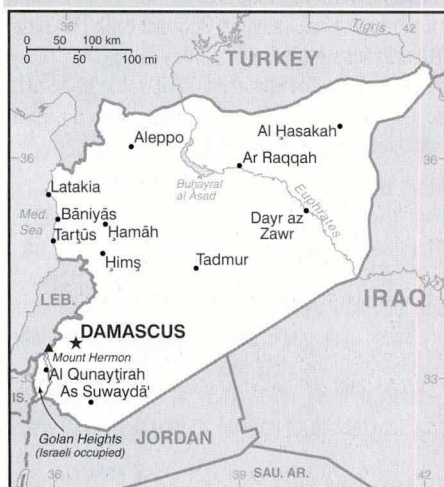


# Syria



## Introduction

**Background:** Following World War I, France acquired a mandate over the northern portion of the former Ottoman Empire province of Syria. The French administered the area as Syria until granting it independence in 1946. The new country lacked political stability and experienced a series of military coups. Syria united with Egypt in February 1958 to form the United Arab Republic. In September 1961, the two entities separated, and the Syrian Arab Republic was reestablished. In the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Syria lost the Golan Heights region to Israel. During the 1990s, Syria and Israel held occasional peace talks over its return. In November 1970, Hafiz al-ASAD, a member of the socialist Ba'th Party and the minority Alawi sect, seized power in a bloodless coup and brought political stability to the country. Following the death of President al-ASAD, his son, Bashar al-ASAD, was approved as president by popular referendum in July 2000. Syrian troops - stationed in Lebanon since 1976 in an ostensible peacekeeping role - were withdrawn in April 2005. During the July-August 2006 conflict between Israel and Hizballah, Syria placed its military forces on alert but did not intervene directly on behalf of its ally Hizballah. In May 2007, Bashar al-ASAD's second term as president was approved by popular referendum. Influenced by major uprisings that began elsewhere in the region, antigovernment protests broke out in the southern province of Dar'a in March 2011 with protesters calling for the repeal of the restrictive Emergency Law allowing arrests without charge, the legalization of political parties, and the removal of corrupt local officials. Since then, demonstrations and violent unrest spread to nearly every city in Syria with the size and intensity of protests fluctuating. The government responded to unrest with a mix of concessions - including the repeal of the Emergency Law, new laws permitting new political parties, and

liberalizing local and national elections - and military force. However, the government's response has failed to meet opposition demands for ASAD's resignation, and the government's ongoing violence to quell unrest and widespread armed opposition activity has led to extended clashes between government forces and oppositionists. International pressure on the ASAD regime has intensified since late 2011, as the Arab League, EU, Turkey, and the US expanded economic sanctions against the regime. In December 2012, the Syrian National Coalition, was recognized by more than 130 countries as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people. Peace talks between the Coalition and Syrian regime at the UN-sponsored Geneva II conference in 2014 failed to produce a resolution of the conflict. Unrest continues in Syria, and according to a January 2015 UN estimate, the death toll among Syrian Government forces, opposition forces, and civilians had reached 220,000. So far, the conflict has displaced 11.6 million people, including 7.6 million people internally, making the situation in Syria the largest humanitarian crisis worldwide.

## Geography

**Location:** Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Lebanon and Turkey  
**Geographic coordinates:** 35 00 N, 38 00 E  
**Map references:** Middle East  
**Area:**  
*total:* 185,180 sq km  
*land:* 183,630 sq km  
*water:* 1,550 sq km  
*note:* includes 1,295 sq km of Israeli-occupied territory  
**Area - comparative:** slightly more than 1.5 times the size of Pennsylvania  
**Land boundaries:**  
*total:* 2,363 km  
*border countries (5):* Iraq 599 km, Israel 83 km, Jordan 379 km, Lebanon 403 km, Turkey 899 km  
**Coastline:** 193 km  
**Maritime claims:**  
*territorial sea:* 12 nm  
*contiguous zone:* 24 nm  
**Climate:** mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus  
**Terrain:** primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west  
**Elevation extremes:**  
*lowest point:* unnamed location near Lake Tiberias -200 m  
*highest point:* Mount Hermon 2,814 m  
**Natural resources:** petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower  
**Land use:**  
*agricultural land:* 75.8%  
*arable land* 25.4%; permanent crops 5.8%; permanent pasture 44.6%

*forest:* 2.7%  
*other:* 21.5% (2011 est.)  
**Irrigated land:** 13,410 sq km (2010)  
**Natural hazards:** dust storms, sandstorms  
*volcanism:* Syria's two historically active volcanoes, Es Safa and an unnamed volcano near the Turkish border have not erupted in centuries  
**Environment - current issues:** deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification; water pollution from raw sewage and petroleum refining wastes; inadequate potable water  
**Environment - international agreements:**  
*party to:* Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands  
*signed, but not ratified:* Environmental Modification  
**Geography - note:** the capital of Damascus - located at an oasis fed by the Barada River - is thought to be one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities; there are 42 Israeli settlements and civilian land use sites in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights (2014 est.)

## People and Society

**Nationality:**  
*noun:* Syrian(s)  
*adjective:* Syrian  
**Ethnic groups:** Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%  
**Languages:** Arabic (official), Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian (widely understood); French, English (somewhat understood)  
**Religions:** Muslim 87% (official; includes Sunni 74% and Alawi, Ismaili, and Shia 13%), Christian (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian) 10% (includes Orthodox, Uniate, and Nestorian), Druze 3%, Jewish (few remaining in Damascus and Aleppo)  
**Population:** 17,064,854 (July 2014 est.)  
*note:* approximately 18,900 Israeli settlers live in the Golan Heights (2012) (July 2015 est.)  
**Age structure:**  
*0-14 years:* 32.49% (male 2,841,760/female 2,701,998)  
*15-24 years:* 19.85% (male 1,713,286/female 1,673,560)  
*25-54 years:* 38.57% (male 3,283,267/female 3,298,387)  
*55-64 years:* 5.07% (male 427,655/female 438,105)  
*65 years and over:* 4.02% (male 309,947/female 376,889) (2015 est.)  
**Median age:**  
*total:* 23.8 years  
*male:* 23.3 years  
*female:* 24.1 years (2015 est.)  
**Population growth rate:** -0.16% (2015 est.)  
**Birth rate:** 22.17 births/1,000 population (2015 est.)  
**Death rate:** 4 deaths/1,000 population (2015 est.)  
**Net migration rate:** -19.79 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2015 est.)



## Syria (continued)

### Urbanization:

*urban population:* 57.7% of total population (2015)  
*rate of urbanization:* 1.37% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

### Sex ratio:

*at birth:* 1.06 male(s)/female  
*0-14 years:* 1.05 male(s)/female  
*15-24 years:* 1.02 male(s)/female  
*25-54 years:* 1 male(s)/female  
*55-64 years:* 0.98 male(s)/female  
*65 years and over:* 0.82 male(s)/female  
*total population:* 1.01 male(s)/female (2015 est.)

**Maternal mortality rate:** 68 deaths/100,000 live births (2015 est.)

### Infant mortality rate:

*total:* 15.61 deaths/1,000 live births  
*male:* 17.95 deaths/1,000 live births  
*female:* 13.13 deaths/1,000 live births (2015 est.)

### Life expectancy at birth:

*total population:* 74.69 years  
*male:* 72.31 years  
*female:* 77.21 years (2015 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 2.6 children born/woman (2015 est.)

**Health expenditures:** 3.3% of GDP (2013)

**Physicians density:** 1.46 physicians/1,000 population (2010)

**Hospital bed density:** 1.5 beds/1,000 population (2012)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:** 0.01% (2014 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:** 900 (2014 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:** less than 100 (2014 est.)

**Education expenditures:** 4.9% of GDP (2007)

### Literacy:

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write  
*total population:* 86.4%  
*male:* 91.7%  
*female:* 81% (2015 est.)

### School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):

*total:* 12 years  
*male:* 12 years  
*female:* 12 years (2012)

## Government

### Country name:

*conventional long form:* Syrian Arab Republic

*conventional short form:* Syria

*local long form:* Al Jumhuriyah al Arabiyah as Suriyah

*local short form:* Suriyah

*former:* United Arab Republic (with Egypt)

**Government type:** republic under an authoritarian regime

### Capital:

*name:* Damascus

*geographic coordinates:* 33 30 N, 36 18 E

*time difference:* UTC+2 (7 hours ahead of Washington, DC, during Standard Time)

*daylight saving time:* +1hr, begins midnight on the last Friday in March; ends at midnight on the first Friday in November

**Administrative divisions:** 14 provinces (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah); Al Hasakah, Al Ladhqiyyah (Latakia), Al Qunaytirah, Ar Raqqa, As Suwayda', Dar'a, Dayr az Zawr, Dimashq (Damascus), Halab, Hamah, Hims (Homs), Idlib, Rif Dimashq (Damascus Countryside), Tartus

**Independence:** 17 April 1946 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)

**National holiday:** Independence Day, 17 April (1946)

**Constitution:** several previous; latest issued 15 February 2012, passed by referendum 26 February 2012 (2015)

**Legal system:** mixed legal system of civil and Islamic law (for family courts)

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal

### Executive branch:

*chief of state:* President Bashar al-ASAD (since 17 July 2000); Vice President Farouk al-SHARA (since 21 February 2006); Vice President Najah al-ATTAR (since 23 March 2006)

*head of government:* Prime Minister Wael al-HALQI (since 9 August 2012); Deputy Prime Ministers Fahd Jasim al-FURAYJ, Lt. Gen. Walid al-MUALEM  
*cabinet:* Council of Ministers appointed by the president

*elections/appointments:* president directly elected by simple majority popular vote for a 7-year term (eligible for a second term); election last held on 3 June 2014 (next to be held in June 2021); the president appoints the vice presidents, prime minister, and deputy prime ministers

*election results:* Bashar al-ASAD approved as president; percent of vote - Bashar al-ASAD (Ba'th Party) 88.7%, Hassan al-NOURI (independent) 4.3%, Maher HAJJER (independent) 3.2%, other/invalid 3.8%

### Legislative branch:

*description:* unicameral People's Assembly or Majlis al-Shaab (250 seats; members directly elected in multi-seat constituencies by proportional representation vote to serve 4-year terms)

*elections:* last held on 7 May 2012 (next to be held in 2016)

*election results:* percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA

### Judicial branch:

*highest court(s):* Court of Cassation (organized into civil, criminal, religious, and military divisions, each with 3 judges); Supreme Constitutional Court (consists of 4 members)

*judge selection and term of office:* Court of Cassation judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council or SJC, a judicial management body headed by the minister of justice with 7 members including the national president; judge tenure NA; Supreme Constitutional Court judges nominated by the president and appointed by the SJC; judges appointed for 4-year renewable terms

*subordinate courts:* courts of first instance; magistrates' courts; religious and military courts; Economic Security Court

### Political parties and leaders:

*legal parties/alliances:* Arab Socialist Union of Syria or ASU [Safwan al-QUDSI]

National Progressive Front or NPF [Bashar al-ASAD, Suleiman QADDAH] (alliance includes Arab Socialist Renaissance (Ba'th) Party [President Bashar al-ASAD], Socialist Unionist Democratic Party [Fadlallah Nasr al-DIN])

Syrian Communist Party (two branches) [Wissal Farha BAKDASH, Yusuf Rashid FAYSAL]

Syrian Social Nationalist Party or SSNP [As'ad HARDAN]

Unionist Socialist Party [Fayez ISMAIL]

*Kurdish parties (considered illegal):* Kurdish Azadi Party

Kurdish Democratic Accord Party (al Wifaq)

Kurdish Democratic Party (al Parti-Ibrahim wing)

Kurdish Democratic Party (al Parti-Mustafa wing)

Kurdish Democratic Party in Syria or KDP-S

Kurdish Democratic Patriotic/National Party

Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party or KDPP-Darwish

Kurdish Democratic Progressive Party or KDPP-Muhammad

Kurdish Democratic Union Party or PYD [Salih Muslim MOHAMMAD]

Kurdish Democratic Unity Party

Kurdish Democratic Yekiti Party

Kurdish Future Party [Rezan HASSAN]

Kurdish Left Party

Kurdish Yekiti (Union) Party

Syrian Kurdish Democratic Party

*other:* Syrian Democratic Party [Mustafa QALAAJI]

### Political pressure groups and leaders:

Free Syrian Army

Syrian Muslim Brotherhood or SMB [Muhammad Riyadh al-SHAQFAH] (operates in exile in London)

Syrian Opposition Coalition or National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces [al-Asi-al-JARBAL]

*note:* there are also hundreds of local groups that organize protests and stage armed attacks

**International organization participation:** ABEDA, AFESD, AMF, CAEU, FAO, G-24, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC (national committees), ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, LAS, MIGA, NAM, OAPC, OIC, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNRWA, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU (NGOs), WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer)

### Diplomatic representation in the US:

*note:* Embassy ceased operation on 18 March 2014

*chief of mission:* Ambassador (vacant); Charge d'Affaires Mounir KOUDMANI

*chancery:* 2215 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008

*telephone:* [1] (202) 232-6313

*FAX:* [1] (202) 234-9548



**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

*chief of mission:* ambassador (vacant); Special Envoy to Syria Daniel RUBINSTEIN (since March 2014); *note* - on 6 February 2012, the US closed its embassy in Damascus  
*embassy:* Abou Roumaneh, Al-Mansour Street, No. 2, Damascus

*mailing address:* P. O. Box 29, Damascus

*telephone:* [963] (11) 3391-4444

*FAX:* [963] (11) 3391-3999

**Flag description:** three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white, and black; two small, green, five-pointed stars in a horizontal line centered in the white band; the band colors derive from the Arab Liberation flag and represent oppression (black), overcome through bloody struggle (red), to be replaced by a bright future (white); identical to the former flag of the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) where the two stars represented the constituent states of Syria and Egypt; the current design dates to 1980 *note:* similar to the flag of Yemen, which has a plain white band, Iraq, which has an Arabic inscription centered in the white band, and that of Egypt, which has a gold Eagle of Saladin centered in the white band

## Economy

**Economy - overview:** Syria's economy continues to deteriorate amid the ongoing conflict that began in 2011. The economy further contracted in 2014 because of international sanctions, widespread infrastructure damage, diminished domestic consumption and production, reduced subsidies, and high inflation. The government has struggled to address the effects of economic decline, which include dwindling foreign exchange reserves, rising budget and trade deficits, and the decreasing value of the Syrian pound and household purchasing power. During 2014, the ongoing conflict and continued unrest and economic decline worsened the humanitarian crisis and elicited a greater need for international assistance, as the number of people in need inside Syria increased from 9.3 million to 12.2 million, and the number of Syrian refugees increased from 2.2 million to more than 3.3 million. Prior to the turmoil, Damascus began liberalizing economic policies, including cutting lending interest rates, opening private banks, consolidating multiple exchange rates, raising prices on some subsidized items, and establishing the Damascus Stock Exchange, but the economy remains highly regulated. Long-run economic constraints include foreign trade barriers, declining oil production, high unemployment, rising budget deficits, increasing pressure on water supplies caused by heavy use in agriculture, rapid population growth, industrial expansion, water pollution, and widespread infrastructure damage.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$107.6 billion (2011 est.)

\$110.1 billion (2010 est.)

\$97.03 billion (2009 est.)

*note:* data are in 2011 US dollars

the war driven deterioration of the economy resulted in a disappearance of quality national level statistics in 2012-13

**GDP (official exchange rate):** \$64.7 billion (2011 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

NA% (2012 est.)

-2.3% (2011 est.)

3.4% (2010 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$5,100 (2011 est.)

\$5,100 (2010 est.)

\$5,200 (2010 est.)

*note:* data are in 2011 US dollars

**Gross national saving:**

18.3% of GDP (2014 est.)

14.8% of GDP (2013 est.)

10.8% of GDP (2012 est.)

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

*household consumption:* 65.2%

*government consumption:* 21.4%

*investment in fixed capital:* 18.5%

*investment in inventories:* 10.3%

*exports of goods and services:* 11.3%

*imports of goods and services:* -26.7% (2014 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

*agriculture:* 18.1%

*industry:* 19%

*services:* 62.9% (2014 est.)

**Agriculture - products:** wheat, barley, cotton, lentils, chickpeas, olives, sugar beets; beef, mutton, eggs, poultry, milk

**Industries:** petroleum, textiles, food processing, beverages, tobacco, phosphate rock mining, cement, oil seeds crushing, automobile assembly

**Labor force:** 3.922 million (2014 est.)

**Labor force - by occupation:**

*agriculture:* 17%

*industry:* 16%

*services:* 67% (2008 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

40% (2014 est.)

35% (2013 est.)

**Budget:**

*revenues:* \$839.6 million

*expenditures:* \$5.472 billion (2014 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:** 1.3% of GDP (2014 est.)

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):** -7.2% of GDP (2014 est.)

**Public debt:**

51.1% of GDP (2014 est.)

47.7% of GDP (2013 est.)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

29.2% (2014 est.)

89.6% (2013 est.)

**Central bank discount rate:**

0.75% (31 December 2014)

5% (31 December 2013)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$5.536 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$6.884 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$11.05 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$12.71 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$6.119 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$8.25 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:** \$NA

**Current account balance:**

-\$3.667 billion (2014 est.)

-\$5.461 billion (2013 est.)

**Exports:**

\$3.015 billion (2014 est.)

\$2.889 billion (2013 est.)

**Exports - commodities:** crude oil, minerals, petroleum products, fruits and vegetables, cotton fiber, textiles, clothing, meat and live animals, wheat

**Exports - partners:** Iraq 63.8%, Saudi Arabia 11.1%, Kuwait 7%, UAE 6%, Libya 4.5% (2014)

**Imports:**

\$8.028 billion (2014 est.)

\$9.04 billion (2013 est.)

**Imports - commodities:** machinery and transport equipment, electric power machinery, food and livestock, metal and metal products, chemicals and chemical products, plastics, yarn, paper

**Imports - partners:** Saudi Arabia 24.5%, UAE 12%, Turkey 10%, Iran 8.9%, Iraq 7.3%, China 5.5% (2014)

**Reserves of foreign exchange and gold:**

\$1.428 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$1.895 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**Debt - external:**

\$5.812 billion (31 December 2014 est.)

\$4.753 billion (31 December 2013 est.)

**Exchange rates:** Syrian pounds (SYP) per US dollar

-

153.695 (2014 est.)

153.695 (2013 est.)

64.39 (2012 est.)

48.371 (2011 est.)

11.225 (2010 est.)

## Energy

**Electricity - production:** 29.48 billion kWh (2012 est.)

**Electricity - consumption:** 25.7 billion kWh (2012 est.)

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:** 8.958 million kW (2012 est.)

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:** 82.9% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:** 0% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:** 16.8% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:** 0.3% of total installed capacity (2012 est.)

**Crude oil - production:** 22,660 bbl/day (2014 est.)

**Crude oil - proved reserves:** 2.5 billion bbl (1 January 2015 est.)

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

168,800 bbl/day (2012 est.)



## Syria (continued)

### Refined petroleum products - consumption:

224,000 bbl/day (2013 est.)

**Natural gas - production:** 5.3 billion cu m (2013 est.)

**Natural gas - consumption:** 5.65 billion cu m (2013 est.)

**Natural gas - proved reserves:** 240.7 billion cu m (1 January 2014 est.)

## Communications

### Telephones - fixed lines:

*total subscriptions:* 3.99 million

*subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:* 22 (2014 est.)

### Telephones - mobile cellular:

*total:* 15.6 million

*subscriptions per 100 inhabitants:* 87 (2014 est.)

### Telephone system:

*general assessment:* fair system currently undergoing significant improvement and digital upgrades, including fiber-optic technology and expansion of the network to rural areas; the armed insurgency that began in 2011 has led to major disruptions to the network and has caused telephone and Internet outages throughout the country  
*domestic:* the number of fixed-line connections has increased markedly since 2000; mobile-cellular service growing with telephone subscribership nearly 60 per 100 persons in 2011

*international:* country code - 963; submarine cable connection to Egypt, Lebanon, and Cyprus; satellite earth stations - 1 Intelsat (Indian Ocean) and 1 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region); coaxial cable and microwave radio relay to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; participant in Medarabtel (2011)

**Broadcast media:** state-run TV and radio broadcast networks; state operates 2 TV networks and a satellite channel; roughly two-thirds of Syrian homes have a satellite dish providing access to foreign TV broadcasts; 3 state-run radio channels; first private radio station launched in 2005; private radio broadcasters prohibited from transmitting news or political content (2007)

**Internet country code:** .sy

### Internet users:

*total:* 4.8 million

*percent of population:* 26.7% (2014 est.)

## Transportation

**Airports:** 90 (2013)

### Airports - with paved runways:

*total:* 29

*over 3,047 m:* 5

*2,438 to 3,047 m:* 16

*914 to 1,523 m:* 3

*under 914 m:* 5 (2013)

### Airports - with unpaved runways:

*total:* 61

*1,524 to 2,437 m:* 1

*914 to 1,523 m:* 12

*under 914 m:* 48 (2013)

**Heliports:** 6 (2013)

**Pipelines:** gas 3,170 km; oil 2,029 km (2013)

### Railways:

*total:* 2,052 km

*standard gauge:* 1,801 km 1.435-m gauge

*narrow gauge:* 251 km 1.050-m gauge (2014)

### Roadways:

*total:* 69,873 km

*paved:* 63,060 km

*unpaved:* 6,813 km (2010)

**Waterways:** 900 km (navigable but not economically significant) (2011)

### Merchant marine:

*total:* 19

*by type:* bulk carrier 4, cargo 14, carrier 1

*registered in other countries:* 166 (Barbados 1, Belize 4, Bolivia 4, Cambodia 22, Comoros 5, Dominica 4, Georgia 24, Lebanon 2, Liberia 1, Malta 4, Moldova 5, North Korea 4, Panama 34, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 9, Sierra Leone 13, Tanzania 23, Togo 6, unknown 1) (2010)

### Ports and terminals:

*major seaport(s):* Baniyas, Latakia, Tartus

## Military

**Military branches:** Syrian Armed Forces: Land Forces, Naval Forces, Air Forces (includes Air Defense Forces) (2013)

**Military service age and obligation:** 18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service; conscript service obligation is 18 months; women are not conscripted but may volunteer to serve; re-enlistment obligation 5 years, with retirement after 15 years or age 40 (enlisted) or 20 years or age 45 (NCOs) (2012)

## Transnational Issues

**Disputes - international:** Golan Heights is Israeli-occupied with the almost 1,000-strong UN Disengagement Observer Force patrolling a buffer zone since 1964; lacking a treaty or other documentation describing the boundary, portions of the Lebanon-Syria boundary are unclear with several sections in dispute; since 2000, Lebanon has claimed Shab'a Farms in the Golan Heights; 2004 Agreement and pending demarcation settles border dispute with Jordan

### Refugees and internally displaced persons:

*refugees (country of origin):* 526,744 (Palestinian Refugees) (2014); undetermined (Iraq) (2015)

*note:* the ongoing civil war has created nearly 4.4 million Syrian refugees - dispersed in Egypt, Iraq,

Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey - as of December 2015  
*IDPs:* 6,563,462 (ongoing civil war since 2011) (2015)

*stateless persons:* 160,000 (2014); *note* - Syria's stateless population consists of Kurds and Palestinians; stateless persons are prevented from

voting, owning land, holding certain jobs, receiving food subsidies or public healthcare, enrolling in public schools, or being legally married to Syrian citizens; in 1962, some 120,000 Syrian Kurds were stripped of their Syrian citizenship, rendering them and their

descendants stateless; in 2011, the Syrian Government granted citizenship to thousands of Syrian Kurds as a means of appeasement; however, resolving the question of statelessness is not a priority given Syria's ongoing civil war

### Trafficking in persons:

*current situation:* due to Syria's political uprising and violent unrest, hundreds of thousands of Syrians, foreign migrant workers, and refugees have fled the country and are vulnerable to human trafficking; the lack of security and inaccessibility of the majority of the country makes it impossible to conduct a thorough analysis of the scope and magnitude of Syria's human trafficking situation; Syria is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking; Syrian refugee women and girls are forced into exploitive marriages or prostitution in neighboring countries, while refugee children are forced into street begging domestically and abroad; the Syrian armed forces and opposition forces are using Syrian children in combat and support roles and as human shields

*tier rating:* Tier 3 - the government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; increasing violence undercut any law enforcement efforts in 2013; the government failed to protect and prevent children from recruitment by government forces and armed opposition groups; a new law passed in 2013 criminalizing the recruitment of children under 18 by armed forces was not enforced; authorities failed to investigate and punish trafficking offenders, including complicit government employees; no trafficking victims were identified or provided with protective services; the government did not attempt to inform the public about human trafficking or to provide anti-trafficking training to officials (2014)

**Illicit drugs:** a transit point for opiates, hashish, and cocaine bound for regional and Western markets; weak anti-money-laundering controls and bank privatization may leave it vulnerable to money laundering

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