inflicts air-strikes against ISIS and Syrian Arab Army, supports SDF)

#### *Non-state opponents*

- Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS) (jihadist organization, controlling Idlib, supposed to be a part of Al-Qaeda, doesn't recognize any agreements)
- Syrian National Army (Turkish-backed militants, mainly moderate islamists, nationalists and neo-ottomanists)
- Syrian Democratic Forces (in alliance with YPG, PYD, PKK) (American-backed troops, mainly left-wing Kurdish forces, fight for independence or autonomy)
- Hezbollah (Lebanese Shia military organization, fights against Israel, Syrian opposition and for Assad)
- ISIS

#### **UN resolutions and relevant treaties**

*The resolution 2332*, adopted by UNSC on 21st of December 2016, renews the authorization for cross-border air delivery in Syria until 10 January 2018.

*The resolution 2336*, adopted by UNSC on 31st of December 2016, calls on all the parties to allow humanitarian agencies rapid, safe and unhindered access throughout Syria

*Adana agreements* - agreements between Turkey and Syria reached in 1998 that obliged Syria to destroy PKK (Kurdish Labor Party) camps and gave Turkey right to conduct operations against Kurdish forces in the North of Syria.

*The resolution 2118*, adopted by UNSC on 27th of September 2013, obliged Syria to destroy its chemical weapons arsenal.

#### **Previous attempts to solve the problem**

In the course of the Syrian war, various members of the UN were put forward a variety of plans and options for resolving the Syrian crisis. One of the first plan was formulated by Kofi Annan, which was the immediate establishment of a ceasefire in Syria in 2012 and the introduction of a monitoring humanitarian mission in the country, but the fragility of the ceasefire led to the failure of the plan. Various talks held between the

government and the opposition in Geneva with the support of a number of other States also did not have much effect in trying to discuss the future of post-war Syria. The American leadership put forward various proposals for the creation of a no-fly zone over Syria or the federalization of Syria, but none of the plans were supported by Russia, Turkey and Iran.

The most promising format of the settlement is «the Astana trio», consisting of Russia, Turkey and Iran, which have already made progress in establishing relative peace in the Idlib zone and concluding truces between cities and villages. A number of humanitarian actions are carried out by Russian, Turkish and Arab-state organizations for the return of refugees and the restoration of cities.

### **Possible solutions**

At the moment, the democratization of the political regime in Syria can be achieved only if diplomatic relations with the legitimate government are restored, by lifting various sanctions and embargoes against Syria. In turn, the future of Syria should be ensured by the granting of equal rights to all faiths and peoples and the creation of a coalition government representing the interests of various political and social movements in the country. An important factor is the withdrawal of foreign troops and armed groups in Syria without an official request of the legitimate Syrian government.

### **Useful links**

<http://www.mod.gov.sy>

<https://www.cnnturk.com>

<http://militarymaps.info>

<http://southfront.org>

<http://syria.liveuamap.com>

<https://www.counterextremism.com>

<https://www.defense.gov/OIR>

<http://aa.com.tr/en>

<https://arabic.rt.com>