

Syria Update

IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Recent Tensions Highlight the Enduring Syrian Refugee Crisis

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW

Al-Assad Gives Russia Today Interview, His First in 2022

There were few revelations, with Assad largely repeating familiar talking points. [Pg 6](#)

Saudi-led Terrorist Financing Targeting Center Sanctions Syria-based Al-Qaterji Company

The step suggests a continuation of Saudi Arabia's hard stance against the Syrian Government and particularly its ties with Iran. [Pg 7](#)

Government Increases Telecommunications Prices by 50 Percent

The prices of basic services in Syria continue to trend sharply upwards. [Pg 8](#)

Update on Turkey's Potential Military Operation in Syria

Turkey continues to threaten a new military operation in Syria. [Pg 6](#)

Israel Carries Out Multiple Strikes on Syria

Strikes damaged infrastructure at Damascus airport, causing its closure. [Pg 8](#)

New Gas Well Enters into Operation in Government Territories

The new gas field will include three wells when operations are finalised but will not increase supply enough to cover domestic needs. [Pg 9](#)

Greece's plans to expand its border wall with Turkey are emblematic of the continued hardening of borders across Europe as the Syrian refugee crisis remains pertinent more than 11 years after the outbreak of the conflict.



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.

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هذه ترجمة عربية لتقريرنا الذي يبحث في الحالات الاقليمية المشابهة لمجتمع الميم السوري من أجل تحديد فرص ودروس يمكن الاستفادة منها لدعم هذا المجتمع.

**مجتمع الميم في سوريا:
دراسات في برامج الدعم
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LGBTQ+ Syria and
the Aid Response**

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

More than 11 years after the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the refugee crisis it engendered continues to raise challenges for the EU and countries at its borders. From growing hostility towards refugees in neighbouring states to continued hardening of borders across Europe, Syrians are stuck between a rock and a hard place as return to Syria remains impossible. Recent events, and the emergence of a displacement crisis in Europe larger than any since the Second World War, highlight the continued salience of the Syrian refugee crisis and the need for a more comprehensive regional displacement framework. Resources will need to be focused on assisting refugees attempting to navigate increasingly hostile legal systems and bureaucracies in destination countries, while timely aid delivery will be needed to ensure refugees are not hardest hit by global economic slowdowns and high levels of inflation.

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

- 01 On 9 June, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad conducted a wide-ranging interview with Russia Today, a Russian state-owned media outlet — his first interview in 2022. Al-Assad signalled a softening tone toward the Gulf, hinted at coordination with the SDF ahead of a possible Turkish offensive, and, for the first time, attributed blame for Syrian's daily woes on corruption and the weakness of state institutions.
- 02 Since late May, the spectre of a Turkish military operation in northern Syria has loomed on the horizon, following multiple escalatory Turkish official statements and military deployments across the lines of conflict in the north. Despite Turkey's insistence on a new military operation in Syria, its likelihood is still uncertain.
- 03 On 6 June, member states of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) sanctioned the Al-Qaterji brothers and their eponymous Al-Qaterji Company over their involvement with facilitating the fuel and wheat trade with Islamic State (IS). As the Qaterjis already faced US sanctions over their involvement in trade with IS, the gesture by TFTC is largely symbolic, though it suggests continuing hesitance on the part of Saudi Arabia towards full normalisation with Damascus.
- 04 Multiple Israeli airstrikes allegedly targeting Iran-backed forces have hit areas in and around Damascus in recent weeks, the most recent of which damaged Damascus International Airport, leading to its closure and flights diverted. The latest airstrike highlights the continued risk to civilians and civilian infrastructure posed by Israel's campaign against Iran in Syria.
- 05 On 29 May, the Syrian Telecommunication and Postal Regulatory Authority approved a rise in prices for telecommunications services, averaging 50 per cent. The growing cost of services presents an ongoing burden for Syrians, who face deepening poverty, and will increase aid sector operational costs.
- 06 On 6 June, Syria's Minister of Petroleum, Bassam Tomeh, inaugurated the first gas well in the Zumlat al-Muhr gas field, located 40 km west of Tadmor (Palmyra) city, Homs Governorate. Even when fully operational, domestic gas production will remain far below electricity production needs.

03

RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi-led Terrorist Financing Targeting Center Sanctions Syria-based Al-Qaterji Company

02

Update on Turkey's Potential Military Operation in Syria

06

New Gas Well Enters into Operation in Government Territories

01

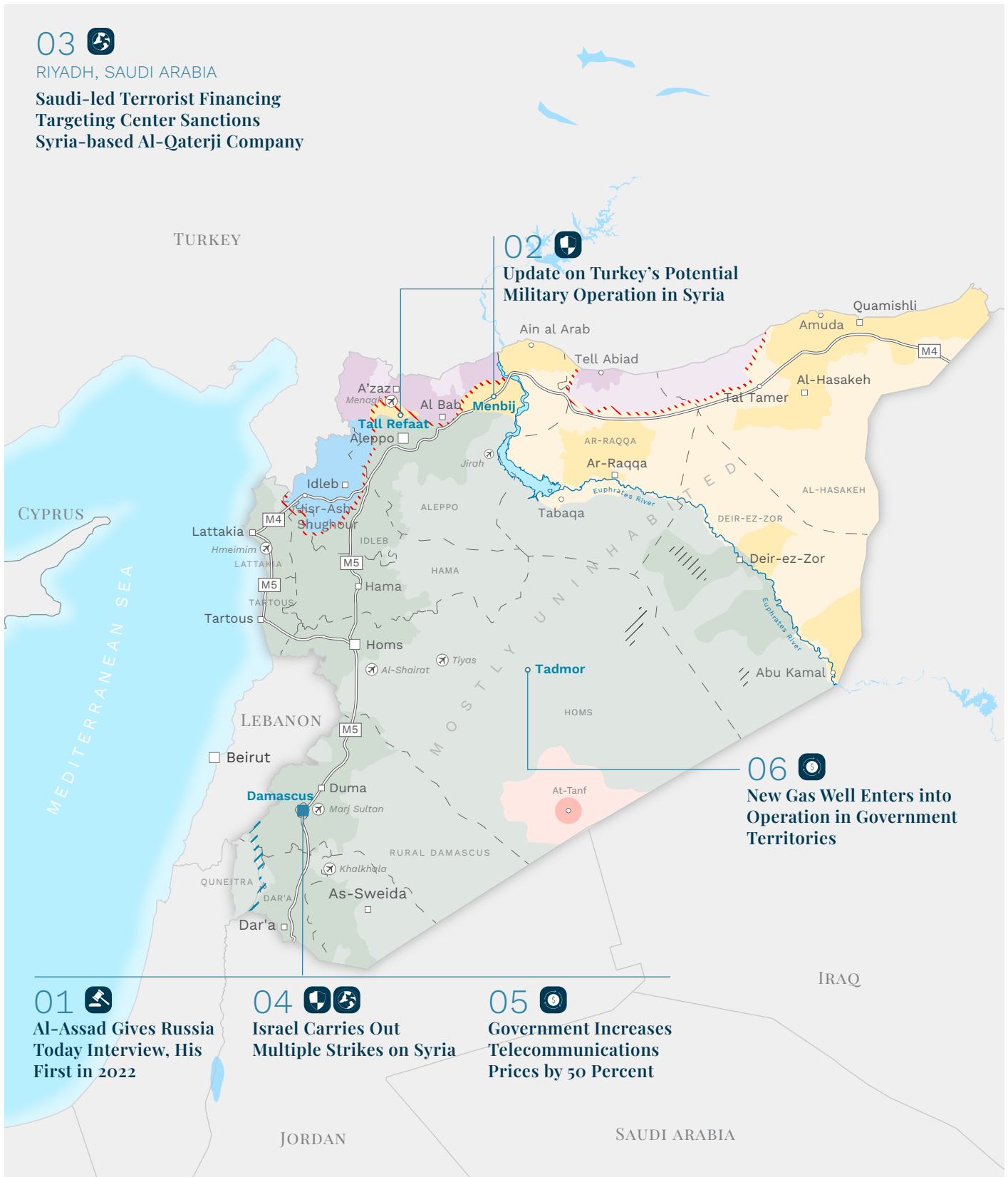
Al-Assad Gives Russia Today Interview, His First in 2022

04

Israel Carries Out Multiple Strikes on Syria

05

Government Increases Telecommunications Prices by 50 Percent



Population Density

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

100 km

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

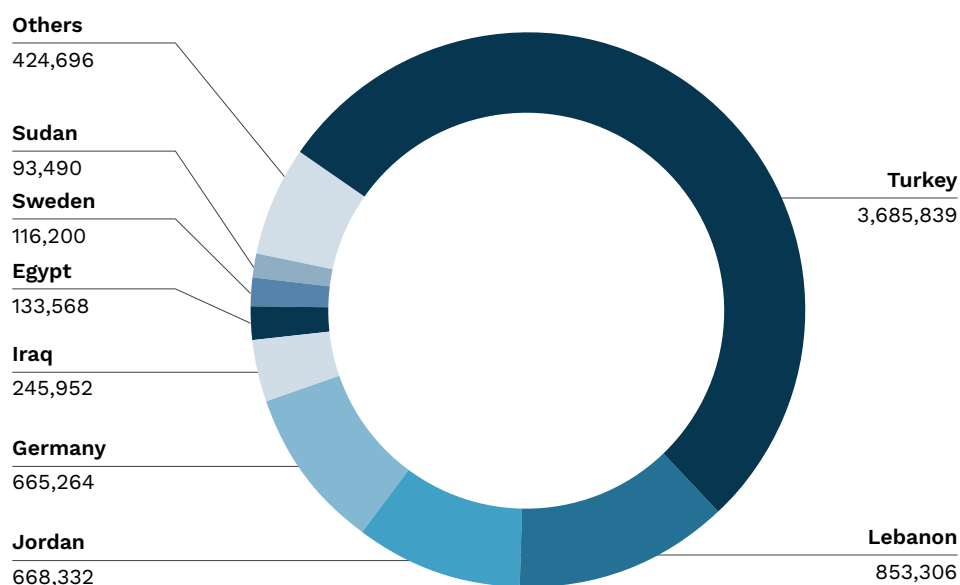
More than 11 years after the outbreak of the conflict in Syria, the refugee crisis it engendered continues to raise challenges for the EU and countries at its borders, as recent events demonstrate. From growing hostility towards refugees in neighbouring states to continued hardening of borders across Europe, Syrians are stuck between a rock and a hard place as return to Syria remains impossible. With the surge of refugees into Europe caused by Russian President Vladimir Putin's war in Ukraine having become the most prominent displacement issue for Western governments (see: [Crisis in Ukraine: Impacts for Syria](#)), international pressure to improve conditions for Syrian refugees, already at a low ebb, may become even more limited. Faced with limited options, aid actors working on the Syrian refugee issue must make the best of a bad hand and push towards a comprehensive regional displacement framework that recognises that, because Syria will likely remain unsafe for returns, aid practitioners and political actors must deal with the long-term displacement concerns of regional states, and refugees themselves, more seriously.

No security for Syrians — even outside Syria

Turkey, which hosts the highest number of Syrian refugees in absolute terms, is witnessing a climate of heightened anti-refugee sentiment as the country gears up for its 2023 presidential election. The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is increasing talk of the

'voluntary return' of Syrian refugees (see: [Syria Update 3 May 2022](#)), even as it accuses the opposition of fomenting racism for proposing [similar steps](#). Recent popular violence includes the killing of a [young Syrian man in Istanbul](#) by a group of Turkish youths on 6 June and an unprovoked attack on a [elderly Syrian woman in Gaziantep](#) — which became a headline issue among Syrians and local authorities — the week before. These incidents received significant local and international media coverage, and attitudes and policies towards Syrian refugees seem likely to shape the contours of the upcoming election.

Syrians attempting to reach Europe continue to face harsh border control, and as reported by [Frontex](#) in May, Syrians continue to be one of the most heavily represented national groups on the migration routes that have seen the largest year-over-year increases, namely the Western Balkans, the Eastern Mediterranean, and the English Channel. Since the beginning of June, 50 Syrian refugees have been [stranded](#) at the border between Greece and Turkey on an islet in the Evros river, going days without supplies, with Greece — in the middle of constructing a border wall — refusing to allow them entry and Turkey refusing to readmit them. A similar situation at the Belarus-Poland border in recent months was highlighted by a 7 June Human Rights Watch [report](#), which documents the challenging conditions faced by refugees at the border crossing. Polish border guard forces have often pushed refugees and asylum seekers back across the border



Syrian Refugees by country of Asylum

Data source: [UNHCR Refugee Statistics](#). Note that these figures are for mid-2021 and include only refugees and asylum seekers identified as such by UNHCR.

into Belarus, where they face harsh treatment and human rights abuses by the Belarusian border services. Further south, Lebanese authorities [apprehended](#) 64 would-be refugees — many of them Syrians — trying to flee Lebanon's spiralling economic crisis by sailing to Europe on 7 June.

Meanwhile, domestic responses in the EU and other Western countries have in many cases become increasingly strict. For instance, the British government has [proceeded](#) with plans to place asylum seekers — including Syrians — on a plane to Rwanda scheduled to depart on 14 June, in the first tranche of deportations under its policy of forcing asylum seekers to stay in that country. Denmark, meanwhile, has received criticism for its policy of “[zero asylum seekers](#)” and its [treatment of Syrian refugees](#), including by non-renewal of residency permits. Treatment of Syrian refugees is an issue [even in South Korea](#).

No path for safe returns

Despite the [claims](#) of the Government of Syria, and of some European [states](#), no [area of Syria](#) is safe for refugee return. While active conflict between forces with different areas of control appears to have largely frozen, tensions remain high across the north of Syria with weekly, if not daily, incidents of cross-lines violence (see: [Syria Update 7 March 2022](#)). Much of Syria's south remains unstable, with assassinations and targeted killings appearing to grow in number amid security chaos and a growing trade in drugs (see: [Syria Update 6 June 2022](#)). Islamic (IS) State continues to present a threat in central and eastern Syria, and recently claimed responsibility for bombings in Rural Damascus (see: [Syria Update 23 May 2022](#)). Even in the most seemingly stable Government of Syria-held areas, such as Damascus and the coastal governorates, arbitrary arrests and human rights abuses remain a distinct threat, as do new legal mechanisms like the so-called cyber-crimes law, despite recent amnesties (see: [Syria Update 9 May 2022](#)). Beyond this, there is widespread poverty, a cost-of-living crisis, a shattered economy, and a growing risk of hunger and famine (see: [Syria Update 10 January 2022](#)).

No solutions in sight

Recent events, and the emergence of a displacement crisis in Europe larger than any since the Second World War, highlight the continued salience of the Syrian refugee crisis and the need for a more comprehensive regional displacement framework. Syria, which [will likely](#)

[remain unsafe for returns](#) for the foreseeable future, presents a unique displacement problem, with millions of displaced persons primarily spread across three domains: Europe, neighbouring states, and within Syria itself. Long-term solutions focused on providing stability and certainty for refugees, labour market integration, and access to public services must be paired with support for addressing documentation needs and HLP rights, as well as the displacement concerns of regional states and alleviating the perceived burdens of refugee hosting.

Absent political will in Western countries and international organisations to adopt welcoming refugee policies, aid actors are in a bind with few good options. Perhaps the most critical activity for aid actors will be to continually message officials and electorates alike concerning the humanitarian consequences of a failure to adopt comprehensive displacement policies, and to sound the alarm regarding the destabilising impacts of refugee politics in neighbouring states. Resources will need to be focused on assisting refugees attempting to navigate increasingly hostile legal systems and bureaucracies in destination countries, while timely aid delivery will be needed to ensure refugees are not hardest hit by global economic slowdowns and high levels of inflation. In the long term, regional states will be hard-pressed to accept the burden of refugee hosting by force, but they may be incentivised to create more sustainable resettlement and reintegration models that serve their needs, as well as those of refugees.

In Syria itself, despite the unsafe conditions, the likelihood of increased inflows of returning refugees will have to be accounted for. Small numbers of refugees may be ousted on an individual basis from current host countries into Government-controlled territory, where they may face unwanted attention from security services and forced conscription for military-aged males — to say nothing of the challenges of survival in a context of economic meltdown. Potentially much-larger movements from Turkey into northern Syria may also occur. Returning populations are likely to struggle to adapt to a new milieu as they are resettled en masse into prefabricated camps, with a high likelihood of tensions between returnees and local communities. Protection and livelihood challenges are likely to be rampant. Practitioners must be prepared for all of these possibilities. Until shifts in policy are effected, the already decade-old Syrian refugee crisis will persist.

WHOLE OF SYRIA REVIEW



01 DAMASCUS

Al-Assad Gives Russia Today Interview, His First in 2022

On 9 June, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad gave a wide-ranging [interview](#) — his first in 2022 — to the Russian state-owned media outlet Russia Today. Touching on Syria's relations with other Arab states, al-Assad stated that he will be "happy to visit any Arab country" (see: [Syria Update 21 March 2022](#)). In relation to tension on Syria's border with Turkey, he remained insistent on the withdrawal of the Turkish "occupier" from the north while describing the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) as "agents" of the US, although he admitted, "sometimes we have to engage even with agents." Also of note, although al-Assad pinned the blame for Syria's economic malaise on sanctions, as he has done consistently in recent years, he also pointed to the economic drag caused by corruption and weak state institutions.

Letting bygones be bygones with the Gulf?

Although the interview contained no major surprises, it does advertise a subtle shift in several key areas. First, al-Assad's statements concerning relations with Gulf states widen the scope for regional rapprochement. So far, Syria has been unwilling to publicly take the first step to restore ties with the Arab neighbours who cut off relations following the 2011 uprising, arguing that they, not Syria, broke off relations in the first instance. Nonetheless, al-Assad's softening tone puts Syria on a forward-looking trajectory with its Gulf neighbours, demonstrating the extent to which Damascus covets rapprochement, and will continue to seek the validation of foreign visits as it courts investment, particularly the UAE. Second, al-Assad's comments concerning the situation in northern Syria hint at the possibility of renewed coordination with the SDF should Turkey follow through with its threat of a fresh military offensive, a [pattern](#) that has to some extent played out in the past (see: [Syria Update 30 May 2022](#)).

The final point of note, and perhaps the most important for the aid community, is al-Assad's reference to the corruption that he claims has been enabled in Syria by enfeebled state institutions. No doubt, Syrians have

been exposed to ever greater financial burdens as the ranks of civil servants have been forced by low state wages to demand transactional bribes and other pay-offs. Al-Assad's remarks on this point may resonate, but they are also likely to fuel an expectation of some action on the part of the central government. While al-Assad refrained from promising any specific reforms, his comments put the issue on the agenda. The interview may therefore be an indicator of future efforts to force through governmental reform, albeit on unknown terms.



02 MENBIJ AND TALL REFAAT, ALEPPO GOVERNORATE

Update on Turkey's Potential Military Operation in Syria

Since late May, the spectre of a Turkish military operation in northern Syria has loomed on the horizon, following multiple escalatory Turkish official statements and military deployments across the lines of conflict in the north. On 23 May, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan [stated](#) in a televised address that Turkey would soon launch a new military operation in northern Syria to combat "the terrorism threat" along Turkey's southern border (see: [Syria Update 30 May 2022](#)). On 1 June, Erdogan [announced](#) that Tall Refaat and Menbij will be the first targets of a planned Turkish military operation into northern Syria (see: [Syria Update 6 June 2022](#)). COAR is closely watching the issue, and we provide here an updated assessment of Turkey's potential incursion and a brief analysis of how actors may pursue their interests.

New developments

Turkey requires hard-to-obtain US and Russian consent to launch any operation; thus far, Washington and Moscow appear to have maintained their opposition.

- **The US refuses to give a green light.** The US has maintained its clear opposition to any Turkish military operation in northern Syria. While Washington has recognised "Ankara's legitimate security concerns on its border," it is [concerned](#) that any "new offensive would further undermine regional

stability.” The US has been clear that it is unwilling to recapitulate its approach to similar Turkish threats in October 2019, when it withdrew its forces from northern Syria and allowed Turkey to launch its Peace Spring operation, through which it established control over Ras Al Ain and Tal Abyad (see: [Syria Update 9 October 2019](#)).

- **Russia bolsters its presence but woos Turkey.** Russia's mixed messages with regards to Turkey's military plan have led to different, and sometimes contradictory, analyses. On 7 June, Russian and Syrian Government forces reportedly [bolstered](#) their presence in northern Syria, particularly in Tall Refaat, Menbij, the southern outskirts of Ain Al Arab (Kobani), and Ain Issa. On 3 June, Russian military officials in Syria reportedly gave [assurances](#) to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commander Mazloum Abdi that Moscow would oppose any Turkish operation in Syria. Nevertheless, on his 8 June visit to Ankara, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [reiterated](#) his country's “understanding” of Turkish security concerns along the Syrian border, an important change of tone. For Moscow, the ideal scenario is to pressure the SDF to cut a deal with the Syrian Government, allowing Damascus to re-establish control over Autonomous Administration areas in return for staving off Turkey's offensive. However, the SDF is insistent on maintaining distance from the Government of Syria, unless driven by force. While Abdi has openly [expressed](#) his willingness to coordinate with the Government and called on Damascus to use its air defence systems to fend off any Turkish operation, the extent to which this will lead to significant cooperation remains to be seen.

“ For Moscow, the ideal scenario is to pressure the SDF to cut a deal with the Syrian Government, allowing Damascus to re-establish control over Autonomous Administration areas in return for staving off Turkey's offensive.



03 RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi-led Terrorist Financing Targeting Center Sanctions Syria-based Al-Qaterji Company

On 6 June, member states of the Terrorist Financing Targeting Center (TFTC) [sanctioned](#) Muhammad Baraa al-Qaterji and Hussam Rushdi al-Qaterji, along with their eponymous Al-Qaterji Company, as being affiliated with terrorist organisations over their involvement with facilitating the trade of fuel and wheat between IS and the Government of Syria. The TFTC, a Gulf-led [organisation](#) based in Riyadh and co-chaired by the United States and Saudi Arabia, targeted a total of 16 individuals, entities, and groups affiliated with a variety of regional terrorist organisations in its sanctions designation. The TFTC's sanctioning of the Qaterjis comes several years after the US Treasury [imposed sanctions](#) on the brothers. Notably, while the US announcement of the TFTC sanctions mentioned only the Qaterjis' involvement with IS, the Saudi announcement also [highlighted](#) their cooperation with the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a reason for their targeting.

A setback for normalisation efforts?

As the Qaterjis already faced US sanctions over their involvement in trade with IS, the gesture by TFTC is largely symbolic with little practical or economic significance. Nevertheless, the sanctioning of prominent economic entities closely linked to the Government of Syria — Hussam al-Qaterji, for example, was a Member of Parliament until 2020 — indicates continuing hesitance on the part of Saudi Arabia towards full normalisation with Damascus. The move comes at a time when the Syrian Government is trying to restore its relations with the Gulf states and has had some success in doing so with the United Arab Emirates (see: [Syria Update 21 March 2022](#)). Iran's influence in Syria remains a major impediment to the restoration of relations between Damascus and the Gulf (see: [Syria Update 28 March 2022](#)), particularly for Saudi Arabia, due to the two countries' regional rivalry. The TFTC sanctions came shortly after the US Treasury Department [targeted](#) an international oil-smuggling and money-laundering network led by IRGC Quds Force officials, which has facilitated the sale of hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of Iranian oil.



04 DAMASCUS

Israel Carries Out Multiple Strikes on Syria

Over the past week, the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) has [reported](#) multiple Israeli airstrikes in the vicinity of Damascus. The latest strike [occurred](#) in the early morning hours of 10 June near Damascus International Airport, reportedly causing one civilian injury and damaging the airport's infrastructure. Flights to and from the airport were suspended. While Syrian state media [claimed](#) the interruptions at the airport were due to 'technical failure', other sources [reported](#) that the strikes damaged facilities, including a runway. Syrian opposition [media](#) reported that the attack hit Iranian militia positions, resulting in an unconfirmed number of casualties, all of which were described as Iranian militiamen. The attack comes just days after an Israeli airstrike in southern Damascus on the night of 6 June, and follows on the heels of the first [combined exercise](#) of the Russian and Syrian militaries since the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In April, Russian forces launched a desultory surface-to-air missile volley at Israeli warplanes after a strike near Masyaf in the northwest of the country (see: [Syria Update 16 May 2022](#)), although the engagement failed to deter the multiple Israeli airstrikes launched in May (see: [Syria Update 23 May 2022](#)).

Not your usual airstrike

To those following the Syrian conflict, Israeli airstrikes – intended to check Iranian influence and the activity of pro-Iranian militias in Syria – are nothing new. The damage to civilian infrastructure caused by the latest strikes may signal an escalation, though it is unclear whether the damaged runway was the intended target. The frequency of Israeli airstrikes can in part be attributed to Russia's preoccupation with the war in Ukraine, which has created a power vacuum that has [incentivised the strengthening](#) of Iranian and Syrian relations. Nevertheless, Russia's Foreign Ministry "[strongly condemned](#)" the "provocative attack on civilian infrastructure" and emphasised that Israeli shelling of Syrian territory is "completely unacceptable" and "in violation of the basic norms of international law", a much more forceful condemnation of Israeli strikes

than delivered on previous occasions (see: [Syria Update 13 December 2021](#)). While possibly aimed at pressuring Israel vis-à-vis its position towards Russia's war in Ukraine, a change in Russia's usually acquiescent position towards Israeli airstrikes may lead to further use of its advanced air defence systems, leading to a substantial change and escalation in the nature of Israel's interventions in Syria. The possibility of an escalated Israeli campaign against Iranian and Iran-linked infrastructure in Syria should be taken seriously by aid actors and factored into planning.



05 DAMASCUS

Government Increases Telecommunications Prices by 50 Percent

On 29 May, the Syrian Telecommunication and Postal Regulatory Authority [approved](#) an increase in prices for telecommunications services, averaging 50 percent. The price increases were reportedly [requested](#) by Syria's three main telecommunications companies – Syriatel and MTN (mobile service providers) and the state-owned Syrian Telecommunications Company (STC; fixed telephone lines) – ostensibly to allow them to improve their services. While the director of the STC marketing department, Firas al-Baden, [said](#) that the price increases were necessary to avoid "a large deficit in the balance of the telecommunications sector", Syrians on social media questioned this, contrasting the significant profits of the telecommunications companies in recent years with their continuing poor service.

Same old story

The increased cost of services exacerbates the financial burden of Syrians, who face a serious economic crisis and deepening poverty. The telecommunications price increase came shortly after prices for "instant" passports were nearly [tripled](#), and follows recent increases in fuel (see: [Syria Update 23 May 2022](#)) and electricity prices (see: [Syria Update 3 May 2022](#)), as the cash-strapped Government of Syria looks to bolster its rev-

venues and reduce its spending on subsidies (see: [Syria in 2022: New Aid Approaches for an Evolving Crisis](#)). While Wafa Telecom, a new mobile network operator, is set to enter Syria's telecommunications market later this year (see: [Syria Update 28 February 2022](#)), it is unlikely to lead to substantial improvements in service delivery, and will likely rather function as a new source of revenue extraction for the STC, which is its third-largest shareholder. Alongside the worsening of the Syrian population's cost-of-living crisis, service price increases and the removal of subsidies will increase aid actors' operational costs within the country, requiring additional funding or budget reallocations.



06 TADMOR, HOMS GOVERNORATE

New Gas Well Enters into Operation in Government Territories

On 6 June, Syria's Minister of Petroleum, Bassam Tomeh, inaugurated the first gas well in the Zumlat al-Muhr gas field, located 40 km west of Tadmor (Palmyra) city, Homs Governorate. The field was [reportedly discovered](#) in late 2021, and is the first new gas field developed by the Government of Syria since 2009. With a capacity of [250,000 cubic metres per day](#) (cbmd), the well entered operation after it was connected to the network linking nearby Al-Shaer gas field, Syria's largest, with the Ebla Gas Processing Plant, also west of Tadmor. Its capacity is expected to increase to 600,000 cbmd by the end of 2022, when two other wells in the field will become active.

A drop in an ocean of need

The most pressing application of extracted gas in Syria is for electrical power generation, but the new wells will meet only a fraction of the requirement. The new gas field, when fully operational and properly integrated into the supply network, could marginally improve the availability of electricity in the country, but local production of gas remains — and will remain — far below needs. At the end of 2021, Syria [reported](#) a need for 20 million cbmd of gas, with only 7.5 million cbmd

available from local production. Power networks and many plants have been damaged or fallen into disrepair during the course of the war; their rehabilitation and operation often require scarce foreign investment. Russian and Iranian investors are the most dominant actors in the energy sector in Syria, and contracts have also been announced with Emirati companies. However, projects [often fail to be implemented](#), and the inconsistency and lack of transparency in government reporting restrict independent analysis. Rehabilitation of the Syrian energy sector is thus unlikely to make significant progress in the current political conditions and, new wells or not, aid actors should not expect major improvements in the sector anytime soon.

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.

The Best Bad Option: The Case for Leaving Syria

What does it say? Given Assad’s victory, the defeat of IS, and the unviability of a Kurdish statelet, the US should withdraw from Syria, allowing Turkey to take its place — and provoking conflict between Turkey, the Government of Syria, and Russia.

Reading between the lines: While from a certain perspective, this argument seems like reason, another perspective is that the current US footprint in Syria is relatively low-cost and, while not a great source of leverage against the Government and its allies, is at least a factor in preventing the situation from reverting to active conflict — which would be a likely outcome of the article’s recommendations.

Source: [The National Interest](#)
Language: English
Date: 31 May 2022

European Union reaffirms its support towards WFP’s cash assistance programme in Syria amidst deteriorating socio-economic conditions

What does it say? The European Union has contributed, or agreed to contribute, EUR 9 million in cash assistance to

the WFP, which will aid with urgent assistance to 375,000 out of the estimated 14.6 million Syrians in need.

Reading between the lines: Between the economic crisis and the global food shortage caused by the Russian war in Ukraine, the numbers of people in need in Syria will likely continue to rise — making emergency food assistance an ever more urgent priority for donors.

Source: WFP
Language: English
Date: 5 June 2022

Stolen Ukrainian wheat sold by Russia to Syria: reports

What does it say? A shipload of wheat stolen from Ukraine by Russia was offloaded and sold to Syria at the port of Lattakia, according to an investigation by Franceinfo published 5 June.

Reading between the lines: The global food supply crisis being caused in large part by Russia’s war in Ukraine is likely to get worse before it gets better, and Russia is likely to continue to take advantage of it by selling stolen Ukrainian wheat to those who will buy — including Government-controlled Syria.

Source: [The New Arab](#)
Language: English
Date: 5 June 2022

Syria’s eastern factions unite in the Liberation and Construction Movement: A conversation with the leadership

What does it say? A number of Syrian National Army factions with roots in Syria’s east united into an umbrella group, the “Liberation and Construction Movement” (LCM), earlier this year. This article is the transcript of an interview in April with its leadership, covering the group’s reasons for establishment and its vision for the future.

Reading between the lines: While the formation of the group may indeed have some marginal impact on the work of aid actors in areas controlled by the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army, the history of factionalism among the armed opposition is good reason to have a healthy scepticism about the LCM’s prospects for effecting any serious change.

Source: MEI
Language: English
Date: 2 June 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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