



**Committee of United Nations
General Assembly
Topic A: International
actions to reduce the basic
needs insecurity in Syria**

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Introduction

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was established in 1945 by the Charter of the United Nations. It is the main policy organ in the organization. The committee counts with a multilateral discussion forum to cover the entire spectrum of international issues where the 193 member States of the United Nations have equal votes. The General Assembly meets annually at the United Nations Headquarters in New York; it is also part of critical decision-making, such as approving a budget, electing non-permanent members of the Security Council, and designating the Secretary-General based on the recommendation of the Security Council. Its primary purpose is to make coherent suggestions and recommendations to States regarding international matters. (United Nations, 2024, par. 1)

Poverty is defined by Britannica (2024) as “the state of one who lacks a usual or socially acceptable amount of economic resources or material possessions”; however, it is also described that it exists “when people lack the means to satisfy their basic needs”. In 1976, the International Labor Organization (ILO) stated that basic needs refer to five

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key elements: “*food*”, “*clothing*”, “*housing*”, “*education*”, and “*public transportation*” (Emmerji, n.d). The aggravating factors of poverty include inadequate access to water and nutrition, educational crisis, health insecurity, and social instability; these factors are essential regarding human well-being and the right to a dignified life (InterAction, 2020).

A humanitarian crisis is an incident that threatens basic human needs, putting a community's health, security, and welfare at risk. Different humanitarian crises can be divided into Natural Disasters, such as earthquakes, tsunamis, tornados, and hurricanes. Human-caused crises, like industrial and transportation accidents, pollution, and environmental degradation. More complex crises also comprise substantial violence, casualties, and population displacement. (Humanitarian Coalition, n.d).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are 17 goals adopted by the United Nations Member States in 2015. These goals aim to achieve peace, prosperity, and well-being for humanity (United Nations, n.d.). Still, efforts for improvement are needed since, according to Iberdrola (n.d.) in 2019, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provided a warning that 168 million people would be in desperate need of humanitarian assistance in the following year. The reasons behind this were extended periods of conflict, decreasing economies, and other compromising events.

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On April 17, 1946, the Republic of Syria gained independence after the last French troops retreated (University of Central Arkansas, n.d). Later, the country adopted a unitary multiparty republic with one legislative house. Since taking control in 1970, the government has been under the leadership of Hafez al-Assad. His main goals as president were to build up the Syrian military and establish the country as a leader of the Arab world; al-Assad believed that using extreme force and violence would be an efficient way to achieve this. After Hafez al-Assad passed away in 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad took over his duties as president (Hamidé et al., 2024, par. 13).

Bashar al-Assad continued the authoritarian government his father had begun, reacting with brutality against the suspected opposers of his regime, employing surveillance to control the population and censoring information, all manipulated by the government. Daoudy, in the RUSI (2022), assures that all these factors angered the Syrian population; however, the issue was aggravated when, due to climate change, Syria was affected by droughts from 2006 until 2010. Furthermore, the president cut the fuel and food subsidies despite the droughts, and due to the poor management of water resources, the lives of many Syrians were destabilized (PNAS, 2015).

By the end of 2010, anti-government protests called Arab Springs spread through countries like Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, reaching Syria. These protests wanted

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to achieve the installation of a democratic regime. However, the conflict began when pacific protests against the president, Bashar al-Assad, intensified. As a result, there were many casualties, and people were imprisoned; this started a Civil-Military Conflict between the Syrian government and rebel groups, increasing the need for humanitarian aid. “Of a total population of 21 million, 16.7 million Syrians require humanitarian assistance” (Concern Worldwide, 2024). The increase in violence and poverty in the country caused the displacement of 12 million people, creating the inevitable fall of the country into crisis (UNHCR, 2024, par. 1).

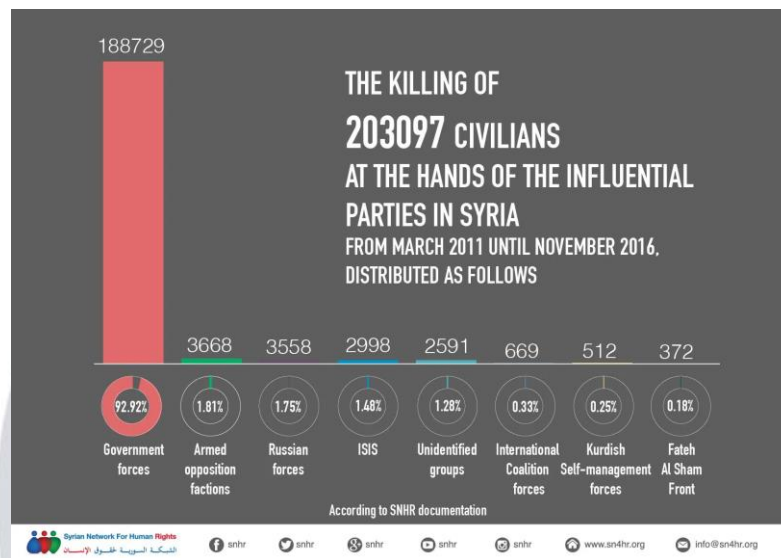
It has been thirteen years since the start of the humanitarian crisis in Syria (*Concern Worldwide*, n.d.); until this day, the country has struggled to maintain the basic needs sufficient for its population. According to UNICEF (2023), “Around 90 percent of families in the country live in poverty”. As a consequence of poverty, access to education, transportation, appropriate nutrition, clean water, safe shelter and equipment for extreme weather conditions, and a secure environment are all compromised, leading to dangerous living conditions.

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Figure 1. Deaths of Syrian Civilians at the Hands of Influential Parties between March 2011 and November 2016



(Syrian Network for Human Rights, 2016)

Concern Worldwide (2022) states that humanitarian aid is to give some type of sustenance or support to decrease distress in moments of crisis, improve the quality of life, and satisfy the needs of the people at risk. “The objectives of humanitarian action are to save lives, alleviate suffering, and uphold human dignity” (UNHCR, 2024). To provide humanitarian aid in the most efficient way possible, international organizations analyze the situation of a country, determine the crisis severity by measuring the lack of

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stability in human needs, and coordinate an assessment of resources to make a detailed plan (EMM2, 2018). Iberdrola (n.d.) stated that the military conflict in Syria is “the largest refugee crisis in the world.”

Depending on the level of emergency that affects a large population and how it threatens their basic needs is what determines if a humanitarian crisis is severe. Some factors that contribute to the severity include violence, climate shocks, inequalities, and the extent of displacement. Various organizations are responsible for covering human needs to resolve this crisis. Governments and governmental organizations, like the Coalition on Human Needs, are alliances of national organizations working together to cover human needs. Non-governmental organizations, such as the UN, UNHCR, UNICEF, and UNDP are involved. For these organizations to succeed, they must work together and communicate effectively. Communication is a crucial tool and an essential part of every organization. Government and non-government organizations must communicate because NGOs are flexible and may offer solutions that governments cannot afford. While governments provide authority and resources, NGOs offer innovative and adaptable approaches. Therefore, communicating with government departments is vital for coordinated operations. (Ebrahimi et al., 2021)

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Human aid faces various challenges, such as insecurity and violence in the affected countries, which could endanger the lives of humanitarian workers and decrease the number of volunteers. Another issue is the lack of resources and poor organization regarding equipment, funding, and transportation (Pinto, 2023). “The United Nations documented 3,931 verified instances of denial of humanitarian access in 2022 — mostly by Government forces” (United Nations, 2024). Government restrictions such as Visa requirements and international procedures are a liability for providing humanitarian aid worldwide.

Thanks to the investigations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2024), it is known that there are 5.5 million Syrians as refugees living in neighboring countries. By 2022, there were 3.5 million immigrants living in Türkiye, 800 thousand in Lebanon, 660 thousand in Jordan, 257 thousand in Iraq, and 145 thousand in Egypt (Statista, 2022). The arrival of Syrian refugees in host communities can have both negative and positive impacts; in some countries, GDP increases due to the arrival of the new population; however, as a consequence, prices can also increase, and public services such as health, and education may be overcrowded by the rise in population. Locals could end up displaced or unemployed (World Bank Blogs, 2023). All of these factors could

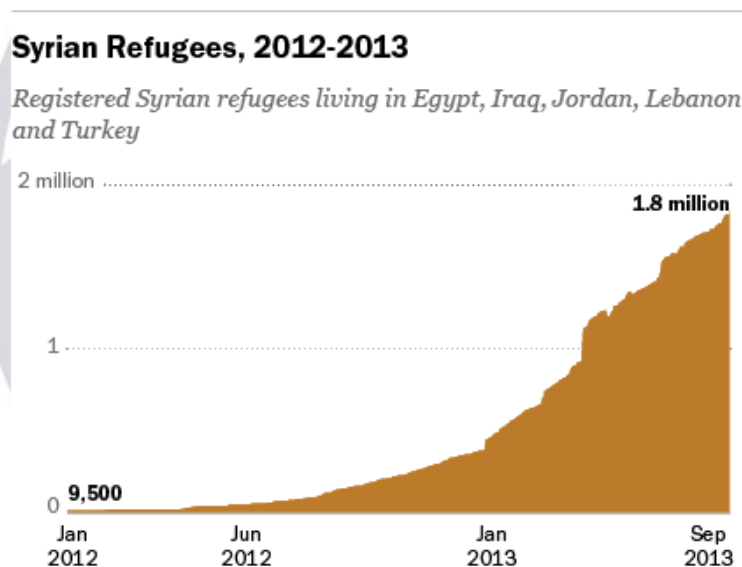
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lead to the distress of the locals. As Taxonomy (n.d) states, “Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination may arise as a result of migration”.

Figure 2. Syrian Refugees living in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey between 2012 and 2013



Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

(Pew Research Center, 2013).

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Nevertheless, the country of origin is also affected by the displacement of its population. The significant loss of people affects the labor force, negatively impacting economic growth and political stability. In addition, when a country loses human capital, the healthcare, education, and technology sectors suffer severe consequences. Families can also be disintegrated, and children can be separated from their parents (StudySmarterUK, n.d).

“Children who have been displaced are at an increased risk of sexual and physical violence, disease and malnutrition, and separation from family members” (BCN, n.d).

Cultural erosion, described by Hayley Stainton (2024), is when elements of a culture begin fading and vanish entirely over time. This phenomenon can occur for different reasons, such as changes in societal values, when one culture dominates over another, and even displacement. When people are forced to leave their country because they were put in a situation that compromised their safety and well-being, the culture of the origin country is scattered, leading to dilution.

Historical background (Syrian History)

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Syria gained its independence on April 17, 1946, from the French, who had previously invaded the country from the mandates under the League of Nations (LON). These mandates represented the legal status under which specific territories transferred the capacity of one nation over another after World War I. General Charles de Gaulle led the “Free French” movement that helped liberate Syria from the Vichy French troops, who also successfully commanded the British and “Free French” together. (University of Central Arkansas, n.d.)

In November of 1947, the General Assembly proclaimed resolution A/RES/181(II), which divided Palestine between Jews and Arab countries. Nevertheless, the Arab countries considered the distribution unfair, initiating attacks between these groups that intensified over time. (United Nations, 1947)

In May of 1948, the Arab countries attacked Palestine to create a single Arab country instead of carrying out resolution A/RES/181(II); Syria contributed to this attack with more than 5000 soldiers. However, during the attempt to conquer Israel to achieve unification, Israel presented a more robust and better military force, which allowed the country to not only defend its borders but also expand it. (United Nations, 1947)

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One of the most relevant battles over territories during this conflict was to get the capacity over Golan Heights. These Heights are made up of natural volcanic obstacles that limit the passage through the valley, and this was a method for Israel to get some sort of defense against the Syrians. In 1949, this whole conflict came to an end, with a 23% improvement in Israel's territory; meanwhile, the rest of the countries lost some of it, including Syria. (Singh, n.d.)

The unification of Syria and Egypt is known as the United Arab Republic, an attempt to become an Arab nation once again. Egypt's leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser, created this Republic, which is why this project did not work from the beginning. The Republic presented many political issues from the start of its formation due to Nasser's hesitation to share the capacity and find a suitable political regime, which led to the unlasting unification of both territories from 1958 to 1961. (Mohsen, n.d.). On March 8, 1963, Syria faced an attack imposed by The Ba'ath Party to seize the capacity of Syria. The Ba'ath Party was a Pan-Arabist political party whose idea was mostly focused on authoritarianism. Salah al-Jadid was a military ruler from Syria who was also part of the Ba'ath Party and an Alawite; he was then set in prison becoming a political prisoner who was held there for a long time; many organizations got together to fight for his liberation until Hafez al-Assad finally released him. Hafez al-Asaad was the air force commander

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and years later became the minister of defense; he was in charge of the Golan Heights fight in a conflict called the Six-Day Conflict in 1967. (The New York Times, n.d.) (Britannica, 2024)

In 1979, the United States created a sort of list that designated four countries as “sponsors of armed groups”; this list was made up of South Yemen, Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Syria was added to the first edition of the list on December 29, 1979, and has not been removed since then, being the only country stated there originally. Syria has gotten sanctions, including restrictions, imposed by Executive Order 13338. (U.S. Department of State, n.d.)

A year later, in 1980, the brother of the leader of Syria, Rifaat, conducted a military operation in June where 1,000 Islamists were executed because of a failed attempt of murder against the president. The Islamists seemed affected because of the party the leaders belonged to, making the opposition of the members of Islam to be more prominent over time against the Assad regime. The Assad regime was highly conservative, especially speaking about sects like the Sunni population who had to face joining rebel groups in Syria. (Saffour, 2024)

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Bassel al-Assad was an essential character for the population of Syria as he was the eldest son of Hafez al-Assad, which meant he was expected to be the next leader of the country, but that was not until he died on January 21, 1994, in a car crash. His younger brother, Bashar al-Assad, immediately became the eldest son of Hafez and was expected to be the next president of Syria. (BBC, n.d.)

President Hafez al-Assad died in 2000 because of a heart attack after being in capacity for 29 years (from 1971 until his death). Bashar al-Assad, his successor, was appointed on June 18 as the secretary-general of the Ba'ath Party; he was picked days later as the candidate for the presidency and won the elections on July 10th. Four months after his election, in November, Bashar freed 600 political prisoners because of the anniversary of his father in the capacity of Syria. (Britannica, 2024)

President Bashar remains in the presidency today; protests started in 2011, leading to the Syrian civil conflict that involved pro-democracy movements, associations, and other countries speaking up. The president decided to go all out with a full-blown military conflict, which caused the authorities to become more aggressive over time. On March 6th, 2011, in the city of Dar'ā, children and teenagers were painting graffiti for an antigovernment movement and got arrested because of these actions; after this incident,

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many other children started following the antigovernment movement, and protests all around the country spread that same year. (Britannica, 2024)

Current Relevance

The problem has escalated and has become a conflict between the population and the government. Since this crisis started, there has not been a resolution, producing many people who need assistance and cannot even satisfy their basic needs. More than 90% of the Syrian refugees need urgent humanitarian assistance. (The UN Refugee Agency, 2024)

Problems inside Syria affect the country, as in 2023, two earthquakes moved the grounds of Türkiye and northern Syria. The number of refugees increased as thousands of homes were destroyed and impacted 8.8 million people inside the country. Vulnerability inside these groups has become more and more relevant due to the economic insecurity that exists there nowadays, “An estimated 4.5 million displaced people inside the country. Altogether, this means a third of Syria’s population is displaced.” (Kinninmont, n.d. par. 1), Syria has been reported as the world’s largest in terms of displacement, states the UNHCR.

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Food has increased its prices due to global inflation, and 12.9 million Syrians suffer from food insecurity. Food insecurity in the country has increased due to the military conflict in Ukraine; prices increased up to 800 percent between 2019 and 2021 (World Food Programme, 2022). Fuel prices have also increased in the country. In 2013, tensions grew between other countries and Syria. The Syrian government decided to increase the price of some materials, especially oil. Octane 95 costs 14,290 pounds, while Octane 90 now costs 11,500 pounds (per liter). (Baladi, 2024)

In May 2011, the US government took additional steps to the violence of the Syrian government against Syria's community through Executive Order 13573; this order blocked the additional property of Syrian officials, President Bashir included. In August of the same year, Executive Order 13582 was launched; this one blocked the property of Syria's government, gave authority for designating individuals or entities, prohibited people from the USA to invest in Syria, such as the exportation to Syria by the US, and the importation of petroleum or petroleum products with Syrian origins. (Syria Sanctions - United States Department of State, 2024)

In 2011, the European Union (EU) also established a Sanctions regime against the Syrian government's violent repression of civilians. Additional sanction measures were introduced in 2013-2014 in response to further violence. The EU has Councils that

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lead business persons in Syria, take control of Syrian's violent repression of civilians, provide support to Syrian armed forces, benefit from the Syrian regime's organized attacks with chemical armaments, and help with the production and development of this armament, among other things; these councils have been established since 2013, the last one being implemented in 2023. Some members of the EU that imposed sanctions on Syria are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, and Italy. The Syrian Regulations imposed by the UK in 2019 were entirely carried out on 31 December 2020. Those regulations intend to ensure that sanctions related to Syria work effectively as they are based specifically on financial sanctions that intend to make Syria operate constructively. (Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2020)

In the year 2011, Canada started to impose sanctions related to chemical armament. These sanctions have evolved over the years, even enforcing the prohibition of importing and exporting different materials, objects, and economic services to and from Syria. (UN Habitat, 2022, p. 19). However, the sanctions restrict humanitarian aid; food, medical supplies, medicine, and disaster relief are all allowed (Government of Canada, 2023).

The depreciation of the local currency has led to inflation, destroying real wages and pushing more people into poverty. The increase in fuel prices in 2022 has reduced

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the purchasing capacity of vulnerable families. According to statistics published by the World Bank, Syria's gross domestic product (GDP) was reduced by 54% between 2010 and 2021. An analysis of the relationship between NTLs (nighttime lights) and economic activity indicates an 84% diminution from 2010 to 2023. (Al Jazeera, n.d.)

“Approximately 5.5 million Syrian refugees live in the five countries neighboring Syria” UNHCR (2024). These countries are Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Germany is said to be the biggest host country, with even more than 850,000 Syrian refugees. In June 2019, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) resettled refugees from Lebanon to France. Many Syrians in Lebanon struggled to access services. Syrians with medical conditions had been moved to other countries. In 2023, UNHCR supported Syrian refugees with cash in Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, and Jordan, distributing \$663.5 million in total; this helped Syrians to pay mainly for education. (UNHCR, 2024)

In 2014, the United Nations created a list of resolutions to allow organizations dedicated to humanitarian aid to cross the border to reach the central conflict in Syria and help the population in need. Years later, in December 2022, some of these groups that were helping in the Northwest Syria part decided to create agencies that had a plan and, even more importantly, a strategy for the fast improvement of the country. This plan

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counted 92 million US dollars and focused on helping the medical system. (Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 2023)

Different countries and organizations around the international community have influenced the conflict. The United States of America began a mission called Operation Inherent Resolve to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), consequently increasing the region's stability (U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, n. d.). According to the DoD OIG (Department of Defense Office of Inspector General), the USA has been aiding the country by providing food, water, and shelter, helping displaced Syrians to reintegrate into society. The country has also applied some sanctions to Syria to prevent the violence civilians are living in. Additionally, on the 7th of April 2017, there was an airstrike ordered to attack Al-Shayrat Air Base. President Donald Trump decided to act due to the previous attack on April 4th, where the Syrian dictator made use of chemical agents. After the attack, the U.S. militia started taking direct action on the conflict, marking the importance of this event (Garamone, 2017).

Another country that has taken part in this conflict is Russia; however, the Russian militia fights on the side of the Syrian government, and this country's task is to carry out air strikes and provide political support at the UN. Russia also aims to provide supplies and supplement the government's armed forces. Russia has used private military

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contractors as a part of its military in the conflict. The use of these allows Russia to have a military presence in Syria without actually using significant numbers of Russian troops, which could be sensitive politically. Although, since the start of Russia's conflict with Ukraine, Russia has deeply reduced the resources it provides to Syria. The military conflict in Ukraine has taken Russia's military resources, causing it to locate them in Ukraine and take troops and equipment away from Syria. (BBC News, 2017)

Iran has been another country that created a notable impact regarding the Military Conflict. Soon after the beginning of the Arab Spring protests, Iranian leadership showed their support for Bashar al-Assad, "Iran's involvement includes military aid, economic support, and backing proxy militias, contributing to a broader regional capacity struggle involving various international players" (Mamchii, 2023). Since aiding the Syrian government, Iran has gained influence and capacity in the Middle East; this is one of the biggest reasons for Iran's support for Bashar.

Similarly, Türkiye has intervened in the Syrian conflict by launching air attacks where armed fighters were captured and neutralized. As Al Jazeera (2024) said, the government aimed to prevent armed group attacks and increase border security and the population. The Türkiye foreign minister has spoken about their ongoing operations and

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hopes to continue their impact. “We will fight to the end against the PKK extremist groups organization within and outside our borders,” Hakan Fidan shared on X (2024).

International Actions

Several international organizations are taking different actions for humanitarian aid. Actions Against Hunger’s goal is to save the lives of families. They help people to provide for themselves. “Last year, Action Against Hunger directly supported more than 800,000 people in Syria.” (Cullinan, 2023, last paragraph). They claim to have helped since 2008. Their programs have restored vital health, nutrition supplies, water, sanitation, and hygiene services. (Cullinan, 2023)

Save the Children’s goal is to transform the lives of children around the world. In Syria, the goal is to ensure that children survive, learn, and are protected. They have been working with children in Syria since 2012. They provide lifesaving emergency support, such as recovery activities to help with essential services for children. They have approached two million Syrian children and claim to have supported “seven primary health care clinics, a maternity hospital, Child-Friendly Spaces, as well as education facilities.” (Save the Children, n.d, p.5)

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Some governmental protocols and programs seek to counteract the problem, like the U.S. Withdrawal of forces from Syria in 2019. President Donald Trump ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces from northern Syria. The exact number of troops that remained in the country is not detailed. However, the New York Times (2019) declared, "In fact, once the comings and goings are done, the total number of United States forces in Syria is expected to be about 900". The purpose of this withdrawal was to transition away from a mission centered on defeating the ISIS group to a political arrangement in northeast Syria. (The International Institute for Strategic Studies, n.d)

Canada and Netherlands case concerning the Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This case occurred on June 8, 2023, led by the International Court of Justice. "Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands filed in the Registry of the Court an Application instituting proceedings against the Syrian Arab Republic concerning alleged violations of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (hereinafter the "Convention against Torture" or the "Convention"), and that this Application was accompanied by a request for the Court to indicate provisional measures" (International Court of Justice, n.d.)

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UN Actions

The United Nations, throughout the years, has attempted to help the situation in Syria by adopting 27 different resolutions related to the issue. The Geneva Communique was an international conference held by the Security Council in 2012 to achieve stability and reconciliation in Syria. In this first conference, the Final Communique of the Action Group for Syria was written, it stated multiple measures to seal the transition of the ongoing military conflict (BBC News, 2014). “The conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic will end only when all sides are assured that there is a peaceful way towards a common future for all in the country.” (United Nations Security Council, 2012, p. 4). However, the goal was not ultimately achieved in the first meeting, so in 2014, the Geneva II Communique was called to bring the Syrian regime and the Syrian National Coalition as main participants to find a viable action plan. On February 22nd, 2014, Resolution S/RES/2139 was written with a list of commitments to follow. “Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations” (United Nations Security Council, 2014, p. 1).

In November 2018, the Security Council arranged another international meeting about Syria in Astana. A joint statement was written by the representatives of Iran,

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Russia, and Türkiye with 15 points where the members “Reaffirmed their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic and to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter;” (Representatives of Iran, Russia, & Türkiye, 2018).

The General Assembly organ has also made impactful decisions regarding the Syrian crisis. The UNGA adopted the A/RES/72/191 Resolution in 2017; one of its key elements was addressing data about the conflict but, most importantly, expressing disapproval of the violation of human rights and the continuing use of extreme violence. The Resolution also encouraged the exhortation of international negotiations to achieve a ceasefire and agree on realistic peace accords (United Nations General Assembly, 2017).

In addition, on June 29, 2023, the UNGA adopted Resolution A/77/L.79, which was incredibly impactful as it appointed a new establishment called “the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic,” also known as IIMP, according to Hevdesti (2024). The IIMP was created to clarify the fate of the people who are currently missing and support the families of survivors as well as the victims. This organization was expected to be a decisive tool when locating missing Syrians (EEAS, 2024).

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Points to Discuss

1. Context

- a. Start of the conflict
 - i. The political background of the country
 - ii. Arab Spring relation with the Syrian conflict
 - iii. Natural disasters as a factor of the conflict
- b. Consequences of the conflict
 - i. Consequences of the prolonged use of armament
 - ii. Weakening of the essential services in the country
 - iii. Forced displacement of Syrian people
 - iv. Economic consequences in countries involved

2. Development

- a. What are the challenges that impede the end of the conflict?
 - i. The economic price of reconstruction of infrastructure

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- ii. International Interest or benefits from the conflict
- iii. Assessment of war crimes committed in the conflict
- b. What are the current measures to provide essential services inside Syria?
 - i. Are actual human aid provisions enough?
 - ii. How many Syrians have access to essential services?
 - iii. Necessary measures to increase population with access to basic services
- c. International cooperation
 - i. Fulfill the basic needs of the Syrian population that have been displaced
 - ii. Provide essential services inside Syria
 - iii. Actions to ensure population stability and reduce the need for humanitarian aid

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