

HUMANITARIAN NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Millions of people in Syria have been affected by the war, and humanitarian NGOs are doing their best to help as many people as possible, providing them with things like food, water, shelter, education, medicine and emergency healthcare, clothing, and other lifesaving supplies. About 12 million people have been displaced from their homes in Syria, and some have been forced to flee to surrounding countries. Humanitarian NGOs are supporting these refugees, but they can only do so much. As of right now, their access to Syria is limited, with restrictions on humanitarian aid put in place by both the government and opposition groups. Also, places with humanitarian aid groups (especially medical facilities) have been targeted, mostly by airstrikes. Many human rights policies have been violated by many different countries, injuring and killing hundreds of people. These issues must be addressed in order to bring peace to Syria and its citizens. Overall, in order to reach the 5.5 million people in need of help in areas that are besieged or hard to reach, humanitarian NGOs need countries to allow them access to all parts of Syria safely, without being targeted by the military or air forces.

COUNTRY BACKGROUND:

OxFam

OxFam, an NGO, is focusing their efforts on rehabilitating the water infrastructure. This includes repairing wells and providing alternative power sources to operate water pumping stations during regular cuts of electricity. OxFam is currently planning to provide 1.5 million people with clean water and also working on public health promotions, solid waste management, and supporting livelihoods. They have been campaigning and advocating for an end to the fighting, and they will continue to call on all parties of the conflict to stop any arms transfers and guarantee humanitarian access and protection of civilians. OxFam is also urging other countries to take on more refugees.

UNHCR

UNHCR is a NGO that is providing cash for medicine and food, stoves and fuel for heating, insulation for tents, thermal blankets and winter clothing. They are also helping Syrians rebuild their ruined homes. So far they have helped 11,000 people do this, and they hope to more than double that number this year.

UNICEF

UNICEF focuses on assisting Syrian children and families by providing healthcare, nutrition, immunization, water and sanitation, and classes. They lead the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and nutrition sectors and the child protection sub-sector, giving immediate life-saving support as well as longer-term resilience interventions. They support health centers and mobile clinics with necessary supplies, equipment, and training for nurses/doctors. The availability of education is being strengthened by UNICEF, as well as the quality of learning. Clothing and blankets are being directly distributed to the children who need them the most. UNICEF operates through its field presence inside the Syrian Arab Republic (in Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, Qamishli and Tartous), as well as through cross-border interventions from Amman and Gaziantep.

Doctors Without Borders/MSF

Doctors Without Borders, or MSF, is one of the most well known NGOs; a decidedly deserved title, for they are responsible for supporting 23 medical facilities in Aleppo, Idlib, and Hama. MSF's work has been very helpful to those in the affected countries, as they are able to receive medical treatment for wounds or diseases that would otherwise go unchecked, as well as have a safe space for when they are injured. MSF's work has not been easy; the Syrian government has still not authorized them to work on their land, and as a result, it is very hard for them to expand and provide more extensive support to those in need; however, they still operate six hospitals in northern Syria. In addition, their medical facilities have been damaged in over 35

separate attacks, putting not only those who are wounded in danger, but also the doctors and nurses that volunteered to provide service in those areas.

Hand in Hand for Syria

Hand in Hand for Syria directly provides people in Syria with clean water, food and healthcare, as well as the opportunity to earn a living again. They are partnered with other NGOs that don't have access to Syria and deliver supplies to the hardest hit areas on their behalf. They are also starting long-term projects to allow Syrian communities to have the dignity to rebuild their homes and lives. Hand in Hand for Syria sets up refugee camps, and provides tents and other necessities such as mattresses and cooking equipment. 8 hospitals have been established in Syria, and more than 20 clinics are supported with medical supplies donated by donors and medical facilities in the UK. Emergency response units are sent into Syria, and courses to train nurses are run. Hand in Hand for Syria also supports schools, and fund salaries for staff, providing jobs and improving the local economies. They work throughout Syria, mostly focusing on the hardest-hit areas, including Idlib, Aleppo, and Hama.

International Medical Corps

The International Medical Corps focuses on providing medical assistance to Syrian refugees and refugees in surrounding countries (Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey). They are currently running primary care clinics throughout Syria in order to give basic health care (checkups, etc.) to those who are unable to afford it/get to it. In addition, the International Medical Corps also established child-friendly play spaces to help improve the extreme mental distress many young children are facing. Health care providers are also located there to assist children with mental health related problems. They are also distributing kits filled with water, sanitary necessities, and hygiene products to families in and around Syria to improve the health and safety of citizens. Lastly, the International Medical Corps are running programs specialized on gender based violence in Syria to protect and educate all individuals.

AmeriCares

Americares is an organization focused on providing emergency response, access to medicine, free clinics, and mobile clinics to both Syria and surrounding countries. Their main mission is to provide emergency response to refugees in locations where few other organizations respond to. AmeriCares also has a mobile clinic that constantly moves around and helps refugees in need of medical treatment. They run discussions to educate citizens on first-aid and public safety. Currently, AmeriCares runs major first-aid shipments to Syria, grants to help organizations with medical treatment and occasional shipments with intensive medical care (antibiotics, etc). The focus of AmeriCare is to help those in locations other organizations can't, and to educate as many families as possible on health and safety throughout Syria including basic first-aid techniques, proper sanitation, and how to get help.

Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is an NGO that is working to provide what is essentially a “normal life” to those who are in places of conflict. They strive to provide schools, shelter, and even playgrounds to those who are in need, as well as food and water. Such resources are crucial to the rebuilding of Syria post-war, for it will be difficult for the Syrian government, who already have no money, to provide complete support for its citizens in areas such as education, healthcare, and food and water. Although they have already performed amazing things in conflict zones, Mercy Corps is always in need of more volunteers, as well as donations from those more fortunate.

Preemptive Love

Preemptive love is an organization that works on Providing emergency relief for those in need. Over 29,500 victims from Aleppo have been served. More than 2,200 lifesaving operations for children. More than 1,000,000 pounds of food have been served. They help people that are in the worst situations possible. These people are usually in the most war torn parts of Syria providing a huge problem for the emergency relief workers. Every day they put their lives in serious danger in order to help those who need help the most.

World Vision

World Vision is an organization that is helping those in need all over the world. Since 2011 it has helped over 2.37 million refugees, displaced people and vulnerable host community members. Last year 1.1 million people among them 630,000 children were supported. Food assistance, emergency supplies, water and sanitation, health, education and child protection interventions reached children and families in need. They help these people get out of dangerous areas and rebuild their lives. They help ensure a secure future for those who need it all over the world. Helping create a brighter future.

CARE

Through their partners, CARE is providing lifesaving emergency assistance to people affected by the conflict in Syria, reaching 182,000. They have provided food, baby items, hygiene kits and winterization kits and other emergency supplies to families; psychological and social support to children; and equipment, medicine and support for hospital obstetric care. With their partners in Syria, CARE is also providing food assistance through the distribution of food baskets and carrying out water sanitation activities including the rehabilitation of a water treatment plant and the distribution of water purification tablets to households. CARE also states that “CARE is impartial and neutral and we do not take sides. We provide assistance based on need alone.” CARE has a website where you can donate money to the refugees then they get the money in the form of a debit card that they can use to buy hygiene, food, shelter, and household essentials.

International Red Cross

The International Red cross supplies food, blankets, water, soap, and other essentials to people caught up in the conflict. Helping people get their homes ready for winter while also helping with the psychological effects of so much violence. Worked to fix water networks and health services helping cut the risk of deadly diseases. It is incredibly difficult overwhelmingly unsuccessful to create humanitarian spaces where aids are guaranteed safety and access to

populations in need. It is also hard to create a humanitarian space without any influence from politics. There is also dispersed population in urban areas. Since there is almost no common dialogue between the refugees and most of the aids it's hard to help them.

KEY POINTS

- **Governance:**
 - In order to improve the current state of Syria, a re-connecting between the civilian and military government needs to occur because the two have become completely separated.
 - Syria needs to go back and re-enforce the constitution as many things that were stated there are not followed by many.
- **Cross Border:**
 - Syria needs to secure its borders and establish safe zones that offer/allow for protection and aid to the people.
 - If the Syrian government is not capable of providing help to the Syrians who do not want to be involved in the fighting, then the government needs to allow other countries to operate within Syrian borders to help these refugee, regardless of where the other country stands.
- **Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation:**
 - Agreements between countries need to be reached on providing citizens of Syria with humanitarian aid in order to bring them peace
 - Any countries accused of committing war crimes or violations of human rights must be put on trial to determine the severity of their crimes
- **Strategic Security:**
 - More than 400,000 government deployed troops
 - Many countries deploying or going to deploy troops in Syria
 - Large amounts of terrorist activity in Syria
- **Economic Reconstruction:**
 - Syria has made many poor economic decisions in the past

- Syria's economic status is currently incredibly poor
- The Humanitarian NGOs will be crucial to the reconstruction of the economy
- **Local Security**
 - An estimated 12 million people, nearly half of Syria's pre-war population, have been displaced.
 - An estimated 500,000 Syrians have died as a result of the conflict since it began in 2011.
 - Many cities in Syria now lack access to basic services, such as clean water; at least one-third of the capital city of Damascus, which had been relatively immune to the conflict, now lacks running water due to fighting around the city's major water source.

Governance

Prior to the crisis, the Syrian government had a semi-presidential republic system with an economy rich in diversity. With agriculture, industry and excavation, retail, and tourism, Syria ran a stable economy and solidly functioning government (Mahamid 1). The Syrian government also had a stable stock market, which has since then come crashing down. Through dealing with challenging weather increments, Syria struggled with dust storms and droughts, and most importantly, dealing with the aftermath that was left (Polk 1). The government ran an Islamic nation with various religious groups throughout. Overall, the Syrian government wasn't perfect however, they had a solid ground to stand on. Before the Syrian conflict emerged, humanitarian NGO's were of little need. Humanitarian agencies were prevalent in neighboring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan however, they became vital to Syria once the crisis began. Countries including Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, The United States, and Turkey are the main connections to the Syrian conflict. Currently, thousands of organizations are working in and around Syria to help improve the current conditions of health and safety among citizens. Corporations such as UNICEF, OxFam, CARE, UNHCR, International Red cross, and Doctors Without Borders are functioning as the primary sources of aid for Syria. All of these organizations are working in said

countries to help improve overall conditions and most have offices in multiple countries to maximize their efforts.

In order to improve Syria, I think the initial constitution is sufficient however, reforms will need to be made. To improve overall well-being and safety of citizens, reforms need to be made as well as rules stated in the constitution need to be enforced. Article 3 states that “The state shall respect all religions, and ensure the freedom to perform all the rituals” (Voltaire 1). The semi-presidential republic system, for example, is not held up to standard and in order to maintain a solid government, it should be enforced. Allowing for a balance of power between two leaders will help with control and leaders becoming tyrants. If followed, the semi-presidential system will improve the Syrian government. Before the conflict, the military and civilian government were very closely related. They connected in order to maintain peace and balance throughout the Syrian community. Currently, the two governments are very unconnected. The horrific events that have occurred in Syria remain separate from the civilian aspect of the government, in terms of keeping people safe and well. External parties are vital in resolving the conflict and resetting the government in Syria. Surrounding countries, and humanitarian aid organizations are currently working to help improve conditions in Syria. It is vital to include their help because without a stable government, Syria can’t solve this problem on their own. The crisis has evolved too much for them to be able to solve it alone. Other countries and humanitarian aid can help by providing resources to keep citizens safe and well and they can host refugees. This is so important to the success of Syria because without any resources, those residing there have nothing to live off of. It is important for surrounding countries such as The United States, Turkey, and Britain to host refugees because doing so saves many people and families from life-threatening danger. Doing this allows for families to have a second chance and slowly establish a normal life again.

Strategic Security

Throughout the whole conflict in Syria the military has been fighting and unchanging battle against the rebels. There is an estimated 400,000 troops within Syria under their commander and chief, president Bashar al-Assad. Syria's military is not really any where other

than Syria their last deployment in Lebanon, consisting of 20,000 soldiers ended in 2005 after three decades. Some of the biggest players in the conflict in Syria are Jihadist Groups, The Chemical Weapons Convention, Syrian opposition, the Free Syrian Army, the president Bashar al-Assad, The U.S., The U.K., Russia, UN Security Council, Israel, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. With groups like the UN humanitarian groups are given certain laws that they must follow that comply with global law. Also these groups work with the UN to help magnify their efforts for global support. Also many countries surrounding Syria work with groups to help with medical problems as well as the refugee problem. While these groups do work with major players like the UN. Other groups like The Free Syrian Army make things harder for the humanitarian groups making certain zones dangerous for the helpers. An estimated 27,000-31,000 foreign fighters have joined the Syrian conflict since the beginning of the war. This has prolonged the war drastically and with more coming every day there is no clear end to the conflict near.

Humanitarian groups are not as invested in the future of Syrian military and security but more in working to help civilians who have been affected by the conflict. All they care about is the safety of these people and ensuring a safe and secure future for them either in or out of Syria. A ceasefire is all that Humanitarian groups want dangerous zones would be free for the groups to move in and help the civilians. Those who desperately need help would finally get the support they need and get them away from the dangers of war. Prior to the war the borders of Syria were not very secure. There was and still is a huge problem with foreign fighters going back and forth between the two countries. Syria had no control over these groups and as a result prolonged many terrorist conflicts. Prior to the war the Syrian military was there to provide national security as well as fight in Lebanon. However there was a lack of strong leadership in the military so when the civil war broke out a strong resistance against the rebels was not adequately put up. Had there been resistance the war within Syria could have ended very quickly. One of the biggest problems for Syria's military is ISIS Providing a steady flow of rebel fighters as well as resources and weapons have given the rebels a huge boost to fight with. This is a huge problem and since much of the supplies are coming from Turkey the borders of Syria need to become secure.

In order to help Syria we must first help their military regain control either through a ceasefire or cutting of ISIS. But for now the best Humanitarian groups can do is help the displaced refugees survive.

Local Security

The Humanitarian NGOs may have different goals whether helping people get clean water, or providing shelter for people whose homes may have been destroyed in the fighting they all have a common interest in helping as many refugees as they can to survive in such terrible conditions. Our main focus is the people of Syria and making sure that they get some help in such difficult times. There is so much basic stuff that humans need to survive that these people don't have access to due to the war going on in the middle of their lives. Without organizations like us many of the civilians in Syria would not survive due to sanitation problems, lack of food, water or shelter, or health related issues. Our work is important, but sometimes it is hard to do due to lack of aids, and it is really hard to go where the Syrian population is without compromising the safety of our volunteers. Even so we try our best to help the innocent victims of the Syrian civil war.

The most important issues around the Syrian Civil war for the Humanitarian NGOs revolve around the people. An estimated 12 million people, nearly half of Syria's pre-war population, have been displaced. An estimated 500,000 Syrians have died as a result of the conflict since it began in 2011. Many cities in Syria now lack access to basic services, such as clean water; at least one-third of the capital city of Damascus, which had been relatively immune to the conflict, now lacks running water due to fighting around the city's major water source. And the life expectancy for Syrians has dropped by an average of twenty years, and infant mortality has increased by ten per cent; poverty and malnutrition are rife throughout the country. These problems are not surprising due to the fact that the Government is not focusing on its people because it is too busy fighting the groups opposing it.

Some of the NGOs fighting for the Syrian population are CARE and the International Red Cross. Through their partners, CARE is providing lifesaving emergency assistance to people affected by the conflict in Syria, reaching 182,000. They have provided food, baby items,

hygiene kits and winterization kits and other emergency supplies to families; psychological and social support to children; and equipment, medicine and support for hospital obstetric care. With their partners in Syria, CARE is also providing food assistance through the distribution of food baskets and carrying out water sanitation activities including the rehabilitation of a water treatment plant and the distribution of water purification tablets to households. CARE also states that “CARE is impartial and neutral and we do not take sides. We provide assistance based on need alone.” CARE has a website where you can donate money to the refugees then they get the money in the form of a debit card that they can use to buy hygiene, food, shelter, and household essentials. The International Red cross supplies food, blankets, water, soap, and other essentials to people caught up in the conflict. Helping people get their homes ready for winter while also helping with the psychological effects of so much violence. Worked to fix water networks and health services helping cut the risk of deadly diseases. It is incredibly difficult overwhelmingly unsuccessful to create humanitarian spaces where aids are guaranteed safety and access to populations in need. It is also hard to create a humanitarian space without any influence from politics. There is also dispersed population in urban areas. Since there is almost no common dialogue between the refugees and most of the aids it’s hard to help them.

Before the Syrian civil war started the Government of Syria was a forced democracy. Assad was president and the Government was having a few problems but nothing compared to the war to come. The local security today is not very good at all. In fact it doesn't seem to be a priority for the government who is busy fighting the people who want to overthrow it. The civilians in most of the regions are incredibly insecure as well as the resources which are also running low. Only the Humanitarian NGOs are providing and security for the Syrian people. The Syrian Government, rebel groups, Kurdish groups, and tribes are all fighting for control of Syria. Oil control is mostly in the militants groups. Syria historically had less small arms in civilians hands than other countries, but now that there is a civil war civilians are taking more precautions by getting them. People can just get them legally but a lot of them end up getting them illicitly for whatever reason which makes it harder to track them.

Social Reconstruction

One of the most pressing concerns for today's humanitarians is the Syrian crisis. Everyday Syrian Tragedies appear on the news. The abundance of reports of bombings and murders are too many to keep up with. Recently, the bombing of the government-ran Syrian city Homs has caught the attention of the media. The constant attacks, make it difficult to fabricate peace talks attempting to make a path to a resolution. Without a resolution in sight, the follows humanitarian support groups are vital to the survival of the Syrian people. With basic needs such as personal safety, freshwater, food, sanitation and health care.

UNICEF, an American organization, is one of the largest corporations at work to aid the Syrian people. Nations International Children's Emergency Fund works to help Syrian children. Although they have raised 240 million dollars, they are still in a 33% deficit. This means the needs for particular services has been assessed and calculated but hasn't been delivered to the people. UNICEF hopes to provide fresh, clean water, child protection, sanitation, nutrition, health care and immunization. But as long as the deficit remains, it has achieve their goal. In addition to funding, border issues stand in their way. Unicef due to security and visa approval have trouble reaching those they desire to help. On top of it, all UNICEF is hunted by the terrorists who are preventing approximately 6 million children from receiving help.

Even other countries are involved in helping, such as the French organization MFS-Doctors without borders. MFS primary goals are to support Syrians with health care. They provide hospitals with medical equipment and drugs. They aid mobile clinics with fuel and immunizations. The majority of the patients treated are victims of severe burn from violence. The MFS forged camps for displaced Syrians fleeing from battle-torn cities. They are provided with hygiene kits and water. The Syrian government has not granted MFS authority to help. MFS has to work against the Syrian government. Nevertheless, they operate six healthcare facilities in North Syria. They also help refugees in Jordan, Amman and Al Ramtha where surgical facilities have been set up. They also support 150 neighboring areas that are too dangerous to enter. In other words. Where they can't go, they send supplies. One challenge is the destruction of hospitals. Airstrikes crumple hospitals causing great need to move surviving children and patients through the rubble.

The humanitarian groups work for the people, they citizens who've lost their homes; they take no side. The middle-east government must cooperate with MFS and UNICEF for the better kind of their people. The NGO organizations provide severely needed help to the Syrian citizens. As long as a permanent solution remains unanswered the NGOs are vital to the Syrians and to our humane integrity.

The Norwegian refugee council helps Syrians with regards to land housing and property.

How did Syria get here? For us to examine that we must look at how Syria was before the conflict began. In peaceful times Syria has been a rich mixture of Sunni Muslims, Shia muslims, Alawites, Yazidis, Jews and Orthodox Catholics, Druze. They lived peacefully in their own Vilayets, where their own schools and medical facilities could be found. Taxes were collected for these areas. Where each division although separated by religion, citizens could travel peacefully between the regions. Syria has been an area fought over for a long time but when the French became involved in the 20s and 30s, the French policies were not always followed and Nationalism grew. In 1958 an Egyptian president Nassier supported the Syrian situation by forming the United Arab Republic, embracing the Arabic speaking Sunni muslims. To fill the void following his death, Syria was ruled by Hafez al-Assad in 70's. He was a member of the Bath party, engaging in countless conflicts between neighboring countries. Employing terrorists attacks to Jews, Israelis and Syrians opposed to his government. At this time, the fractionation of the muslim population grew. Inclusive to all Muslims a reason for terrorist approach to gain control. Causing many radical groups to gain control with force (guerrilla warfare), and by providing necessary resources to the people to gain control. (THE ATLANTIC, December 10, 2013 Understanding Syria: From Pre-civil war to Post-Assad.) In terms of the Syrian government being protective of their citizens.~ Syria does not follow International treaties such as the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) which bans the use of chemical weapons. In a suburb of Dasmascus a chemical rocket was launched killing 281 people. In terms of mental health, Syria did not have many supportive facilities in the past but now with this traumatic devastating conflict ongoing, drug addiction facilities are being converted to mental health facilities.(World Health Organization emro.who.it)

Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

Human rights have been continuously violated in Syria through the use of dangerous illegal weapons, restrictions on humanitarian aid, and even torture. Though humanitarian NGOs are doing their best to help citizens affected by these violations, they don't have any control over the governments committing them. If these NGOs were given access to all of Syria, and countries were able to reach an agreement on access constraints and prohibited weapons/war tactics, then not only would the 14.9 million people in need of humanitarian aid in Syria receive help, but it would hopefully also lower the need for humanitarian help in the future.

Most parties in the war have committed war crimes/violations of human rights of some sort, though some groups are more well known for their violations. ISIS, for example, is notorious for violating human rights and was responsible for systematic and widespread violations, including targeting civilians with artillery, kidnappings, and executions. Non-state armed groups opposing the government also carried out serious abuses including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, using child soldiers, kidnapping, unlawfully blocking humanitarian aid, and torture. The UN found that ISIS had used sulfur mustard gas in an attack in August 2015 and that the Syrian government had also used chemicals in an attack in March of 2015. Civilian areas such as homes, markets, schools, and hospitals were targeted in indiscriminate attacks by Syrian and Russian airstrikes using explosives, barrel bombs, cluster munitions, and incendiary weapons, and killing over 440 civilians. According to Human Rights Watch, government forces used at least 13 types of internationally banned cluster munitions in over 400 attacks on opposition-held areas between July 2012 to August 2016. These cluster munitions were banned because they fall over a wide area, and, if left uncleared, will act like landmines, exploding if disturbed. 113 countries, including Russia, have ratified the Convention on Conventional Weapons protocol that prohibits the use of air-delivered incendiary weapons in areas with a "concentration of civilians." Syria, however, has not, and ignores calls to sign the protocol, while Russia still denies its involvement in incendiary weapons attacks, despite the footage of incendiary weapons—specifically bombs—being mounted on a Russian aircraft at a Syrian airbase. More than 117,000 people have been detained or have disappeared since 2011, mostly because of or by the Syrian government forces. In detention facilities, thousands have died from

torture and ill-treatment. These war crimes and violations of human rights are dangerous, and if a solution isn't reached soon, the number of injured or killed civilians in Syria, as well as the number of Syrian refugees, will continue rise at an alarming rate.

There have been many different approaches to bringing justice after a civil war, though some have been more effective than others. An amnesty law pardons a certain group of people from crimes, including human rights abuses and crimes against humanity, that may have been committed. Chile, for example, put one into place in 1990, after the 1973 coup d'état. However, these are highly controversial, and human rights organizations protest them, saying that amnesty laws violate the local constitutional law and international law. Even today Chile's amnesty law is being debated in parliament. In another example, South Africa created a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1996 after apartheid. This court-like body allowed anyone believing they had been a victim of violence to be heard and get justice. The TRC worked in three committees: Human Rights Violations, Reparation and Rehabilitation, and the Amnesty Committee, which effectively worked together to bring justice to all. Rwanda's response to the 1994 genocide was similar, using local reconciliation efforts to decide who was accountable for war crimes. Three levels of courts were put into place, starting with the local Gacaca courts (now closed), the national court system, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. These courts were highly effective, allowing the government to solve millions of cases. Laws were also put into place to balance justice, truth, peace, and security, while focusing on reconstructing the Rwandan identity. Trials have also been used in the past, such as the Nuremberg trials at the end of World War II. These trials, the first international trials of war criminals, set the precedent for dealing with crimes against humanity in the future. They are very effective, making sure that all guilty parties are punished accordingly. They also led to the modern International Criminal Court, which resolves disputes between governments. Unlike the trials, however, it can't prosecute individuals. The US is not involved, due to the fear of soldiers receiving frivolous prosecutions. In 2002, the UN Security Council voted to give US troops a 12-month exemption from prosecution (renewed annually). The Security Council, however, later refused to renew it, after seeing pictures of US troops abusing prisoners. The court is weaker without US involvement, but the US does cooperate in certain cases. The ICC has also been criticized for

only prosecuting black Africans, which is a problem, and also makes it seem less authoritative. Justice can be brought about in many different ways, the most effective way for Syrians being through the ICC, or a similar set of court trials.

Syrian society has always been overwhelmingly Muslim, though its history is very diverse. Many different foreign peoples have fought over Syria, including Egyptians, Mongols, Turks, British, and French. Several communities in Syria contain “leftovers” from past invasions. Assad has always identified Syria as secular, accepting all of the different religions in Syria. However, since the beginning of the war, the country has become more sectarian, deepening the divide between the Shia and Sunni Muslims.

There are now 5.5 million people in hard-to-reach or besieged areas, one million more than at the beginning of the year. Out of those, 860,000 are in 18 besieged areas. Without access to all parts of Syria, those people will not receive necessary life-saving humanitarian aid. Unlawful restrictions on humanitarian aid have been placed by both the Syrian government and opposition groups, preventing humanitarian groups from accessing millions of people in Syria. According to the UN, in February alone, the government prevented 80,000 medical treatment items, including diarrhea kits, emergency health kits, antibiotics, and other medicines, from going into besieged areas. In order to straighten out the war, any countries accused of committing war crimes or violations of human rights must be put on trial to determine the severity of their crimes. Justice and peace will not happen until everyone in the war is held responsible for their violations of human rights, and everyone affected by the war—including refugees—receives the help that they desperately need.

Cross-Border Issues

Syria borders the countries of Jordan, Israel, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq. Relations between Jordan and Syria have historically been tense well before the conflict began in Syria. But to this day, incredibly, the two countries have not cut their diplomatic ties. Jordan has a refugee camp for the Syrians, which puts a strain on their economy. Assad has also directly threatened Jordan and the West; however, Assad may have directed his warnings at Jordan because he's starting to feel uncertain and insecure about the most strategically important Syrian

border: the one it shares with Jordan. Though the Syrian army has lost some of its official border crossings with Iraq and Turkey to rebel control, until now the Syrian army is adamant about manning the two it shares with Jordan: Daraa-Ramtha and Nassib-Jaber. Syria's international relationship with Israel has been tense; however, Israel is accepting Syrian refugees. The strained relationship took a step further, as Syrian rebels captured the only border crossing in the disputed region of Golan Heights, an area the two countries have been fighting over for decades. When Syria and Turkey signed the *Sdana Protocol* to end hostilities, they became firm allies. Then, Turkey sided with the popular uprising and openly backed the removal of Assad. Turkey's primary goal is to remove ISIS and have a "ISIS-free" no-fly zone. Their secondary goal is to remove Assad. There are 15,000 troops in Lebanon from Syria trying to stop, and failing to stop, war in Lebanon. Anti-Syrian sentiment has been slowly building. Lebanese voices are getting louder about the need to redefine the relationship with Syria — namely, to modify or end completely, the Syrian occupation. Syria had accepted over one million refugees from Iraq by 2010; however, Syria and Iraq are not allies, but Iraq and Iran are strategic allies. Shiite fighters from both Lebanon and Iraq have in turn, been mobilized by Iran for the battle in Syria — and are now being redirected to Iraq. While these groups are clearly fighting for political power, the theological aspects of the conflict are becoming increasingly dominate, possibly leading to a sectarian civil war between Sunnis and Shiites, which could engulf Syria and Iraq.

Prior to the Syrian conflict, Syria had an unofficial open border policy, which allowed anyone to come in at any time. At the end of 2010, there were over 1,300,000 refugees and asylum-seekers that were housed in Syria. That was over 6% of Syria's population at the time. A majority of these refugees were from Iraq; however, anyone could come in. While the refugees in Syria were not in refugee camps, their living conditions were still far from desirable. These refugees were able to enter Syria, mainly due to the insecure borders.

Since Syria did not directly secure its borders, many other countries surrounding Syria had, and still have, border police, military, or other government employed groups, guarding and protecting their side of their border with Syria. If Syria were to secure its borders, it would cut ISIS off from their supply line and source of cash. This makes for an interesting potential conflict of interests. Certain countries may want to weaken ISIS, and therefore may want Syria to

secure its borders for that reason. And, depending on what Syria wants its relationship to be with ISIS, that may or may not influence their decision to possibly change their open-border policy to a secure border to weaken ISIS. The Syrian government and the groups of rebel fighters are currently all fighting ISIS. And there was some alleged state-sponsored terrorism.

Terrorists had always harmed Syrians, and this mainly started in 1976; however, at this time, it was not ISIS as ISIS had not yet formed — it was other Islamic terrorist groups. Some of the terrorists were coming in from outside of Syria, and they would terrorize civilians and off-duty military personnel. They also tried to destroy and take over the Syrian government. There are some alleged, homegrown terrorists, with alleged Syrian state-sponsored terrorism where there were possible direct orders to execute terrorist attacks on specific targets (groups of people and/or locations). The Kurdish Democratic Union Party (YBG) has been designated a terrorist organization by the United States, but it is also the lead party in the U.S. backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which also includes Arab militias. The YPG could be considered the most militarily capable group confronting the Islamic State, but more than that, they also want to govern themselves. The Kurds may be terrorists, and dangerous to Assad because they are still pushing for independence, but they are also fighting the ISIS and other Islamic terrorist groups, which makes them beneficial to him as well as other countries also enemies of ISIS and other Islamic terrorist groups. ISIS is a major challenge for Syria as a whole, and not just because the jihadist use the open-borders to their advantage as a cash and supply line — they also exploited the chaos and divisions within both Syria and Iraq. ISIS overran large areas of northern and western Iraq, proclaimed the creation of a "caliphate", and became the "Islamic State". ISIS jihadists were in the process of being ousted from Iraq, and took advantage of the chaos in Syria by fighting both the government and the rebel groups, in hopes of taking over.

Prior to the war, Syria was concerned about severe droughts. The droughts intensified social uprisings and preexisting political instability. They recently had the worst drought registered in the past century. This drought, and others, caused the rural population to migrate towards cities, and left a million small farms unemployed. Along with climate change, Syria's water shortage could be attributed to the unsustainable management of aquifers, which are excessively exploited, reaching the depletion of irrigation wells. The drought has defiantly been

exacerbated by the war, and the war has, in turn, exacerbated the drought. The effects that the drought had on the population added to social and political tension. As a result, the war progressed even more. The government did not put environmental governance as a top priority because of the ongoing rebellion, and this collapse of environmental governance, [resulting in the accumulation] of household, medical and industrial waste and the outbreak of [communicable] diseases. In addition, ensuing waste burning and waste dumping could pollute groundwater sources, causing more of severe drought. Because the government is not regulating environment-related [aspects], civilians in the oil-rich areas started make-shift oil refineries, exposing them to hazardous substances that under peacetime circumstances are heavily regulated.

Economic Reconstruction

Before the war, Syria had maintained a very diverse and mostly profitable decentralized economy, consisting mostly of industry (oil) and retail, with tourism also being a major factor. However, their economy began to take a turn for the worse once the Syrian government spent too much money on the military and other projects. Due to the fact that the Syrian government only controlled about half of the oil industry under the SPC, their profits were not as high as they possibly could be, with the other half of oil being extracted by private corporations. Because of their weak profit margins, the 12.8% of their budget that was dedicated to their military was impossible to sustain, and resulted in a 122 billion Syrian Lira deficit, putting Syria in quite a tight spot economically. In this predicament, instead of asking their people for support and making difficult decisions when it came to cutting spending, the Syrian government hid their shortcomings, instead covering them up by creating a multitude of sanctions regarding trade. Combined, the Health and Education sectors of the Syrian budget wouldn't add up to the military budget, creating a severe imbalance of spending, leaving most Syrians without education and healthcare. As a direct result of these economic shortcomings, the lower class in Syria were dirt poor, education-less, and without healthcare, whilst those heavily affiliated and involved with the government had access to practically whatever they wanted.

The lack of healthcare, education, and equal spending created an extremely unequal society in which those affiliated and connected with the government were able to start new banks in order to make incredible amounts of money with virtually no effort- some of these banks are still open now, even during the war. Created by those privileged few with connections to the government, these banks were created not for the purpose of creating a more social economy, but for creating an economy the more favors the president and his friends. Prior to the war, Syria had an unemployment rate of about 10%, with that rate skyrocketing to over 50% once the war had started, and Syria's population consisted of 35.2% people aged 0-14, 61% people aged between 15-64, and 3.8% people older than 65 years old. Because of the war, the Syrian economy was not only devastated, but completely unearthed as not only unstable, but also as unfair and imbalanced, something that the Syrian government had desperately tried to cover up, but couldn't. Throughout the whole lead up to the war, the Syrian population had been working under that false pretense that the Syrian government was attempting to create a more open and equal economy, appearing to share the wealth of their banks with many other private ones; however, due to the way that they handled this "opening up", it resulted in the further monopolization of the economy. Compared to their past issues, this monopoly was even more dangerous than before, as the general population had no way of knowing that their even was such a scheme happening behind the scenes.

All of these factors combined to make the Syrian government and economy extremely unstable, as well as untrustworthy. As if it wasn't enough, in addition to the sanctions created by the government, Syria also decided to make budget cuts; however, they chose the wrong department. Instead of cutting military or oil budgets, the Syrian Government decided to cut the electricity and power from the poorer districts of the country, leaving most of the lower and middle class without fresh water or any way to get it prior to the war. In addition to this horrible decision, the Syrian government also created a restriction on taking money outside the country, creating tension within the country as well as throughout the world. The result of all these shady decisions was an angry population, and one that was ready, and willing, to fight for their freedom.

Humanitarian NGOs such as Doctors without Borders have been and will continue to be a huge source of healthcare for those who not only do not have access to it, but to those who are truly in need of it. Through providing stable healthcare to as many Syrians as they can, these NGOs are able to provide immense support to those in need, as well as provide economical support for the country once it is back in a stable state. This is crucial to Syria, for once the war is over, the country will be ravaged financially, geographically, and in terms of population and health. The support of the NGOs, who will be constantly helping the government with things like healthcare, education, shelter, and providing food, will help the government cut costs on those things, and instead focus on completely reconstructing the broken country.

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