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**Current Event Journal 2.1**

**Syria: The story of the conflict**

12 March 2015 *Produced by Lucy Rodgers, David Gritten, James Offer and Patrick Asare*

**More than 200,000 Syrians have lost their lives in four years of armed conflict, which began with anti-government protests before escalating into a full-scale civil war. More than 11 million others have been forced from their homes as forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad and those opposed to his rule battle each other - as well as jihadist militants from Islamic State. This is the story of the civil war so far.**

**1. Uprising turns violent**

Pro-democracy protests erupted in March 2011 in the southern city of Deraa after the arrest and torture of some teenagers who painted revolutionary slogans on a school wall. After security forces [opened fire on demonstrators](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12791738), killing several, more took to the streets.

The unrest triggered nationwide protests demanding President Assad's resignation. The government's use of force to crush the dissent merely hardened the protesters' resolve. By July 2011, [hundreds of thousands were taking to the streets across the country.](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10338256)

**2. Descent into civil war**

Violence escalated and the country descended into civil war as rebel brigades were formed to battle government forces for control of cities, towns and the countryside. Fighting reached the capital Damascus and second city of Aleppo in 2012.

By June 2013, the UN said [90,000 people had been killed in the conflict](https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/HRDAG-Updated-SY-report.pdf). However, by August 2014 that figure had more than [doubled to 191,000](https://hrdag.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/HRDAG-SY-UpdatedReportAug2014.pdf) - and continued to climb to 220,000 by March 2015, according to activists and the UN.

**3. War crimes**

Government and rebel forces have also been accused by investigators of using civilian suffering, such as blocking access to food, water and health services, as a method war.

Islamic State has also been accused by the UN of waging a campaign of terror in northern and eastern Syria. It has inflicted severe punishments on those who transgress or refuse to accept its rule, including hundreds of public executions and amputations. Its fighters have also carried out mass killings of rival armed groups, members of the security forces and religious minorities, and beheaded hostages, including several Westerners.

**4. Humanitarian crisis**

Almost 7.6 million Syrians have been internally displaced within the country, bringing the total number forced to flee their homes to more than 11 million since the start of the conflict, most of them women and children.

Neighbouring countries have borne the brunt of the refugee crisis, with Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey struggling to accommodate the flood of new arrivals. The exodus accelerated dramatically in 2013, as conditions in Syria deteriorated.

**5. Rebels and the rise of the jihadists**

The armed rebellion has evolved significantly since its inception. Secular moderates are now outnumbered by Islamists and jihadists, whose brutal tactics have caused widespread concern and triggered rebel infighting.

Capitalizing on the chaos in the region, [Islamic State (IS)](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29052144) - the extremist group that grew out of al-Qaeda in Iraq - has taken control of huge swathes of territory across northern and eastern Syria, as well as neighbouring Iraq.

**6. Peace efforts**

With neither side able to inflict a decisive defeat on the other, the international community long ago concluded that only a political solution could end the conflict in Syria. organization's long-term strategic objective remains a [political solution based on the Geneva Communique](http://www.un.org/sg/statements/index.asp?nid=8120). The UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura has also [proposed establishing a series of "freeze zones"](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-29999157), where local ceasefires would be negotiated to allow aid deliveries in besieged areas.

**7. Proxy war**

The Sunni-dominated opposition has, meanwhile, attracted varying degrees of support from its main backers - Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Arab states along with the US, UK and France.

The US is now arming a 5,000-strong force of "moderate" rebels to take the fight to IS on the ground in Syria, and its aircraft provide significant support to Kurdish militia seeking to defend three autonomous enclaves in the country's north.

**Answer the following questions using the article.**

1. Who is fighting in this civil war? The rise of which group has added further dimension?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
2. What is civilian suffering, and why would a government use it in war?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
3. Why have people fled Syria? Who and how many have relocated, to where?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
4. What did the international community decide would end the conflict in Syria? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
5. How is the US aiding the civil war in Syria?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_