

Syria Update

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Iranian Foreign Minister to Damascus, Welcoming Arab Normalisation or Reminding of Tehran Influence?

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW

Hard-line Wartime Narrative to Be Integrated into Updated State Curriculum

The rhetoric indicates the state's approach to influencing national consciousness about the conflict. Pg 6

Residencies of Thousands of Syrians in Turkey Suspended over Address Records

Amid growing anti-Syrian sentiments, the move places thousands at risk of deportation and loss of access to state services. Pg 6

New Censorship Law: 15 Years in Prison for 'Weakening the State' on Social Media

The law will prohibit speech that contradicts the Government's line on the war and the economy. Pg 7

Constitutional Committee's Seventh Session Opens Optimistically, Ends in Disappointment

The meeting was marred by the resignation of opposition figures over step-for-step. Pg 7

UN-ESCWA Report: Remittances at 30 Percent of Syria's Real GDP

Despite rising global pressures on money transfers, remittances have become a major component of the Syrian economy. Pg 8

Clashes between Government and Local Forces in As-Sweida

As-Sweida remains a hotbed of public discontent amid ongoing protests. Pg 8

New Hotel Initiative Presents Opportunities for Local Ba'ath Officials

While lofty in its ambitions, the news indicates where investment interests lie. Pg 9

Shortly after his visit to Abu Dhabi, Bashar al-Assad receives Iranian foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian. Al-Assad is likely looking to exploit the widening rift between regional powers to maximise his political and economic gains. File photo courtesy of almayadeen.net.



WEEKLY SYRIA UPDATE DIGEST



**Crisis in Ukraine:
Impacts for Syria**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine risks upending the delicate status quo in Syria, another site of proxy conflict involving many of the same parties now at odds in Eastern Europe. This report explores the impacts that have already been felt in Syria, and it looks ahead to others that are still to come.

[READ MORE](#)



**The Future of
LGBTQ+ Syria and
the Aid Response**

LGBTQ+ Syrians face specific challenges, including healthcare disparities, legal discrimination, social prejudice, and the aid sector's unpreparedness to meet resulting needs. This report explores regional case studies to identify programming opportunities and entry points to meet these needs and empower and support LGBTQ+ Syrians.

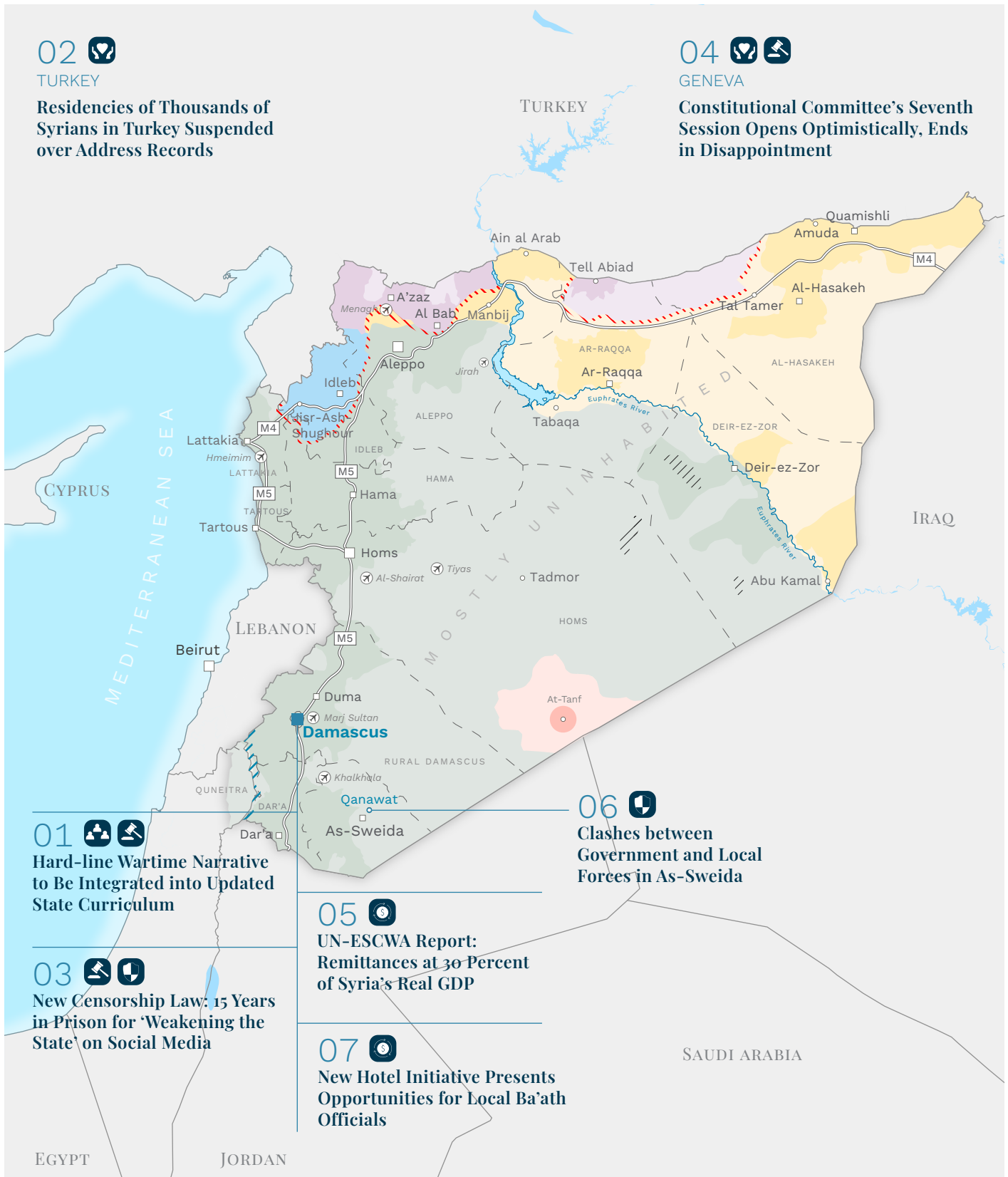
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The following is a brief synopsis of
the *In-Depth Analysis* section:

On 23 March, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and a high-level Iranian delegation in Damascus. The parties discussed the “standing cooperation between the two countries” and their continuing ambitions to implement bilateral agreements, “particularly in economic and commercial fields”. The visit came a week after al-Assad’s historic trip to the UAE, his first visit to another Arab state since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011. Regional developments may reflect the regional rivalry between Tehran and Abu Dhabi and al-Assad’s attempt to pit the two countries against each other in a bid to maximise his political and economic gains. With the Caesar Act in place, however, it is too early to tell how regional states interested in normalising relations with Assad will pursue their Syria policies.

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

- 01 The Syrian Government indicated its chosen narrative for recent events since 2011 through a series of speeches and meetings on 17 March. Politically charged and misleading rhetoric regarding the conflict present challenges for aid actors interested in supporting Syrian education in the years to come.
- 02 On 24 March, media sources indicated that the temporary protection card, "Kimlik", for thousands of Syrian refugees in Turkey had been suspended, placing them on an unknown path amid continuing threats to deport them to Syria.
- 03 An amendment approved by the Syrian parliament on March 17 added “undermining the financial prestige of the state” on social media as a crime punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Punishment over social media activity is not new in Syria, yet a parliament-approved law likely intends to add a mask of legitimacy over state oppression.
- 04 The Syrian Constitutional Committee small body convened its seventh session in Geneva last week, closing with “no meaningful progress” and palpable disappointment. Growing dissent over the UN-backed step-for-step plan has highlighted its apparent inability to speed along a conclusion to the conflict.
- 05 A new report published this year by UN-ESCWA’s National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) found that remittance inflows to Syria have become a major component of Syria’s economy and a major source for livelihoods. It highlights that although exacerbating needs have increased reliance on remittance inflows, those inflows have also become too large to ignore by aid and development actors.
- 06 On 21 March, there were clashes in As-Sweida between the local armed group "Bayraq Al-Fahed" and the state security intelligence. As-Sweida continues to be a hotbed of widespread public discontent with an unstable security environment, amid security tensions, clashes, kidnappings, different armed groups, and drug trafficking, as well as ongoing protests against Syrian government policies and the difficult living situation.
- 07 On 20 March, the Ministry of Tourism announced an 8 billion SYP initiative to develop and renovate five hotels in several Syrian cities. The properties are owned by local Ba’ath Party unions and reaffirm age-old linkages between the state and the private sector.





02 
TURKEY

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04  
GENEVA

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03  
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05 
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07 
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06 
Clashes between Government and Local Forces in As-Sweida

Population Density

-  Major city (750,000+)
 -  City (100,000+)
 -  Town (25,000+)
 -  IDP Camp
 -  Governorate
 -  Military airbase
- 100 km

LOW POPULATION DENSITY

Territorial Control

-  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 23 March, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian and a high-level Iranian delegation in Damascus. The parties discussed the “standing cooperation between the two countries” and their continuing ambitions to implement bilateral agreements, “particularly in economic and commercial fields”. The visit came a week after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad’s historic trip to the UAE, his first visit to another Arab state since the outbreak of the war in Syria in 2011. During the visit, al-Assad met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, and the ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum. Among other issues, they discussed the withdrawal of the foreign forces from Syria (possibly a veiled reference to Iranian personnel) and the possibility that the UAE will provide political and humanitarian support to Syria (see: [Syria Update: 22 March 2022](#)). Although that visit yielded no substantial commitments from the UAE, it undoubtedly contributed to the rehabilitation of al-Assad’s image and stoked debate over the prospect of Arab states normalising relations with Syria as well as Iran’s reactions to this. What is missing from the picture, however, is the broader geopolitical interests that have driven recent regional developments.

Damascus dancing on the edge

Recent developments — including al-Assad’s trip to UAE and the Iranian Foreign Minister’s visit to Syria — may reflect the regional rivalry between Tehran and Abu Dhabi and Assad’s attempt to pit the two countries against each other in a bid to maximise his political and economic gains. Ostensibly, the UAE’s bold move to thaw relations with Syria is based on what it describes as a new approach that prioritises Abu Dhabi’s interests through “diplomacy, de-escalation and engagement”. Nevertheless, the UAE may have other reasons to cautiously edge closer to Damascus, a move that took US officials off guard and prompted the Biden administration to express deep disappointment. These include the underlying tension between the US and the UAE over Washington’s prioritisation of reviving the nuclear deal with Iran above all other regional files, whatever the blowback for regional affairs (see: [Syria Update 16 November 2020](#)). Added to this is the refusal of the US to re-designate the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen as a terrorist organisation, following multiple rocket attacks by the group on UAE territory.

Al-Assad’s survival can be largely attributed to the flow of Iranian cash and militia support. Nonetheless, limited and slow engagement with the UAE, Iran’s rich rival, widens al-Assad’s margin of manoeuvre with Tehran and, more importantly, may encourage other Arab states to follow suit by embracing al-Assad publicly. How Iran will react to al-Assad’s evolving relations with the UAE is as-yet uncertain. Although Iran’s foreign minister welcomed “some Arab countries’ normalisation with Syria”, there is little to suggest that Tehran will be eager to see al-Assad inching closer to rival powers whose interests in Syrian reconstruction and investment may compete with its own.

What about normalisation?

Despite hand-wringing over some Arab states’ appetite for warming ties with Damascus, their efforts are conflicted. Saudi Arabia and Qatar oppose such moves. The UAE, Jordan, and Egypt have been the strongest proponents of some form of normalised political relations, although Jordan has hit the brakes on its efforts in recent months due to Syria’s failure to halt the increasingly violent cross-border drugs trade. Undoubtedly, al-Assad’s visit to the UAE carries a symbolic victory for the isolated president, coinciding with the 11th anniversary of the Syria uprising. Nevertheless, al-Assad needs to go far beyond mere formal meetings. While Syria’s collapsing economy could be a potential market for investment for Emirati businesses, the extent to which Abu Dhabi is willing to defy US sanctions on Syria remains to be seen. For the time being, the Caesar Act is a powerful deterrent against states willing to make further steps toward Damascus. On the political level, Syria has a long way to go before returning to the Arab League, let alone convincing Western nations to change course.

Syria’s neighbours cannot reasonably isolate the country indefinitely, however. Looking ahead, as more states upgrade relations with Damascus, it will be important to observe how they do so. The UAE has enthusiastically welcomed al-Assad on a state visit, conferring on him the legitimacy he desperately covets after a decade as a pariah. Jordan, by contrast, trod a middle ground, seeking pragmatic recognition of a neighbour whose common-sense cooperation is needed on files such as border security, refugees, and bilateral trade. King Abdullah moved carefully and avoided actions that would signal a rehabilitation of al-Assad.

“ *Aid actors should understand that coordination with officials in Syria is often a necessity, but it need not entail legitimation.* ”

In several respects the dilemma facing donor governments providing foreign assistance to Syria is similar. In key sectors such as education, WASH, and early recovery, scaled-up assistance is impossible without greater contact with Government of Syria authorities or, in some cases, the handover of project outputs to state figures. Aid actors should understand that coordination with officials in Syria is often a necessity, but it need not entail legitimation. Cooperation with authorities will likely compromise donor principles and violate red lines. However, the categorical refusal to coordinate with officials — particularly the technocrats and locally legitimate civil servants who are often community focal points — will prevent needed activities and undermine programming objectives. If the aid response in Syria is to successfully navigate rising needs and shrinking donor pledges, it must find ways of working around — and in some cases, through — authorities without supporting them.

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW



01 DAMASCUS

Hard-line Wartime Narrative to Be Integrated into Updated State Curriculum

In recent weeks, a series of events have pushed Syria's education sector into the spotlight. In a speech on 17 March, President Bashar al-Assad [urged](#) educators to “build awareness” among youth of Syria's history since 2011, and cited the need to acknowledge that “terrorist activities by the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s are directly linked to the recent conflict”. President al-Assad reiterated the importance of such topics in a meeting with Syrian teachers on the same day. This comes as the education ministry [prepares a new curriculum](#) that would include “facts” on Syria's most recent history during the conflict, referred to by the government as the “war on Syria”. The shift in rhetoric ran parallel to changes to public education financing. On 22 March, the Syrian Government announced a new plan to raise salaries of public school staff by 30 percent, following a [decision](#) in early March to impose registration fees for public school students ranging from 100,000 to 300,000 SYP (25 to 76 USD).

Dialling up disinformation

The developments signal progress by central authorities following a November 2021 [meeting](#) between educators, intellectuals, and Government officials to establish a policy for references to events since 2011 in Syrian public schools. The chosen rhetoric and expected approach in the classroom send a strong signal over Damascus' chosen narrative regarding the war, presenting challenges for donors and aid actors looking to support the education sector in Government-controlled areas in the years to come. Directly supporting public education could make aid actors complicit in spreading misleading information and false narratives, particularly in [cases](#) where aid agencies provide textbooks and materials that may contain such information. Wide-ranging needs in Syria's education system do, however, make it difficult for aid actors to forswear engagement completely. Joint donor-NGO consortiums could stipulate a more balanced reference of the conflict in order to guarantee the Ministry of Education's eligibility for assistance.



02 TURKEY

Residencies of Thousands of Syrians in Turkey Suspended over Address Records

On 24 March, media sources [reported](#) that the temporary protection card (Kimlik) for thousands of Syrian refugees in Turkey had been suspended. Text messages sent to affected Syrians said the suspension was the result of failure to update their address information. Those affected will be required to file for appointments with local immigration offices in their province of registration. These messages have raised fears that such measures pave the way for the possibility of deporting refugees to Syria amid rising anti-immigrant sentiment among Turkish communities (see: [Syria Update 7 March 2022](#)). The Turkish Immigration Directorate [issued](#) a statement on these messages, saying that it will not revoke the temporary protection of those who update their data and address, which will be reactivated immediately after the data update.

Refugees on shaky footing

The measures, though seemingly walked back by officials, have put thousands of Syrian refugees in Turkey on shaky ground amid popular calls for their deportation to Syria. Although the Immigration Directorate of Turkey has clarified that the latest measures are related to out-of-date address information, it is not immediately clear what steps will need to be taken to enable Syrians to reactivate temporary protection cards. Local sources have indicated that appointments with Immigration Directorates are not currently available, potentially due to surging demand in response to the cancellations. Furthermore, some refugees were faced with cancellation of their protection status despite having updated their data and verified their place of residence with local authorities. Until the Immigration Directorate reviews and updates their legal status, thousands of Syrians face the risk of deportation and the loss of access to state services such as healthcare and education. Syrian refugee issues in Syria's neighbouring countries will remain highly politicised, particularly as major military conflict in the country recedes into the background. Donors should seek common solutions with host governments to resolve the legal status of refugees in asylum countries and ensure that refugee concerns are removed from immediate political interests.



03 DAMASCUS

New Censorship Law: 15 Years in Prison for ‘Weakening the State’ on Social Media

On 17 March, the Syrian parliament approved an amendment to toughen penalties over what the government describes as ‘cyber crimes’. Law No. 17, which was first introduced in 2012 and amended late last year, intended to penalise behaviour that “undermines the state’s prestige” and the “prestige of the public servant” on social media platforms. The recent amendment added a new crime to the list: “undermining the financial prestige of the state”. This could include, but is not limited to, publishing information regarding the economic crisis, inflation, and the availability of goods. The law also raised penalties to up to 15 years in prison and a fine of up to 4,000 USD. This is not the first time the Government has used such regulations to address economic crises (see: [Syria Update 27 January 2020](#)). Dozens have been detained for their social media activity over the past two years, the most recent of which was of journalist Kinan Waqqaf, who worked at a pro-government newspaper.

Governance through Political Detention

Punishment over social media activity is not new in Syria, yet a parliament-approved law likely intends to add a mask of legitimacy over state oppression. Unwilling and unable to address the rising popular discontent across the country, state violence has always been the Syrian government’s go-to strategy. The new law sends a strong message to all residents in Government territories, including activists, journalists, aid workers, and ordinary citizens, that alternative narratives will not be tolerated. This will inevitably place residents in Government territories under immense security risks and will exacerbate fears of detention and disappearance. Although rarely targeting Bashar al-Assad himself, criticism of the government and local governing bodies has become common in Syrian social

“ *The new law sends a strong message to all residents in Government territories, including activists, journalists, aid workers, and ordinary citizens, that alternative narratives will not be tolerated.*

media, and increased notably as the economic crisis has worsened. A law such as this — which threatens prison for arbitrary offences — will exacerbate the detainees problem, already a chief impediment to the UN-promoted step-for-step plan. It also closes one of the few remaining windows available to peek into life inside Syria and for Syrians to reach the outside world. Aid actors should take note. They will not just see their access to information restrained, but their employees working in Government territories could also now be at risk.



04 GENEVA

Constitutional Committee’s Seventh Session Opens Optimistically, Ends in Disappointment

The Syrian Constitutional Committee small body convened its seventh session in Geneva last week, closing with “no meaningful progress” and palpable disappointment. The talks centred on four thematic areas: principles of governance, the identity of the state, symbols of the Syrian state, and the organisation and function of public authorities. Although UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen had expressed reserved optimism for the talks following the “business-like” nature of preparatory meetings with the Government of Syria and opposition small committees, the session was marred by the resignation of the spokesperson for the large body of the opposition committee, Yahya Aridi. Aridi resigned in protest over the step-for-step plan, which he characterised as a “betrayal” of the Syrian people “imposed by Pedersen”. The session was the first since October 2021, which Pedersen characterised as a “big disappointment” owing to paralysing disagreement over the framework for discussing and updating constitutional principles (see: [Syria Update 1 November 2021](#)).

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The failure of Syrian constitutional talks is nothing new, although growing dissent over the step-for-step plan is. Although Pedersen’s signature confidence-building programme is intended to shepherd a negotiated settlement to the crisis in Syria, it has come

under fire not only for its apparent inability to speed along a conclusion to the conflict, but also because sceptics point to a history of Government of Syria and al-Assad regime intransigence. The Geneva track's critics are legion (and their scepticism justified), but they should be careful what they wish for: Although calls to jettison the Geneva process altogether are mounting, alternatives are not apparent, and the fig leaf of a process grants a forum to demand reforms for regional states whose basic interests propel them towards normalised relations with Syria. There is, moreover, current debate among humanitarian actors over the use of step-for-step as a springboard for increased access and scaled-up implementation, including area-based approaches. Nevertheless, donors should understand that any approach that conditions access on concessions by Damascus faces long odds.



05 DAMASCUS

UN-ESCWA Report: Remittances at 30 Percent of Syria's Real GDP

A new report published by UN-ESCWA's National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) found that remittance inflows to Syria have become a major component of Syria's economy and a major source for livelihoods. Titled "[Syrian Remittances: Dynamics, Volume and the Future](#)", the report found that in 2017 (the latest year available for study), Syrian remittances accounted for around 30 percent of real GDP. It notes that in the time since, pressures on mobility and money transfers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the Lebanese financial crisis may have undermined access to remittances. However, with diminishing humanitarian funds and a shattered economy, the importance of remittances has never been higher. For instance, two-thirds of Syrians living in Damascus have relatives abroad, who are a major financial lifeline (see: [Left Behind: Family Separation and Its Impacts in Three Damascus Neighbourhoods](#)). As remittances grow relative to GDP and Syrians' reliance on remittance inflows increased, access to remittances has not been uniform, with variations observed along lines of gender, socio-economic class, geographic location and age, among others.

Largely Untapped Remittance Market

The NAFS report essentially highlights that although exacerbating needs have increased reliance on remittance inflows, those inflows have also become too large to ignore by aid and development actors. The report found Syria is now among the "top 15 remittance receiving countries in the world". With limited exports, remittances have become a vital source for foreign exchange. The flexibility of remittance transfer networks often made them more resilient against risks of "diversion through government misappropriation or corruption". But central authorities in Damascus have often sought to capture some of the foreign currency inflows by redirecting transfers only through official channels tied to the Central Bank (see: [Syria Update 27 January 2020](#)). The innate fluidity of informal money transfer networks, while a significant shield against capture attempts by central authorities, might have also "[hampered] the ability of policymakers to formulate effective policies" that leverage remittances as a source for livelihoods and local early recovery. As a result, the remittance market remains largely unexplored. Aid actors scrambling for resources would do well to explore untapped potential in the remittance market in a way that maximises population-level gains while also shielding it from misappropriation and corruption. This will not be an easy task, yet the potential gains might be pivotal for local early recovery and development.



06 QANAWAT, AS-SWEIDA GOVERNORATE

Clashes between Government and Local Forces in As-Sweida

On 21 March, local armed group Bayraq Al-Fahed [clashed](#) with a Government state security intelligence patrol in Qanawat, northern As-Sweida governorate, and arrested three members of the state security intelligence. The clashes concluded following the [mediation](#) of local Druze elder Hikmat al-Hijri, and the release of the state security members. This occurred only a few days after local armed groups took over [checkpoints](#) manned by the state security and National Defence Forces (NDF) in Qanawat. In parallel, on 19 March, demonstrations [took place](#) in As-Sweida Governorate to continue the popular movement (see: [Syria Update 14 February 2022](#)) and denounce the policies of the Syrian Government.

As-Sweida Governorate on alert for huge disturbance

As-Sweida is a hotbed of widespread public discontent with an unstable security environment, amid security tensions, clashes, kidnappings, different armed groups, and drug trafficking, as well as ongoing protests against Syrian government policies and the difficult living situation. The religious leadership and tribal system in As-Sweida continue to control tensions and prevent them from slipping into a large-scale escalation in the region, but the political vacuum, security fragility, and economic crisis have been accumulating factors and a spark for more local conflicts. For the time being, Damascus has been unable to meet the demands of protesters in As-Sweida, despite its soft handling of protests. Direct confrontations between local armed groups and Syrian government-backed militias are likely to recur in As-Sweida, though without developing into large-scale military operations at least in the short-term. Nevertheless, there is a looming security option through Syrian intelligence, the NDF, and other local militias, which would lead to more internal conflict in As-Sweida and increase the trust gap between the Syrian government and the community. Government attempts to suppress the continuing popular protest movement may also trigger an escalation of violence in other areas of As-Sweida governorate.



07 DAMASCUS

New Hotel Initiative Presents Opportunities for Local Ba'ath Officials

On 20 March, the new City of Jasmine Hotel in the Mazzeh district of Damascus opened as part of an 8 billion SYP (over 2 million USD) hotel investment and rehabilitation initiative between the Ministry of Tourism, private investors, and Ba'ath Party owners. The City of Jasmine Hotel will be managed by the Wael Naser and Jamil Khoury Company, which also reportedly invested in renovations and management of the nearby Youth City Hotel in 2019. Minister of Tourism Mohammad Martini announced that the project would also launch renovations and investment in five other hotels in Damascus, Aleppo, Tartous, and Lattakia

Land purchases for hotel development in the future could present housing, land, and property rights risks if found to unjustly expropriate property from residents or businesses in areas of interest.

in 2022. Two other hotels involved in the project will reportedly be owned by a French real estate chain. The project will be carried out through a rent, operate, and transfer (ROT) system in which a management company pays rent and oversees daily operations, eventually transferring duties to the property owner.

If they build it, who will come?

The initiative presents a stark example of longstanding interdependence between the Ba'ath Party and the Syrian economy, particularly its private, profit-generating components. It is unlikely that Syria's tourism industry will present a boon for investors or property owners in the near future. Nevertheless, the project indicates Ba'ath Party interest in real estate as a space to preserve or generate profits while other service-based sectors of the economy continue to degrade. Comparative to property sales, the ROT system generates profits at a smaller scale over a long period of time. The City of Jasmine's management will pay the hotel's owners an annual fee of 215 million SYP (about 55,000 USD), for the 12 years of its management. While the news does not present immediate risks, donors and aid agencies with a presence in Damascus should monitor the sector for further investment from the Party. The above-mentioned hotels have been owned by members of the Ba'ath Party since before 2011; however, land purchases for hotel development in the future could present housing, land, and property rights risks if found to unjustly expropriate property from residents or businesses in areas of interest. In the shorter term, donors and aid agencies could expect to see officials in Damascus encouraging spending and engagement in Party-owned facilities to generate profit and exposure for such investment projects.

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.

Secret prisons and detention centres in the areas of control of the Autonomous Administration in northeastern Syria

What does it say? The report investigates detention in Northeast Syria, explores the types of detention facilities present in the region and the local actors that control them, and documents testimonies over detention conditions and existing methods of torture.

Reading between the lines: While much has been written on Syrian government-run prisons, little has been known about SDF detention facilities. Establishing clear transparency and accountability procedures to address violations committed in Northeast Syria should be among the top priorities of all actors operating in the area in order to preserve long-term stability and enhance trust.

Source: Syria Untold
Language: Arabic
Date: 22 March 2022

Speed up repatriations or foreign children could be stuck in North East Syria camps for up to 30 years, warns Save the Children

What does it say? Around 18,000 Iraqi children and 7,300 minors from 60 countries live in dire conditions in Roj and Al-Hol camps in Northeastern Syria. Save the Children warns if repatriation processes are not expedited, foreign children could be stuck in Northeast Syria camps for up to 30 years.

Reading between the lines: Out of sight, out of mind: Alarming reports over the frightful living conditions inside camps in northeastern Syria have not yet nudged governments of foreign nationals living in the camps, many of whom are Western, to expedite repatriations. More advocacy efforts like Save the Children’s are needed.

Source: Reliefweb
Language: English
Date: 23 March 2022

Syrians outraged by luxurious lifestyle of Turkish-backed rebel leaders

What does it say? Videos of Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army leaders and members showing off their luxurious lifestyle have sparked controversy in the opposition-held areas in northwestern Syria, where inhabitants live in poverty.

Reading between the lines: Practices promoting accountability, transparency, and good governance are notably lacking across Syria, including in Turkish-influenced northern Syria. Military-turned-governance actors across Syria have taken advantage of relative stability to cement their control over the economy and governance in their territories rather than establish fair institutions.

Source: Al-Monitor
Language: English
Date: 22 March 2022

Revenues of thousands of dollars for the benefit of warlords ... "Sham" reveals the secrets of the fish trade in Idlib

What does it say? The fish trade is among many sectors monopolised by local traders connected to Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), in addition to imports of sugar, fuels, heating materials, feed, and poultry.

Reading between the lines: Monopoly practices are causing immense disruptions in local markets in northwest Syria at the expense of the impoverished local population. Lack of inclusion, transparency and accountability measures allows for the continued hegemony of military factions over the economy, threatening livelihoods and long-term stability in northwestern Syria.

Source: Shaam Network
Language: Arabic
Date: 22 March 2022

Proposals to turn Syrian oil into an "entry" to break the deadlock

What does it say? For the last two year, Syria' lines of conflict have been frozen with little hope for finding a solution for its political stalemate. Through turning Syrian oil into a point of consensus between the players involved in the Syrian issue, there might be a breakthrough for the political deadlock.

Reading between the lines: As the Russian invasion of Ukraine enters its second month, reaching a consensus over Syria, which unavoidably includes Russia, has become increasingly difficult. Adding to that is Damascus' unwavering stance regarding the prospect of Syrian oil, which it perceives as national wealth.

Source: Ashark alawsat
Language: English
Date: 20 March 2022

Syria using maze of shell companies to avoid sanctions on Assad regime's elite

What does it say? Official documents obtained by the Guardian reveal that the Syrian regime is setting up shell companies in a systematic attempt to avoid sanctions.

Reading between the lines: "[A] Syrian craft" is how Syria's economy minister described sanction evasion practices. The report reveals Syria's ruling elite's ability to evade some of the most severe sanctions to ever target the country, whereas the majority of the population struggles to secure their most basic needs.

Source: The Guardian
Language: English
Date: 22 March 2022

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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