

# Syria Update

## IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

### Damascus Opens ‘Online Consulate’ to Reach Syrians Abroad

#### WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW

##### Syrian Migrants Sent back to Syria from Belarus on Cham Wings

The first flight deporting Syrians from Belarus to Damascus takes off, after an EU border standoff. Pg 5

##### Rukban Camp Residents Protest Conditions, Demand US Support

Rukban Residents hold a sit-in near the Coalition military base in Tanf demanding aid. Pg 5

##### Renewed Protests in Deir-ez-Zor Demand SDF Release Detainees and Improve Living Conditions

The recurring protests against the SDF, which have centred on a dire shortage of services, poor living conditions, and arbitrary arrests, will not cease anytime soon. Pg 6

##### Moscow Silent as Israel Strikes Lattakia Port

Despite deadly fallout for Moscow, Russia has tolerated such attacks to pressure Iran. Pg 6

##### Syriatel Ownership Changes, Again. What’s Next for One of Syria’s Foremost Companies?

The change brings an end to Rami Makhlouf’s majority stake in the company. Pg 7

##### Asayish Detain Journalists as NES Press Freedom and Conscription Issues Simmer

Northeast Syria is viewed as a journalistic safe harbour compared to other areas in Syria, yet critics have often been silenced. Pg 7

The Syrian Online Consulate has opened, allowing more Syrians abroad to apply for passports. However, questions of access, costs, and basic functionality remain. Image courtesy of Khabarieh.



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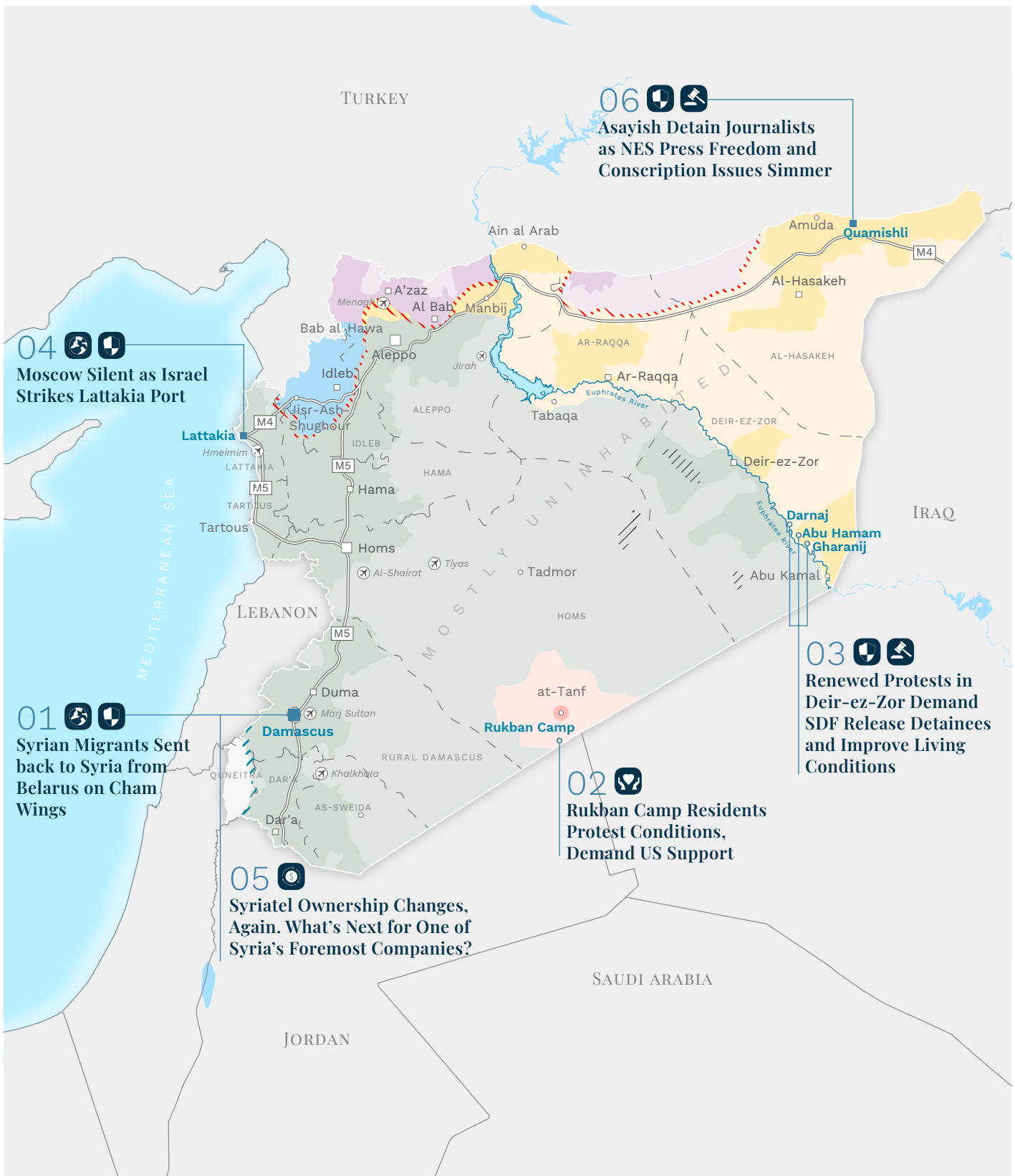
## WEEKLY SYRIA UPDATE DIGEST

### The following is a brief synopsis of the *In-Depth Analysis* section:

On 25 November, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the “online portal for Syrian expatriate services,” effectively an online consulate, through which Syrians residing abroad can access consular services and apply for documentation, including passports. These new services should be seen through the prism of the Syrian Government’s ongoing adaptation to its new reality after a decade of conflict, where government agencies are largely extractive and used as revenue-generating tools. The “online consulate” may offer a way for Syrians to bypass issues of bribery and corruption and limit undesirable, or even risky, contact with Government officials, while the Government may hope its revenues increase as more Syrians are able to afford their documents without the need for bribes and added payments to fixers. Nevertheless, without reforms to the underlying systems of governance, record-keeping, and registration, Syrians are likely to continue to face problems in asserting property rights, acquiring needed documentation, and indeed accessing government services in general.

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

- On 7 December, Belarus deported Syrian migrants to Damascus, as the EU sanctioned the airline used in the procedure. Migrants will continue to seek refuge in Europe due to poor living conditions in Syria unless the EU implements sustainable migration and development policies.
- Residents of Rukban camp have begun an open-ended sit-in demanding to be “treated like camps under the Autonomous Administration.” Rukban is often forgotten, and like other camps in Syria, its existence speaks to the main challenges of divided control. Implementers should take note.
- On 7 December, hundreds of civilians demonstrated against the SDF in several towns in rural Deir-ez-Zor. Since the SDF took control of the area, popular complaints have centred on a dire lack of electricity, water, and fuel, as well as arbitrary arrests, exogenous rule, and inefficient local governance.
- Also on 7 December, Israeli aircraft struck alleged Iranian weapons in an attack on the commercial port in Lattakia. The attack is the first on Lattakia in more than three years, and Russia’s muted response may be a sign that Moscow remains willing to use Israeli pressure to push back against Tehran.
- Syriatel, Syria’s primary telecommunication company, has changed ownership, signalling the end of Rami Makhoul’s influence in the company. The new majority-holders have not yet been declared, but aid actors should be mindful of changing ownership, compliance implications, and the broader question of who profits from Syria’s limited industry.
- On 7 December, the Internal Security Forces (Asayish) of the Autonomous Administration detained eight journalists covering a protest against child recruitment. Though limited in scale, the detentions speak to the broader issues of press freedom, democratic credentials, and military recruitment in the region.



**Population Density**

- Major city (750,000+)
- City (100,000+)
- Town (25,000+)
- — Governorate
- ✈ Military airbase

100 km

**Territorial Control**

LOW POPULATION DENSITY

- Government of Syria
- Syrian Democratic Forces
- Syrian National Army
- US-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 25 November, the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched the “online portal for Syrian expatriate services,” effectively an online consulate, through which Syrians residing abroad can access consular services and apply for documentation such as birth and marriage certificates, as well as passport renewals. In the statement accompanying the launch, the Ministry said it sought to reduce the burdens and costs on Syrians living abroad when travelling to consulates and embassies, and to provide consular services in countries that lack Syrian Government representation. The Syrian Ministry of the Interior has also announced changes to the processes of acquiring passports inside Syria, introducing an “instant passport service” through which a passport can be issued within one day for 100,000 SYP (30 USD, around eight times the regular cost) and a new portal on its website through which Syrians can register requests for passports.

These new services should be seen through the prism of the Syrian Government’s ongoing adaptation, if not reform, to its new reality after a decade of conflict. Its operational capacities have only withered as the needs of the population it is supposed to serve have grown. While streamlining consular services is sorely needed for the millions of Syrians who fled the country as a result of the war, it remains to be seen how effective the new system will be and whether it will result in tangible improvements to accessibility. E-governance systems are only as good as their underlying records and data, which in the case of Syria are fragmented and patchy, if not missing entirely.

### A System in Dire Need of Streamlining

For the millions of Syrians now living outside of their country, accessing official documentation and, in particular, renewing passports is an expensive and time-consuming process with few guarantees of success. Such documentation is often needed to access services in other countries, apply for work and residence permits, and officially register the birth of children, for example. In addition to the standard (often exorbitant) fees for procuring such documentation, Syrians must also pay for transportation to and from the embassy or consulate (often for multiple appointments), and may be required to pay bribes or hire “fixers” in order to secure appointments in the first place. Many are also hesitant to visit Syrian consulates in person due to fears of abuse from hostile officials or, at worst, arrest. After all of this, documents are slow to arrive, if they arrive at all.

The “online consulate” may offer a way to bypass issues of bribery and corruption and limit undesirable, or even risky, contact with Government officials. If the portal works as suggested, all applications can be made online with supporting documentation sent by post, and the documents are either

received by post or picked up at a consulate or embassy. If the system is developed further, it could create important mechanisms for civil documentation and the improvement of conditions related to housing, land, and property (HLP), for example. Verifying property claims inside Syria is an important issue for many displaced persons, both refugees and IDPs, although documentation of property ownership, much of it informal, was patchy and inconsistent even before the conflict. Nevertheless, improving the mechanisms by which Syrians outside the country can access legal documentation will be particularly important for the aid response and help to verify the identities and claims of beneficiaries.

### Services, But Always for a Price

While framed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an initiative to “alleviate the suffering” of those residing outside of Syria, the online consulate system should be seen as a tool through which the Syrian Government will seek to bolster its dollar income. Government agencies are largely extractive and used as revenue-generating tools, rather than points of service provision. While service fees finance the Government of Syria, consular officers and other intermediaries also extort populations for access to basic documentation. Despite improvements in passport issuance inside Syria, passport processing outside the country is an immense burden. The Syrian passport is the most expensive in the world, costing 300 USD for renewal from outside the country through standard processes and 800 USD through an expedited process, to say nothing of the added fees and bribes required in many cases. Passport access has been a key source of dollars for the Syrian state throughout the conflict.

Although the fees for documents have remained the same, an online system for acquiring documentation, if it functions as intended, should make the process more affordable for Syrians living abroad as they bypass the cost of transportation and bribes. Indeed, the Syrian Government may hope that the overall amount of revenue generated for the state will increase, as more Syrians are able to afford their documents without the need for bribes to officials and payments to fixers.

### ‘Reform’ as Adaptation

The online consulate reflects the broader adaptation of the Syrian state. A shift to e-governance, which could improve efficiency and outcomes for both the Syrian people and the state, should be cautiously welcomed. However, providing, and improving, services to the Syrian people is a goal only insofar as it supports the state’s primary aim of resource extraction. Without reforms to the underlying systems of governance, record-keeping, and registration, Syrians are likely to continue to face problems in asserting property rights, acquiring needed documentation, and indeed accessing government services in general.

## WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW



## 01 MINSK, DAMASCUS

## Syrian Migrants Sent back to Syria from Belarus on Cham Wings

On 7 December, the Minsk International Airport announced that a Cham Wings deportation flight was leaving Belarus to Damascus, carrying 97 Syrian passengers. Whether the deportees left voluntarily, or by force, is unknown. The large presence of migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria in Belarus is due to an open-border policy adopted by the country following EU sanctions in an effort to pressure European countries with an influx of refugees. Alarmed by these developments, the EU threatened to withdraw landing and overflight rights to airlines shuttling migrants to Belarus, prompting Cham Wings to officially suspend flights from Damascus to Minsk. However, on 2 December, the EU sanctioned Cham Wings under its Belarus sanctions program.

### Europe and Weaponised Migration

The sanctioning of Cham Wings is a small step to check the emergence of a nexus between international pariahs in Minsk and Damascus. The relationship between isolated, Moscow-leaning political actors in both Syria and Belarus has contributed to the export of instability from Syria, the manipulation of refugees for political leverage against Europe, and the erosion of international norms. Cham Wings reportedly opened new offices in Minsk to facilitate the exodus of migrants. It is notable that the airline, known for supporting the Syrian Government militarily and logistically, has been targeted for EU restrictive measures taken against Belarus, not those enacted in response to the crisis in Syria.

The deportation of migrants from Belarus signals a partial downshift in the tensions along the Belarus-Poland frontier. Although tensions between the EU and Belarus have abated slightly, the developments will not deter Syrians from seeking an exit, particularly as conditions in the country worsen. Absent real political and economic reform, many Syrians are willing to risk migration pathways through Belarus, despite reports of serious human rights violations at the Belarus-Poland border by both governments. According to Human Rights Watch, at least 13 people have died due to freezing temperatures, lack of food or water, and other inhuman conditions. Western states are politically consumed with difficult battles against an emerging autocratic front. In the meantime, Syrians are finding themselves trapped with no safe exit

strategy and will therefore resort to more dangerous paths for asylum unless the EU implements sustainable migration and development policies. Additionally, it is unclear what Syrians will face upon return to Syria as no safety measures have been discussed by the EU or the Syrian Government.



## 02 RUKBAN CAMP

## Rukban Camp Residents Protest Conditions, Demand US Support

On 10 December, Syrian media reported that protests in Rukban entered their eighth day, as residents demanded that the US-led International Coalition provide aid. Slogans raised by the protestors, who gathered near the coalition's base, appealed for urgent medical and livelihood support to the camp's diminished population. Thousands of Rukban's predominantly opposition residents reportedly relocated to camps controlled by the Syrian Government, facing serious risks of detention and retaliation. One protestor stated that residents are willing to accept anything to improve their living conditions. Protestors notably demanded to be treated "like [residents of] the camps under the Autonomous Administration" in northeast Syria.

### Syria's Neglected Camps Mired in Political Stalemate

The challenges facing Rukban are formidable, and they signify the extent to which camps across Syria pose distinct problem sets to the crisis response. The Rukban camp's unique geographic position along the Syrian-Iraqi-Jordanian border triangle places it outside the purview of any single actor, effectively isolating the camp within its desert surroundings. The International Coalition, Jordanian authorities, and the Syrian Government all refuse to take responsibility for camp residents. Regarding the demands of Rukban residents, it is worth noting that camps in northeast Syria themselves are overpopulated, and struggle from lack of services and support. Autonomous Administration officials cited "aid politicisation" as the main reason for deteriorated conditions inside its camps, warning of a wintertime disaster. Facing limitations on cross-border aid delivery, UN and other Damascus-based aid agencies must acquire permission from the Government of Syria to deliver aid to Rukban camp and camps in northeast Syria.

More broadly, in northeast Syria, overpopulated camps are dealt with through a security-based approach by the Autonomous Administration. The suspected presence of Islamic State (IS) sleeper cells and the fate of Syrian, Iraqi, and foreign IS affiliates, as well as the children and families of former IS combatants, defy easy solutions. In the northwest, border camps are growing increasingly massive and institutional in scale, despite the limitations on aid delivery and the threat of IDP influx. Aid actors operating in different zones of control inside Syria must recognise each of the camps' unique dynamics, risks, and needs. Failure to do so risks prolonging the suffering and deepening the grievances of thousands of people.



03 ABU HAMAM, DARNAJ, AND GHARANIJ,  
DEIR-EZ-ZOR GOVERNORATE

## Renewed Protests in Deir-ez-Zor Demand SDF Release Detainees and Improve Living Conditions

On 7 December, media sources [reported](#) that hundreds of civilians demonstrated against the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the towns of Abu Hamam and Gharanij, eastern rural Deir-ez-Zor. The protests were reportedly triggered by the SDF's seemingly arbitrary [arrest](#) of a merchant in Abu Hamam, forcing his family to pay a large sum of money for his release. The demonstrators demanded the SDF's withdrawal from their areas, unless the Autonomous Administration is able to improve economic and living conditions and combat corruption in its institutions. The protesters also demanded that the SDF stop forcible recruitment, especially of young men and minors, and called for the immediate release of detainees and the cessation of arbitrary arrests. Demonstrators threatened to escalate by closing Autonomous Administration institutions in the area if their demands went unmet. In the same vein, on 4 December, a mass [demonstration took place in Darnaj](#) village in the eastern countryside of Deir-ez-Zor. The demonstration was mainly prompted by flour scarcity, in addition to arbitrary arrests, corruption, and a lack of employment opportunities.

### Tribal Tensions

Since the SDF took over control of the area from IS, popular complaints have centred on a dire shortage of electricity, water, and fuel, as well as arbitrary arrests, exogenous rule, and inefficient local governance. On the one hand, the region's Arab tribal populations are mistrustful of the SDF. On

the other, throughout the Euphrates River valley, Arab-led 'home rule' within the Autonomous Administration has been ineffective, largely due to corruption and inept local administration. The Arab population in the SDF-controlled parts of Deir-ez-Zor Governorate have been and are expected to continue protesting the SDF's rule. Of note, the three towns now witnessing social unrest targeting the SDF constitute the power base of the Sha'ytat tribe, which experienced some of the most brutal mass killings at the hands of IS of any population in Syria. Aid actors should approach such regions cautiously (see: [Tribal Tribulations: Tribal Mapping and State Actor Influence in Northeastern Syria](#)). Close proximity to Government-held Deir-ez-Zor city exposes the region to political interference by the Government of Syria (see: [Syria Update 22 November 2021](#)). In terms of implementation, efforts to stabilise the area must work through local authorities of limited popularity. Crisis response actors should ensure that projects designed to improve material conditions do not widen other rifts by empowering unpopular local governance or military actors.



04 LATTAKIA

## Moscow Silent as Israel Strikes Lattakia Port

On 7 December, Israeli aircraft fired several missiles into the container yard at the port of Lattakia, [according to](#) the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA). The metal containers targeted in the attack [allegedly held](#) weapons bound for Iran-backed armed groups in Syria. Only hours after the incident, Israeli Foreign Minister Naftali Bennet [stated](#) at a public event that Israel is "pushing back on the bad forces of the region day and night," remarks that can be interpreted as a rare admission of Israeli responsibility for an airstrike in Syria.

### Moscow Turns a Blind Eye

Although Israeli airstrikes on Iran-linked targets in Syria are relatively common and have ticked up in recent weeks, Israeli officials seldom acknowledge them. Attacks on sites like the port at Lattakia, however, are rare. The last Israeli attack targeting Lattakia sparked an international row after Syrian air defences [mistakenly shot down](#) a Russian military plane while targeting Israeli aircraft, killing 15 Russians. That incident drove Moscow to take a more direct role in the management of Syrian air defence, an area where its presence is significant. The Russian-Israeli relationship is to some extent

mediated through airstrikes in Syria. In the past, Russia [has lambasted](#) Israel for its aerial sorties, while at other times, Moscow has turned a blind eye to such attacks, seemingly allowing them as a means of pressuring Tehran and Damascus. Such attacks are all but certain to continue. Changes to Russia's public stance and a lack of robust air defence support can be read as signs of Moscow's evolving relationship with its Damascus partners and with Israel.



## 05 DAMASCUS

### Syriatel Ownership Changes, Again. What's Next for One of Syria's Foremost Companies?

On 27 November, Syriatel, Syria's main telecommunication company, underwent yet another change in ownership, effectively ending Rami Makhlouf's influence over the company, according to the [Syria Report](#). A record 116 billion SYP in trades were executed in the second half of November, reducing Wings Private JSC's share of the company from 40 percent to 0.298 percent. Wings Private JSC had held all of Makhlouf's shares in the company since his departure. Syriatel has not yet declared the identity of its new owners, and has provided limited information on the new shareholding structure – ownership of nearly 75 percent of the company's shares is undisclosed. Rami Makhlouf, Bashar al-Assad's cousin, was the majority shareholder of Syriatel until last year, when a tax dispute became the nominal basis for the Government of Syria's initiative to put the company under curatorship and seize Makhlouf's assets (see: [Syria Update 4 May 2020](#)). Trading in Syriatel stock was also put on hold, but resumed in mid-November. Syriatel is used not only by virtually everyone in Government-controlled areas, but also by some in surrounding regions.

#### Change in Ownership or Stewardship?

The transfer of Syriatel's ownership closes a drawn-out chapter in the Makhlouf saga (see: [Syria Update 29 August – 4 September 2019](#)). Syriatel was the crown jewel in Makhlouf's business empire in Syria. The seizure of his shares in the company by the Government has officially ended his status as Syria's leading businessman, a reality that was long seen as a *fait accompli*. His downfall has demonstrated that the Syrian Government is willing to sacrifice long-time allies to protect its changing interests. Syriatel is used almost universally throughout Syria, including by international aid organisations, and despite turmoil in its ownership, it remains the

primary telecom service provider in the country. Until the new shareholders are declared, potentially by the first quarter in 2022, aid organisations should be attentive to the company's changing ownership, particularly if Syriatel's network directly funds the Government of Syria or other Assad regime figures.



## 06 QUAMISHLI

### Asayish Detain Journalists as NES Press Freedom and Conscription Issues Simmer

On 7 December, media sources [reported](#) that the Internal Security Forces (Asayish) of the Autonomous Administration temporarily detained eight journalists while covering a protest in Quamishli city. The protest was organised by members of the opposition-affiliated Kurdish National Council (KNC) and families of girls recruited by the Kurdish Revolutionary Youth Movement, a prominent militant youth organisation, demanding their return. The Asayish [prevented the protest](#) from taking place, under the pretext that the protesters did not have a permit, then confiscated the protestors' phones and tore their banners. Security forces later [detained](#) six journalists of Rudaw TV, a pan-Kurdish news network based in Erbil that was present during the protest, raided their offices and confiscated their equipment. SDF media centre director, Badee Hesso, later [claimed](#) that the journalists were mistakenly arrested while the Asayish was following a tip on cannabis dealing in the neighborhood where Rudaw TV's office is located.

#### A Facade of Press Freedom?

Though small in scale, the events speak to the broader issues that continue to roil northeast Syria, including limitations on space for democratic free expression and resistance to unpopular military conscription efforts. Abuses against local reporters have occasionally been [reported](#) in SDF-controlled territories in northeast Syria. Harassed journalists are often accused of being affiliated with opponents of the Autonomous Administration, such as the Turkey-backed opposition or Kurdish political rivals in Erbil. Restrictions on journalists defy transparency and accountability, which only harm the Autonomous Administration's already checkered reputation in communities where it is seen as a tight-knit ruling circle. Donors contemplating more expansive support to the region will be forced to navigate such issues in order to avoid being seen as propping up unpopular local entities.

## 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.

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### German Man Receives 3-Year 3-Month Sentence for Ties to Al-Nusra

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**What Does It Say?** The Düsseldorf Higher Regional Court sentenced a 31-year-old man with ties to Al-Nusra Front, a designated terrorist group, to a three-year three-month prison sentence.

**Reading Between the Lines:** European courts are increasingly being used as legal forums for crimes committed in Syria. Efforts such as these demonstrate the extent to which — for the time being — justice and accountability for the conflict may be found in Europe, not Damascus.

**Source:** [Zaman Al-Wasl](#)  
**Language:** Arabic  
**Date:** 8 December 2021

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### Mixed Verdicts for Syrian Businessmen, Companies, and Regime Intelligence Officer after European Court Rulings

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**What Does It Say?** The three businessmen were originally sanctioned for their proximity to the Government and involvement in the Marota City project. While the courts annulled Khaldoun al-Zoubi and Bashar Assi’s inclusion

on the sanctions list, Samer Foz’s appeal was dismissed.

**Reading Between the Lines:** The process for ‘de-sanctioning’, which sanctioned individuals regularly attempt, incentivises distancing themselves from the regime, but doing so is difficult given the risks of open opposition.

**Source:** [Syria Report](#)  
**Language:** English  
**Date:** 7 December 2021

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### The ‘Great Project.’ Is the Syrian regime turning into a “narco-state”?

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**What Does It Say?** The report details how Syria is increasingly viewed as a narco-state due to its centrality in the production and distribution of drugs such as captagon and hashish.

**Reading Between the Lines:** A cottage industry has sprung up around analysis of the Syrian narcotics trade. Consumers of news and analysis should beware recycled reporting, and they must understand that drug trafficking from Syria is unlikely to abate as long as Damascus remains cash strapped.

**Source:** [Al Hurra](#)  
**Language:** Arabic  
**Date:** 2 December 2021

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### Agriculture in Ras Al Ain: The Weapons of the ‘War on the Farmer’ are Electricity and Fuel

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**What Does It Say?** The report details how electricity shortages have led to irrigation issues which, in turn, have led farmers in northern Syria to plant fewer crops.

**Reading Between the Lines:** Network effects such as these are emblematic of the challenges facing Syria. In turn, a lower crop yield will likely result in increased demand for imported foodstuffs. Imports necessitate foreign currency, which is sorely lacking in Syria at the moment.

**Source:** [Enab Baladi](#)  
**Language:** Arabic  
**Date:** 7 December 2021

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### Lebanon Asks Jordan to Allow the Passage of Qatari Gas through Syria

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**What Does It Say?** Lebanon has requested that Jordan allow gas to flow from Qatar to Lebanon through Jordan. Jordan has announced that it does not see any problems with the proposal and has expressed readiness to entertain it.



**Reading Between the Lines:**

Lebanon is in dire need of power for heat and electricity. Passage through Syria still poses a problem as the electrical grid is not yet equipped to transfer power from Jordan to Lebanon.

Source: [Viral Text 24](#)

Language: Arabic

Date: 7 December 2021

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## Assad's Family Reunion Could Be a Final Victory

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**What Does It Say?** Bashar al-Assad allowed his uncle Rifaat al-Assad to return to Syria after many years in exile, helping him avoid spending four years in prison in Europe.

**Reading Between the Lines:** This ostensibly altruistic gesture may also personally benefit Bashar al-Assad by shoring up clan loyalty against a backdrop of economic hardship.

Source: [Foreign Policy](#)

Language: English

Date: 2 December 2021

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## The Evolution of Russian and Iranian Cooperation in Syria

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**What Does It Say?** The report details how Russia and Iran's diverging military and economic views on Syria are unlikely to cause a breakdown of their relationship.

**Reading Between the Lines:** The far-reaching implications of the Russia-Iran relationship, characterised by both cooperation and competition, are still unclear. However, outside observers have serially overstated the extent of Russian-Iranian disagreement in Syria.

Source: [CSIS](#)

Language: English

Date: 17 November 2021

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## In Syrian Province, babies are abandoned in streets, trash bins

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**What Does It Say?** Incidents of parents abandoning newborn babies and older children, attributed to the inability to support them, have risen to the level of social crisis in Idlib Province.

**Reading Between the Lines:** The ongoing food and economic crises in northwest Syria, linked to the collapse of the Turkish lira, is having profound humanitarian consequences. In a society that stigmatises orphans, these children could grow up with deep psychological scars as they face abuse, humiliation, and bullying.

Source: [TRT World](#)

Language: English

Date: 6 December 2021

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## Turkey and Qatar: Normalization with Assad Regime Cannot be Achieved

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**What Does It Say?** The foreign ministers of Qatar and Turkey issued statements at a joint press conference in Doha expressing their opposition to Syria returning to the Arab League.

**Reading Between the Lines:** While Qatar may seek to block Syria's re-entry into the Arab League, it is unable to stop the wider efforts at normalisation being undertaken by other Arab states, primarily Jordan and the UAE.

Source: [Syrian Observer](#)

Language: English

Date: 7 December 2021

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## Lebanon: Syrian Refugee Children Blocked from School

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**What Does It Say?** Human Rights Watch called for the extension of the 4 December school registration deadline and an end to policies that block Syrian children's access to education in Lebanon.

**Reading Between the Lines:** Access to education for Syrians in Lebanon has been an issue since the start of the Syria conflict, compounded by Lebanon's financial crisis, which has led to teacher strikes and further reductions in state capacity.

Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)

Language: English

Date: 3 December 2021

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## Deir-ez-Zor "Settlements" Reach Abu Kamal; Regime Forces Passers-by to Participate

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**What Does It Say?** Government of Syria forces established "security settlements" for residents of Abu Kamal, east of Deir ez-Zor, forcing passers-by to enter the settlement centre and register with the regime.

**Reading Between the Lines:** This is part of the ongoing reconciliation drive that began in Deir-ez-Zor city, in which the Government of Syria is targeting young men wanted for military service. The drive will likely impact the mobility of such men as they seek to avoid conscription.

Source: [Enab Baladi](#)

Language: Arabic

Date: 8 December 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.

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**Contact:**  
[syria-update@coar-global.org](mailto:syria-update@coar-global.org)



Funded by  
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