

Syria Update

25 October, 2021 | Vol. 4 | No. 41

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Deadly Bus Blast Evinces Security Risks in Damascus and Beyond

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW**01 Finance Minister Announces Syria's Initial 2022 Budget Projection**

The projection is ambitious, but raises several red flags Pg 5

02 Women-Led Polygamy NGO Established, and Reportedly Shuttered, in A'zaz

The women-led organisation aims to support women through marriage Pg 5

03 Few Concrete Steps in U.S. Treasury's Global Sanctions Review

The review constitutes a small step toward improving American sanctions policy Pg 6

04 Etilaf Requests UN Travel Documents for Syrian Refugees

A long shot, it would deprive the Syrian Government of funds from abroad Pg 6

05 More Al-Hol and Roj Camp Families Repatriated to Europe and Iraq

Prosecutions may be the key to getting foreigners out of the camp Pg 7

06 Protests in Idelb and Northern Aleppo Over Fuel Prices and Teachers' Salaries

The recent depreciation of the Turkish lira has driven up commodity prices as wages shrink Pg 7

07 Amid Much Sabre-Rattling, Russia Advises SDF to Hand over Manbij

The SDF continues to cooperate with Russia and the Syrian Government despite hostile statements Pg 8



The wreckage of a Syrian Government bus following an IED attack in a highly secured area of Damascus. Image courtesy of SANA.



Other reports by COAR's
team of analysts:

coar-global.org



Syria-Libya Conflict Nexus

The latest thematic report from COAR Syria documents and maps how Syrian mercenaries reach Libya. With extensive field research conducted in both countries, the report shows how a conflict nexus has created a migration pathway.

[READ MORE](#)



هذه ترجمة عربية لتقريرنا الموسع عن تجارة المخدرات في سوريا، وتقييم تاريخها، والديناميكيات الداخلية الخاصة بها، وآثارها الإقليمية غير المباشرة.

الاقتصاد السوري في حالة حرب: كبتاجون وحشيش - دولة المخدرات السورية

[READ MORE \(ARABIC\)](#)

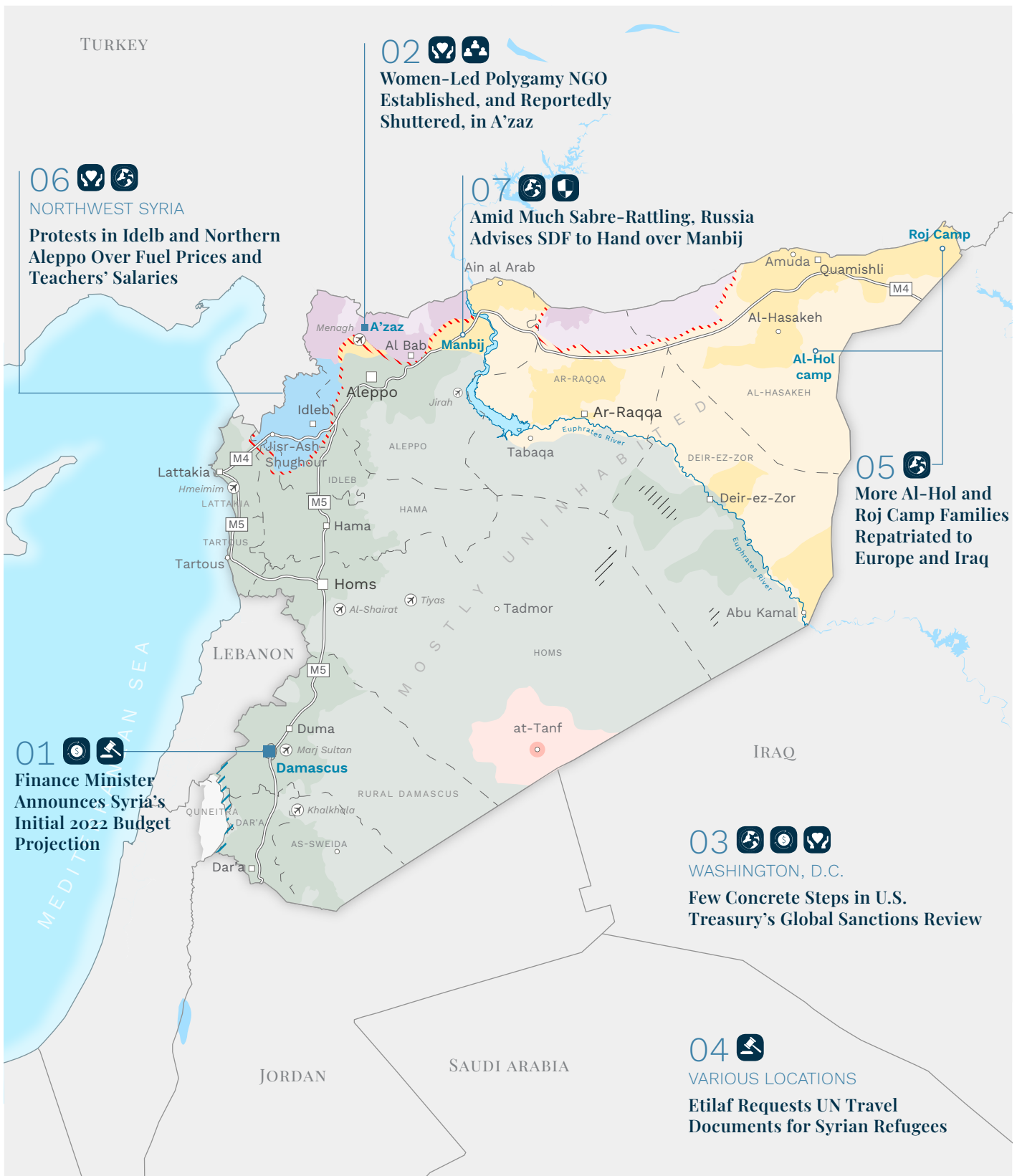
The Syrian Economy at War: Captagon, Hashish, and the Syrian Narco-State

[READ MORE \(ENGLISH\)](#)

WEEKLY SYRIA UPDATE DIGEST

The following is a brief synopsis of the *Whole-of-Syria Review*:

- 01 The Syrian Government has published its initial budget projection for 2022, which is over 50 percent higher than last year's. The budget is a public relations exercise, and it excludes major files such as military spending, making it little more than ink on paper.
- 02 A new NGO advocating for polygamy has opened its doors in A'zaz. It frames polygamy as a solution for Syrian women experiencing harsh economic and social conditions, and the controversy it has generated casts light on heady issues of gender-sensitive programming.
- 03 The U.S. Treasury has issued a global sanctions review, outlining recommendations to improve the impact of the American sanctions policy. It is unclear how the recommendations will be implemented, particularly in Syria, though it does call for heightened coordination among allies and the possibility for increased humanitarian exemptions.
- 04 Etilaf has requested that the UN issue travel documents for Syrian refugees, thus circumventing Syrian embassies. Although such a step would ease the security and financial burden associated with bureaucratic procedures at Syrian embassies, previous initiatives like this have foundered over practical and legal complications.
- 05 Several European countries have repatriated their nationals from al-Hol and Roj camps. While repatriations remain small in scale, there is some hope that the arrest and potential prosecution of suspected IS-linked individuals will reduce political exposure and close a loophole that has left camp residents in limbo.
- 06 HTS-affiliated entities have increased the price of key commodities such as fuel and bread in northwest Syria in response to depreciation of the Turkish lira. The price rises and teacher strikes over stagnant wages are a reminder of the deep impact of currency depreciation in Turkish-controlled areas of Syria.
- 07 An influential Kurdish political figure has accused the Government of Syria and Russia of pressing the SDF to surrender Manbij to Turkey. The remarks come amid heightened speculation over a potential military invasion by Turkey in northern Syria.



06 NORTHWEST SYRIA
Protests in Idleb and Northern Aleppo Over Fuel Prices and Teachers' Salaries

02 **Women-Led Polygamy NGO Established, and Reportedly Shuttered, in A'zaz**

07 **Amid Much Sabre-Rattling, Russia Advises SDF to Hand over Manbij**

05 **More Al-Hol and Roj Camp Families Repatriated to Europe and Iraq**

01 **Finance Minister Announces Syria's Initial 2022 Budget Projection**

03 WASHINGTON, D.C.
Few Concrete Steps in U.S. Treasury's Global Sanctions Review

04 VARIOUS LOCATIONS
Etilaf Requests UN Travel Documents for Syrian Refugees

Population Density

- Major city (750.000+)
- City (100.000+)
- Town (25.000+)
- Governorate
- Military airbase



Territorial Control

LOW POPULATION DENSITY

- Government of Syria
- Syrian Democratic Forces
- Syrian National Army
- U.S.-Backed Opposition Groups
- Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham
- Islamic State presence
- Contested area
- UN Disengagement Observer Force

Type Of Incident

- Humanitarian Issues
- Social
- Regional Intervention
- Security
- Economy
- Governance

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

On 20 October, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) [reported](#) that a Military Housing Corporation transport bus was targeted in an IED attack in central Damascus, killing 14 people. Among the dead were two women, and numerous others were reported injured — all employees of the Military Housing Corporation. The Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [stated](#) that the attack was an attempt by “terrorist organisations and their sponsors to boost the morale of terror groups, particularly in Idlib.” Later the same day, the insurgent faction Saraya Qasioun [claimed](#) responsibility for the explosion, describing it as a response to bombardment carried out by the Syrian Government in opposition-held northern Syria.

Although the Syrian opposition has not held territory in the vicinity of Damascus since 2018, the capital continues to be shaken by occasional deadly explosions. In August, the Al-Qaeda loyalist group Hurras al-Din claimed responsibility for a deadly attack that targeted members of the elite Republican Guard in another tightly controlled area (see: [Syria Update 9 August 2021](#)). The latest attack struck an area that is more sensitive yet, the President’s Bridge area, which is among the most highly securitised sectors in [Damascus](#), as it sits near the country’s military command and within earshot of hotels used by international organisations, including the UN. While some details concerning the attack remain unclear, its implications for security in the Syrian capital are unambiguous: even areas under firm Government of Syria control remain susceptible to deadly violence.

Who is behind the blast?

Saraya Qasioun has been [active](#) since 2019, yet relatively little is known about the group, which has carried out a low-level insurgency in and around Damascus. It has frequently claimed responsibility for targeting Government forces, yet some question its capacity to launch such operations, and it has been accused of opportunistically claiming attacks that it neither planned nor executed. Local sources surmise that both the most recent explosion and the August attack were inside jobs. Whatever the case, the targeting of civilian state

employees in the securitised heart of the capital undermines the Syrian Government’s narrative that it has fully restored security and stability inside Damascus.

Is Damascus safe?

Such events challenge claims made by the Syrian and Russian governments about Syria’s stability under their control. Although Government forces continue to expand their reach, including in Dar’a, genuine stability, safety, and security are unlikely to be achieved any time soon (see: [Syria Update 19 October 2021](#)). Low-level insurgencies targeting Government actors and security forces are likely to persist for the foreseeable future, particularly in southern Syria, but potentially in Damascus as well. Particularly in urban areas, such attacks are likely to kill civilians as well. The incentive for insurgent attacks will only grow more pressing as economic conditions deteriorate, [needs grow](#) more dire, and the Government of Syria resists genuine reform or even modest accountability. A flare-up in violence in northwest Syria may also heighten the risk of reprisals or opportunistic attacks. Foreign governments assessing whether Syria is safe for refugee return should take note (see: [Point of No Return? Recommendations for Asylum and Refugee Issues Between Denmark and Damascus](#)).

Violence continues in other areas, too

Also on 20 October, Syrian Civil Defence (commonly known as the White Helmets) [reported](#) that 11 people were killed, including children, and 20 others were wounded by Syrian Government artillery fire on residential neighbourhoods and a popular market in Ariha, Idlib Governorate. Local sources have suggested that the targeting came in response to the Damascus bombing on the same day, yet this is dubious. There is no clear link between the attacks, while the Syrian Government has in recent weeks escalated its shelling in northwest Syria more generally (see: [Syria Update 19 October 2021](#)). On the same day, the U.S. military base in al-Tanf [was also attacked](#) via a coordinated drone and rocket strike. There were no reported casualties in the incident, which is nonetheless a reminder that Syria continues to witness a complex, multi-dimensional international conflict, and violence may flare with little warning.

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW



01 DAMASCUS

Finance Minister Announces Syria's Initial 2022 Budget Projection

On 19 October, the Government of Syria [published](#) its initial budget projection for 2022. The overall budget is estimated at 13,325 billion Syrian Pounds (SYP), an increase of over 50 percent from last year's budget projection of 8,500 SYP. The new budget allocates a substantial sum – around 5,530 billion SYP – to the state's social support and subsidy programmes.

Damascus' annual numbers game

Quarterly reports and a year-end review of actual state spending have not been published in recent years, casting doubt on the accuracy of budget projections published by Damascus. The absence of figures for military spending, which likely represents a sizable portion of actual state spending, if not an outright majority, leaves the figures in doubt. Even as configured, the budget raises several red flags in terms of its viability. State subsidies for basic items such as bread and fuel have been all but eliminated in the leadup to winter, yet the projection allocates over 40 percent of the budget to subsidies and social support, beginning in January. Likewise, the Government has long inflated its investment expenditures to pad anaemic figures. For 2022, it has projected 4,800 billion SYP in investments, yet sectors that are ideally positioned for state investment, such as energy and water, are largely dysfunctional. Given such shortcomings, Syria's annual budget projections are sliding increasingly towards public relations efforts than actual fiscal planning.



02 A'ZAZ, ALEPPO

Women-Led Polygamy NGO Established, and Reportedly Shuttered, in A'zaz

On 18 October, Syrian [media reported](#) the establishment of Multiple Wives, a women-led NGO in A'zaz, Aleppo that advocates for polygamy and provides matchmaking services. The NGO blends Islamic and pro-social rhetoric to justify its services, describing itself as an organisation that “is concerned with women's rights...

[and] aspires to build a cohesive, socially and morally strong homeland in which women claim their right to marry” after suffering wartime losses. Polygamy is by no means a novel phenomenon in Syria. Nonetheless, the organisation has faced heavy criticism on social media, and it has been widely decried as sexist and archaic. In response to the criticism, the A'zaz local council issued a [statement](#) denouncing the organisation and asserting that it has not authorised its operations. The licensing process was instead carried out by the Free Aleppo Governorate Council. As of writing, it is unclear whether the organisation remains active, and Multiple Wives has refuted media reports that the A'zaz local council has shuttered the NGO and halted its [operations](#).

Gender-sensitivity concerns abound

The organisation aims to address critical security and economic needs among Syrian women, particularly widows. However, its unconventional approach virtually guarantees controversy, offering a reminder of seldom-acknowledged aspects of Syria's broad spectrum of social, religious, and customary practices. Aid and development actors contemplating relief work in Syria should be aware of the ways in which these conditions intersect with aid activities, and they must devise gender-sensitive activities accordingly.

Syrian women, including widows, must surmount steep hurdles to workforce participation, and are therefore left with limited earning potential and no safety net. Additionally, the return of men to the labour force through military demobilisation has conspired with economic contraction to heighten the pressure on women (see: [The Business of Empowering Women: Insights for Development Programming in Syria](#)). Historically and in Syria today, polygamy is often justified [as a response to economic and social hardship](#), and anecdotal reports indicate that the practice has grown more common as conditions in the country have deteriorated throughout the conflict. Ultimately, polygamy is an entrenched norm in some corners of Syria, yet crisis response actors can address the underlying economic, social, and protection challenges that increase the pressure for polygamy without directly challenging social or religious norms. Aid organisations should ensure women are empowered socially and economically, including by providing safe spaces, education, community awareness, and sustainable and equitable work opportunities to mitigate harsh underlying conditions.

“ Polygamy is by no means a novel phenomenon in Syria. Nonetheless, the organisation has faced heavy criticism on social media, and it has been widely decried as sexist and archaic.



03 WASHINGTON, D.C.

Few Concrete Steps in U.S. Treasury's Global Sanctions Review

On 18 October, the U.S. Treasury [released](#) a long-awaited review of its global sanctions policies. The review, which was initiated shortly after President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, aimed to identify “new, emerging challenges to the efficacy of sanctions as a national security tool.” According to the report, 7 percent of all U.S. sanctions target Syrian entities. The review provided a set of recommendations to ‘modernise’ America’s approach to sanctions across five broad adaptations:

- Adoption of a structured policy framework that links sanctions to a clear policy objective.
- Multilateral coordination, where possible.
- Calibration of sanctions to mitigate unintended economic, political, and humanitarian impact, including by expanding humanitarian exemptions.
- Ensuring sanctions are easily understood, enforceable, and adaptable, and, where possible, reversible.
- Modernisation of the Treasury’s technology, workforce, and infrastructure around sanctions.

Progress or politicking?

The review means little in practice without an accompanying roadmap and country-specific specifications, and it is unlikely to initiate much-needed changes to sanctions that constrain aid operations in Syria. Among the most important direct impacts of sanctions on relief work is proactive de-risking, by which financial institutions eschew permitted activities, including aid-related work, for fear of inadvertent violations. The review makes only passing reference to this pernicious form of overcompliance, and it does not put forth mitigations. The review also stops short of assessing sanctions’ effectiveness in creating political leverage and behavioural change. How limited sanctions relief can be held out to Damascus in return for behavioural change within the Assad regime is now a question of foremost concern for the international community, as the pressure levied by sanctions is undermined as regional actors move toward economic and political normalisation with Damascus.

The shortcomings of American sanctions practices are felt in Europe, too. U.S. sanctions overshadow narrower, more targeted European restrictive measures on Syria. [Improvements](#) such as the joint application of sanctions and the facilitation

of humanitarian exemptions could be facilitated through increased coordination. However, such adaptations would require careful planning and execution, as well as clear, mutually agreed upon roadmaps for sanctions relief and exemptions. For the time being, Washington’s appetite for wide-reaching coordination with American allies is unclear.



04 VARIOUS LOCATIONS

Etilaf Requests UN Travel Documents for Syrian Refugees

On 14 October, Salem al-Meslet, the head of the Syrian Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces (Etilaf) [stated](#) that Etilaf had requested that the UN Secretary-General issue temporary UN passports for Syrian refugees. Al-Meslet did not express optimism regarding the UN’s response, but emphasised that issuing travel documents for Syrian refugees is a priority, as bureaucratic services, including passport issuance, are a financial lifeline for the Syrian Government and a cause of harassment for Syrians abroad.

Practical and political hurdles

For the opposition, providing Syrians abroad with alternate documentation is a means of killing two birds with one stone. Opening such channels would deprive the Syrian Government of resources, as it currently demands as much as 800 USD for each passport issued abroad. Additionally, it would lighten the burden on Syrians seeking to integrate in host countries. Bureaucratic procedures, security restrictions, and the substantial cost of passports are among the biggest obstacles impeding integration (see: [Syria Update 19 October 2020](#)). Not only do these challenges prevent Syrians from traveling freely, they also complicate residency procedures and work and educational pursuits. Many countries in Europe and North America have granted temporary travel doc-

f *For the opposition, providing Syrians abroad with alternate documentation is a means of killing two birds with one stone. Opening such channels would deprive the Syrian Government of resources, as it currently demands as much as 800 USD for each passport issued abroad. Additionally, it would lighten the burden on Syrians seeking to integrate in host countries.*

uments based on the [1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees](#) for Syrian refugees living within their borders. However, the countries which host the largest number of the Syrian refugees — Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt — have not followed suit. Jordan and Lebanon are not party to the convention, while Turkey and Egypt are.

In 2015, Etilaf [sought](#) to issue alternate travel documents for Syrians, an initiative that failed partly due to the pervasiveness of [fake passports](#). Turkey has attempted to address the issue by putting in place a legal framework that allows Syrians to apply for specific residence permits using an expired passport (see: [Syria Update 19 October 2020](#)). However, Syrians elsewhere remain vulnerable to extortion and harassment by Syrian embassies.



05 AL-HOL AND ROJ CAMPS

More Al-Hol and Roj Camp Families Repatriated to Europe and Iraq

On 7 October, media sources reported that Denmark and Germany repatriated 11 women and 37 children from Roj camp in northeast Syria. Eight mothers and 23 children reportedly returned to Frankfurt. German foreign minister Heiko Maas stated that the women will be tried for their crimes under criminal law, adding that the [“children are in no way responsible for their circumstances.”](#) In parallel, three women and 14 children were repatriated to Denmark. The women have reportedly been charged with terrorism-related offenses.

Meanwhile, the [Ukrainian government](#) stated that a Ukrainian family in Roj camp in Syria has been transported to Kiev, and that plans are underway to repatriate Ukrainian nationals from al-Hol camp, yet there are conflicting reports around [the scale of planned repatriation](#). For its part, the United Kingdom [repatriated](#) three children from al-Hol camp on 18 October; 60 British children are thought to remain. In the past two months, five women with children and one woman without children have been repatriated to Sweden. However, the Swedish government stated that these did not constitute repatriations but rather expulsions from the Autonomous Administration, and Sweden is obligated to receive them. In addition, Iraqi authorities have been preparing to transport [55 Iraqi nationals](#) from al-Hol to al-Jadaa camp in Iraq.

A good start, but not enough

The repatriations are notable, as they follow a period of stalled efforts to empty the camps and repatriate foreign nationals. Despite overwhelming consensus that actions to shut down northeast Syria’s most notorious camps must quicken, return efforts such as these have been infrequent and small in scale. Western states’ hesitancy to repatriate their citizens, especially those with Islamic State (IS) links, is evident in Germany and Denmark, where the returning women were arrested upon arrival. However, in the long run, Europe’s capacity to repatriate camp residents may hinge upon such prosecutions. In terms of justice, accountability, and the legal obligation of states, formal prosecution will likely be seen as a necessity, and it may ease the process of overcoming political risk domestically. Crucially, such prosecutions close a loophole that allows the camps — and their foreign residents — to be treated as a political hot potato that can be passed on without accountability. In general, Western states are beginning to make some concessions from their initial hardline stands against repatriation, especially in the case of children. If the camps are to be closed, such efforts must quicken. Holistically, the return of Syrians and Iraqis, who make up the majority of camp residents in northeast Syria, must also be supported. Although Iraqi nationals are being repatriated, they are in many cases being transferred from one camp to another, where conditions are unlikely to be much better.



06 NORTHWEST SYRIA

Protests in Idlib and Northern Aleppo Over Fuel Prices and Teachers’ Salaries

On 19 October, [media sources](#) reported that Watad Petroleum would raise fuel prices for the second time in one week in Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)-controlled areas in Idlib and Aleppo governorates. Watad referenced the rise in global hydrocarbon prices and the continuing depreciation of the Turkish lira to justify its decision. On the same day, the Salvation Government reduced the weight of a bundle of bread from 650 to 575 grams, while maintaining the price of 2.5 Turkish liras. Days earlier, on 15 October, dozens of people demonstrated in Sahat al-Sa’a Square in Idlib city, demanding that the Salvation Government improve the living and service conditions in

the province and hold corrupt officials and exploitative merchants to account.

Meanwhile, on 14 October, [media sources](#) reported that teachers went on strike across areas of the Aleppo countryside controlled by Turkish-backed factions, demanding that the Turkish authorities increase their salaries. They demanded that their wages be raised from 750 Turkish liras (78 USD) to 2,000 liras (208 USD). Teachers from the majority of schools in Afrin joined the strike, holding a sit-in in front of the Aleppo Education Directorate. When their demands went unmet, teachers in Al-Bab and A'zaz announced a one-day suspension of classes. On 19 October, [media sources](#) reported that teachers in Aleppo's eastern countryside were continuing to strike, organising protest vigils. In response, the local councils of Al-Bab, Bazza, and Qabasin threatened to reduce teachers' salaries and dismiss them if they did not return to work. However, the protesters were not deterred, and representatives of schools in Al-Bab and Qabasin confirmed the strike was ongoing, and described the local councils' threats as "irresponsible, oppressive, and reminiscent of those issued by Ba'ath Party institutions affiliated with the Assad regime."

Better conditions, but still bad

Although economic conditions in opposition-controlled areas in northwest Syria are better than in Government areas, those residing in the northwest still struggle to make ends meet. Standards of living are dropping in both areas due to the depreciation of the Turkish lira, a result of Turkey's highly unconventional fiscal policy. Knock-on effects reverberate across northern Syria, where markets and entire sectors operate using Turkish lira (see: [Cash crash: Syria's economic collapse and the fragmentation of the state](#)). Generally, salary increases have not kept pace with price increases, including for bread, fuel, and other tightly controlled sectors, including education.

The churn within the education sector has shaken affected communities. The local councils of Al-Bab, Qabasin, and Bazza have justified their threats against striking teachers as a necessity to safeguard children's rights. Meanwhile, the strikes have piqued parents' fears over the collapse of the education system in these areas. However, the teachers' demands are unlikely to be met anytime soon, as the salaries of Syrian teachers in Turkey and in the areas under Turkish influence in Aleppo countryside are funded by UNICEF and channelled through the Turkish educational authorities. Therefore, any pay rise is contingent on UNICEF taking a decision to increase funding, which cannot happen overnight. More broadly, many aid activities in northern Syria rely on the Turkish lira. This has been a source of stability as the value of the Syrian pound has eroded. However, Turkey's own economic turmoil raises similar concerns. Over time,

the effects of currency depreciation are likely to be felt in all areas of programming, including procurement, salaries, and cash-based activities. Ankara appears committed to its current fiscal toolkit; it behooves response actors to note that currency depreciation and fiscal instability are not the exclusive province of Damascus and the Central Bank of Syria.



07 MANBIJ, ALEPPO GOVERNORATE

Amid Much Sabre-Rattling, Russia Advises SDF to Hand over Manbij

In an [interview](#) published on an 18 October, Saleh Muslim, the former co-chairman of the Democratic Union Party (PYD) and a current member of its presidential council, stated that Russia and the Government of Syria have frequently warned the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that Turkey will eventually invade and capture Manbij, a pivotal commercial hub now held by the SDF. According to Muslim, Moscow and Damascus have repeatedly advised that the SDF relinquish the city to Turkey. Muslim claimed that an offensive on SDF areas would meet with "violent resistance." It should be noted that Saleh Muslim is no longer seen as a power player within the PYD or the SDF. However, he remains a widely consulted elder statesman, and his sentiments are likely reflective of views across a large segment of northeast Syria's political and military establishment.

The drumbeat of war

These statements come amidst rhetorical preparations for another Turkish military operation in northern Syria (see: [Syria Update 19 October 2021](#)). At present, whether such an operation will take place seemingly hinges on cloakroom discussions between Moscow and Ankara. For the time being, many analysts view Russia's relationship with the SDF as the signal indicator of a potential military incursion by Turkish forces and their Syrian proxies. Should Russia withdraw its forces from targeted communities, including Manbij, there will be little to prevent Turkey from initiating a military offensive. The SDF is keen to keep its allies of convenience, Moscow and Damascus, on its side. On 15 October, the SDF [reportedly](#) reached yet another agreement to supply oil to Government of Syria areas, after a similar arrangement collapsed weeks earlier due to the Government's failure to meet its financial commitments. Media activists have also [claimed](#) that the SDF has removed checkpoints between Government- and SDF-controlled areas in northern Deir-ez-Zor city, allowing Russian patrols to enter rural Deir-ez-Zor on their way to Ar-Raqqa Governorate.

OPEN SOURCE ANNEX

Open Source Annex

The Open Source Annex highlights key media reports, research, and primary documents that are not examined in the Syria Update. For a continuously updated collection of such records, searchable by geography, theme, and conflict actor — and curated to meet the needs of decision-makers — please see COAR’s comprehensive online search platform [Alexandrina](#).

Note: These records are solely the responsibility of their creators. COAR does not necessarily endorse — or confirm — the viewpoints expressed by these sources.

“Our Lives Are Like Death” Syrian Refugee Returns from Lebanon and Jordan

What does it say? The report documents cases of return to Syria from 2017-2021, noting human rights abuses, persecution, and abysmal economic and humanitarian conditions.

Reading between the lines: The report comes on the heels of increased regional normalisation with Damascus, as well as potentially harmful comments by UN officials on Syria’s readiness for the return of refugees.

Source: Human Rights Watch
Language: English
Date: 20 October 2021

Deciphering the competition for Syrian oil: Part one

What does it say? The investigation tracks the opaque business dealings of the little-known American company Delta Crescent Energy in northeast Syria and potential coordination with Kurdish and American officials.

Reading between the lines: The unusual deal permitting an American company to operate in Syria was seen as a solution to the Autonomous Administration’s technical shortcomings that led to reliance on Damascus.

Source: Syria Untold
Language: English
Date: 18 October 2021

The United States and Efforts to Revive the Assad Regime

What does it say? The article argues that the U.S. under the Obama administration played the key role in keeping Bashar al-Assad in power by using Syria as a bargaining chip to reach a nuclear agreement with Iran.

Reading between the lines: While there is some truth to the theory, arguing that the Obama administration deserves the lion’s share of credit for the Assad regime’s staying in power is an oversimplification; the reality is more complicated.

Language: Arabic
Source: Arabi21
Date: 16 October 2021

Jordan is pushing for rapprochement with Syria. But is it to reinforce artificial stability in the region?

What does it say? Jordanian normalisation with Syria serves local and regional economic interests, but the absence of preconditions marks a dangerous precedent.

Reading between the lines: While regional interest in rapprochement with Damascus is well-documented, viable measures for establishing preconditions and ensuring that normalisation does not occur at the expense of human rights have yet to be mapped out.

Source: Atlantic Council
Language: English
Date: 19 October 2021

“The Right to Have Rights”: Legal Identity Documentation in the Syrian Civil War

What does it say? Over the course of the Syrian conflict, several actors have issued legal

identification documentation in their zones of control. This has created difficulties for those who have moved around due to the conflict.

Reading between the lines: Women are the hardest hit, as they are unable to claim property rights from their deceased spouses or male relatives without proper documentation.

Language: English
Source: German Institute for Global and Area Studies
Date: October 2021

Cuts to Oil Derivative Subsidies: Consequences for Syria

What does it say? Oil and gas subsidies in Syria have dropped, creating myriad difficulties for individuals and businesses.

Reading between the lines: Syrians are reliant on oil and gas derivatives for essentials such as heat, electricity, and transportation. Without sufficient quantities at affordable prices,

people will continue to suffer in virtually all areas of life.

Language: English
Source: European University Institute
Date: October 2021

The Syrian President Establishes a New Fund for Renewable Energy

What does it say? The Syrian Government created a new fund to support the use of renewable energy and raise energy efficiency among households and businesses in Syria.

Reading between the lines: The new law aims to encourage individual and larger scale investment in renewables; however, it does not provide insight into the Syrian Government’s broader economic policy towards energy investors or private installations.

Source: Sana
Language: Arabic
Date: 19 October 2021

The Wartime and Post-Conflict Syria project (WPCS) is funded by the European Union and implemented through a partnership between the European University Institute (Middle East Directions Programme) and the Center for Operational Analysis and Research (COAR). WPCS will provide operational and strategic analysis to policymakers and programmers concerning prospects, challenges, trends, and policy options with respect to a mid-conflict and post-conflict Syria. WPCS also aims to stimulate new approaches and policy responses to the Syrian conflict through a regular dialogue between researchers, policymakers and donors, and implementers, as well as to build a new network of Syrian researchers who will contribute to research informing international policy and practice related to their country.

The content compiled and presented by COAR is by no means exhaustive and does not reflect COAR's formal position, political or otherwise, on the aforementioned topics. The information, assessments, and analysis provided by COAR are only to inform humanitarian and development programs and policy. While this publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union, its contents are the sole responsibility of COAR Global LTD, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Contact:

syria-update@coar-global.org

