Please cite as: EUAA, '1. Introduction to the situation in Syria' in *Country Guidance: Syria*, April 2024.

1. Introduction to the situation in Syria

> Following the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, this document has been reviewed and updated. Please consult 'Interim Country Guidance: Syria (2025)'

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: March 2024

This section aims to highlight the main important elements/general considerations in the situation in Syria.

The Syrian armed conflict began in 2011 as a civil uprising against the government of President Bashar al-Assad, inspired by the Arab Spring protests. Since 2012, the conflict became increasingly violent and developed in a full-scale civil war, as armed opposition groups confronted Syrian government forces and began seizing key territories. The rise of Islamist groups and subsequent infighting marked another phase in the conflict that culminated in 2014, with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) conquering large areas in the eastern part of the country and further into Iraq and establishing the so-called 'Islamic State caliphate'. The creation of the 'caliphate' prompted the military intervention of an international US-led coalition against ISIL. Since late 2015, military interventions of other external actors in support of Assad marked the comeback of the Syrian government, which gradually recaptured most territories and consolidated its control. By the end of 2018, the conflict was viewed as having shifted decisively in Assad's favour. Assad was re-elected for a fourth term as President of Syria in the May 2021 elections, which were found to lack any form of credibility. [Actors, 1.1, p. 4; Security 2021, 1.2, p. 13]
States from the region such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have re-established diplomatic relations with Syria and the country was officially readmitted to the Arab League in May 2023. Multilateral efforts for a political solution to the Syrian conflict have so far yielded no results. [Security 2023, 1.2, p. 17]

During the course of the war, Syria became the scene for a series of intersecting conflicts involving many internal and international actors [Actors, 1.1, p. 4]. Three main campaigns have driven the conflict in Syria: the violence between the Syrian government and opposition forces; the efforts of a US-led coalition to defeat ISIL; and the military operations against Syrian Kurds by Turkish forces [Security 2021, 1.4, p. 19].
Complex alliances, shifting allegiances, rivalries and conflicting interests between the actors involved continue to affect the balance of power and to foster uncertainty. [Actors, 1.1, p. 4]
Since 2020, the frontlines have remained static while the conflict has changed from large-scale military clashes to localised clashes between armed groups and government forces with a decrease in civilian casualties. [Security 2023, 1.1, pp. 16-17; 1.5.3, p. 40]

By 2022, a total of 306 887 civilians were estimated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have been killed since the beginning of the armed conflict. Most other sources estimated the number of fatalities to be at around 500 000 or higher. The conflict has also caused the biggest displacement crisis in the world. According to estimates, it has driven some 5.2 million Syrian refugees out of the country and, as of May 2023, 6.8 million Syrians were living in internal displacement (80 % of whom had been displaced for more than five years), making the country home to the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the world. [Security 2023, 1.5.3, p. 40; Security 2022, 1.6.3, p. 58]

A combination of factors, including international economic sanctions, the financial collapse of Lebanon, protracted conflict, hyperinflation, currency devaluation and rising prices, as well as water and fuel shortages have contributed to a further significant worsening of the socioeconomic conditions in Syria. The economic situation has also contributed to a rapid deterioration of humanitarian conditions in the country. Over 90 % of the Syrian population were living below the poverty line as of June 2023. About 15.3 million Syrians (of an overall population of 21.7 million) were assessed to be in need of humanitarian assistance and around 12.1 million persons faced acute food insecurity in the country. Moreover, the devastating earthquakes of February 2023 resulted in massive damages of infrastructure (e.g. schools) and displacement. [Country Focus 2023, 1.4., p. 43; 2.2.1, pp. 53-55, 2.2.2, p. 55, 2.2.4, p. 57, 2.2.5, pp. 58-59]

Deliberate targeting by multiple actors, as well as risks associated with indiscriminate violence have had a significant impact on the civilian population in the country.

The individual assessment of international protection needs should also take into account the presence and activity of different actors in the applicant's home area and the situation in the areas the applicant would need to travel through in order to reach their home area. Moreover, the assessment should account for the dynamically changing security situation in the country.

It should also be noted that in some cases, where international protection needs would be established, exclusion considerations may be relevant.

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