

# RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'S

PEACE DIPLOMACY:  
THE CASE OF SYRIA







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RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'S PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF SYRIA

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## FOREWORD

The upholding and restoration of international peace and security are considered one of the fundamental objectives of the current international order. However, this objective is held back by turmoil and conflict at local, regional, international, and global levels, with the disorder quickly proliferating within the current international order. The displacement of millions of innocent civilians, particularly women and children, the destruction of cities, and the erosion of state power lead to profound humanitarian crises. Thus, terrorist organisations exploit the power vacuums that may arise in such a context, expanding their networks while contributing to instability and insecurity.

The Republic of Türkiye, drawing strength and inspiration from its past, is mobilising all its resources to shape a future that is more humane and equitable. Türkiye has been on the right side of history, enacting policies that derive their strength from the nation and having a voice in the current century. Moreover, the guiding principles of our foreign policy align with our vision of global influence, which is woven with our national and domestic approach. Our foreign policy approach, which has been refined in the national, regional, and international arenas, lies at the core of our vision of global influence, “The Century of Türkiye.” Our vision of global influence fundamentally places humanity and meaning at the heart. The Republic of Türkiye, as part of its people-oriented political approach, actively takes part in regional developments, evokes compassion, and formulates innovative policies to address issues in light of the principles that have been passed down from its long-standing history. Turkish Foreign Policy, in broad terms, ensures the nation’s interests are protected in the face of a volatile regional and international context of chaos, with the objective of establishing sustainable development and peace.

Progress achieved in Syria today is a prime illustration of the relevance of Türkiye’s human-centred policy. Our Syria policy hinges on fighting terrorist organisations that originate on Syrian territory and ensuring the complete elimination of any threats to our national security and interests. Additionally, our primary objective is to facilitate the secure, voluntary, and dignified repatriation of our Syrian brothers and sisters, to advance measures that promote stability, and to achieve a lasting solution based on the territorial integrity of Syria. These policies reflect our outstanding efforts to guarantee

the peace, prosperity, and security of our august nation. Furthermore, we stress that in order to stabilise Syria, the premise that "Syria belongs to Syrians" must be recognised across all spheres. For this reason, we prioritise the elimination of any and all terrorist organisations that may emerge in Syria. We believe it is critical for a sovereign state to ensure that legitimate state authority is effective across all parts of Syria, that the unitary state structure is established, and that territorial integrity is preserved.

Alongside addressing national security concerns, Türkiye's fight against terrorism aims to establish peace and stability in the region. That we do not permit the creation of a terror corridor across our southern borders is indicative of our sensitivity on the issue. Within the framework of the right of self-defence as outlined in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, Türkiye has implemented all necessary measures to combat terrorist organisations, including the PKK/YPG and DAESH. Throughout the 13-year Syrian conflict, we did not leave any of our Syrian brothers and sisters at the mercy of terrorist organisations. Nor did we allow any attempt that could compromise our national security. For this reason, I can clearly state that Türkiye's presence in the region is the most significant guarantee to keeping peace and stability, thanks to our people-oriented, active foreign policy.

Thirteen years later, a new chapter of hope, peace, and security has begun for Syria. Beyond this threshold lies brotherhood, sisterhood, and brighter days. We hope that Syria will shortly attain the peace, stability, and security that it has been yearning for. As it has done thus far, Türkiye will continue to bear its share of responsibility in order to establish peace and security and win the hearts and minds of the people. As I have consistently emphasised, our conception of the state has never been founded on a material understanding. In contrast, it has been the embodiment of a set of values that prioritise substance and meaning and are founded on justice and conscience. In the new era in Syria, we will continue in our course without compromising this understanding.

We hope that this new era will usher in a world we have been longing for, which has achieved tranquility, peace, and security and has been freed from terrorism. We have witnessed and continue to witness a series of monumental historical events, including the toppling of the Baath regime in Syria, which in a sense paved the way for the realisation of this long-held hope of ours. The Syrian process has taught us that we must never give up hope. Hence, I am confident that this book, prepared by the Presidency's Directorate of Communications, which lays out our Syria policy from a historical standpoint, will advance our cause of humanity. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to the creation of this book, which will serve as an invaluable reference for helping readers understand our Syrian foreign policy thus far.



PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN







# INTRODUCTION

Syria, a country situated in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, has been home to numerous civilisations and cultures throughout its history. Many diverse ethnic and religious groups continue to coexist today. Among these are the Arabs, Turkmen, Kurds, and Levantines, as well as Druze, Ismailis, Imamis, Nusairis, Assyrians, and Armenians. Syria, which has a multicultural population with diverse religious views and has stood through numerous invasion attempts throughout its history, is a country situated at the heart of the Middle East. For this reason, any incident in Syria has immediate repercussions in the entire region. Syria has undergone the sovereignty and rule of a variety of civilisations and cultures, such as the Hittites, Arabs, Ottomans, Persians, Romans, and Byzantine Empires. It is bordered by Iraq to the east, Jordan to the south, Israel and Lebanon to the west, and Türkiye to the north, northwest, and along the Mediterranean. Therefore, it would be inaccurate to assume that Syria would remain unaffected in case of an issue or political crisis in the aforementioned countries or at the regional level.

The Arab Spring, which started in Tunisia on December 18, 2010, spread across the Middle East and North Africa in a short time and was engraved in the international relations literature as a popular movement of opposition groups protesting against the governments in their countries. It was sparked in Tunisia when a street vendor set himself on fire after his stand was confiscated. So much so that Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, who had been in power for 23 years, resigned in the aftermath of these uprisings, and the public brought the Ennahda Party to power through the elections.

Egypt was the second destination of the Arab Spring. A young man named Khaled Said circulated online the images of police chiefs and drug dealers sharing revenues in Egypt. The incident rapidly spread across the country, with people rising up and protesting against it. The protests grew increasingly violent starting on January 25, 2011, and culminated on February 11, 2011, when Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled the country for 30 years, stepped down, marking the end of the Arab Spring movements in that country.

The third—and, in fact, the bloodiest destination—of the Arab Spring was Libya. On February 15, 2011, a group of around 200 protesters demonstrated in front of Benghazi Police Station, demanding the resignation of Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi, who had been in power for 42 years. Unlike in Egypt and Tunisia, Gaddafi chose to fight against the protests instead of stepping down from power. Despite the reactions in the international community, the Gaddafi regime resorted to violence against the people involved in the protests. In response to the escalating situation, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervened pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 and fought alongside the opposition against Gaddafi. Ultimately, Gaddafi was lynched to death by the opposition in Sirte, his birthplace.

The final destination of the Arab Spring is Syria, with which Türkiye shares a 911 km border along with a common history, kinship ties, culture, language, religion, customs, and traditions. Because Syria shares a long land border with Türkiye, any conflict within the country will directly affect Türkiye. And that has been the case. In Daraa, Syria, a group of secondary school students wrote, “The people want the regime to fall,” on the school wall. The riots escalated and spread to other provinces following the arrest of students. The demonstrations started off as simple protests. Nevertheless, when the opposition took up arms in response to the Assad regime’s violent practices in three towns in Homs, the uprising assumed a different dimension. Opposition groups, subsequently, have engaged in combat with the Baath regime law enforcement forces all over Syria in an attempt to topple the regime. Those who did not take part in the conflicts, believing they would not be able to secure the right to live in Syria, began migrating to neighbouring countries, primarily Türkiye, along with Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan. The initial immigration movement to Türkiye commenced with the arrival of 252 immigrants on April 29, 2011.

In the simplest terms, today’s world can be described as an age of uncertainty and chaos. In such a world order, the human being is deemed a commodity, while humanitarian and moral values are disregarded. These successive occurrences in every corner of Syria revealed the immoral and unscrupulous attitude of the Baath regime, which considered millions of individuals as commodities. In such a chaotic environment where global governance mechanisms have failed, Türkiye has hosted millions of displaced Syrians as a natural act of being a benevolent country under the visionary and strong leadership of our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Moreover, Türkiye has offered humanitarian aid, including food and shelter, along with services pertaining to pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher education, health, agriculture, energy, municipal services, infrastructure, etc. through its public institutions and organisations, as well as non-governmental organisations, to millions of Syrian opponents who were unable to seek refuge in Türkiye and remained in the south of Türkiye and north of Syria, areas where security has been established by Türkiye.

In the face of substantial humanitarian losses and economic devastation in almost every conflict zone in its region and geography, Türkiye has embraced a stance in consideration of humanity’s collective conscience, voicing the need for resolving conflicts via peaceful means and methods on every international platform. Additionally, Türkiye has been implementing policies that prioritise equitable burden and responsibility sharing, particularly in the context of Syria. From the first day of the migrations onwards, Türkiye has served as the protector of over 4 million Syrians. It should be noted that, to this end, over \$40 billion have been allocated since 2011.

On December 8, 2024, the opposition captured the capital city, Damascus, marking the end of the 61-year Baath regime. Syria’s deposed leader Assad, who has caused millions

of his own people to become refugees and asylum seekers for years, has himself become a refugee by seeking asylum in Russia. The newly established government in Syria is determined to cooperate with Türkiye in the reconstruction of Syria and the elimination of terrorist elements in the region. Likewise, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has repeatedly expressed Türkiye's commitment to ensuring honourable, safe, and voluntary returns and restoring Syria's development in all areas (politics, economics, security, etc.). As a result, Türkiye is actively working on the ground to shape Syria's future, along with all its public institutions and organisations, civil society organisations, and the private sector.

Türkiye also urged the international community to recognise Syria's new legitimate government and support the new administration's reconstruction efforts. Türkiye has also worked to foster a sense of global solidarity around the idea that "Syria belongs to Syrians," aiming to restore the country's territorial integrity. Türkiye will make every effort to establish a joyful, peaceful, and prosperous Syria that embraces all ethnic, religious, and sectarian groups. Recognised as one of the most important actors in regional and global affairs, Türkiye is dedicated to international peace. Türkiye has already demonstrated this in the Russia-Ukraine war, the resolution of the grain corridor crisis, the establishment of a cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas, and the resolution of the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict.

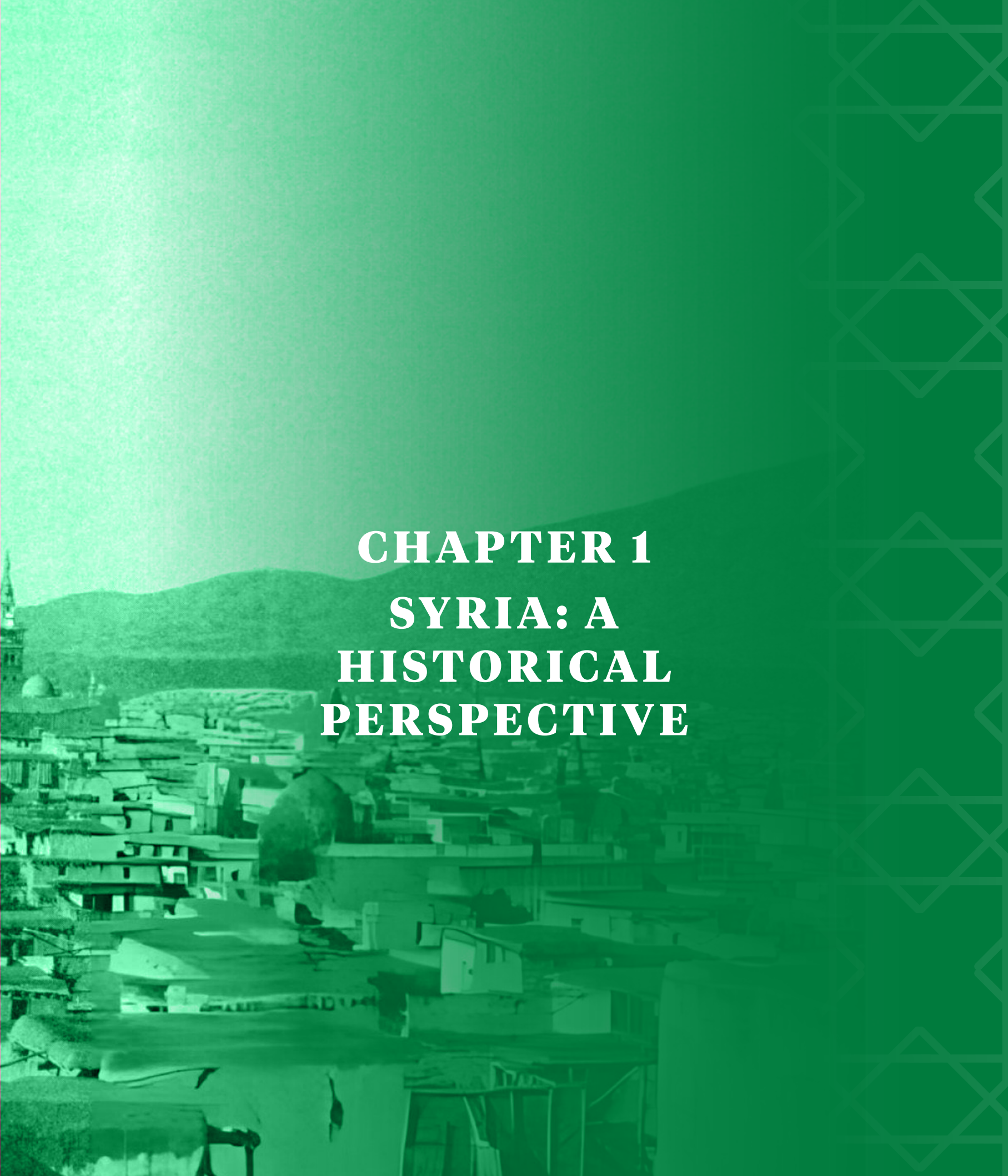
The international community appreciates Türkiye's constructive role and contribution to the pursuit of regional stability. Türkiye's stabilising role has cemented its reputation as a compassionate power in the international community. The situation in Syria is the latest illustration of Türkiye being on the right side of history through its human-centred, meaningful foreign policy. Türkiye's policy of safeguarding Syria's territorial integrity and unitary structure, with which it has deep historical ties, as well as preventing terrorist organisations such as DAESH and PYD/PKK from influencing the region's future, has begun to yield results.

Today, Syrians who have been in Türkiye since 2011 are gradually returning home. These returns will increase over time as the country establishes a climate of security, prosperity, and peace. Given that 52,622 Syrians have returned to their country in one month since Considering that 95,322 Syrians returned to their country from December 9, 2024 until January 4, 2025 and 835,325 Syrians in total between 2017 and 2025, it is believed that the projection of an increase over time will materialize. Syrians returning to their home country will undoubtedly contribute to its development. Syrians who have completed their higher education during their stay in Türkiye, for example, can work as civil servants and bureaucrats in public institutions, academics and administrative staff in universities, and so on as part of their country's reconstruction efforts. A concrete example of this is Assad Hassan al-Shaibani, the new Foreign Minister of Syria, who earned a master's degree in political science and international relations from a

foundation university in Türkiye and is now pursuing a PhD in the same programme at the same university. Another example is the appointment of Azzam Garib, who earned a master's degree from a Turkish state university, as Governor of Aleppo. As evidenced by these examples, during its 13-year hosting period, Türkiye has effectively trained qualified human resources, or alternative elites, who will assist in the construction of the new Syria.

This book discusses all aspects of Türkiye's policies towards Syria. The chapter headings are carefully elaborated, and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's peace diplomacy initiatives are meticulously presented to the reader. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is undoubtedly regarded as the most trustworthy and experienced leader in today's global politics, who observes international law in crisis and conflict environments not only for his own country but also for all sovereign states and strives to establish peace and stability at regional and global levels. This work, which reveals Türkiye's deep knowledge of peace diplomacy approaches under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan from an intellectual perspective, presents Türkiye's position in global politics to the international public.



The image is a book cover with a green tint. It features a photograph of a cityscape with a mountain in the background. On the right side, there is a vertical decorative border with a repeating geometric pattern. The title is centered in white, bold, uppercase letters.

**CHAPTER 1**  
**SYRIA: A**  
**HISTORICAL**  
**PERSPECTIVE**



## 1. Syria: A Historical Perspective

Syria has been home to many civilisations throughout history and has retained political and cultural importance due to its strategic location. Syria, which held a unique position within the Ottoman Empire due to its proximity to trade routes and holy lands within a centralised administrative structure, fell under French mandate after World War I. Syria, whose borders were redrawn during French rule and whose social structure was shaped by regional divisions, experienced significant changes following independence as a result of the Baath regime's ideological influence. This transition from Ottoman rule to modern statehood had a significant impact on Syria's political, social, and economic structures, leaving a historical legacy that continues to shape the country's identity today.

### 1.1. Pre-Baath Syria

#### 1.1.1. Syria during the Ottoman Period

Sultan Selim I's campaigns between 1516 and 1517 brought many Arabic-speaking regions under Ottoman control, including Syria, Egypt, and the Holy Land. Thus, in addition to defending the Islamic world's borders, the Ottoman Empire took on the role of the protector of Mecca and Medina. Sultan Selim I captured Aleppo first, followed by Damascus on September 27, 1516, making Syria a strategically important location for the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottomans' primary goals in Syria were to facilitate trade and economic life by providing internal security, as well as to ensure the safety of pilgrimage caravans. For this purpose, Damascus was designated as the centre for pilgrimage caravans, and security was enhanced by the construction of fortresses and bastions along the route. Local leaders who posed a threat were deposed, while those loyal to the state retained their positions.

Even though the majority of the local powers in the region pledged their allegiance to the Ottoman Sultan, certain Arab cities were not entirely under Ottoman rule. Bedouin, Turkmen, Druze, and Nusayri communities' adaptation to Ottoman rule varied within the order inherited from the Mamluks. The Ottoman State was able to directly control the land and sea routes traversing Anatolia; however, this control was mostly limited to major cities, grain fields, and coastal harbours. Controlling mountainous and desert regions was considered a lower priority due to their geographical challenges and low revenues. Cooperation with local landowner families was established, and taxes were regularly collected in these regions to provide safe passage for merchants and armies.

Nevertheless, the balance between the Ottomans and the local powers was occasionally disrupted.

During the Ottoman period, Syria played an important role as a strategic transit route as well as a hub of trade and religious practices. The administrative order, architectural works, and economic revival that the Ottomans introduced to the region left indelible marks on the historical development of Syria. This period was characterised by Syria's multinational structure, where various religions and cultures coexisted in harmony under the Ottoman policy of tolerance.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the Ottoman State's decreasing power and the growing influence of European states on the Ottoman State served as important factors that sparked the process of Syria's secession from the Ottomans. During this period, Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Governor of Egypt, revolted against the Ottoman State in 1831 and took control of Syria for a short period; however, the Ottoman State reclaimed the region in 1840.

World War I (1914-1918) played a decisive role in Syria's secession from the Ottoman State. During the war, Britain and France signed the Sykes-Picot Agreement to divide the Ottoman lands. This agreement resulted in Syria falling under France's sphere of influence. Meanwhile, with Britain's support, Arab leaders revolted against the Ottoman State. With the assistance of the British, Sharif Hussein and his son Faisal I opposed the Ottoman State during the Arab Revolt, which accelerated Syria's independence.

In 1918, the Ottoman armies had to retreat from Syria as a result of their defeat in World War I. Following the war, in 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres officially concluded the Ottoman rule in the region, which lasted for nearly four centuries, and Syria became a French mandate.

The secession of Syria from the Ottoman State resulted from factors such as the weakening of the Ottoman State, the interests of the great powers in the region and the rise of Arab nationalism. During the Ottoman period, Syria flourished as a hub of religious and commercial practices and had a multinational presence; however, it seceded from Ottoman rule due to the political imbalances resulting from World War I and the influence of European powers. This process marked a significant milestone in Syria's history.

### **1.1.2. Period of the French Mandate in Syria**

The Sykes-Picot Agreement, which was concluded between Britain and France in 1916 after World War I, was a secret agreement regulating the post-war division of the Ottoman State's lands. In accordance with this agreement, Syria and Lebanon were

ceded to France's sphere of influence. The defeat of the Ottoman State at the end of the war and the Treaty of Sèvres signed in 1920 led to the official termination of Ottoman sovereignty over Syria. Following the San Remo Conference held in the same year, the League of Nations assigned Syria and Lebanon to the French mandate.

The French mandate officially entered into force in 1923. France shaped the mandate administration in line with two main objectives: maintaining direct control over the region and establishing a political order aligned with its interests. In this context, the French adopted a sectarian and ethnic-based administration model in Syria in order to fragment the country's social structure. The administrative structure of Syria is divided into smaller regions: Lebanon, Aleppo, Damascus, the Jabal al-Druze, and the Alawite State. This administrative fragmentation rendered it difficult for the Syrian people to unite around a common national identity and sought to facilitate French control over the region.

Political and military coercion served as the foundation for the French mandate. In order to maintain their presence in the region, the French deployed a strong military force in Syria and granted local leaders restricted authority. In addition, the French administration also aimed to promote economic and social development in Syria by investing in infrastructure projects and reforms in education. Yet, these policies were usually implemented within a framework favouring French interests.

### ***Resistance of the Syrian People and Struggle for Independence***

During the period of the French mandate, the Syrian people engaged in a struggle for independence. The Great Syrian Revolt, which took place between 1925 and 1927, marked one of the most important resistance movements in this period. Spearheaded by Sultan al-Atrash, the revolt was sparked in the Jabal al-Druze and rapidly spread to other regions. The French forces resorted to aggressive measures to suppress it and undertook a severe military intervention. On the other hand, the revolt paved the way for empowering the national movement in Syria and developing a social consciousness that opposed the French mandate.

In the 1930s, the French administration was compelled to introduce certain political reforms in the face of increasing national pressures. In 1936, an independence treaty was signed between France and Syria; however, this treaty could not be fully implemented due to France's participation in World War II. France maintained its military and political control over Syria.

### ***End of the French Mandate***

In the aftermath of World War II, criticisms of the mandate system increased worldwide, and independence movements gained momentum. In 1941, Syria made

a significant stride towards its independence from French occupation. Nevertheless, France's political and military interventions lasted until 1946. On April 17, 1946, Syria ultimately achieved full independence with the withdrawal of French forces from the region. Subsequently, this date became known as "Independence Day" in Syria.

The French mandate was a period of significant development, encompassing the establishment of Syria's borders and the foundation of its state structure. These developments continue to have multifaceted effects to this day. During that period, the French administration, while on the one hand implementing infrastructure and educational reforms in Syria, fuelled regional and sectarian divisions on the other, thereby laying the groundwork for long-term instability. Nevertheless, the Syrian people's struggle for independence reinforced their sense of national identity, culminating in full independence in 1946. This period left lasting imprints on Syria's political and social history.

### **1.1.3. Struggle for Independence and Power**

The independence process in Syria included a challenging period that commenced with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I and persisted under French mandate. This was a time when the political and social structure of Syria underwent a transformation, its struggle for independence gained strength, and Arab nationalism was on the rise.

After World War I, in line with the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Syria came under the mandate of France. The French administration relied on sectarian and regional divisions to govern Syria. This policy of "divide and rule" exacerbated local divisions on the one hand and fuelled Arab nationalism on the other. The idea of the Arab world's liberation and unification resonated strongly with intellectual circles and political leaders, particularly in Syria, and served as the ideological foundation for the independence movements.

In 1920, a short-lived Arab Kingdom was founded in Damascus under the leadership of Emir Faisal I, son of Sharif Hussein, but it was dissolved after the French forces triumphed at the Battle of Maysalun. The defeat caused significant disappointment in the Arab world; however, it concurrently strengthened the idea of independence and nationalism among the Syrian people.

During the 1930s, Arab nationalism was pivotal in Syria's struggle for independence. During this period, the idea of Arab nationalism emerged as a call for not only Syrian independence but also for the unity and freedom of the Arab world. The idea grew stronger, particularly in response to France's divide-and-rule policies during the mandate. In 1935 and 1936, France confronted political and economic instability domestically and in its mandated territories. This created an opportunity for the Syrians, setting the stage for their pursuit of independence. Despite its prolonged efforts

to suppress Syrian demands for independence through pressure and force, France was compelled to initiate negotiations with the Syrians for independence in early 1936. The negotiations concluded with the signing of a treaty of independence between France and Syria on September 9, 1936. Nevertheless, due to the lack of ratification of the Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence by the French legislature, France did not withdraw from Syria.



Syrian Delegation is signing the France-Syria Treaty in 1936 in Paris.

World War II expedited Syria's quest for independence. The weakening of the French administration during the war, coupled with the declaration by the Free France movement, led by Charles de Gaulle, that it would recognise Syria's independence, provided momentum for nationalist movements. During this period, Arab nationalism emerged as a concept of resistance not only to the French mandate but also to any intervention by Western powers. In 1940, following the fall of France in World War II, Syria fell under the authority of the Vichy Government. However, it was later occupied by British and Free French forces in July 1941. Syria proclaimed its independence in the same year, yet it was not until January 1, 1944, that it was internationally recognised as an independent republic. In January 1945, the Syrian government took a pivotal step towards becoming an independent state by committing to establish a national army. In February, Syria persisted in its endeavours to strengthen its international presence by declaring war on the Alliance States. Subsequent to these developments, it was recognised as a founding member of the United Nations in March, signifying its sovereignty. In April of the same year, Syria ratified the Charter of the Arab League, reaffirming its dedication to the principles of the Arab League and regional solidarity.

In May 1945, extensive demonstrations were orchestrated in Damascus and Aleppo advocating for independence, triggering a vigorous response from the French mandate administration. The French resumed their bombardment of Damascus in an attempt to regain control of the situation. Subsequently, following British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's threat to deploy military forces to Damascus, the French administration stepped back, and General Charles de Gaulle declared a ceasefire. This process marked a significant turning point in Syria's pursuit of independence. Consequently, April 17, 1946, signified the formal date of the complete withdrawal of French forces from Syria and the establishment of the nation as an independent republic. This was regarded as a victory not solely for Syria but for the entire Arab world. After establishing its independence, Syria prioritised the idea of Arab nationalism in its foreign policy and, in this context, became a founding member of the Arab League.



The people of Deir ez-Zor, Syria, celebrate their independence in 1946.

The Syrian Republic, founded after independence, formulated its policies in accordance with Arab nationalism. During this period, Arab nationalism served as both an ideology and a framework that shaped Syria's national identity. Syria has sought to lead the Arab world at the regional level and has actively participated in collective Arab causes, particularly the Palestinian issue. Nonetheless, the country's ethnic and sectarian diversity has occasionally presented obstacles to the political stability of the young republic.

The establishment of an independent Syrian Republic is not only a political accomplishment but also a tangible reflection of the Arab world's commitment to independence and unity. Arab nationalism, which experienced a surge during the French mandate, formed the ideological foundation of the Syrian people's struggle for independence and became the determining factor in the country's political trajectory

following the independence. That period is acknowledged as a turning point in the modern history of Syria.

Several political movements, including the Baath Party, emerged in Syria during the 1950s as a result of the ideologies of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism. While the Baath Party's pan-Arabic rhetoric resonated well with the public, the Baghdad Pact, established under the leadership of the United Kingdom (UK) and of which Türkiye was a member, cemented anti-Western sentiments in the country. In the same period, the Soviet Union's arms sales to Syria and strengthening of ties with Egypt under the leadership of Gamal Abdel Nasser resulted in Syria and Egypt's unification under the name United Arab Republic in February 1958. However, Syrian politicians' concerns about being marginalised and the closure of the Baath Party resulted in this unification's termination through a military coup in September 1961.

#### *The Baath Party and the Centralisation of Power*

The Baath Party came to power in 1963 through a military coup. In that period, the military's influence in politics came to a rise, and non-Sunni officers, such as Alawite and Druze, were assigned to critical roles. However, the ethnic and sectarian conflicts within the government led to a power struggle between Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad in a coup in 1966. In 1970, General Hafez al-Assad seized power through a military coup and was elected president in 1971.

#### *Hafez Al-Assad Period (1971-2000)*

Despite adopting a statist economic approach rooted in the Baathist ideology, Hafez al-Assad endeavoured to foster economic growth and political stability by providing more opportunities to the private sector. The Sunni majority from the urban areas was marginalised from the government with prioritisation of elements with provincial backgrounds and non-Sunnis in government positions. This policy, along with the growing opposition influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, led to some severe conflicts, such as the Hama Revolt (1982). Al-Assad, failing to put up an effective fight against Israel, managed to establish a strong influence over Lebanon. The continued Israeli occupation of Golan Heights since 1967 has become a fundamental issue in Syria's foreign policy.

#### *Bashar Al-Assad Period and the New Era Politics*

Following Hafez al-Assad's death in 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad was elected president through a referendum. Syria, under Bashar al-Assad, garnered attention with its economic reforms and expansion policies. As relations with Türkiye progressed, there was an escalation of tension with the US over its Iraq invasion. However, after the Rafic Hariri assassination in Lebanon, international pressure mounted, and Syria in 2005 had to withdraw its troops from Lebanon.

Syria's post-independence period was characterised by constant power struggles and regional dynamics. The Baath Party's long-lasting dominance helped the implementation of socialist policies and pan-Arabic ideals; however, political stability was impeded by ethnic and sectarian differences. Under the Assad family's rule, Syria continued its efforts to establish itself as a strong player in the regional and international arena and to promote domestic stability.

## 1.2. The Baath Regime and Its Impacts on the Society

In the aftermath of World War I, the Baath Party was founded on an idea that emerged during the Middle East's political shaping process and mobilised the masses with an anti-colonialist motivation. The Baath movement, which united the fundamental principles of Arab nationalism and socialism against the mandate rule established by the French following the Ottoman withdrawal from the region, was instrumental in the transformation of the political and social structure of the Middle East. The Baathist concept, which sought to address the Arab world's underdevelopment and to create a robust vision of order against the colonial powers, resonated with a number of countries in the region in an atmosphere created by the Cold War period and became one of the primary sources that accelerated the process of authoritarianism.

Baathism, despite initially providing a framework that prioritised freedoms and democratic principles, became the primary philosophical foundation of the one-man rule in the Arab world in the coming period as a result of political and social developments. The Baath concept, which manifested itself as Arab socialism, had been re-formulated by Nasserism in Egypt and by Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and was able to preserve the primary principles of its foundation in Syria and Iraq. The Baath Party, which led to a serious ideological rivalry field between Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein, played a system-building role in the progression of both countries towards authoritarianism. Having said that, the Baath's dominant position in Syria and Iraq resulted in severe tensions in the relations between the two countries, which culminated in the manifestation of a deep-rooted rivalry between Saddam Hussein and Hafez al-Assad. The fact that many Baath members, who were dismissed or fled the country during Hafez al-Assad's consolidation of power, left for Iraq triggered the deepening of this rivalry and even resulted in these two figures adopting a hostile attitude towards one another.

The Baath Party, established in 1943 by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-din Bitar, through its discourse and vision, founded on the fundamental principles of socialism, freedom, and unity, has had a substantial influence on the youth in the region. In an environment where the sole challenge to the colonialist powers and Western-orientated world order was posed by the Islamist movements, the Baath Party took on the role of a safe haven for secular Arab youth to seek refuge. For the new elites, who had no problem with

modernisation and Westernisation on the grounds of a new vision of society, who adopted the Western way of life, who were far from the vision of an Islamic order, but who did not want to compromise Arab nationalism, the framework drawn by the Baath was quite functional. In this regard, youth educated in the West, particularly motivated by socialism, along with the masses they guided, established the roots of a new political tradition in Syria robustly. Although the Baath party was popular with a very limited segment of society when it was founded, the movement's pioneers successfully increased their support by prioritising organisations in rural regions and vocally condemning the affluent class.

The first military coup d'état in Syria, which took place in March 1949, marked a rupture in the country's history as it was trying to gain full independence and establish a democratic nation-state in the post-French period. After this incident, which showed that the military could intervene in politics, the Syrian political system faced serious vulnerabilities with the coups that took place in August and December of the same year. This created a favourable environment for the rise of the Baath Party, which had a secular perspective. The new sociology of the Alawites and Druze, who moved from the provinces to the centre through demographic engineering, especially during the French mandate, largely adopted Baathist ideas. The establishment of a strong group of senior military commanders in the army, influenced by Baathist ideologies in the mid-1950s, originated from minorities who were encouraged by the French to enrol in military academies, leading to a novel political landscape in Syria. To terminate the instability in the nation and establish a new Syrian identity aligned with their ideological views, the elites of the Baath Party, entrenched in the military and bureaucratic apparatus of the state, usurped the government and initiated their own power dynamics.

### **1.2.1. The 1963 Coup and the Rise of the Baath Regime**

The Baath Party's ascension to power via coup d'état has significantly disrupted many balances in Syria. While Michel Aflaq defined the basic principles of the Baath on the axis of "unity, freedom, and socialism," the Baath administration seemed to move away from these target principles. Whereas in the early period, Baath had an inclusive, unifying, and freedom-valuing profile, after the coup d'état on March 8, 1963, the party's structure changed into one that sought to impose its ideology on all segments of society. The authoritarian nature of the Baath Party was significantly exacerbated by the ideological and cultural disparities between the military faction and the conventional Baath establishment, as well as the enhancement of the military faction within the party.

The pivotal transformation in the Baath Party's progression from a pluralistic understanding of society to an authoritarian government model transpired in 1953. The Baathist leaders, who decided to merge with the Arab Socialist Party of Akram al-Hourani, a notable figure in the Syrian socialist school of thought, exhibited some

indications of transition during this process. The Arab Socialist Baath Party's name change and the widespread use of a more secular language than the Aflaq-al-Bitar duo's approach, which leaned towards a reading that placed Islam at the centre, were a sign that Baath would eventually establish a new road map. Having seized power with the coup in 1963, the Baathists quickly brought to the surface the internal conflicts they had suppressed for many years.

Although Aflaq and al-Bitar were the main ideologues of the Baath, with the decline of their influence within the party, not only did the Baath move away from its traditional line, but religious discourses were instrumentalised within the party. In the party structure, which also included a Marxist faction, conflicts among the leadership deepened and a major purge began. The consolidation of Alawite officers within the party led to the Baath adopting a strategy of Arab nationalism centred on Syria. In 1958, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt had taken the first step towards unifying the Arabs by uniting with Syria. This new state, the United Arab Republic, was set to completely transform the political status quo of the region. However, due to the differences between the elites of these two countries, the initiative did not last long and ended in 1961. Despite the vocal dissent on the Syrian side regarding the challenges associated with the merger with Egypt, prominent Baathist officials, in particular, upheld their Nasserist position and contended that the party should pursue fresh initiatives to achieve unity with Egypt. It was at this juncture that the Alawite generals, who had become the most dominant faction inside the Baath, along with their allies, opted for drastic actions to eradicate Egyptian influence and reconfigure the party's structure. Salah Jadid, Mohammad Umran, and Hafez al-Assad, who possessed significant influence over party members through their rhetoric, executed a purge of the Baath's civilian faction in an internal coup. As the Baathist military faction took control of the country, the visibility and decisive position of the Alawites within the state mechanism increased dramatically.

The takeover of power in Syria by the Baathist military faction did not end the internal power struggle. On the contrary, differences between Salah Jadid and Hafez al-Assad regarding the philosophy of governance deepened the power crisis between the two. The outcome of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, known as the Six-Day War, provided the momentum that accelerated Assad's rise to power in Syria. The coalition of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan suffered a heavy defeat in the war, and Israel's occupation and expansion of East Jerusalem, Sinai, and the Golan Heights significantly shook the regional and global balance. This war, which concluded the charismatic dominance of President Nasser of Egypt, also enabled Assad to consolidate his power over Jadid. Hafez al-Assad's positioning of individuals close to him in significant positions and the crucial arrangements he made in the Baath's provincial organisation provided him with an advantage over Jadid, despite the fact that the two figures attempted to preserve their political positions by blaming each other for the heavy defeat. In the end, Salah Jadid's

attempts to thwart Assad's actions and eliminate him proved unsuccessful, and the significant increase in the number of Assad supporters within the army and the party resulted in Assad triumphing in the power struggle between the two. Ultimately, Hafez al-Assad overthrew Jadid with a coup d'état in November 1970, setting the stage to exert his rule in the country.

Hafez al-Assad's accession to power in Syria represented a significant turning point in the nation's history. Syria had never been able to establish a stable structure due to factors such as the successive coups d'état in 1949, failed attempts to form a union with Egypt, and the major defeat suffered during the June War in 1967. Hafez al-Assad attempted to establish his own one-man regime with the goal of bringing stability to a country that had seen numerous changes of government, repeated amendments to the constitution, and fierce power struggles prior to and following the Baathist coup in 1963. Assad, with the goal of reshaping the political and social structure on a large scale, initially pursued strategies to secure his legitimacy. To this end, Assad successfully instrumentalised Islam and anti-Israel sentiment and minimised the risk of potential crises that may arise in society through economic incentives he provided to the economic elite.

To prevent a controversy about Alawism and Alawites and avoid any criticism towards his religious identity, Assad first began consolidating his power by obtaining a fatwa from the Lebanese Shiite authorities. Assad, who associated himself directly with Islam with this fatwa that ratified Alawism as part of the Shiite faith, overcame the concerns about social legitimacy by offering great conveniences and freedom in religious practice. Contrary to Baath's secular rhetoric and practices, Assad effectively used religion as a tool to secure his power in Syria, creating an environment conducive to crushing any future opposition. He aimed to strengthen the rightfulness of his one-man regime with the 1973 Constitution by referencing Islam. The first paragraph of Article 3 of the constitution stating, "The religion of the head of state is Islam," prevented potential criticism towards his sectarian identity while also striking a manipulative blow to society with this legislative framework that prohibited the Christian population in the country from becoming the head of state. The second paragraph of the same article that states, "The Law of Islam is the primary source of legislation," hinted at Islamic Sharia being the main theoretical source of reference in Syria. Hafez al-Assad, conserving the approach in this article that was inherited from the preceding constitutions, strengthened his authoritarian system in all aspects based on a foundation that instrumentalised Islam.

Another key factor that facilitated the rise of Assad's power in Syria was the space that the new government provided to the Sunni bourgeoisie. Recognising the importance of maintaining close ties with the economic elite to stabilise the country and counter potential opposition, Hafez al-Assad adopted a strategy that paved the way for Sunni elites. Thereby, he gained the support of a wealthy group that would allow him some leeway during the early years of his rule, while also attempting to prevent the formation

of underground opposition groups from the start. There was no threat left to Assad's rule except the political opposition since his ties with the Sunni elites were not perceived as a significant threat by the traditional structures within the country.

The 1973 Constitution was founded solely upon the key ideological views of the Baath. Through highlighting Baath's fundamental principles, namely "unity, freedom, and socialism," in the preamble of the constitution, an ideological perception of the state was created. Consequently, Assad set forward a delicate strategy to establish a strong and centralised government with a loyal team of family members and close relatives without antagonising the Sunni Baathists. Through combining the Baathist political ideology and institutional doctrine with the Alawite-orientated security bureaucracy and purging all his rivals within the party, Assad established one of the most oppressive authoritarian regimes in the Middle East.

While constructing his regime, Hafez al-Assad adopted an approach that garnered the entire system onto himself and repressed the establishment of different orders in Syria. Unlike the approaches of institutionalised authoritarian structures in the region, such as Nasser's Egypt or Habib Bourguiba's Tunisia, Assad's entire state mechanism was founded on absolute loyalty and devotion to him. The alignment of bureaucracy, army, or the economic elites with Assad's system allowed for the establishment of a less vulnerable one-man regime in contrast to other countries in the Middle East. Assad deterred the formation of alternative political or societal movements within the country by assuming the title of commander-in-chief of the army as the head of state and the secretary-general of the Baath Party. Defining the Arab Socialist Baath Party as the "supreme party to the country and the people" within the constitution, Assad effectively prohibited the establishment of any institutional structure other than Baath.

Fortifying the central government with a robust security bureaucracy, Assad gave the army and intelligence agency a great deal of leeway within the system. The 11th article of the constitution, in particular, granted the army vastly expanded powers and tasked it with ensuring the security and continuity of the regime and the state's borders. By stating in the relevant article that "the Armed Forces and other defence units are

responsible for the security of the homeland and the preservation of the fundamental principles of the revolution, unity, freedom, and socialism,” the exceptional position of the security bureaucracy within the country was established. Thus, Assad, who established absolute dominance over society using the politics of fear, had completely controlled the legislative and judicial mechanisms and prevented any other voice from emerging in Syria against his will. The widespread public assumption that “Assad’s forces are everywhere” reinforced the belief that Syrians are constantly watched and monitored. In a system in which countless people were interrogated, tortured, and punished in the harshest way based on reports from Mukhabarat elements, Hafez al-Assad was not hesitant to commit all kinds of violations of law and human rights in order to keep the regime in place.

### 1.2.2. Human Rights Violations by the Baath Regime



Syrian fleeing Russian attacks / Syria - (October 26, 2015)

Following the establishment of the Assad regime in Syria, not only did a more politically stable structure emerge, but the authoritarian regime’s strategy of destroying the opposition to maximise its own interests and ensure its security resulted in the bloodiest process in the Middle East. As previously stated, Assad effectively exploited Islam and anti-Israel sentiment to gain social legitimacy and, in doing so, aimed to eliminate the opposition in the country. In the early stages of his tenure, Hafez al-

Assad concentrated on leftist groups in Syria in order to avoid backlash from diverse factions and new challenges at a time when he had not yet held absolute power within the party. In an attempt to compel leftist groups and parties outside the Baath to pledge their allegiance to himself, Assad exerted intense pressure on all leftist groups that refused to comply and did not join the Baath. Following this attempt, in which many people were subjected to extrajudicial treatment, Assad declared the Baath the sole political party in the country, eliminating any threat from leftist groups and ruthlessly purging opposition elements within the Baath.

Assad, who managed to remove one of the obstacles to his one-man rule by incorporating or liquidating leftist groups into the Baath, suppressed criticisms voiced during the 1973 Constitution-drafting process with similar methods. In particular, Assad intensified his pressure on society by committing numerous violations to end the dissent of liberal factions opposing the establishment of a strong authoritarian system and to suppress their voices. As Assad no longer faced threats from the traditional Baathist staff, he took advantage of the chance to turn to other groups in Syrian society. The Arab-Israeli War in October 1973 also considerably benefitted Assad in his policy of maximum repression. The relative victory following the crushing setback in 1967 offered Hafez al-Assad considerable flexibility, allowing him to exert additional pressure on the opposition.

The state's absolutisation of the narrative of victory over Israel, as well as its portrayal of Assad as a powerful figure against the Zionist authority, paved the way for the regime's strategy of severe and bloody massacres against the Muslim Brotherhood and all Islamist formations in Syria. Through systematic massacres, arbitrary detentions, torture, and punishment of thousands of Muslim Brotherhood members, Assad had been attempting to undermine the Brotherhood's influence in the country since the middle of the 1970s. Assad, who consolidated his power with the leftist and liberal groups, focused it entirely on the Islamists and employed an aggressive strategy to ensure that there were no voices of opposition to the regime.

With his policies targeting factions with a vision of political order, Assad, who did not appear to interfere based on individual religious beliefs, considered Islamists as the biggest threat to the regime's future. Thus, Assad pursued a policy of severe repression and massacres to prevent the realisation of a political formation outside the Baath, with the goal of marginalising the Muslim Brotherhood by ensuring the visibility of Islam in the social sphere. Law 49/1980 stipulated that any member of the Muslim Brotherhood would be deemed a criminal and face the death penalty. During the 'witch hunt' that was initiated across the country, the Mukhabarat implemented unlawful practices to identify and punish members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Assad also actively deployed the army to repress the resistance of groups opposing the regime's increasing pressure and violations of the law, as well as prevent formations that would jeopardise the regime's survival. In 1982, tens of thousands of innocent Syrians were massacred in Hama. The regime army, which attacked Hama residents who opposed the Assad regime's oppressive policies with heavy artillery, did not hesitate to commit all kinds of illegal and inhumane acts in order to fulfil Assad's dream of a Syria devoid of opposition. In addition to the massacres, Syrians who were detained were subjected to inhumane treatment in regime prisons.

Assad, who exterminated the Syrian opposition following the Hama massacres, always restricted political liberties and continued to violate human rights in the country with his intelligence and military mechanisms in the following years. The families and relatives of the thousands of detainees whose fate was unknown were severely victimised and subjected to all kinds of repression by the regime. Rights violations in Syria became a state tradition as a result of Hafez al-Assad's policy of repression against innocent people by the centralist government he fostered since 1970. After his death in June 2000, similar problems continued under his son Bashar al-Assad, who succeeded him.



Amputated children of Idlib - Idlib, Syria / (November 11, 2022)

The international community initially viewed Bashar al-Assad's succession to the Syrian presidency following his father as a positive development. In reality, with the conceptualisation of the "Damascus Spring," there was an anticipation that the new leader would implement some reforms in Syria and, at the very least, put an end to

human rights violations. The main reason for these expectations was that Bashar Assad, who studied medicine and specialised in ophthalmology in the United Kingdom before leaving the country in 1994 following the death of his older brother Basil Assad, had lived in the West and was not involved in the military echelon. In the early 2000s, it was widely assumed that he would handle the issue with the sensitivity of a doctor, working towards the country's growth and liberation. Deep-rooted changes could not happen in Syria, though, because of the institutional mindset of the regime built by Hafez al-Assad and because of elements of the established order. During this time, his son, Assad, who attempted to find a new ground in the Arab world with his foreign policy efforts, gave the impression that he would adopt a course that was relatively different from his father's during the US invasion of Iraq. The relationship between Damascus and Baghdad has always been strained due to the wide divide between Syrian and Iraqi Baathist traditions, as well as the long-standing animosity between Hafez al-Assad and Saddam Hussein. This is why, unlike the rest of the Arab world, Hafez al-Assad supported the Tehran government throughout the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). Bashar al-Assad, on the other hand, initiated a fresh start with Baghdad early in his rule, hoping to erase the unfavourable perceptions of the past.

In order to prevent a social legitimacy crisis and to balance the pressure on the established order, the new leader attempted to develop a new political strategy that involved international manoeuvres, despite the fact that the son Assad continued his father's strategy of denying the opposition any living space. During this period, Bashar al-Assad, who spoke out more strongly against Israel than his father, made a concerted effort to transform the public perception of the Syrian government by establishing new relations in the regional and global arenas. Although there was no intention of introducing political liberties in the social arena, Assad projected the illusion that the country was reforming.

Bashar al-Assad gained major advances in the first decade of his tenure through active foreign policy, but made no genuine efforts to change the centralised government regulations passed down from his father. Assad's son, who continues to dominate society through Mukhabarat, has essentially continued his father's politics of fear. Despite the existence of new opportunities in the economic sector and the relative relaxations that resulted from increased internationalisation, Bashar al-Assad maintained a resolute stance in his opposition to alternative political ideologies. Although Assad never exhibited the same flexibility in domestic politics and security concerns, he endeavoured to adopt a more principled approach in contrast to Hafez al-Assad's highly pragmatic foreign policy stance. Assad's son upheld the view that the regime's interests and security take precedence above national interests and the welfare and stability of the community. Indeed, the regime's harsh and asymmetric intervention strategy following the outbreak of popular uprisings in the Arab world in 2011 foreshadowed the fact that there was no transformation in the Damascus

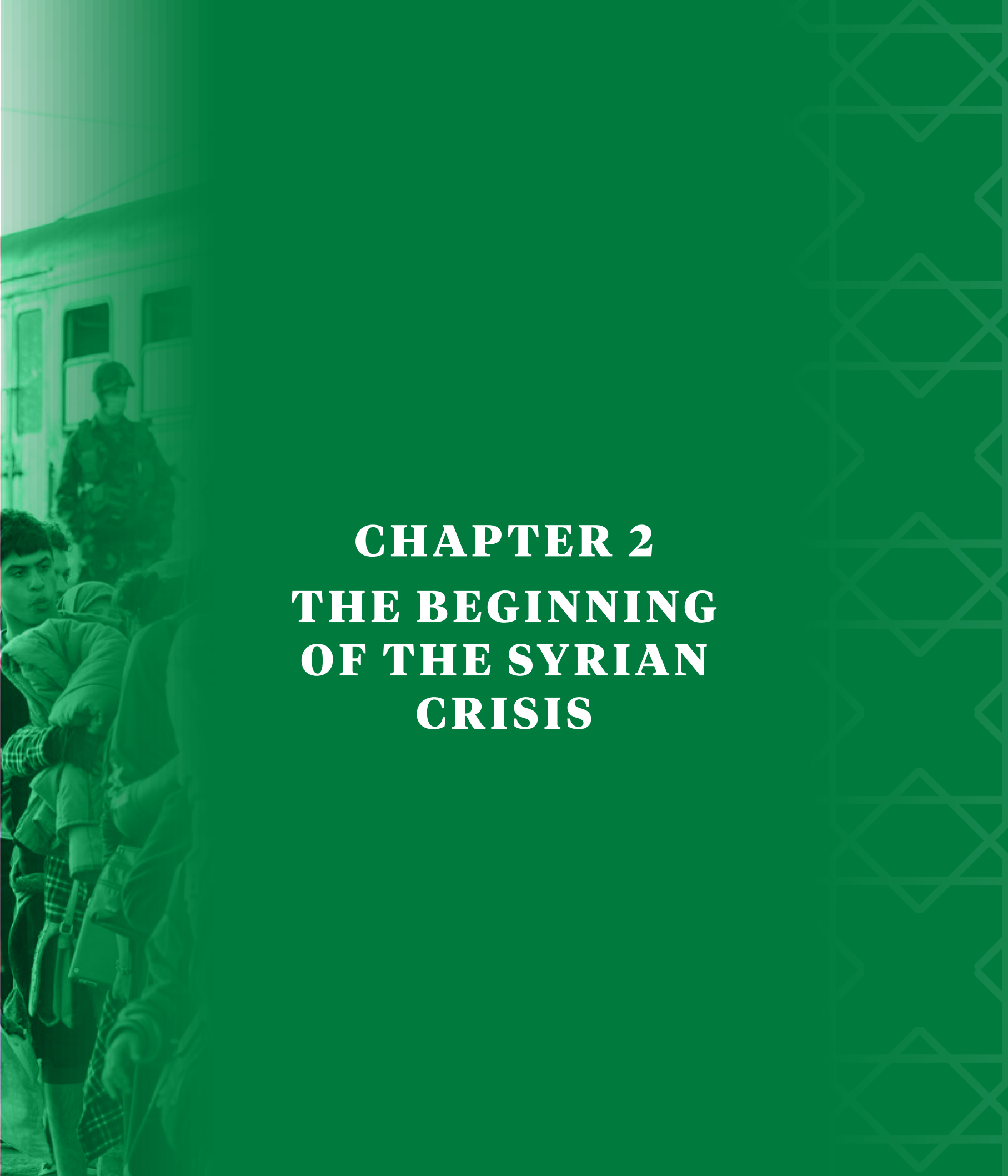
regime's traditional codes; instead, tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of people could be punished in order to keep the regime in power.

The regime's response to Syria's peaceful demonstrations, which began in March 2011, with rhetoric of greater freedom, wealth, and justice, highlighted the Assad regime's policy of eradicating opposition voices in the country. In the new era, Syria has begun to adopt a harsher and bloodier version of the Hama strategy, with attacks on protestors assembled in squares and massacres by unofficial elements connected particularly to the regime, the so-called Shabiha. Regardless of gender or age, the security forces have committed a variety of illegal activities in order to maintain the regime's authority. The escalation of the conflict in Syria, particularly the active engagement of Hezbollah militias and other Iranian-backed groups in on-the-ground atrocities, has increased the number of crimes perpetrated in the country. The Assad regime perpetrated numerous war crimes during this period.

It has been evident that countries that overtly and tacitly support the Assad regime either directly support the massacres or turn a blind eye to the regime's transgressions in order to maintain the status quo. Indiscriminate air and ground attacks have claimed the lives of several innocent civilians. The regime also carried out mass executions with chemical weapons. Extrajudicial trials and cruel treatment of detainees were commonplace in the regime's prisons. During this period of the most severe torture, the Damascus regime did not hesitate to conduct a variety of legal violations in order to secure the regime's existence.

The rise of the Baath Party, the emergence of a new authoritarian reality within the nation, and Hafez al-Assad's victory in the long-term power struggle culminated in the formation of one of the most powerful and oppressive governments in the history of the region. By establishing himself as the sole authority over the entire state system without exception, Assad entrusted his approach, focused on the regime's security and longevity, to his successors. The dictatorship, founded on the suppression of any opposition voices through the military and intelligence, has rendered the country unlivable for its own citizens, as evidenced by unprecedented massacres, tortures, and extra-legal actions over the years. This tradition, acquired from Assad's father, was rekindled during peaceful rallies against Bashar al-Assad's leadership, resulting in a tremendous wave of attacks to crush demonstrators. As the conflict intensified, the Assad regime persisted in violating human rights and the law by employing a strategy of systematic massacres and repression, as it had in previous decades.





**CHAPTER 2**  
**THE BEGINNING**  
**OF THE SYRIAN**  
**CRISIS**

ذكري الثورة  
السورية  
Anniversary of the  
Syrian Revolution



## 2.1. External Factors

The start of popular movements against authoritarian regimes in the Arab world marked one of the most significant breaks in modern Middle Eastern history. The uprising of the masses, who had been living under the pressure of decades of one-man rule, represented a revolt in which they exercised their own will, paving the way for the construction of a new reality in the political and social spheres. These uprisings, which prompted global attention toward the Middle East, became a crucial turning point with the potential to influence regional and global balances. Particularly, countries with influence in the region expressed serious concerns about the direction of these uprisings. Having maintained their interests through their relations with authoritarian leaders in the past, these powers had tolerated human rights violations and undemocratic practices of the one-man rules in the Arab world to secure their positions and avoid facing new challenges. At the start of 2011, with the populations suddenly taking to the streets demanding freedom, democracy, and prosperity, Arab leaders, and the actors they collaborated with, became deeply unsettled.

The increasing spread of calls for regime change in Arab streets signalled the construction of a new order in the Middle East. This event, deeply shaking the traditional order, unveiled the vision of a new political framework rooted in the social fabric. The revolutions in Tunisia and later Egypt, on one hand, signified that the region would no longer remain the same, while on the other, they marked the beginning of actions by global actors to safeguard their interests and prevent changes to the status quo. The establishment and strengthening of democratic governance in the Middle East would mark the beginning of discussions on alternative paradigms within the international system and the emergence of new inquiries. In this process, both positive developments reflecting the will for transformation and interventions by external and internal actors, hindering the healthy progress of the post-revolution transition, were observed.

With uprisings spreading across the entire region and change demands gaining momentum, the positions of external actors in the process became more evident. To avoid losing privileges and the accumulation of years of influence, regional and global actors who adjusted their positions accordingly have at times preferred political and social instability over the true construction of democratic regimes. The success of Islamist movements in the first elections in Tunisia and Egypt after the revolutions created serious risks for many. This new process of political formation, which shook the dynamics of the Middle East, was perceived as a threat by mainstream Western powers and the Arab regimes allied with them. The emergence of structures capable of reflecting the people's will and generating alternative discourse following authoritarian regimes marked a significant shift in regional and global politics. Therefore, Western countries, despite clashing with their philosophical, legal, and political norms, took steps

that hindered the democratisation process and will in the Arab world, implementing new destabilising strategies in the region.

Though Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya went through transitional experiences within their respective contexts, the uprisings in Syria evolved into a protracted conflict due to Bashar al-Assad's harsh response to protesters and external support, resulting in hundreds of thousands of innocent lives lost. The delay in the overthrow of the regime in Damascus triggered instability within the country, compounded by external actors' manipulative interventions, leading to the rise of terrorist organisations. The reversal of revolutionary motivation in the Arab world from the summer of 2013 onward deepened the conflict in Syria and exacerbated the regime's crimes and massacres. In this context, the opportunity created in 2011 by various factors for the people to reflect their will was hindered from transforming into the establishment of a strong, stable order due to destabilising policies by external actors. However, with the capture of Damascus by the opposition and the collapse of the 61-year-old Baath regime on December 8, 2024, the popular uprising that began in 2011 ultimately succeeded despite all the obstacles.

### **2.1.1. Arab Uprisings and Key Dynamics**

The self-immolation of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi on December 17, 2010, in response to the degrading treatment by municipal officials, became an act that ignited a wave of change not only in his country but also throughout the entire Middle East. After Bouazizi fought for his life for days and passed away on January 4, anti-regime protests spread across all of Tunisia, leading to the end of the Zine El Abidine Ben Ali regime. When the president's request for military support to stop the protesters was rejected by the chief of staff, Ben Ali was left with no other option but to flee the country. On January 14, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's escape from Tunisia led to a popular revolution as a result of the firm stance of the masses. Following Tunisia, protests against President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt started on January 25, marking a clear transition of the region into a new phase.

The winds of change blowing in Cairo undoubtedly echoed worldwide. Given that Tunisia was not an influential actor in Middle Eastern politics, the international implications of the revolution there were limited. Although the revolution in Tunisia was of direct interest to France due to its traditional influence over the country, it did not hold significant meaning for other international actors. However, when the revolutionary motivation manifested in the streets and squares of Egypt, it became a critical development for both regional and global players. A profound transformation in Egypt, a leading power in the Arab world and of strategic importance due to its geographical position, could have led to a reshaping of the region's security architecture beyond just political and social change. Considering that Israel's security is a primary

concern for Western actors, led by the United States, the strategy of the new leaders in Cairo could create new and different risks for Tel Aviv. Therefore, even though the beginning of the popular uprisings in the Arab world was considered to be in Tunisia, the real impact began with the revolutionary process in Egypt.

Although there had been previous opposition uprisings or anti-regime protests in many Arab countries, the process in 2011 resulting in mass-led revolutions stemmed from changes in local, regional, and global dynamics. During the Cold War period, regimes that suppressed Islamist opposition groups and used force to control them thrived by exploiting the general atmosphere of competition between two blocs. However, due to the changing dynamics in 2011, these regimes could not resist the uprisings. Except for Syria's exceptional situation after the uprisings, it was observed that similar motivations played a role in the four countries where revolutions occurred, opening the door for societal opposition to succeed.

The strong impact of popular uprisings and the inability of the established order to stop this revolutionary momentum stemmed from the active role played by not just one group but by various segments of society throughout the process. Additionally, the dominance of educated young people in the protests, and the fact that there was no allowance for the revolution to be monopolised by any one group, were key factors in the success. For authoritarian regimes that had previously targeted and repressed Islamists or the radical left by seeking grassroots support for such policies, they were unable to create a legitimising discourse this time. This not only accelerated the collapse of the regimes but also allowed the masses who had carried out the revolution to take ownership of the process. However, factors such as a lack of governing experience and the inability to reflect the unity demonstrated during the uprising in the democratisation and transition process, ultimately led to new authoritarian tendencies or instability as revolutionaries were faced with serious challenges in the later stages of the uprisings.

The masses, who set out with the goal of escaping from past traumas and reaching the living standards of prosperous societies, expressed their desire for a new system in the protests, one that guarantees political rights and freedoms and establishes a transparent and accountable government model. The adoption of the understanding found in institutionalised democracies—ending corruption, bribery, and unlawful practices—became one of the primary points of agreement for all participants in the popular uprisings. Instead of regimes strengthened through absolute centralisation of power by one individual, there was an expectation of a rule of law that respects pluralism and individual rights and freedoms, reflecting the true will of the people. When considering the overall framework of the uprisings, it becomes much clearer why the majority of society supported this process and made a significant effort for the revolution to occur, driven by these shared values and expectations.

It would be appropriate to discuss the four primary transformative parameters that triggered the revolutions resulting from the popular uprisings in the Arab world. These parameters include not only the global context but also an increasing fragility within authoritarian systems. Additionally, it is evident that generational changes and new demands created a different impact compared to previous opposition experiences in the Arab world. Lastly, structural transformations in the fields of communication and media emerged as another key parameter contributing to the success of the revolutionary process in the Middle East.

Global developments played a crucial role in enabling social protests to reach a point where they could overthrow strong authoritarian regimes. Within the framework of George W. Bush's aggressive global strategy targeting the Islamic world, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, along with the killing of over a million people in these two countries, intensified anti-American sentiment among Muslim societies. Following Barack Obama's assumption of the presidency in January 2009, his visits to Türkiye, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt early in his term aimed to reverse the negative U.S. image built under Bush and deliver more peaceful messages, particularly to the Arab world. Within the new approach adopted by the White House during this period, the U.S. began to place a relatively greater distance between itself and authoritarian leaders. The increasing fragility in the fault lines of the global system, coupled with the emergence of new centres of power, made it increasingly difficult for traditional Western powers to maintain relationships shaped by Cold War paradigms. In this context, President Obama's alignment with the demands of the masses during the uprisings in the Arab world reflected a desire to control the signs of systemic change. His suggestion to Mubarak during a phone call at the end of January to listen to the voice of the people and step down expedited the revolution in Egypt. Notably, the fact that the Egyptian army and the established order did not position themselves against the message from the U.S. resulted in Mubarak's resignation on February 8. In this context, the U.S. administration's decision to adopt a stance favouring limited and controlled change in the Middle East—rather than resisting the demands of the new sociological realities in the Arab world and risking a legitimacy crisis—paved the way for popular revolutions to become the region's new reality.

The second key parameter in the uprisings' transformation into a momentum that ended decades of authoritarian rule was the growing cracks within the system and the deepening of disputes among authoritarian elites. In Tunisia, the increasing economic gains of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's wife and relatives in recent years, along with their suppression of other actors within the established order, became a primary factor in the tensions and the absence of support for Ben Ali during the revolutionary process. The role undertaken by prominent figures of the former regime, such as Beji Caid Essebsi, who served as a deputy to Bourguiba and aligned himself with revolutionaries during the transitional process, is significant in understanding the extent of internal struggles

within the system in Tunisia. Similarly, a gradually deepening crisis emerged between Mubarak and the Egyptian army starting in the early 2000s. The military, resisting Mubarak's plans to appoint his son Gamal as his successor, did not support Mubarak's attempts to retain power during the revolution, both to align with messages from the U.S. president and to resolve its grievances with Mubarak. In Yemen and Libya, increasing disputes within the system and demands from political elites for a larger share of power contributed to the fragility of these regimes. This internal situation, which weakened the institutional cohesion of the regimes and made it difficult for their members to act in unison, played a significant role in the success of mass protests.

The undeniable impact of generational change in the region has contributed significantly to the emergence of a stronger block against authoritarian regimes. Young people, who no longer wished to live under the constraints imposed by repressive governments, sought similar standards to those they closely observed in other societies. Taking the initiative to prevent the repetition of their grandparents' and parents' fates, the younger generation accelerated the trend of change through their missions on public squares. The young people's belief that achieving their freedom and escaping economic hardships required the overthrow of existing regimes, provided significant legitimacy to the transformation in the Arab world. Thus, instead of operating within an institutional framework, they quickly established a strong and independent revolutionary movement against the administrations of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Hosni Mubarak, Bashar al-Assad, Ali Abdullah Saleh, and Muammar Gaddafi.

Another major parameter that played a visible role in the success of the popular uprisings, which considerably shook the Middle Eastern balance, was advancements in communication. The spread of social media and the ability to follow the actions of demonstrators and the regimes' responses in real-time through these platforms empowered the masses. Historically, the lack of global awareness about regimes' bloody interventions prevented international sensitivity. However, Al Jazeera's coverage of developments in early 2011, which was closely followed worldwide as well as in Arab countries, and the efforts of the Arab diaspora in Western countries to mobilise public opinion in their host countries, significantly contributed to the failure of these regimes to maintain their grip.

The four key parameters mentioned above paved the way for the uprisings and consequent revolutions in four Arab countries. However, regional and global actors opposed to a complete shift in the status quo altered their positions to protect their interests in the Middle East shortly afterwards. Western powers' increasing concerns over Arab revolutions were closely tied to the issue of ensuring Israel's security. As a result, they adopted strategies like cooperating with former regime figures or maintaining the continuation of the authoritarian status quo. Meanwhile, Iran's strategy of fortifying its presence in the field, rooted in its expansionist foreign policy since the 1979 revolution, further deepened instability and crises, particularly in Syria and Yemen.

### **2.1.2. International Actors and Conflicting Interests in Syria**

The peaceful protests organised by the Syrian people to demand democratic rights, justice, and transparency from their government evolved into one of the greatest tragedies of modern history. The asymmetric attacks conducted by the loyalist army and intelligence forces of the Assad regime against protesters, along with massacres targeting civilians in residential areas, resulted in acts of brutality rarely seen in history. Unlike other countries, the absence of where internal conflicts within the regime in Syria, combined with the expectations of external actors, enabled Assad's regime to retain power for an extended period. In this respect, the Damascus government managed to construct an exceptional situation by receiving explicit or implicit support from the United States, Russia, Israel, Iran, and the Gulf states to maintain the status quo until December 8, 2024.

Compared to other countries where revolutions were achieved, the delay in Syria was primarily driven by the strategies adopted by external actors. The concerns among the aforementioned actors were less about whether Assad should leave but rather about who would replace him. Preferring a known authoritarian figure serving their interests over an unknown alternative, these actors prioritised stability over change. The electoral successes of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated candidates in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen triggered fears for not only the United States and Israel but also Iran and the Gulf states. Establishing structures that reflected the societal will and built strong democratic traditions in the region—and seeing an example of this materialise in Damascus—would have marked the end of long-standing practices and introduced a new dimension to the power struggle. Thus, despite the crossing of multiple red lines and the Assad regime's use of every means of violence, including chemical weapons, Western countries refrained from making a meaningful move regarding the Syrian issue, which was evident to all observers.

The failure of the revolutionary process in Syria in 2011 and the deepening of the crisis were largely influenced by Israel's security concerns and Tel Aviv's concern about a potential regime change in Damascus. Although the Assad regime frequently employed anti-Israel rhetoric as a tool for societal consolidation, it is well known that the regime avoided engaging in real hostility with the Zionist administration. Given that the elimination of Islamist groups served the interests of both the Assad regime and Tel Aviv, the primary reason behind the Western world's distinct approach to Syria's revolutionary process becomes clear. In this context, the potential new order brought about by a popular revolution was deemed risky since it could lead to a new problem for Israel in the Middle East, leading to efforts to maintain the Assad status quo.

While the United States appeared to support the revolutionaries in Syria at a rhetorical level, it was evident that its actions on the ground followed a different course. The American establishment foresaw that a revolution in Damascus following the Muslim

Brotherhood's rise to power in Cairo would disrupt regional balances. The prospect of a new alliance forming along the Ankara-Cairo-Damascus axis unsettled the United States and other Western nations, prompting various actions to destabilise Syria. Aware of the challenges involved in overtly backing a regime responsible for mass atrocities, the White House refrained from taking direct action to depose Assad. Instead, it implemented a strategy that would disrupt Syria's social fabric, using terrorist organisations to help preserve the regime. By highlighting the presence of DEASH in the country, the U.S. justified its intervention. It also prevented the Syrian opposition from forming a strong and unified front by supporting PKK-affiliated terrorist groups. In its effort to counterbalance Russian and Iranian influence on the ground, the White House adopted a cautious strategy to avoid direct confrontation with these actors on the ground, thereby obstructing the emergence of a stable and lasting transition in Syria.

Russia's explicit support was the primary factor enabling the Assad regime to remain in power for an extended period. Benefiting from the political, military, and logistical backing of a powerful global actor, the Assad government gained the freedom to suppress and eliminate opposition forces with greater ease. Russian veto at the United Nations Security Council was the primary factor stalling attempts to dismantle the regime in Damascus. Moscow's significant increase in gains on the ground by supporting Assad has not allowed the balance of power to shift in favour of the opposition following the uprisings that began in March 2011. Russia's historical strategy of gaining access to the Mediterranean and expanding its influence in the Middle East through its bases in Tartus and Hmeimim has resulted in the implementation of a support policy aimed at ensuring the continuity of the Assad regime, regardless of the massacres occurring in the country. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the ideological influence it once held over certain regional governments during the Cold War significantly diminished. In this context, Moscow viewed its support for the Damascus administration as the only viable option for regional expansion. Within the framework of covert competition with the United States, both countries adopted a strategic alliance approach, prioritising Assad's retention of power in Damascus over the emergence of a government they could not control.

In the transformation of Syria's issue of change into a profound and large-scale crisis, the most significant actor on the ground is undoubtedly Iran. Within the framework of its persistent influence policy since 1979, Iran has sought to maintain control over Damascus and spared no effort in providing all forms of support to the regime to prevent a revolution from taking place. Despite backing the revolutionary processes in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, Iran adopted an opposite strategy once the uprisings spread to Syria. Under the "Axis of Resistance" discourse, it sought to legitimise its

reflex to protect the Damascus administration. Iran has actively and effectively utilised its proxy forces in the region, particularly Hezbollah, while also directly taking the initiative against anti-regime structures. The role of Iran-backed groups in the rising number of Syrians who have lost their lives or been forcibly displaced is evident. Additionally, through demographic engineering, the Tehran administration has altered the country's social fabric. Using its resistance rhetoric as a primary reference point for opposition to the U.S. and Israel, Iran has made efforts to avoid direct confrontation with the U.S. on the ground. Moreover, while it approved Hezbollah's attacks against opposition forces, it never sought to position Hezbollah as a threat to Israel via Syria during this process.

The Arab uprisings erupted under increasing fragility among authoritarian regimes, exacerbated by new international dynamics and internal disputes within ruling systems. This pivotal development, which reshaped the fate of the region, escalated into a disruptive turning point as a massive uprising by the masses aimed at dismantling the authoritarian tradition. However, due to the destabilising strategies pursued by regional and global actors seeking to prevent the formation of a new order in the Middle East, the initial objectives of the popular uprisings were not fully achieved. While the revolutionary process in other countries evolved in different directions based on their respective societal realities, the explicit and implicit support of actors unwilling to see Assad removed resulted in a deep crisis in Syria. Over the past 13 years, during which hundreds of thousands of people lost their lives and millions of Syrians were displaced, external actors played a significant role in preventing the establishment of a stable, healthy, and sustainable transition process. However, following the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood on October 7, 2023, the complete shift in regional dynamics has significantly accelerated the power transition in Syria. Similar to the Arab Uprisings, the October 7 events triggered a major break, altering the positions of actors on the ground. In particular, the weakening of Hezbollah and Iranian militias has significantly undermined the regime's resilience, paving the way for the revolution.

## 2.2. Internal Factors

### 2.2.1. The Repressive Regime

The popular uprising that began in Syria in 2011 quickly turned into a civil war, leading to the displacement of millions of people, mass migration, and severe crises, particularly hunger. To fully understand the situation in Syria, it is necessary to evaluate the country's social, political, and economic conditions together. This is because the economic system and the relationships among ruling elites influence political and social structures over time. Conversely, the groups in power can shape economic structures through ethnic, religious, or familial ties. Syria's economic structure and institutions have also influenced the ruling elites -hence the political structures- and the connections between these elites and businesspeople have played a decisive role in shaping economic policies and institutions.

After gaining independence from the French mandate in 1946, Syria formed a united state with Egypt between 1958 and 1961, but this union lasted only three years. In the post-independence period, Syria entered a governance crisis, frequently shaken by military coups; yet the country still experienced economic improvements, although limited. However, the political instability caused by military coups and the military governments' attempts to establish a homogeneous Arab-Muslim social structure created a repressive environment for minority groups. In this chaotic setting, the Baath Party, with its slogan of "unity, freedom, and socialism," gained influence and began securing the support of minorities and rural populations. The Baath Party, which had been increasing its influence across the Middle East in the 1950s and 1960s, seized power in Syria through a military coup in March 1963. Rising nationalism and populism among the middle class and rural communities in the post-independence period disrupted the stability of the semi-liberal oligarchic regime, leading to decreased investments and paving the way for the Baath coup.

The Baath Party consolidated its power by nationalising major enterprises and implementing land reforms, thereby weakening traditional power structures and gaining full control over the economy. However, these policies failed to achieve the expected impact on poverty reduction and economic development, resulting in social unrest. Taking advantage of internal disputes within the party, Hafez al-Assad seized control through a coup in 1970. He secured the support of the rural population and the Alawite minority while consolidating his control over the state and party apparatus, countering the dominance of urban Sunni elites.

When the Ba'ath Party took control in 1963, it implemented land reform and nationalisation policies as part of its socialist agenda. The majority of the party leaders, who were from rural backgrounds, neutralised urban Sunni leaders and businessmen to strengthen Ba'ath rule. To this end, individuals from the Alawite minority were

appointed to positions in the party and state apparatus, thereby consolidating the regime's power within the state. In rural areas, there was a shift from working as labourers on others' farms to managing small agricultural lands. The policies introduced by the Ba'ath Party through a top-down revolution were, in a way, executed as a class struggle. Between 1963 and 1970, the percentage of the rural population without land ownership decreased from 60% to 36%, while the percentage of the rural population owning large agricultural lands fell from 1% to 0.5%. This resulted in the evolution of the newly established social base into a structure that was loyal to and dependent on the Baath Party.

This social structure created by the Ba'ath Party also paved the way for implementing a one-man regime's policies and establishing governance by a single leader. However, when Hafez al-Assad came to power, he foresaw that the previous policies could not continue in the same manner. According to him, it was not possible to maintain the regime solely by catering to minorities or by excluding the urban middle class. Therefore, the regime had to expand its social base, including these groups, and thus increase capital accumulation. In this context, Hafez began implementing policies of economic rapprochement and controlled liberalisation to reach the urban community. In doing so, he legitimised a moderately nationalist-socialist administration, secured capital accumulation, and maintained a strong business sector within Syria.

During Hafez's 30 years in power, two significant "infatih" (liberalisation) policies were implemented. In Arabic, the term "infatih" has a slogan-like significance, referring to economic liberalisation. With Anwar Sadat's policies in Egypt being referred to as "infatih," the term in the Arab world signifies an emphasis on the private sector, internationalisation of markets, granting more roles to market actors, and public sector reforms. The first liberalisation policy began in the early 1970s when Hafez came to power. In the policies he referred to as the reform movement (*al-haraka al-tashihyya*), he sought to include private enterprise into economic policies. Unlike the previous party leadership's policies, Hafez aimed to reduce dependence on the Soviet bloc, strengthen connections with other Arab states, and expand the regime's social base through controlled liberalisation. The liberalisation trend in policies that began in 1971 continued through 1974-1975, but by 1977, the gradually abandoned policies came to an end. During this period, non-Syrian Arabs were gradually allowed to open foreign currency accounts in banks, permitted to transfer profits from capital investments back to their home countries, and some import bans were lifted. However, the regime set specific quotas for traders, who were designated and registered by the government. Moreover, the "General Organization of Free Zones" was established to encourage private sector investment. The liberalisation policies implemented during this period were different from those in Egypt. The state continued to control strategic sectors, such as foreign trade, maintained significant roles in public industrial investments, and used public expenditures for development. In short, a form of state

capitalism was implemented. The policies implemented were designed not so much for economic development but to maintain the regime's power and control over the people.

After the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000, his 30-year rule passed on to his son, Bashar al-Assad. The Bashar regime, guided by Ba'ath leadership, maintained its political repression and totalitarian pressure on society. The administrative triangle, composed of the elite guided by Alawite elements and Baathist elites, was bolstered by a select group of Sunni businessmen, thereby maintaining control over the political sphere. The regime's oppressive structure was, in a sense, concealed behind the facade of elections. Additionally, the organisation of military power around the ruling elite helped ensure the regime's continuity. Bashar also implemented a series of reforms to combat the economic issues of the time. However, unlike his father, the impact of the reforms benefited a small elite group rather than the masses, leading to public discontent and anger.

### **2.2.2. Economic Collapse**

The Bashar al-Assad regime attempted to implement economic reforms and shift from a centrally planned economy to an economic model referred to as a "social market economy," in which both the state and the private sector played active roles. Up until the civil unrest that began in 2011 and the subsequent armed conflict and chaos, Bashar al-Assad sought to integrate Syria's economic policies with global markets.

The causes of the uprising in Syria and the ensuing civil war require extensive discussion. These causes can be categorised into ten main factors: political oppression, a discredited ideology, an unbalanced economy, drought, population growth, social media, corruption, state violence, minority rule, and the influence of the Tunisian revolution.

Several of the factors mentioned above are directly linked to the economic structure. The statistical depiction of the macroeconomic framework did not translate to the social base. Rather than alleviating poverty, the positive performance in economic growth exacerbated it. The unbalanced economic structure failed to meet the needs arising from population growth, and the crisis was further intensified by corruption and the drought that emerged after 2006.

To understand the economic backdrop of the uprisings, it is necessary to review the overall economic outlook briefly. According to calculations based on constant prices, Syria's per capita income was \$1,637 in 2007, classifying it as a lower-middle-income country by the World Bank. Compared with other countries based on per capita income, Syria ranked economically in the lower tiers. Structural problems, inconsistencies, and shifts in economic policies prevented sustainable growth in the country. Before 2000, sharp economic fluctuations were evident, but from 2000 to 2010, there was a more

balanced growth performance, with average growth rates of 4% to 4.5%. However, Syria's economic performance was relatively weak compared to similar countries.

Although the Syrian economy achieved positive growth in the early 1990s, it contracted towards the end of that decade, and this trend continued into the early 2000s. With Bashar al-Assad's reform initiatives, growth rates increased between 2005 and 2010. However, these policies, which primarily benefited specific segments rather than addressing structural issues, deepened poverty and exacerbated inequalities in income distribution.

The Syrian economy, largely reliant on oil revenues and the agricultural sector, remained fragile due to factors such as international price fluctuations and drought. The oil price boom of the late 1970s temporarily bolstered the economy, but subsequent declines in oil production and increases in domestic consumption led to significant economic losses, necessitating new revenue-generating measures. The drop in oil prices in 1986 nearly caused the collapse of the state-centred economic system, exposing the inefficiency of the subsidised public sector and its high cost to the economy.

Before 2011, Syria's demographic structure, with a population of approximately 23 million and an annual growth rate of 2.5%, placed significant pressure on employment policies. The high proportion of young people created a substantial demand for jobs. However, insufficient economic growth failed to generate new employment opportunities, leading to rising unemployment rates.

Regarding economic indicators, price movements represent another significant area of evaluation. Examining price movements reveals a recurring pattern of volatility. Notably, the latter half of the 1980s was marked by high inflation rates. During this period, the oil crisis exerted upward pressure on prices. Similarly, the 2000-2010 period also experienced considerable price increases, with notable upward trends. In particular, the influx of refugees following the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2001 led to significant rises in housing and food prices.

Among the main sectors of the economy, agriculture holds the largest share. The sector accounts for 25% of total GDP and provides 21% of employment. However, agriculture is highly susceptible to uncontrollable external factors such as droughts and climate change, making the economy more fragile. The severe drought after 2006 significantly reduced rural incomes and accelerated migration from rural to urban areas. This, in turn, disrupted the employment structure and led to various socioeconomic issues.

When looking at the industrial sector, issues related to productivity and technology emerge. The widespread use of unskilled labour and the inability to utilise production technologies result in low value-added production in the industrial sector. The dominance of the public sector over industrial enterprises and the poor management

of these facilities also remain persistent problems. This situation keeps the industrial sector's role in the economy low.

Syria's economy, viewed through the lens of foreign trade, is marked by an export structure that relies heavily on crude oil and agricultural products. Crude oil accounts for 60% of total exports. The contraction in petroleum products has also put pressure on exports. Insufficient crude oil processing capacity has failed to meet the growing domestic demand. Additionally, the rising demand for luxury consumption has led to an increase in processed food imports.

The economy experienced rapid growth in the 1970s, driven by implemented incentive policies, increased oil revenues, and particularly foreign aid from Gulf countries. State factories established due to infrastructure investments and import substitution policies enabled the economy to grow at an average annual rate of 10% during the 1970s. These large projects were generally financed through foreign aid and remittances sent by Syrians working abroad. The policies referred to as "liberalisation policies" essentially involved large public investments. In Syrian pounds, public investments amounted to 897 million in 1970, rising to 14.1 billion by 1980. Public investments and expenditures continued to be the primary driving force of the economy. Between 1973 and 1981, more than 9 billion USD in foreign capital entered the country, accounting for 12.5% of GDP. However, despite these investments, structural transformations failed to occur. Despite the economic growth, development saw no advancement. On the other hand, a new economic elite class emerged around the regime during this period due to privileges such as state-private sector partnerships and import quotas. This class was mainly composed of individuals from the party, security forces, or those with direct ties to them. The rise of this new elite led to an increase in luxury goods consumption and imports, as well as changes in the lifestyle of specific segments of society.

From 1983 onwards, new policy approaches were introduced to liberalise the economy, and by 1986-87, demands for a second wave of liberalisation policies had intensified. The second phase of liberalisation policies took a different shape compared to those of the 1970s. The rapid decline in foreign capital inflows and the subsequent economic stagnation influenced this shift. Instead of state-centred economic policies based on the assumption of unlimited state resources, a greater role was given to the private sector. Public-private partnership models in the tourism and transportation sectors were also extended to agriculture. During the second phase of liberalisation policies, the Syrian currency was devalued. Along with this devaluation, trade regulations were loosened, and the private sector was allowed to import raw materials. Another major policy change during this period was the promotion of private-sector investments. The policy of promoting the private sector began in 1986 and was formalised and secured with the enactment of the "Investment Incentive Law No. 10" in 1991.

The 1980s were years of crisis for the Syrian economy. Between 1986 and 1987, inflation reached 100%, the economy contracted by 5%, and foreign exchange reserves dropped to their lowest levels. Along with the economic crisis, austerity policies were introduced, leading to a reduction in government expenditures. Military spending, which accounted for 18% of GDP between 1976 and 1988, was reduced to 7% in the 1990s. During this period, government spending decreased from fifty per cent to twenty-five per cent of GDP. The economic crisis strengthened the position of the private sector and revealed that a system based on a planned state economy could not be sustained for long. In the 1990s, the private sector's economic share began to rise. However, the state's control and regulatory role in the economy continued alongside the private sector.

With the start of the Gulf War in 1991, foreign aid increased again under the condition of supporting Iraq against the Gulf countries. The Syrian economy achieved steady growth, and new oil fields led to an increase in oil revenues. The allocation of new resources to infrastructure investments, social services, and public investments resulted in higher employment rates. On the other hand, during this period, the private sector's share reached its highest level since 1967. However, most of these developments remained statistical and did not lead to structural changes. While the economy peaked in the mid-90s, it began to decline rapidly afterwards. The liberalisation policies introduced in the 1990s led to the formation of a new class with ties to the regime or familial connections rather than creating a widespread private sector. The "Investment Incentive Law No. 10", enacted in 1991, resulted in the emergence of private sector monopolies instead of competition.

The reason Hafez and his regime did not fully implement economic liberalism policies should be viewed in light of the relationships the regime had established. Economic liberalism policies could not be implemented alone; they required further reforms that would bring political freedom and participatory politics. Instead of adopting active liberal policies, Hafez introduced limited initiatives, maintaining the social contract he had established with the ruling elites, military bureaucracy, and some merchants. Bureaucrats, businessmen, and high-ranking military officers within the network of relationships surrounding the regime did not want full liberalisation. These groups, who believed that competition in a democratic and liberal system would undermine their interests, preferred limited reforms and used the power they held to ensure this. However, the cost of these limited reforms was ultimately imposed on the general population through measures like austerity policies.

With the death of Hafez in 2000, his son Bashar al-Assad was elected President of Syria. Taking office in a different global political environment, Bashar's primary focus was on domestic politics rather than the peace negotiations pursued in foreign policy. His immediate challenge was consolidating his power in the face of the entrenched cadres within the regime and expanding his authority over a broader base. The urgent

issues and key areas of reform that the new regime needed to address in its early years can be grouped into four main areas:

1. **Population growth:** Managing the rapid population increase by creating new job opportunities and ensuring the provision of essential services and infrastructure,
2. **Dependence on oil revenues:** Reducing reliance on oil revenues, which accounted for 70% of exports and 50% of government income,
3. **Risk of economic contraction and current account deficit crisis** due to failure to increase non-oil revenues,
4. **Declining living standards and rising poverty.**

The Bashar administration recognised the need for the private sector to address these challenges. As a result, new regulations and reforms became necessary. Since the Investment Incentive Law in 1991—expected to be a turning point for liberalisation—no significant reforms were implemented. Bashar’s plan was to open Syria’s economy to international markets and take steps to adapt to the era of globalisation. In this context, he aimed to introduce measures such as integrating internet usage into daily life. However, due to the absence of a reform plan, he had to implement his policies cautiously, ensuring they did not open doors for elements that might jeopardise the regime. Overall, Bashar’s approach focused on an economic policy where reforms were introduced to modernise public institutions, and the private sector was integrated into the market without privatising the public sector.

The Bashar administration took several measures to liberalise the system and promote economic growth. In this context, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was invited to the country to provide consultancy and recommendations. In 2001, a law was passed allowing the establishment of private banks, and in 2003, a Presidential Law lifted restrictions on foreign exchange transactions that had been limited for 17 years. Import bans that had put pressure on the local manufacturing industry were also removed. After 40 years of state-controlled banking, the first private bank was opened in 2004, followed by five more private banks. However, strict controls were maintained over the banking sector. A regulation required that 51% of bank shares be owned by Syrian citizens or companies, with at least 25% of the shares under Syrian control. The state granted these privileges to specific groups, serving as a source of power. Later, additional laws further liberalised the banking sector, increasing the share of foreign ownership in banks. In 2009, the “Syrian Stock Exchange” was established. Alongside domestic market reforms, steps were also taken in foreign trade. Commercial relations with Türkiye, Iran, and Arab states were strengthened, and free trade agreements were signed. In 2005, Syria experienced significant growth in foreign direct investment and Arab investments. Foreign investments, which amounted to \$111 million in 2001, surged to \$1.6 billion by 2006.

The defining characteristic of the Bashar era was the acceleration of economic liberalisation policies. After three cycles without one, a Five-Year Development Plan was announced, and in 2005, at the Ba'ath Party's Regional Congress, it was declared that Syria would transition from a planned economy to a "Social Market Economy" model. Under this model, the state's influence over the economy would be reduced, the role of the private sector would be expanded, but the government would maintain its regulatory functions. According to the announced policies, new financial institutions would be established, and the banking sector would be further developed.

Despite the economic growth in the first half of the 2000s, the anticipated decline in oil production necessitated economic measures. While Syria's economy showed numerical growth, it failed to address its structural problems and performed poorly in areas affecting large segments of the population, such as income distribution. Austerity measures, particularly those impacting rural areas, led to a decline in living standards and further deepened poverty.

The removal of subsidies on agricultural inputs, the reduction of price supports, the neglect of agricultural planning and cooperatives, and the increasing demands for bribes within public institutions serving the agricultural sector, combined with the severe drought between 2007 and 2010, dealt a major blow to agriculture. As the sector contracted, farmers fleeing rural areas and Iraqi refugees formed poverty-stricken neighbourhoods on the outskirts of cities. The state proved incapable of providing adequate infrastructure and essential services in response to this migration. Meanwhile, real estate speculation, fuelled by capital inflows from the Gulf and rising domestic demand, hit low-income families the hardest. Many families who had lived in low-rent housing for years faced the risk of homelessness. The lifting of rent controls, the sale of state land to the private sector at low prices, and the reduction of social housing projects created a severe threat for many middle- and low-income families. The housing crisis pushed society to the brink of social unrest. In addition, the rising luxury consumption among the new wealthy class caused widespread discontent. A report submitted to the Presidency even noted that a growing perception was taking hold—that the regime had abandoned the poor in favour of the rich.

Over the past half-century, Syria's economy has undergone three phases of economic liberalisation (*infitah*). These liberalisation policies aimed at transitioning to a market economy under state control and guidance. The policies of the 1970s allowed the private sector to take on a greater role in the economy. By the late 1980s and 1990s, the private sector gained increasing influence, and by the 2000s, it had acquired decision-making autonomy, become active in the financial sector, and developed ties with global markets. The Bashar regime took a more reformist approach compared to the old guard within the bureaucracy and the ruling party. However, while it pursued greater economic liberalisation to address the country's financial challenges, it was not

committed to political reform or democratisation. The network of business elites and state officials created deeper economic concessions, but to prevent the emergence of new rivals in both the market and political sphere, it actively blocked reforms beyond the economic sector.

### **2.2.3. The Military's Response to Social Protests and Civil Uprisings**

The peaceful demonstrations against the Bashar regime in Syria, which began in the wake of the mass uprisings in Tunisia in 2010—an event some authors refer to as the “Arab Spring”—quickly spiralled out of control due to the military's harsh intervention. The ensuing civil war and destruction created a power vacuum and widespread chaos in the region. These events in Syria naturally drew greater international attention to the country. With the Ba'ath Party's rise to power in 1963 and the subsequent establishment of a socialist economic system, Syria remained under a dictatorial regime for half a century. When Hafez al-Assad took control through a coup in 1970, he introduced a planned economy while also allowing for the private sector. The state largely played a driving role in the economy, funding infrastructure projects primarily through oil revenues and foreign aid, leading to high economic growth in the 1970s. However, due to an economic crisis and currency problems in the mid-1980s, the government was forced to implement a series of austerity measures and, in the early 1990s, announced a new liberalisation policy. This initiative aimed to revitalise the economy by granting the private sector more autonomy and incentives. However, the results revealed that the economy had not undergone true structural transformation. An elite class closely tied to the state exploited public resources and privileges for their interests.

In 2000, after succeeding his father, Bashar al-Assad was compelled to focus more on domestic politics due to regional political developments. Measures had to be taken to address issues such as unemployment and poverty. Additionally, Bashar had to consolidate his power against elements of the old regime. Gradually, liberal economic policies began to be implemented. In this context, the IMF was consulted for recommendations on economic reforms. The Bashar regime aimed to integrate Syria into the global system further, as demonstrated by the introduction of internet access and mobile phone usage within the country.

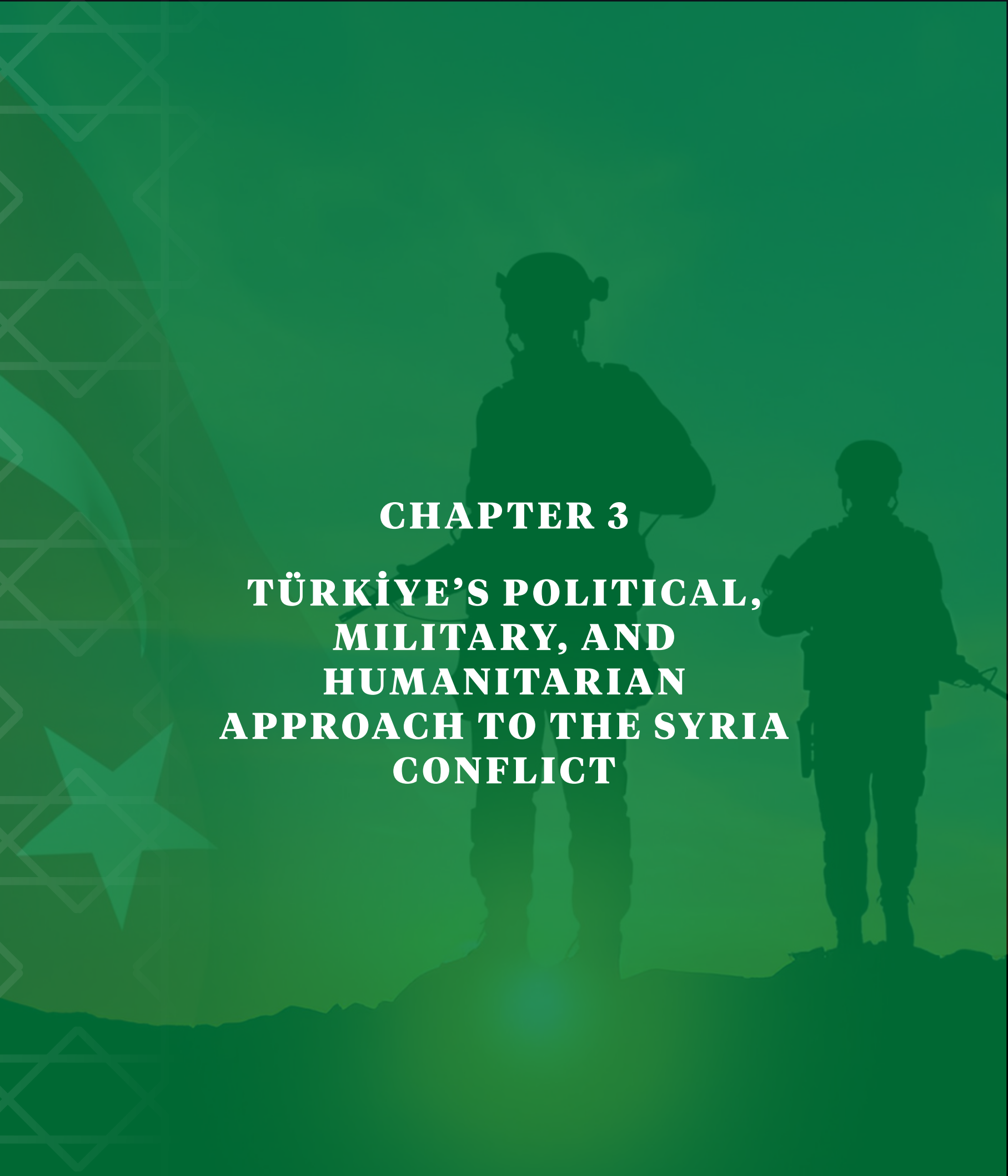
In 2005, Bashar announced a transition from a planned economy to a social market economy. This policy sought to encourage private investment without privatising public assets while maintaining state oversight. Alongside these incentives, Syria pursued trade liberalisation, signing free trade agreements with Türkiye and Arab countries. The goal of removing import and export quotas was to stimulate economic growth.

The policies implemented positively impacted economic growth, and in recent years, the country has presented an optimistic outlook in this regard. However, increasing rural poverty, reductions in state support under reform policies, and the contraction of

the agricultural sector accelerated rural-to-urban migration. Rising consumer goods prices and speculation in the housing market fuelled growing public discontent. One of the most pressing issues was that the economic reforms benefited only a specific group of businessmen rather than the entire market. Despite advancements in the luxury goods and financial sectors, expectations were not met for agriculture and small businesses. While the reforms safeguarded the interests of a small elite close to the regime, they failed to drive overall economic development. Rather than implementing policies to maintain public support, Bashar al-Assad focused on favouring a select group of businessmen, which exacerbated poverty and heightened public grievances. Over the past 13 years, this ruling elite has remained closely aligned with the regime, fighting to secure its survival. The regime was sustained not only by a group rooted in sectarian and familial connections but also by an elite class committed to maintaining an economically established system, which further extended the duration of the civil war.

A key pillar of this elite governance was the military. The armed forces were organised around the Ba'ath Party leadership and the Assad family, leading to harsh crackdowns on popular movements both during Hafez's rule and Bashar's era. Given that power in Syria depended on force, the army responded with armed intervention during the 2011 protests. The military's violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations—particularly in Homs, Aleppo, and surrounding areas—rapidly escalated the situation into a civil war.





**CHAPTER 3**

**TÜRKİYE'S POLITICAL,  
MILITARY, AND  
HUMANITARIAN  
APPROACH TO THE SYRIA  
CONFLICT**

### 3.1. Political Approach

#### 3.1.1. Türkiye's Peaceful Policy Supporting Syria's Territorial Integrity: The Geneva Process and the Astana Process as an International Platform

The social events that began in Syria in March 2011 reshaped both Syria's internal agenda and the dynamics of Türkiye-Syria relations. The policy adopted by Türkiye during this process was based on key principles such as the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and unity, the cessation of conflicts, and the implementation of democratic reforms to respond to the legitimate demands of the people.

Even before the events in Syria began, the outbreak of social movements in Tunisia had foreseen the inevitable transformation in the region, and the Syrian government had been advised to carry out the necessary reforms to adapt to this process. These suggestions aimed to help Syria navigate its transition process while minimizing potential harm.

On February 6, 2011, during a meeting in Aleppo with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized the importance of adopting reforms that would initiate a comprehensive and effective transformation process in Syria.

On April 6, 2011, during a high-level official visit to Syria by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussions were held with President Assad and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem, emphasizing the significant importance attached to Syria's stability. In the meetings, the necessity of implementing the announced reforms to prevent the events from turning into ethnic and sectarian conflicts and the need to avoid violence was expressed.

In a meeting held in Syria on August 9, 2011, with President Bashar al-Assad, the expectations regarding cessation of the violence, immediate ending operations, withdrawal of the army from the cities, and swift implementation of comprehensive reforms to address the legitimate demands of the people were clearly stated.

Despite all these efforts, the Syrian administration did not respond to the people's demands for universal values encompassing democracy, freedom, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law. On the contrary, the government initiated a militarised campaign against its citizens in order to suppress these aspirations. The administration, resistant to enacting reforms, sought to defer the matter from the agenda through a series of delaying tactics.

The fundamental principles of Türkiye's Syria policy have been the peaceful completion of a democratic reform and transformation process that would respond to the legitimate demands of the Syrian people, the cessation of the bloodshed in the country, and the protection of Syria's territorial integrity and unity.

Türkiye has prioritised the prevention of a religious, sectarian, or ethnically-based civil war in Syria and has endorsed the Arab League's proposal to convene a national dialogue conference between the Syrian administration and the opposition under specific conditions. Türkiye expected this initiative to stop the bloodshed in the country and pave the way for a political transition process that would respond to the legitimate demands of the people. However, the Syrian administration persisted in its violence against its people, despite its announcement that it had accepted the proposal. Türkiye regarded the Arab League's resolution to suspend Syria's membership, which was enacted during its meeting on November 12, 2011, as an appropriate step in light of the Arab League observer mission's unsuccessful endeavours, which were attributed to Syria's failure to demonstrate the necessary objectivity and cooperation in adhering to the established protocols and the possibility of escalating the issue to the United Nations through the Arab League became apparent.

From the onset of the process, Türkiye has embraced the perspective that a robust and inclusive opposition is essential to foster a constructive political transition in Syria that aligns with the aspirations of the people. Türkiye holds the view that pluralism, along with a robust opposition, is essential to the functioning of democracies, reflecting its commitment to democratic principles.

Engagements with Syrian opposition groups were carried out with a commitment to democratic principles, ensuring that there was no display of political, ethnic, religious, or sectarian bias, and that the interests of any particular group were not given precedence. In this context, the initial formal engagement with opposition groups occurred during the visit of representatives from the Syrian National Council to Ankara on October 17, 2011.

Türkiye has called on the international community, particularly the United Nations Security Council, to take action in addressing the escalating crisis within Syria's borders and to work towards a resolution to the ever-deepening tragedy in the region. Our nation has engaged earnestly in all global efforts undertaken thus far to seek a peaceful resolution to the Syrian crisis, demonstrating a commitment to expedite the resolution process in order to mitigate the escalation of violence in Syria and its potential impact on neighbouring countries.

In this regard, Türkiye has taken on a proactive role as a member of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People (Friends' Group), which comprises more than 100 members. Our country played a significant role in addressing the crisis by hosting the second meeting of this group in April 2012, demonstrating our commitment to regional ownership and actively engaging the UN General Assembly on the situation in Syria.



The Second Conference of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People/ İstanbul (April 1, 2012)

At the second conference of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People held in Istanbul on April 1, 2012, the determination to support the just cause of the Syrian people was emphasized, human rights violations by the Syrian regime were condemned, and the importance of the political transition process was noted. Referring to the results of the first meeting held in Tunisia, the Friends' Group reaffirmed its determination to support the just cause of the Syrian people. The Friends' Group emphasized that Syria's future should be determined by the Syrian people and that they would resolutely stand by the Syrian people until their just and legitimate demands are realized. In this context, the Friends' Group strongly expressed its commitment to preserving Syria's sovereignty, independence, political unity, and territorial integrity.

At the fourth meeting convened in Marrakech in December 2012, a significant consensus was reached as 114 countries and 13 international organisations acknowledged the Syrian National Council as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, with notable support from Türkiye.

Türkiye has given full support to the efforts of Lakhdar Brahimi, who has served as the Joint Special Representative of the UN and the League of Arab States for Syria since August 17, 2012. However, Türkiye has repeatedly expressed its perspective that the potential for success in international initiatives may be constrained when the UN Security Council does not adequately perform its duties and responsibilities.

The Geneva Communiqué of June 30, 2012, was endorsed for the first time by the UN Security Council with Resolution 2118, and a call was made to organize

an international conference to ensure the implementation of this communiqué. Türkiye has continued to provide necessary support for the implementation of these initiatives.

Within the framework of UN Security Council Resolution 2118, initiatives to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria gained momentum. Accordingly, following discussions between the US, Russian Federation, and UN officials in Geneva on November 25, it was decided to hold the Geneva II Conference on January 22, 2014. Türkiye, which participated in and made significant contributions to the first Geneva Conference held in 2012, has given full support to initiatives aimed at creating the necessary ground for Geneva II to achieve the desired results.

The Geneva Communiqué of June 30, 2012, stated: “The members of the Action Group are committed to the sovereignty, independence, national unity, and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic. They are determined to work urgently and intensively to bring about an end to the violence and human rights abuses, and to facilitate the launch of a Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and enables them independently and democratically to determine their own future.”

Furthermore, the Friends of the Syria Core Group's joint statement from the İstanbul meeting on July 15, 2014, emphasised Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity, as well as its commitment to combating extremism and terrorism in the region, expressed its full support for political transition through the full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué (June 30, 2012).

Throughout the process, Türkiye has maintained the fundamental expectation of the initiation of a viable democratic transition process through Geneva II that would preserve the existing infrastructure and public institutions in Syria. The peaceful conclusion of this process would be the establishment of a free and democratic system in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Syrian citizens are constitutionally guaranteed on the basis of equality, regardless of ethnic origin, religion, and sect, in accordance with the legitimate demands and expectations of the Syrian people.

Türkiye played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the Vienna meetings at the end of 2015 aimed at resolving the conflict in Syria and revitalising the stagnant political process. This initiative facilitated the Geneva talks, which allowed for negotiations between the regime and the opposition. Following the Second Geneva Conference, meetings of the Syria Support Group, which included Türkiye among other nations, were convened in Vienna in November 2015. In Vienna, an agreement was reached to establish a ceasefire, initiate negotiations between the parties, implement a six-month transition period, and conduct elections in Syria

within 18 months. UN Security Council Resolution 2254 was adopted unanimously with the backing of the US and Russia within the framework agreed upon in Vienna.

On December 18, 2015, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2254, marking the first resolution to propose a concrete timeline for the political transition process related to the conflict in Syria, which had entered its fifth year.

This resolution reflects the framework agreed upon and the course of action to be adopted in the political transition process at meetings held by the International Syria Support Group in Vienna on October 30 and November 14, 2015. It was based on the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and envisaged a scheduled political transition process aimed at establishing a transitional government with full executive powers through negotiations among Syrian parties.

Türkiye advocated for a solution during the anticipated political transition process in which Bashar al-Assad would transfer all his powers to the transitional government and step down from office. Moreover, Türkiye placed significant emphasis on the talks that were to be initiated between the Assad regime and the Syrian opposition. In this regard, it highlighted the critical importance of the delegation representing the opposition, reflecting the outcomes and scope of the conference held in Riyadh on 8-10 December 2015, for the success and legitimacy of the talks..

Türkiye believes that peace and stability in Syria can only be attained through a process that allows the will of the people to be expressed through free and fair elections, along with the establishment of a fully empowered transitional government and the removal of regime officials, particularly Bashar al-Assad. In this context, Türkiye has consistently supported the anticipated political process at every level.

Within this framework, Türkiye engaged actively in meetings with like-minded nations and members of the International Syria Support Group to seek a political resolution to the conflict and made essential contributions to the process. As a result of these endeavours, the United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution outlining a specific timeline for a political solution.

In the context of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which is rooted in the 2012 Geneva Communiqué and sets the framework for political transition in Syria, opposition and regime delegations were scheduled to convene in Geneva under UN mediation. Consequently, the Syrian opposition gathered in Riyadh in December 2015 to consolidate their ranks and formed the High Negotiations Committee.

The resolution underscored Syria's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political unity, called for the establishment of an inclusive governance system not rooted in sectarian foundations, and asserted that the process would be led by

Syrians. According to the roadmap outlined in this resolution, it was intended to establish a transitional government that includes the opposition, with the people to be incorporated into this structure based on mutual agreement, prepare a new constitution, and subsequently conduct free and fair elections under UN supervision within 18 months, allowing Syrians in the diaspora to participate as well.

This resolution was highly significant because it garnered the unanimous agreement of all principal stakeholders in the Syrian crisis and was not subjected to a veto in the Security Council. Türkiye made extensive efforts alongside like-minded nations to ensure and maintain the unity and harmony of the opposition, achieving significant success in this regard. As a result of these diplomatic initiatives, representatives of the High Negotiations Committee, formed in Riyadh, arrived in Geneva on January 30, 2016. At the outset of this process, Türkiye thwarted attempts by terrorist elements to participate in negotiations alongside the opposition.

The Geneva process, designed to create a political framework for resolving the Syrian conflict, was reinitiated at the start of 2016. However, the UN-mediated negotiations were halted after the third round, which took place from April 13 to 27, 2016, due to the regime's aggressive assaults and its unwillingness to engage in discussions about a political transition.

The ceasefire announced in February 2016, under the leadership of the US and the Russian Federation through the initiative of the International Syria Support Group, collapsed in May 2016 due to systematic violations by the regime and its supporters, as well as intense attacks on civilians. This situation rendered the progress of the political process even more difficult.

The Syrian regime endeavoured to avoid discussing political transition, the primary subject of the negotiations. Furthermore, by violating the ceasefire that came into effect on February 27, 2016, it obstructed the passage of humanitarian aid and impeded the progress of the political process by besieging Eastern Aleppo.

Eastern Aleppo, besieged by the regime in July 2016, fell completely under regime control in December 2016 after relentless assaults. Nevertheless, a ceasefire was established in Aleppo due to vigorous diplomacy conducted under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Russian President Vladimir Putin, resulting from cooperative efforts between Türkiye and Russia. This ceasefire enabled the safe evacuation of 45,000 civilians during December 2016.

During this process, Türkiye maintained its contacts with Iran and with the trilateral meeting held with the foreign ministers of Russia and Iran in Moscow on December 20, 2016, it established the foundation of the Astana process.



Trilateral Meeting of Foreign Ministers of Türkiye, Russian Federation and Iran / Moscow  
(December 20, 2016)

Following the ceasefire agreement signed by Türkiye and Russia as guarantors on December 29, 2016, which aimed to extend the ceasefire achieved in Aleppo across the country, a nationwide ceasefire was declared in Syria. This development represented an important step towards reducing conflicts and revitalising the political process. After the ceasefire took effect on December 30, 2016, under the guarantee of Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, peace talks commenced in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, as had previously been decided.

In the declaration made at the first meeting held on January 23, 2017, it was stated that the Syrian problem could not be resolved through military means, and it was expressed that Russia, Türkiye, and Iran had decided to establish a trilateral mechanism to monitor the ceasefire in Syria. The declaration called on international parties to make efforts to initiate the political process in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254, and all opposition groups were urged to participate in the conference to be held in Geneva.



Syria peace talks in Astana (January 23-24, 2017)

The declaration calling for the resumption of talks among Syrians also emphasised “the protection of Syria’s territorial integrity as a democratic country home to various ethnic and religious communities, as confirmed by the UN Security Council.” Released on December 29, 2016, and supported by the UN Security Council Resolution 2336, the declaration called on all parties to support the ceasefire regime and to work towards minimising ceasefire regime violations while underlining the presence of a common will regarding the fight against terrorist organisations such as DAESH and the need for the opposition to disassociate itself from these groups.

During the Astana meetings on Syria, which commenced on January 23-24, 2017, the guarantors of the ceasefire regime in force since December 30, 2016, namely Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, which later declared itself a guarantor, as well as the observers, the UN, the USA, and Jordan, convened with the parties to the Syrian conflict. At the Astana meetings, efforts were made to strengthen the ceasefire regime and implement confidence-building measures between the conflicting parties.

Russia, Türkiye, Iran, the Syrian government, and the opposition participated in the second round of the talks held on February 16, 2017, in Astana, which focused on resuming the interrupted ceasefire. The most tangible outcome of the talks, in which

Jordan participated for the first time as a guarantor country, was the adoption of an article on the establishment of a task force composed of Russia, Iran, and Türkiye as well as setting out a mechanism for the exchange of those detained by force.



Syria peace talks in Astana (February 15-16, 2017)

Following the ceasefire, which came into effect through the efforts of Türkiye, Russia, and Iran, the talks in Geneva started on February 23, 2017, and concluded on March 4, 2017. During the talks in Geneva, the phrase “fight against terrorism” was added to the articles regarding the transitional governing body, multi-party elections, and the new constitution outlined in the UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

The agenda of the Astana talks held on May 3-4, 2017, included the issue of “de-escalation zones.” During the talks, a memorandum was signed by Türkiye, Russia, and Iran on the establishment of de-escalation zones in specific areas of Idlib, Latakia, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus/East Ghouta, Daraa, and Quneitra. While the borders and functioning of de-escalation zones were to be determined by a working group to be formed by the three guarantor states, the memorandum envisaged the cessation of the use of weapons and the facilitation of humanitarian aid flow in these zones.



Syria peace talks in Astana (May 3-4, 2017)

Within the framework of these meetings, the memorandum, which ordered the creation of de-escalation zones throughout certain areas in Syria, notably contributed to ensuring peace on the ground by reducing the number of ceasefire violations. The memorandum also involved the deployment of observers on the field by Astana guarantor states. Consequently, since October 12, 2017, troops of the Turkish Armed Forces have been deployed to the Idlib de-escalation zone with the target of establishing observation posts.

At the Summit of the Leaders of the Guarantor States of the Astana Process, held in Sochi on November 22, 2017, it was decided to organise the “Syrian National Dialogue Congress” to support the political process to be owned and led by the Syrian people. The most important outcome of the Congress, held in line with this decision in Sochi on January 30, 2018, was the call for the formation of a Constitutional Committee to draft Syria’s new constitution, paving the way for free and fair elections in the country. Furthermore, a pool of 150 candidates was selected for the Committee. The work towards the formation of the Constitutional Committee was conducted in coordination among the Astana guarantors and the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Syria.



Trilateral Summit on Syria in Sochi (November 22, 2017)

In the joint statement at the summit held on November 22, 2017, the three guarantor states announced that they will persist in their coordinated work to preserve the success achieved in reducing violence in Syria. The statements highlighted the three leaders' strong commitment to Syria's independence, unity, and territorial integrity and reaffirmed that political attempts to undermine these principles would be in vain.

In the same period, Türkiye provided the necessary support to the First Riyadh Conference (December 8-10, 2015), organised to strengthen the opposition's representation in the political negotiation process in Syria, which also served as a valuable reference, while the long-anticipated Second Riyadh Conference was held on November 22-24, 2017, at the initiative of Saudi Arabia. Closely followed by Türkiye, the final communiqué adopted in the conference reaffirmed the vision largely agreed upon in the First Riyadh Conference, such as "Assad's resignation from office at the onset of the transition process."

The meeting elected a new 36-member High Negotiations Committee (HNC), including representatives from the Moscow and Cairo platforms, which had previously operated independently of the HNC. This development eliminated the excuse of "not facing a single opposition," which the regime frequently cited, as the aforementioned platforms participated in previous Geneva Talks with delegations independent of HNC. This represented a significant step towards a more integrated and effective negotiation process.

Türkiye's primary expectation in this process was the initiation of a genuine transition through the political process, which had been bolstered by the ceasefire regime and improved conditions on the ground resulting from the Astana meetings. The transition process aimed to achieve the peaceful establishment of a free and democratic system that aligns with the legitimate demands of the Syrian people, ensuring that the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or sect, are constitutionally guaranteed on the basis of equality.

Following the Syrian regime's seizure of Eastern Ghouta, Northern Homs, and the Daraa-Quneitra regions, preserving Idlib's status as a de-escalation zone became paramount for Türkiye. Among the key parameters of concern were the population of Idlib surging to approximately 3.5 million due to evacuations from other de-escalation zones and the risk of a humanitarian crisis arising from a potential wave of migration to be triggered by a potential regime attack on this region.

In response to these concerns and the expectations for a solution, the sensitivity demonstrated at the Tehran Summit on 7 September 2018, conducted in the Astana format, was conveyed to the leaders of the other Astana guarantor countries. Consequently, the Summit reached an agreement that the situation in Idlib should be addressed according to its unique dynamics and with composure, in line with the spirit of cooperation that characterised the Astana format.

"The Memorandum on the Stabilisation of the Situation in the Idlib De-escalation Area," signed at the Sochi Summit between the President of Türkiye and the President of the Russian Federation on 17 September 2018, was a concrete result of rigorous endeavours to preserve the status quo in Idlib. Through the Memorandum, which Iran also expressed support for, the Russian Federation pledged to avert a potential regime assault on the region.



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Vladimir Putin of Russia meet in Sochi, Russia (September 17, 2018)

The borders of the demilitarised zone planned to be established under the memorandum were determined during discussions between Turkish and Russian military officials in Ankara from September 19 to 21, 2018, and substantial progress was achieved regarding the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and extremist factions from this area. Resolute efforts were made to execute the Memorandum in its entirety, and throughout the process, a substantial contribution was made to de-escalate the region and to prevent a potential humanitarian crisis.

The tranquillity created by the memorandum presented a significant opportunity to advance the political process and expedite the establishment of the Constitutional Committee. During the Quadrilateral Summit in Istanbul on October 27, 2018, attended by Türkiye, Germany, France, and the Russian Federation, the leaders urged the establishment of the Constitutional Committee by year-end, considering the current circumstances. Türkiye acted in its capacity as the guarantor of the opposition, meticulously monitoring the efforts to establish the committee.



Quadrilateral Summit on Syria in Istanbul (October 27, 2018)

The significance of the ceasefire's durability in Idlib was underscored at the Quadrilateral Summit, which was intended to reconcile the positions of the prominent stakeholders in the Syrian conflict and identify a lasting solution. Furthermore, separatist agendas, particularly the PYD/YPG terrorist organisation, which aim to undermine Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the national security of neighbouring countries, were explicitly rejected. The summit notably contributed to endeavours aimed at achieving a peaceful solution to the conflict while preserving balance in the political and security fields.

Following extensive consultations between the Astana guarantors and the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria, an agreement was established regarding the members of the Constitutional Committee during the Türkiye-Iran-Russian Federation Trilateral Summit hosted by our President in Ankara on September 16, 2019. On September 23, 2019, the Syrian parties agreed on the rules of procedure, and the establishment of the Constitutional Committee was announced by the UN Secretary-General on the same day.



Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit in Ankara (September 16, 2019)

Within this framework, in cooperation with UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pederson and Astana guarantors, Türkiye, which provided the necessary support for the works of the Constitutional Committee, whose establishment was announced on September 23, 2019, and whose opening session took place on October 30, 2019, in Geneva, contributed to organising the first and second sessions of the Committee on November 4-8, 2019, and November 25-29, 2019, respectively. Following the start of the Constitutional Committee's works, the regime, for the first time, recognised the opposition as a direct interlocutor in the political process and sat at the negotiating table. This development was an important milestone in terms of the political settlement process.

Since the onset of the conflict in Syria, the primary goals of the Turkish policy have been to halt the bloodshed in the country, to safeguard Syria's territorial integrity and unity, and to complete the political transformation process in a peaceful manner that would satisfy the Syrian people's legitimate demands. Türkiye, to that end, staunchly supported the UN-brokered political process on the basis of the road map determined by the UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

On the other hand, concerns related to the regime's attacks against the Idlib De-escalation Area, along with the expectations related to the region, were brought to the Russian Federation's attention at all levels and on all occasions. As a result of these efforts, the Syrian regime announced a unilateral ceasefire in the region on August 31, 2019, and a significant decrease was observed in ceasefire violations. Türkiye maintained its resolute efforts with Russia to ensure full observance of the Idlib Memorandum.

The ceasefire established on the basis of the "Additional Protocol to the Memorandum on the Stabilisation of the Situation in the Idlib De-Escalation Area" signed on March 5, 2020, between Türkiye and the Russian Federation in the Kremlin, was maintained thanks to Türkiye's diligent efforts and the deterrence provided by its military presence in the field. At the same time, in parallel with the developments on the ground, efforts to advance the political process were made by ensuring continuity of the Constitutional Committee works, demonstrating a commitment to finding a lasting and peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Meeting with President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation in the Kremlin (March 5, 2020)

In Additional Protocol to the Memorandum on the Stabilisation of the Situation in the Idlib De-Escalation Area, the Parties referred to the Memorandum on the Creation of De-Escalation Areas in the Syrian Arab Republic as of May 4, 2017, and the Memorandum on Stabilisation of the Situation in the Idlib De-Escalation Area as of September 17, 2018, reaffirming their strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity, and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Reiterating the commitment to combating terror in all its manifestations and removing the groups classified as terrorists by the United Nations Security Council, the Protocol once more emphasised that targeting the civilians and civilian infrastructure is by no means excusable; there can be no military solution to the Syrian conflict; and the conflict can only be resolved under the leadership and ownership of Syrians, to be facilitated by the United Nations and through a political process option in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254.

As a part of efforts to find a lasting solution to the Syrian conflict, the Constitutional Committee, which held its inaugural meeting in 2019 as a result of the intense dialogue and cooperation between the UN and Astana guarantors (Türkiye, the Russian Federation, and Iran), entered into a hiatus after the eight-round meetings held in 2022. Türkiye, believing that a sustainable political resolution could be accomplished on the basis of the UN Security Council Resolution 2254, maintained its support for the work of the Constitutional Committee, asserting its efforts to resolve the impasse.

The cooperation and coordination established with the Russian Federation and Iran under the auspices of the Astana platform in order to maintain restraint on the ground and provide momentum for the political process continued, and Türkiye, through these platforms, continued to contribute to the international efforts for a peaceful settlement in Syria.



### 3.1.2. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Political Contacts and Statements on the Prevention of the Syrian Conflict

Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 69th session of the UN General Assembly (September 24, 2014)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 69th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN).

In his speech at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan dwelt on the humanitarian crisis and the regional instability in Syria and the responsibility of the international community. President Erdoğan expressed that the Syrian issue was not merely a regional issue but one that has grown into global dimensions and urged the international community to become more engaged:

**“The Syrian issue, too, has started to defy borders. The Syrian crisis has increasingly become a regional and global concern. It is no longer possible to remain indifferent to this, be it politically or humanistically.”**

Emphasising the importance of the territorial integrity of the countries in the region for Türkiye, President Erdoğan went on to say:

**“As Türkiye, we are working hard to ensure peace and prosperity in our region. We do not intervene in the domestic affairs of any nation. We respect and strongly defend the territorial integrity of every country in our region.”**

Highlighting Türkiye's humanitarian stance during this crisis, President Erdoğan detailed the assistance extended to Syrian refugees and asserted that Türkiye has taken a leading role in humanitarian relief efforts:

**“We are accommodating 1.5 million individuals who have fled Syria, on our own territory and predominantly relying on our own resources. 1.5 million individuals are currently in my country, and we are ensuring their safety. We are supplying them with food, medicine, education, and healthcare services all by ourselves.”**

Criticising the international community's failure to address this issue, President Erdoğan made the following remarks to question the response of European nations to the crisis:

**“Does the world provide you with substantial support? Unfortunately not! The funds we have channelled for Syrian refugees so far have surpassed 3.5 billion dollars. In contrast, wealthy and influential European nations admitted merely 130,000 Syrians.”**

President Erdoğan remarked that the loss of trust in the United Nations and other international organisations has fuelled terrorism and instability around the world. Arguing that double standards lay the groundwork for terrorism, President Erdoğan emphasised the necessity of reinforcing global conscience:

**“The double standards regarding the oppressed and the apathy towards the massacre of children foment terrorism all over the world.”**

Noting that the United Nations is supposed to be more effective and courageous, President Erdoğan voiced the need for reform with the following remarks:

**“The United Nations must weigh in on issues without further delay, before more oppressed individuals and innocent people lose their lives, before the global conscience is further scarred.”**

Lastly, President Erdoğan asserted that the international system needs more just and effective decision-making systems and complemented his urge for solidarity and cooperation with the following statement:

**“Faster and more effective decision-making mechanisms must be established for the resolution of global and regional challenges, and the United Nations must be much more courageous in standing up for what is right.”**

In this context, President Erdoğan stated that Türkiye continues its efforts for a peaceful and humanitarian solution to the Syrian crisis and called on the international community to take action in this direction.

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the UN Security Council's Special Session on “Foreign Fighters” (September 24, 2014)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the UN Security Council special session on “Foreign Fighters”.

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In his address at the UN Security Council's Special Session on "Foreign Fighters," President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasised the importance of international cooperation in the context of the threat of terrorism and the instability in Syria. President Erdoğan noted that terrorist activities in the region originate from the Syrian regime and the international community's failure to sufficiently intervene in the crisis, saying:

**"Türkiye has reiterated its warnings to the international community about the upcoming threat on various occasions, especially as of the onset of the instability in Syria. (...) The inertia engulfing the international community in the face of the regime's violent policies against its people has paved the way for Al-Qaeda to resurge and regain a foothold under the DAESH banner in Syria with the backing of the regime."**

Elaborating on Türkiye's counter-terrorism and humanitarian aid efforts, President Erdoğan described the scale of the refugee crisis and the sacrifices made by Türkiye in this process with the following statements:

**"There is a great pressure on the borders of our country. Alongside the 1,300,000 Syrian refugees of various ethnicities and sects we have received since the onset of the Syrian conflict, over 140,000 Syrian Kurdish refugees escaping from the DAESH onslaught have taken refuge in our country during the past week alone."**

Drawing attention to the necessity of international collaboration in combating terrorism, President Erdoğan asserted that this menace can only be addressed through the exchange of information and cooperation with the countries of origin:

**"The threat of foreign terrorist fighters begins with their departure from their countries of origin. Consequently, the fight against them should commence at the countries of origin. (...) I would like to emphasise this once again. We can only manage to stem this flow through a genuine sense of cooperation to be demonstrated by our friends and allies who anticipate Türkiye's cooperation on this matter."**

Lastly, President Erdoğan emphasised the importance of a common spirit of solidarity in resolving the Syrian crisis and in the fight against terrorism in order to ensure a lasting environment of peace and stability:

**"Our common goal must be to establish a permanently peaceful, democratic, and stable environment where millions of our Syrian brothers and sisters can safely return to their homes and all of our Iraqi brothers and sisters feel like they are a part of Iraq. Türkiye will continue its vigorous efforts towards this goal."**

### President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivers a speech at the World Economic Forum Special Meeting in Istanbul on (September 28, 2014)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivers a speech at the World Economic Forum Special Meeting in Istanbul on September 28, 2014

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pointed out the flaws of the international system and the global issues while calling for unity of power and cooperation to overcome these issues in his speech at the World Economic Forum. Stating that fault lines in the political, economic, and sociocultural landscape have become more apparent today, President Erdoğan made the following remark:

**“Economic crises, poverty, and unbalanced income distribution coupled with the strain on energy resources are dragging countries and societies into various forms of depression. It does not seem likely that a country can overcome these challenges on its own any more.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised that the international community must develop a common vision and voiced his concern over the current structure of the UN:

**“Unfortunately, the international organisations engaged in the political and economic realm, particularly the United Nations, are ineffective in preventing issues menacing humanity. The World is Bigger than 5 We cannot leave the fate of the world in the hands of these 5 countries.”**

In reference to the territorial integrity of Syria, President Erdoğan highlighted the necessity to increase humanitarian aid, particularly for the Syrian crisis, and proposed the following solutions:

**“First and foremost, it is imperative that urgent steps be taken to make sure humanitarian aid is delivered to Syria. The establishment of a constitutional parliamentary system enabling equal representation of all sections and protecting Syria’s territorial integrity can no longer be postponed.”**

Stating that regional issues reached a global scale today, President Erdoğan touched upon the effects of the crises in the region:

**“The massacres committed by the Damascus regime in Syria have claimed the lives of 250,000 people. The number of people displaced is now around 7 million. Türkiye alone accommodates nearly 1.5 million Syrian refugees.”**

President Erdoğan pointed out that the international community has failed to take adequate action and underlined the importance of solidarity with the following statements:

**“Before the fire spreads to other countries, inciting more terror and conflict, it must be extinguished in collaboration immediately. As Türkiye, we maintain our conviction that political dialogue is the most valid approach to resolving the issues in our region.”**

In conclusion, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasised the need for the international community to assume a more active attitude in addressing the Syrian crisis and increase humanitarian aid, and he also concretely demonstrated Türkiye’s leadership and sense of responsibility in this process.

### President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Speech at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations in Belgium (October 5, 2015)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations in Belgium.

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan drew attention to the crisis in Syria, the ongoing humanitarian tragedies, and the necessity of global cooperation in his speech at the Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations in Belgium. President Erdoğan emphasised the severity of the humanitarian situation in Syria with the following remarks:

**“Since 2011, the regime in Syria has been inflicting terror and violence on its own people with all sorts of weapons at its disposal. It has claimed the lives of 350,000 people to this day. The Syrian crisis has**

**led to the worst humanitarian tragedy since World War II. 12 million people, comprising about half of the population, have been displaced.”**

Pertaining to Türkiye's open-door policy for refugees and the sacrifices the country has made, President Erdoğan used the following statements::

**“Türkiye is currently hosting 2.2 million Syrians and 300 thousand Iraqis in despair. Our expenditures so far have surpassed 7.5 billion US dollars. However, the aid provided by the international community has remained at 417 million US dollars. This situation is not sustainable.”**

In an appeal to the international community, President Erdoğan underscored the significance of addressing the root causes of the issue, and made the following proposal:

**“This humanitarian tragedy can only be alleviated by addressing its root causes. Peace and stability in Syria can only be restored through a controlled transition process that leads to regime change.”**

Moreover, President Erdoğan reiterated his calls for establishing “terror-free safe zones” and stated that this proposal will contribute to the resolution of the issue:

**“Securing the areas cleared of DAESH in Syria by the moderate opposition will be a crucial step in resolving the issue.”**

President Erdoğan demonstrated Türkiye's role in this process with the following remarks:

**“Türkiye is ready for any kind of cooperation in resolving this issue. The international community must fulfil its responsibilities; if not, time is working against us.”**

President Erdoğan concluded his remarks by asserting their opposition to all forms of terrorism and emphasised the significance of international solidarity:

**“Türkiye opposes all forms of terrorism and anticipates the support of its European friends in resolving this issue.”**

### Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Press Conference following the G-20 Leaders Summit in Antalya (November 16, 2015)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at a press conference on the second day of the G-20 Türkiye Leaders Summit in Antalya on November 16, 2015.

During the press conference held following the G20 Leaders Summit in Antalya, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan elaborated on the matters discussed during the summit and Türkiye's stance on global issues. In his address, President Erdoğan underscored the importance of global stability and cooperation while addressing terrorism, the crisis of Syrians under temporary protection, and the Syrian issue.

In reference to Syria's territorial integrity and proposed solutions, President Erdoğan said that the international community's efficient cooperation and solidarity are indispensable for addressing the Syrian crisis and went on to say:

**“The regional issues, mainly the issue of refugees and terrorism, cannot be overcome in Syria without agreeing on a common solution that is acceptable to all people living in the country. The international community must act in efficient cooperation, burden-sharing, and sincere solidarity.”**

President Erdoğan outlined the main goals for Syria's future in the following words:

**“The main goals of this process are to preserve the territorial integrity of Syria, wipe out all terrorist elements, and establish a pluralistic, democratic, and legitimate political structure.”**

Pointing out the sacrifices made for Syrians under temporary protection, President Erdoğan described Türkiye's humanitarian approach as follows:

**“Türkiye is housing over 2.5 million refugees, 2.2 million coming from Syria and 300,000 from Iraq. We opened our doors to all people in need, regardless of their faith or origin. This attitude is a humanitarian duty for us before all else.”**

The humanitarian responsibilities of the crisis were underscored by President Erdoğan, who urged the international community to act in solidarity in pursuit of a resolution, remarking:

**“We should display sincere solidarity in our struggle with this humanitarian crisis. As the G20, I believe we should set an example to the whole world about this issue.”**

President Erdoğan stressed that terrorism poses a significant threat to global stability and calls for collaborative efforts on an international scale, noting:

**“We should struggle against all terrorist organisations without discrimination. In our eyes, any country making a distinction among these organisations is in grave mistake.”**

### Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly (September 20, 2016)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivers a speech during the 71st session session of the UN General Assembly.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasised the Syrian crisis, global issues, and Türkiye's stance on these matters during his address to the 71st session of the UN General Assembly. Although humanity had reached the pinnacle of technological advancement, President Erdoğan said that this rosy picture also had a dark side, criticising the lack of concern for humanitarian crises on the part of the international community, adding:

**“Syria, Iraq, and many other countries have been suffering in the grip of war and terrorism that continue to kill hundreds of thousands of women and children, young and elderly. Refugees fleeing death and persecution face degrading treatment in European cities.”**

President Erdoğan stated plainly that Türkiye attached great importance to the protection of Syria's territorial integrity, noting:

**“Türkiye is the country that attaches the greatest importance to protecting Syria's territorial integrity and political unity. We have no designs on Syria's territory. Syria belongs to Syrians, and that is the whole point. No one should have designs on Syria's territory.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised the significance of Operation Euphrates Shield in terms of peace and stability in the region, stating:

**“Operation Euphrates Shield is of critical importance for reinstating stability, peace, and balance in a region dominated by despair. Indeed, the goal of our current operation is to de facto establish this safe zone.”**

Calling on European countries, President Erdoğan emphasised the necessity of a humanitarian approach towards asylum seekers, saying:

**“I call upon all European friends who perceive Syrian refugees as a vital threat; it is a futile endeavour to look for peace behind barbed wires and high walls.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's commitment to fighting terrorism and urged the international community to cooperate, saying:

**“Türkiye is engaged in a fight against all forms of terrorism. The people of Jarablus have started to return to their homes with a sense of safety and tranquillity after we freed them from terrorist organisations, including PKK/PYD and DAESH.”**

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Conference on “Türkiye’s Enterprising Vision for Peace in the Middle East” in Bahrain (February 13, 2017)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the conference titled “Türkiye’s Entrepreneurial Vision for Peace in the Middle East” organized by the Middle East and North Africa Office of the International Peace Institute in Bahrain.

During his speech at the conference in Bahrain, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye’s peace initiatives in the Middle East and its vision of regional cooperation while addressing current issues in the Islamic world, the Syrian crisis, and Syrians under temporary protection, urging for the continuation of the peace process and the protection of Syria’s territorial integrity, as well as for political unity:

**“It is imperative to safeguard Syria’s territorial integrity and political unity, implementing a political transition process that is founded on robust legitimacy, encompassing all religious, sectarian, and ethnic elements.”**

Furthermore, President Erdoğan underscored the significance of Operation Euphrates Shield, noting that Türkiye has been engaging in an active dialogue and initiative process on international platforms in this regard, saying:

**“We expelled the terrorist organisation DAESH and a part of the PYD from our borders through Operation Euphrates Shield. We successfully rid Jarablus, Al-Rai, and Dabiq of the presence of DAESH. Our goal is to create a terror-free safe zone of at least 4 or 5 square kilometres.”**

Proposing solutions for Syrians under temporary protection, President Erdoğan made the following statement:

**“It is a necessity to form a safe zone cleared of terrorism and enable refugees to settle there. We can enhance the living standards of refugees by building social facilities and settlements with specific architecture suitable for these areas.”**

President Erdoğan pointed out the dichotomy in the Islamic world and urged for unity:

**“At a time when their neighbours are in despair and brothers and sisters who pray to the same qibla are being oppressed, no country can think solely of its own comfort. We share destiny and dismay. Now is the time to act, not later.”**

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly (September 19, 2017)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations (UN).

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underscored the instabilities in Syria and Iraq, global issues, and the humanitarian approach of Türkiye in his speech at the 72nd Session of the General Assembly.

Stating that protecting Syria's territorial integrity is a priority for Türkiye, President Erdoğan touched upon the endeavours to this end with the following words:

**“We are currently hosting over 3 million Syrian and 200 thousand Iraqi refugees in our country. In cooperation with Russia and Iran, we initiated the Astana meetings with the participation of all interlocutors to ensure a permanent ceasefire and peace in the country. Following these initiatives, the long-stalled Geneva process was revitalised. Within the framework of the agreement reached in Astana, we are implementing a new plan to secure the Idlib region. We support every step towards building a stable and prosperous Syria based on the territorial integrity of the country, respecting the democratic demands of the people.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's determination in the face of terrorist organisations such as DAESH, PKK and PYD while remarking on the challenges in the fight against terrorism:

**“With Operation Euphrates Shield, which we launched in Syria against DAESH attacks on our borders, we liberated 243 residential areas and over 2 thousand square kilometres of land from this organisation.”**

In his speech on the actions of the PYD/YPG in Syria, President Erdoğan said the following:

**“The struggles of PYD/YPG towards altering the demographic structure of the areas it has invaded in Syria, appropriating people's properties, and murdering or exiling those who resist it constitute crimes against humanity.”**

President Erdoğan concluded his remarks by highlighting the importance of international solidarity for peaceful solutions for the future of Syria and Iraq as well as expressing Türkiye's active role in this process.

## Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at Chatham House (May 14, 2018)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the think tank Chatham House in London.

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In his speech at the think tank Chatham House in London, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assessed Türkiye's regional and global vision, delving into the crisis in Syria, Syrians under temporary protection, and the responsibilities of the international community. Devoting a significant portion of his speech to humanitarian aid, fight against terrorism, and regional stability, President Erdoğan also underscored the importance of protecting Syria's territorial integrity and mentioned Türkiye's efforts to this end as follows:

**“Türkiye is the most candid country when it comes to Syria's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Because the only way for the 3.5 million Syrian refugees who are currently living within our borders to return home is for this country to be safe again.”**

President Erdoğan stated that the Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield operations resulted in several areas being freed from terrorism, allowing people to live safely in such areas.

**“Hundreds of thousands of people have returned and settled in the Syrian lands secured by Türkiye while none have returned to the areas under the control of terrorist organisations still backed by our allies.”**

President Erdoğan voiced his determination in the fight against terrorism and criticised the double standards applied by the international community:

**“Türkiye has carried out the most effective operation against DAESH in the world. Neutralising 3 thousand DAESH militants during the Operation Euphrates Shield, Türkiye has struck the biggest blow to this terrorist organisation in Syria.”**

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly (September 25, 2018)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 73rd General Assembly of the United Nations (UN).

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addresses the 73rd President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pointed out the need for global justice and reform while discussing the crisis in Syria, Syrians under temporary protection, as well as Türkiye's role in the fight against terrorism. In his speech, President Erdoğan addressed the shortcomings of the international system and called for global solidarity.

President Erdoğan also underscored the importance of preserving Syria's territorial integrity and described Türkiye's role in this regard as follows:

**“The Sochi agreement that we recently signed with Russia enabled us to prevent the regime's bloody attacks directed at the Idlib de-escalation zone where 3.5 million civilians reside. We believe we have preserved the path to peace and a political solution in Syria by preventing the previous massacres in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Daraa, and Eastern Ghouta from occurring in Idlib.”**

President Erdoğan made the following remarks on the safe zones established on the ground by Türkiye:

**“We have cleared the Jarabulus, Rai, al-Bab, and Afrin regions of terrorism, leaving a 4 thousand square kilometre area safe and peaceful for millions of Syrians.”**

President Erdoğan elaborated on Türkiye's humanitarian assistance to Syrians under temporary protection and called on the international community to fulfil its responsibilities:

**“We host more than 4 million refugees within our borders, including 3.5 million Syrians. So far, we have spent 32 billion US dollars on Syrian refugees alone.”**

President Erdoğan highlighted the lack of international support, saying:

**“The European Union's pledge of 3 billion euros plus 3 billion euros in support is not being used effectively because it is project-dependent. However, we continue to provide services to asylum seekers on a daily and continuous basis, without being dependent on any project.”**

President Erdoğan also emphasised Türkiye's commitment to fighting terrorism and urged the international community to adopt a principled stance.

**“We urge the adoption of a principled stance against terrorist organisations. Those who equipped terrorists with tens of thousands of trucks and thousands of cargo planes laden with weapons for the sake of their tactical interests will undoubtedly face consequences in the future.”**

### Statement by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ahead of the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit (September 16, 2019)



President Erdoğan, President Putin of Russia and President Rouhani of Iran pose for a family photo in front of the three countries' flags prior to the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit hosted by President Erdoğan

In a statement prior to the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan assessed peace and stability efforts regarding the Syrian crisis, underlined that the summit was a crucial platform for preserving Syria's territorial integrity and political unity, and elaborated on Türkiye's role in this process. President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's commitment to defending Syria's political unity and territorial integrity in the following words:

**“We fully agree on preserving Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, keeping the peace on the ground, and finding a lasting political solution to the conflict.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised the significance of the trilateral summit held in the Astana format, saying:

**“The Astana platform is the only initiative capable of identifying and implementing effective solutions to alleviate the suffering in Syria.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's humanitarian approach to Syrian refugees as follows:

**“We continue to host more than 3.6 million Syrians fleeing persecution, terrorism, and carnage. From education to health, we spared no effort in ensuring that Syrian refugees live in humane conditions.”**

President Erdoğan provided updates on the returns to the safe zone in Syria, saying:

**“The number of our Syrian brothers and sisters returning to the safe zones we have established, such as Jarabulus, al-Bab, and Afrin, has reached 360 thousand.”**

President Erdoğan expressed Türkiye's commitment to fighting terrorism and the importance of its operations in the region, saying:

**“The Olive Branch and Euphrates Shield operations have successfully targeted terrorist networks that pose a threat to both Syria's territorial integrity and our national security. (...) Together, we will take our efforts to a new level by draining the terrorist swamp east of the Euphrates.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised the gravity of the situation in Idlib and described Türkiye's contribution, stating:

**“With the joint steps we took in Idlib, we prevented a tragedy that would have upended the lives of four million civilians.”**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed Türkiye's commitment to finding a peaceful and political solution to the Syrian crisis, emphasising the need for the international community to assume greater responsibility.

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at a Joint Press Conference following the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit (September 16, 2019)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani held a joint press conference at Çankaya Mansion in Ankara as part of the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan gave significant messages, emphasising the common stance adopted by the three countries with regard to the Syrian crisis at a joint press conference following the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit. In his address, President Erdoğan weighed in on the territorial integrity of Syria, the return of Syrians under temporary protection, and the fight against terrorism.

President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's commitment to maintaining Syria's territorial integrity and political unity, stating:

**“We reaffirmed our shared sensitivity to Syria's territorial integrity and political unity. We emphasised the unacceptable nature of supporting terrorist organisations under the guise of fighting DAESH.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised the importance of implementing the Sochi agreement and made the following remarks:

**“During our meeting today, we reviewed our obligations under the Sochi agreement. We affirmed the importance of fully implementing the agreement reached.”**

President Erdoğan also underscored the goal of creating a peace corridor in Syria for the secure and voluntary return of Syrians under temporary protection, saying:

**“So far, 360 thousand Syrians have returned to the four thousand square kilometres of territory cleared of terrorism through the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. These people are now living peacefully on their own land, sending their children to school. (...) We believe that at least two million Syrian brothers and sisters who have sought refuge in our country can settle in this region. If we can extend this line to Deir ez-Zor-Raqqa, the number of refugees returning may exceed three million.”**

President Erdoğan expressed Türkiye's commitment to combating terrorist organisations and went on to say:

**“The separatist terrorist organisation controls more than a quarter of Syrian territory. At this point, DAESH no longer poses a threat in Syria. The PKK and its extension, the YPG/PYD, pose the most serious threat to Syria's future.”**

President Erdoğan concluded his remarks by emphasising the need for international support to advance peace efforts in Syria, saying:

**“We want to build a peace corridor along our border with Syria to prevent the country from being divided. We will continue to work for the voluntary return of Syrians with the support of the international community.”**

### Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 24, 2019)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 74th General Assembly of the United Nations.

In his address to the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan drew attention to global injustice, the Syrian crisis, and the responsibilities of the international community. President Erdoğan emphasised Türkiye's humanitarian policy as well as the role it assumed in ensuring peace in Syria, and called for global solidarity.

President Erdoğan emphasised the significance of Syria's territorial integrity and political unity and expressed Türkiye's determination on this issue as follows:

**“It is crucial for Syria's territorial integrity and political unity to ensure that the Constitutional Committee functions effectively and efficiently. The country's territorial integrity will be automatically guaranteed once a lasting political solution is reached in Syria.”**

In his speech, President Erdoğan also referred to Türkiye's efforts to prevent a humanitarian tragedy in Idlib as follows:

**“We prevented potential massacres in Idlib and protected the lives of approximately 4 million people. We expect all countries to support Türkiye's efforts.”**

President Erdoğan commented on Türkiye's humanitarian assistance to Syrians under temporary protection and criticised the inadequacy of the international community as follows:

**“Türkiye hosts more than 5 million asylum seekers, including 3.6 million Syrians. We spent over 40 billion US dollars in this process. However, the European Union's support remained limited to only 3 billion euros.”**

Referring to the peace corridor plan, our President stated:

**“We aim to ensure the voluntary return of two million refugees with the peace corridor we intend to establish east of the Euphrates. It is essential for the international community to contribute to this project.”**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasised the determination in the fight against terrorism as follows:

**“A quarter of Syria's territory is under the occupation of terrorist organisations. Our fight against terrorist organisations such as PKK-YPG and DAESH will continue. All countries must adhere to the same principles in the fight against terrorism.”**

Our President also addressed the safe zone efforts with the US, making the following remarks:

**“Negotiations are underway with the United States to set up a safe zone extending 30 kilometres in depth and 480 kilometres in length, located to the east of the Euphrates. Our goal is to enable the resettlement of millions of refugees in this area.”**

**Following President Erdoğan's address to the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, the joint statement between Türkiye and the United States issued on October 17, 2019,**

Referred to the agreement reached by the parties on the situation in northeast Syria, the safe zone efforts, and the fight against terrorism; emphasised the importance of the relations between the two NATO allies; and declared that the United States understands Türkiye's legitimate security concerns on Türkiye's southern border.

The statement highlighted the importance of maintaining the territorial integrity and political unity of Syria and stated the need to find a political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Furthermore, it was agreed that counter-terrorism operations must target only terrorist elements. Türkiye particularly emphasised that the YPG elements must withdraw from the region, their heavy weapons must be collected, and their fortifications must be destroyed.

**Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Joint Press Conference with President Vladimir Putin of Russia (October 22, 2019)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Vladimir Putin of Russia hold joint press conference after their meeting at the Presidential Residence in Sochi, Russia

At the joint press conference held in Sochi with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan touched upon the developments in Syria, Operation Peace Spring, and the cooperation between the two countries. During the meeting, the territorial integrity of Syria, the fight against terrorism and the return of Syrians under temporary protection were addressed.

President Erdoğan emphasised that the territorial integrity of Syria must be protected and expressed Türkiye's determination on this issue as follows:

**“We are working with our Russian friends to maintain Syria's territorial integrity and political unity. Through Operation Peace Spring, we seek to eliminate terrorist threats in the region and secure the future of Syria.”**

In his remarks on the launch of the Constitutional Committee's activities, President Erdoğan also said:

**“We announced the establishment of the Constitutional Committee at the Ankara Summit on September 16. We expect the Committee to initiate a political transition process that will meet the legitimate demands of the Syrian people.”**

President Erdoğan also expressed the objective of Operation Peace Spring and its consequences in the region and emphasised the importance of the operation for the stability of the region and the territorial integrity of Syria:

**“The ultimate goal of Operation Peace Spring is to remove the terrorist organisation PKK-YPG from the region and to ensure the return of Syrian refugees. The operation also guarantees the territorial integrity of Syria.”**

President Erdoğan further shared the following details on the return of Syrians under temporary protection to the areas liberated from terrorism as part of the operation:

**“365,000 Syrian brothers and sisters have returned to safe zones thanks to the Euphrates Shield and Olive Branch operations. We aim to relocate one million Syrians in these zones through the Peace Spring Operation.”**

President Erdoğan further announced the memorandum of understanding concluded with Russia on the fight against terrorism, sharing the following objectives:

**“As of October 23, YPG elements will be removed from the safe zone, and joint Turkish-Russian patrols will begin in the area. Furthermore, all YPG elements will be expelled from Manbij and Tal Rifat.”**

In his speech, President Erdoğan emphasised that Türkiye and Russia would not tolerate separatist agendas in Syria:

**“With the memorandum of understanding we signed today, Türkiye and Russia have once again demonstrated that they will not tolerate any separatist agenda on the territory of Syria.”**

### Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit in the Astana Format (July 1, 2020)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attends a meeting on Syria with President Vladimir Putin of Russia and President Hassan Rouhani of Iran via video conference from Ankara

During the sixth Türkiye-Russia-Iran Trilateral Summit in the Astana Format, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan prioritised peace, security, and stability regarding the Syrian conflict. The summit, held via video conference, focused on Syria's territorial integrity, Syrians under temporary protection, and the combat against terrorism.

President Erdoğan emphasised their commitment to preserving Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, saying:

**“Our key concerns are to preserve Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, to restore peace on the ground, and to find a long-term political solution to the conflict.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised the significance of the Astana Format in the peace process, saying:

**“The Trilateral Summits in the Astana Format, which we initiated in 2017, have significantly contributed to the establishment of peace, security, and stability in Syria.”**

President Erdoğan also accentuated Türkiye’s humanitarian approach to Syrian refugees and stated that terrorist organisations are not allowed to break up Syria, adding:

**“We have welcomed millions of Syrian refugees, regardless of their ethnicity, background, or beliefs. We have demonstrated remarkable sensitivity in preventing Syria’s fragmentation through terrorist organisations. (...) As Türkiye, we have prevented humanitarian disasters and separatist ambitions with de facto intervention when necessary. We will continue to do everything we can to help Syria achieve peace, security, and stability.”**

President Erdoğan also stressed in his speech that Syria’s future will hinge upon the Astana guarantors’ cooperation.

### **Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 22, 2020)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 75th General Assembly of the United Nations.

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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan highlighted global health crises, the Syrian crisis, and the need to restructure the international system. In his speech, he emphasised Türkiye's contributions to humanitarian aid and peace initiatives and called for global solidarity.

President Erdoğan underlined the need to preserve Syria's territorial integrity and political unity and outlined Türkiye's humanitarian aid and peace efforts in the region:

**“As the international community, we cannot find a lasting solution to the Syrian issue unless we take the same principled and firm approach against all terrorist organisations. This approach is also required to enable a safe and voluntary return to Syria. The return of over 411,000 Syrian brothers and sisters to the areas that we have liberated from terrorist organisations in Syria is the most visible example of this. Similarly, thanks to the areas we have secured, we have prevented millions of Syrians from fleeing their homes, particularly in Idlib and elsewhere in the country.”**

President Erdoğan underscored the necessity of safeguarding territorial integrity in accordance with UN Resolution 2254, including the following points:

**“We should all prioritise resolving the Syrian conflict in accordance with the road map outlined in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254. This necessitates the successful completion of the political process, particularly the one launched under the auspices of the United Nations and embraced and led by the Syrians. Only in this way will Syria be able to achieve lasting peace while preserving its territorial integrity and political unity. Until this goal is achieved, we are determined to prevent terrorist organisations that threaten Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, as well as our national security.”**

### **Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 21, 2021)**



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 76th General Assembly of the United Nations.

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Speaking at the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivered strong statements to the international community over the Syrian issue. During his speech, President Erdoğan highlighted Syria's territorial integrity, efforts for a political solution, and the significance of humanitarian aid.

President Erdoğan stressed the need for an end to Syria's ten-year humanitarian crisis and said:

**“The international community cannot allow the Syrian crisis to last another ten years. A stronger commitment is required to find a political solution to the conflict based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254, which satisfies the Syrian people’s expectations.”**

President Erdoğan referred to Türkiye's peace efforts in the region and the return of individuals to safe zones, saying:

**“As a result of our efforts at the expense of martyrdom, we have so far managed the voluntary return of 462,000 Syrians to the areas we have made safe.”**

President Erdoğan highlighted the threats that terrorist organisations in Syria pose to regional and international security and said:

**“We will persist in our efforts to combat terrorist organisations that pose a threat to the territorial integrity of Syria and our national security. Distinguishing between terrorist organisations in the region and employing them as proxies is unacceptable.”**

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan underscored the necessity of bolstering international cooperation and the pursuit of a solution in accordance with UN Resolution 2254 to establish peace and stability in Syria and stated that Türkiye will persist in its contributions to humanitarian diplomacy and security. President Erdoğan urged all actors to share responsibility and stated that the rights of the Syrian people should be safeguarded and safe returns should be guaranteed through collaborative efforts.

## Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 20, 2022)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 77th General Assembly of the United Nations.

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In his speech at the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed Türkiye's approach to the Syrian conflict in detail. In his speech, President Erdoğan placed emphasis on Syria's territorial integrity, humanitarian aid, and efforts for a peaceful resolution.

President Erdoğan pointed to the security and stability challenges posed by the Syrian crisis for the region and stated the following:

**“The ongoing deadlock increasingly jeopardises both the security and stability of our region as well as the territorial integrity of Syria. In this context, we reiterate the significance of achieving a lasting settlement to the Syrian crisis that is consistent with the legitimate aspirations of the people, as outlined in Security Council Resolution 2254.”**

President Erdoğan stated that the territorial integrity of Syria is supported by Türkiye's efforts to combat terrorist organisations and continued:

**“Türkiye cannot be expected to maintain an indifferent stance towards the PKK and its derivatives, which pose a threat to Syria's territorial integrity. We invite those who endorse terrorist organisations to undo their mistakes.”**

President Erdoğan shared the following information on humanitarian aid, emphasising the security umbrella provided by Türkiye to over 4 million civilians in northern Syria:

**“Over 4 million civilians in northern Syria are surviving thanks to the security umbrella offered by our country as well as international aid. The Security Council must fulfil its duty to sustain the assistance mechanism in northwest Syria.”**

President Erdoğan explained the projects undertaken by Türkiye to facilitate the secure and voluntary return of Syrians under temporary protection as follows:

**“We have constructed 100,000 briquette houses to provide war victims with adequate living conditions. We have also commenced the construction of 200,000 houses to facilitate the return of approximately 1 million Syrians.”**

President Erdoğan underlined the significance of international collaboration and adherence to UN Resolution 2254 in addressing the Syrian crisis while highlighting Türkiye's contributions from humanitarian aid to security projects. President Erdoğan urged solidarity and responsibility from all parties to achieve a peaceful resolution and maintain Syria's territorial integrity.

### Address by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly (September 19, 2023)



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the participants at the 78th General Assembly of the United Nations.

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In his address at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan provided significant assessments regarding the Syrian crisis and articulated Türkiye's position on Syria's political integrity, humanitarian aid, and peaceful resolution.

President Erdoğan emphasised the need to preserve Syria's political unity and stated the following:

**“We are the only country to adopt a principled, constructive, and equitable position regarding developments that jeopardise Syria's political unity, social cohesion, and economic framework.”**

President Erdoğan noted that the Syrian crisis requires a comprehensive and enduring resolution that meets the legitimate expectations of the people and urged the international community to fulfil its responsibilities in this matter.

President Erdoğan made the following remarks on Türkiye's humanitarian aid to the Syrian people:

**“We will not abandon to their fate the more than four million people in northern Syria who are struggling in harsh conditions. Once the settlements we are leading the construction of beyond our borders are completed, the return of refugees to these areas will pick up speed.”**

President Erdoğan stated that terrorist organisations in Syria pose a threat to the country's territorial integrity with the following remarks:

**“The greatest threat to Syria's territorial integrity and political unity is the obvious support given to terrorist organisations manipulated by powers with designs on Syria.”**

## 3.2. Humanitarian Approach

### 3.2.1. Türkiye's Refugee Policy and the Temporary Protection Regulation of 22/10/2014

#### Temporary Protection Policy

According to the United Nations Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme Conclusion No. 100 of 2004, a mass influx situation is defined as considerable numbers of people arriving towards an international border, with a rapid rate of arrival and the host country unable to implement current individual asylum procedures. Temporary protection is granted if these conditions are met and the mass influx persists.

Temporary protection is a form of protection established to offer prompt solutions in mass influx situations. In accordance with their non-refoulement obligations, governments offer a pragmatic and supplementary solution to mass arrivals at their borders, circumventing delays in individual refugee status determination procedures.



Entry of Syrians forced to flee their country into Türkiye (2012)

**The protection extended to Syrians who arrived in our country through mass influx is referred to as “Temporary Protection” in international discourse. Türkiye fulfils three key components of temporary protection. These include an open border admission policy, the principle of non-refoulement, and meeting the basic and urgent needs of arrivals.**

Temporary protection in Türkiye is provided under Article 91 of Law No. 6458 of 04/04/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection and the Temporary Protection Regulation No. 2014/6883 of 13/10/2014 issued based on this article.

The escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria has prompted mobility in our border region. On April 29, 2011, the influx of 300-400 Syrian citizens to the Yayladağı district of Hatay province marked the inaugural mass population movement from Syria to Türkiye. During this movement, necessary steps were taken, resulting in the transfer of 252 Syrian citizens across the border, who were subsequently offered provisional accommodation in a sports hall in Hatay, with their nutritional needs fulfilled. Syrian citizens entering the country first underwent a body search and were subsequently registered with their identity cards, if available, or through verbal declarations in the absence of such documentation, accompanied by an interpreter.



Presidency of Migration Management, Karkamış Voluntary Return Office

Türkiye, considering these initial waves of mass migration, has made legal arrangements suited to its own circumstances, and following the efforts, first on March 30, 2012, “The Directive on the Reception and Accommodation of Citizens of the Syrian Arab Republic and Stateless Persons Residing in the Syrian Arab Republic Arriving in Türkiye for Mass Asylum” was put into effect by the Ministry of Interior.

This directive is based on the principle of temporary protection, which is defined as “providing access to the receiving State, implementing the principle of non-refoulement to territories where there is a risk of persecution, and ensuring basic human rights standards in order to meet the need for immediate protection in the event of a mass influx.”



Hatay Yayladağı Border Crossing (2025)

The Presidency of Migration Management is responsible for conducting actions and procedures in relation to the temporary protection. In this respect, the Presidency in 2014, in order to expand the scope of the directive published in 2012, issued the Temporary Protection Regulation dated 13/10/2014 and No. 2014/6883 based on Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection.

The temporary protection regime, which is not governed by a separate law within the legislation, is defined in Article 91 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection titled “Temporary Protection” as follows:

“Temporary protection may be provided for foreigners who have been forced to leave their country, cannot return to the country that they have left, and have arrived at or crossed the borders of Türkiye in a mass influx situation seeking immediate and temporary protection. The actions to be carried out for the reception of such foreigners into Türkiye, their stay in Türkiye, their rights and obligations, their exit from Türkiye, measures to be taken to prevent mass influxes and cooperation and coordination among national and international institutions and organisations, and the determination of the duties and mandate of the central and provincial institutions and organisations shall be stipulated in a regulation to be issued by the President.”

Due to its geographical location, Türkiye has witnessed numerous migration movements throughout history. Following the civil war that erupted in Syria in 2011, millions of Syrians took shelter in Türkiye, resulting in drastic changes in Türkiye's migration policies. Türkiye, in addition to fulfilling its obligations under international law, has taken substantial steps within the framework of humanitarian assistance and has put great efforts into following extensive policies for the groups under temporary protection. In this regard, the Temporary Protection Regulation, which entered into force on October 22, 2014, represents a key milestone in Türkiye's temporary protection and irregular migration policy.



Kilis Çobanbey Border Crossing (2024)

Türkiye's temporary protection policy is based on humanitarian assistance principles irrespective of race, religion, language, or ethnic origin. This policy is based on international conventions and law as well as national legislation. The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol are the cornerstones of Türkiye's approach to asylum seekers. Türkiye, however, resulting from the geographical limitation it had imposed on the Geneva Convention, does not grant "refugee" status to those arriving from outside of Europe. This has made it necessary to create a special mechanism for exceptional circumstances such as the mass migration movement that took place in the Syrian crisis.

The Temporary Protection Regulation emerged from this need to create this special mechanism. The regulation safeguards the national interests of Türkiye while protecting the rights of individuals.

The “Temporary Protection Regulation” added to the Presidential Regulation pursuant to Presidential Decree dated 24/12/2019 and No. 1851 published in the Official Gazette dated 25/12/2019 and No. 30989 governs the procedures and principles of temporary protection for those who have been forced to leave their country and are unable to return in cases where international protection requests cannot be assessed individually.



Modern shelter areas put in use of Syrians under temporary protection

The regulation encompasses the reception of individuals under temporary protection into Türkiye, their stay in the country, their rights and obligations, regulations related to their exit from Türkiye, and measures to be taken against mass movements, and the provisions related to the cooperation between national and international organisations. Temporary protection is implemented based on the rules and principles set by the Presidency, which is also in charge of deciding the specifics, such as the scope, duration, and geographical limitations.

In this regard, the temporary protection regulation is introduced by the President upon the proposal of the Ministry (of Interior) pursuant to Articles 9, 10, and 11 of the Regulation. Procedures and principles on the method and implementation of temporary protection are determined by the Board and are implemented by the relevant public institutions and organisations.



Syrian children and a Turkish soldier

If a decision is made to grant temporary protection, the President determines the individuals who will be covered, the start date of temporary protection, and, if necessary, its duration. In addition, the President decides whether the temporary protection is to be implemented nationwide or in a specific region. Extending the duration of temporary protection or circumstances of its termination are also decisions to be taken by the President as a part of this decision. Besides, the decisions around the temporary protection process and its associated limitations are determined by the Office of the Presidency and relevant institutions through the implementation of new regulations. Upon a temporary protection decision being made, individual decisions regarding the beneficiaries are offered by the Presidency of Migration Management.

Temporary protection can be terminated by a Presidential Decree upon the Ministry of Interior's proposal. The President may decide to suspend temporary protection entirely and order temporary protected persons' return to their country of origin, to grant temporary protected persons their status collectively, or to consider the applications of international protections applicants individually. In addition, temporary protected individuals' stay in Türkiye may also be allowed under the conditions outlined in the Law.



Türkiye continues to save lives amid dangers that emerge during irregular migration.

The regulation stipulates that no individual shall be returned to a place where he or she may be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment, or treatment. Likewise, individuals who are considered to pose a danger to national security, public order, or public security are not covered under the scope of temporary protection. Individuals entering under temporary protection accept that this status does not entitle them to more permanent rights, such as international protection or refugee status. In other words, “temporarily protected individuals” are not considered entitled to any of the international protection statuses stipulated by Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) No. 6458.

Temporary protection applies to mass influxes as well as individual applicants but excludes individuals who have been involved in various crimes or are assessed to be a security threat.

Voluntary repatriation proceedings are undertaken in cooperation with national and international organisations. The Regulation also governs access to social services and provision of the basic needs of individuals under temporary protection, with a focus on support mechanisms, particularly for those with special needs.



A Syrian family under temporary protection and a temporary protection identity document issued by Türkiye

Lastly, the regulation has been amended to include temporary provisions for exceptional circumstances, such as mass influxes from the Syrian Arab Republic, where it is stipulated that individuals who enter the country between specific date intervals will be granted temporary protection. In this context, temporary protection identity documents are issued to the relevant individuals, thereby ensuring their access to social assistance and facilitating their residence in the country. The Regulation establishes a thorough framework for temporary protection designed to address the needs of individuals while adhering to Türkiye's international commitments.



### 3.2.2. Türkiye's Humanitarian Aid to the Syrian People and Social Rights Provided to Syrians under Temporary Protection Status

Since 2011, Türkiye has been hosting a sizable Syrian population as a result of the conflict in Syria. Syrians under temporary protection have been granted equal rights to housing, education, health, employment, and other social services, as well as a wide range of financial support. In accordance with presidential directives, social cohesion initiatives from relevant ministries and agencies also contribute to these aids. Türkiye also plays a crucial role in addressing the basic needs of the Syrian people through the humanitarian assistance it delivers within the country. Türkiye's comprehensive strategy aims to enhance the humanitarian living standards and social unity of Syrians residing in Türkiye and Syria.

#### Housing Services

Since 2011, Türkiye has provided shelter to Syrians by establishing numerous accommodation centres for this purpose. These centres provide healthcare, education, and social services to Syrians under temporary protection. Furthermore, these centres undertake numerous projects and events aimed at facilitating the integration of Syrians into society.





A testament to Türkiye's hospitality to Syrians: Adana Sarıçam Temporary Accommodation Centre (November 24, 2019).

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In the seven years from 2011 to 2018, 10 provinces along the southern border established 26 temporary accommodation centres, housing about 272,000 Syrians.

The provincial breakdown of Syrians under temporary protection in accommodation centres is as follows as of 2019: Adana - Sarıçam: 17,718; Kilis - Elbeyli: 9,661; Central Kahramanmaraş: 11,384; Kahramanmaraş - Altınözü: 2,681; Hatay - Yayladağı: 4,334; Hatay - Apaydın: 4,198; Osmaniye - Cevdetiye: 13,608. There are a total of 63,584 Syrians under temporary protection residing in accommodation centres across these five provinces.

As of September 23, 2021, 3,714,918 Syrians had been biometrically registered and issued temporary protection identity documents, 52,202 of whom were housed in seven temporary accommodation centres throughout five border provinces. The reduction in the number of Syrians residing in accommodation centres from 2019 to 2021 serves as proof that Syrians have access to sufficient housing in Türkiye, supplementing these centres.



Temporary Accommodation Centre, Kilis, Elbeyli (November 6, 2019).

Türkiye accommodates the highest number of Syrians and other foreigners under temporary protection worldwide. Providing shelter for Syrians constitutes a significant component of Türkiye's humanitarian aid policies.

### **Rights in Health Services**

Another primary focus of the rights and services afforded to Syrians under temporary protection is on the enhancement of their health conditions. As part of this effort, the SIHHAT Project was initiated pursuant to the Association Council Decision between Türkiye and the European Union (EU) on October 15, 2015, to enhance health services for Syrians in Türkiye. This resolution entailed the allocation of two tranches of €3 billion in EU financial assistance to enhance the health conditions of Syrians under temporary protection and the associated services offered by the Republic of Türkiye. The first "Direct Grant Agreement" was signed between the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye and the EU Delegation, totalling €300 million, with the project launching on December 1, 2016, under the coordination of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye.

EU GRANTS BROKEN DOWN BY HEALTH SECTOR			
SOURCE	PROJECT NAME	PAYMENT METHOD	AMOUNT (€)
FRIT-I	SIHHAT-1 Project	Direct grant to the Ministry of Health	300.000.000
	Hospitals in Dörtyol, Kilis	Mediated grant (CEB— Council of Europe Development Bank ) to the Ministry of Health	90.000.000
	International NGO Projects	To International NGOs	63.000.000
FRIT-II	SIHHAT-2 Project	Direct grant to the Ministry of Health	210.000.000
	SHIFA Project	Mediated grant (CEB— Council of Europe Development Bank ) to the Ministry	90.000.000
	International NGO Projects	To International NGOs	25.000.000



As part of the “SIHHAT” initiative launched by the Ministry of Health to enhance healthcare services for Syrians residing in Türkiye, health staff received training in Elazığ (September 23, 2019).

The SIHHAT Project is the most extensive and comprehensive collaboration venture on temporary refugee management in the field of healthcare. Within the scope of the project:

- Migrant Health Centres (MHC) are established throughout Türkiye and provided with personnel, and medical equipment is procured for primary and secondary healthcare facilities.
- Efforts are undertaken in providing vaccines and vitamins.
- 181 MHCs and 10 community mental health centres were established across 29 provinces with a large number of immigrant populations, employing approximately 4,000 personnel.

With direct contributions from the Republic of Türkiye and as part of the SIHHAT project, between the years 2011 and 2021, more than 93 million medical examinations and 2.5 million surgeries were performed, while 112 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) units were dispatched to over 930 thousand Syrians under temporary protection. Between 2014 and 2021, 8.6 million vaccines were administered based on the national immunisation schedule.



SIHHAT Project Launch Event (August 16, 2017)

The project was divided into two main parts: SIHHAT I and SIHHAT II. The first of these, SIHHAT I, was financed by the European Union and executed by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye with a mission “to improve the health status of Syrians under temporary protection and the relevant services provided by the Republic of Türkiye.” The project also provided Syrians with access to primary and secondary healthcare services in their native language.

As a result, the capacity and quality of healthcare services in 29 provinces with large Syrian populations were improved, making them more accessible to Syrians under temporary protection. The establishment and improvement of Migrant Health Centres (MHC) was the most significant step in facilitating Syrians’ access to healthcare services.



Opening of Hadimi Migrant Health Centre, Meram, Konya (November 5, 2019).

With the endeavours towards the “Establishing and Improving Migrant Health Centres (MHC)” objective, Syrians under temporary protection (SuTP) were successfully provided with primary healthcare services in their native language. These services include immunisation, contagious disease control, tuberculosis infection control, environmental health, women’s and reproductive health, and child and adolescent health. As of September 2020, 792 migrant health units (MHUs) affiliated with 177 MHCs were established and improved in 29 provinces with large Syrian populations. The established or supported services of MHC are accessible to 96.20% of SuTPs residing in Türkiye in 29 key provinces.

Within the project’s scope, SuTPs receive services from specialist physicians and other health providers, including through 48 Strengthened MHCs. The healthcare services also include psychosocial assistance, counselling, and various trainings from psychologists and social workers. As of September 2020, 8211 sessions/services were provided to 6248 Syrians. 3422 personnel were employed as of December 2020, and about 8.8 million laboratory tests were performed for SuTPs who visited MHCs. SuTPs received approximately 13.5 million primary healthcare services between 2017 and 2020.

<b>DATA ON HEALTHCARE SERVICES PROVIDED TO THOSE UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION</b>			
DATA ON 81 PROVINCIAL HEALTHCARE SERVICES		<b>JANUARY-NOVEMBER 2024</b>	<b>2011-2024 TOTAL</b>
NUMBER OF POLYCLINICS	Clinics Affiliated with the General Directorate of Public Health (HSGM)	12,684,151	69,240,581
	Hospitals Affiliated with the General Directorate of Turkish Public Hospitals (KHGM)	8,804,796	84,283,073
	University/Private Hospitals	427,250	3,642,847
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>21,916,197</b>	<b>157,166,501</b>
NUMBER OF INPATIENTS	Hospitals Affiliated with the General Directorate of Turkish Public Hospitals (KHGM)	278,622	3,864,944
	University/Private Hospitals	35,920	320,483
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>314,542</b>	<b>4,185,427</b>
NUMBER OF SURGICAL OPERATIONS	Hospitals Affiliated with the General Directorate of Turkish Public Hospitals (KHGM)	244,527	3,214,957
	University/Private Hospitals	23,269	171,130
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>267,796</b>	<b>3,386,087</b>
NUMBER OF DELIVERIES	Hospitals Affiliated with the General Directorate of Turkish Public Hospitals (KHGM)	68,086	958,493
	University/Private Hospitals	17,332	90,493
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>85,418</b>	<b>1,048,986</b>
112 EMS DISPATCHES	Border Response	1,001	66,862
	Domestic Response	176,297	1,518,445
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>177,298</b>	<b>1,585,307</b>

Community Mental Healthcare Centres (CMHC) were also established to provide mental healthcare services to SuTPs with chronic mental health issues. These centres extensively provide medical treatments and recreational activities. Within the scope of the project, 10 CMHCs were established or endorsed in İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Adana, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Gaziantep, and Kilis provinces. Turkish and Arabic-speaking “Patent Guidance and Support Personnel” are employed at these facilities. As of September 2020, an average of 2,000 Turkish citizens and Syrians had visited CMHCs within the scope of the SIHHAT project on a monthly basis. These individuals received around 42,000 mental health counselling sessions.



Strengthened Migrant Health Centre (MHC), Haliliye, Şanlıurfa (May 23, 2019)

“Micronutrient Support Programme,” a crucial service for improving health conditions, is another necessary service provided within the SIHHAT I project to reduce micronutrient deficiencies and ensure healthy nutrition for SuTPs. This service also provides mothers with necessary nutritional supplements during pregnancy and postpartum. As part of this project:

- 2.6 million boxes of vitamin D and 2.4 million boxes of iron supplements were supplied.
- By the end of 2019, 2.1 million boxes of vitamin D supplements were distributed to Syrian infants/children and women.
- By the end of 2019, 2 million boxes of iron supplements were distributed to Syrian infants/children and women.

The SIHHAT project, which also covered healthy reproduction and maternity, had overseen the establishment of “Reproductive Healthcare Services” and made it easier for SuTPs to access them. As part of this project:

- Approximately 2 million oral contraceptives and around 20 million condoms were supplied.
- By the end of 2019, a total of 1.4 million oral contraceptives were distributed to Syrian women under temporary protection.
- Approximately 750,000 Syrian women received 2.6 million sessions of prenatal care services.

As part of the project, “Immunisation Services” were set up as a preventive health service. They were meant to collaborate with other service units to protect Syrian women and children under temporary protection from vaccine-preventable diseases while also reducing related morbidity and mortality:

- As part of these services, SuTPs received 5.5 million doses of immunisations.
- 6.25 million syringes, vaccine cabinets, vaccine storage units, vaccine delivery vehicles, and freezers were supplied.
- By the end of June 2020, 4.2 million doses of vaccine were administered to Syrian infants/children (0-59 months).



Vaccination efforts for COVID-19 underway for foreigners in Elaziğ (September 22, 2021)

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Mobile Health Services, which are established in areas where access to health services is limited, aim to increase access to primary health care services and cancer screening services for SuTPs who live in rural areas and are on the move due to seasonal work, etc., or have limited access to health services due to age or disability, etc. These services have also been conducted safely in the operational areas of the Turkish Armed Forces in northern Syria.

- 102 Mobile Health Vehicles were procured to facilitate mobile health services.
- Five mobile cancer screening vehicles offer cancer screening services.
- As of November 2020, 420,000 sessions of cancer screening services were offered to SuTPs.



Turkish Red Crescent launches mobile health clinics in Syria (May 15, 2019).

Training healthcare personnel is another effort carried out within the project's framework to boost the capacity of patient referral personnel on issues such as migration health, intercultural communication, and national and international migration legislation.

- As part of this effort, 50 Community Mental Health Centre personnel received two rounds of orientation training until November 2019.
- 966 Arabic and Turkish-speaking patient guide personnel received seven rounds of training.
- 2,520 healthcare personnel received 22 rounds of training.

Similarly, the project's "Supporting Emergency Health Services" campaign improved access to emergency health services for SuTPs.

- 430 ambulances, including 50 neonatal ambulances, were purchased as part of this campaign.
- In an effort to increase access to health centres among Syrians, 500,000 posters on 16 topics and 20 million brochures on 38 topics were also printed and distributed to health centres to increase Syrians' interest in health services and enable them to monitor their own health status and manage their requests properly.

SIHHAT 1 is a comprehensive project aimed at improving the health of Syrian migrants in Türkiye by enhancing their access to health services. The project has broadened the spectrum of health services provided to Syrians and met their health needs by promoting reproductive health, micronutrient support, immunisation, mobile health services, and emergency and prenatal health services.

NUMBER OF SYRIANS RECEIVING PRACTICAL TRAINING						
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2022	TOTAL
DOCTOR	633	254	164	19	41	1,111
ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS	572	427	0	56	0	1,055

Similar to the SIHHAT I project, the second phase of the European Union-funded SIHHAT Project, "Supporting Migrant Health Services in Türkiye," also known as the SIHHAT-2 Project, which has been implemented by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye since 2016, aims to increase access to the Turkish health system and improve the health status of all migrants in Türkiye.



Many Syrians regain their health thanks to Turkish doctors (January 7, 2013)

By “Increasing Availability and Accessibility of Quality Health Services,” 190 additional strengthened MHCs are scheduled to be established. New health and support personnel are hired, and the contracts of existing personnel are renewed. Increasing mobile health services is aimed at reaching out to women living in rural areas or working as seasonal agricultural workers more easily.

Also, 210 additional nurses and midwives have been employed under the SIHHAT II Project to increase the effectiveness of immunisation services. Increased antenatal and postnatal care for pregnant women, family planning services, reproductive health counselling, and contraceptive distribution are among the additional services available to address migrant women’s reproductive health issues.

The SIHHAT-2 Project’s goal of increasing migrants’ access to health services and improving their health status in Türkiye has been instrumental in developing health policies by raising migrants’ medical literacy and facilitating access to quality health services.

At the same time, the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Türkiye launched numerous projects within its jurisdiction to promote the healthy development of Syrian youth. The Ministry has been particularly focused on improving the mental well-being of Syrian youth.

Individuals with a history of trauma received structured group sessions, community-based mental health services, and family information activities as part of the “Child Protection Programme.” As of 2024, 5,656 people received group support, while 18,983 received community-based mental health services. Awareness-raising events on children’s rights and gender equality were likewise carried out, and 31,536 children received protection services.

MIGRANT HEALTH CENTRES AND NUMBERS OF UNITS (NOVEMBER 2024)					
NUMBER	Province	Institution Approved MHC	Institution Approved MHU	Governorate Approved MHC	Governorate Approved MHU
1	Adana	11	48		
2	Adiyaman	3	10		
3	Ankara	8	44		
4	Batman	2	6		
5	Burdur	2	4		
6	Bursa	9	42		
7	Denizli	2	4		
8	Diyarbakır	3	6		
9	Düzce	1	2		
10	Eskişehir	1	2		
11	Elazığ	1	3		
12	Gaziantep	12	74		
13	Hatay	15	75	1	10
14	Isparta	1	2		
15	<b>İstanbul</b>	30	138		
16	<b>İzmir</b>	9	41		
17	Kahramanmaraş	4	19		
18	Kayseri	3	15		
19	Kilis	3	23		
20	Kocaeli	6	16		
21	Konya	5	27		
22	Malatya	3	13	1	3
23	Manisa	1	1		
24	Mardin	4	12		
25	Mersin	8	45		

26	Muğla	1	1		
27	Nevşehir	2	7		
28	Osmaniye	3	19		
29	Samsun	1	2		
30	Sakarya	2	3		
31	<b>Şanlıurfa</b>	14	66	2	12
32	Yalova	1	2		
TOTAL		<b>172</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25</b>

### **Rights Offered in the Fields of Education, Recreational Activities and Sports**

Syrian children under temporary protection have been integrated into the Turkish education system and offered complimentary education from preschool through high school. Moreover, Turkish language courses are provided for Syrian children and adults to help overcome the language barrier and promote integration.

Türkiye has made significant strides in the education of Syrian children between 2016 and 2025, as confirmed by the significant jumps in school enrolment rates and the number of students.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has taken necessary measures by introducing various regulations in this process. In June 2011, the initial measure involved conducting inspections of educational programmes in Temporary Accommodation Centres (TACs) established in Hatay, where Arabic-speaking teachers were appointed to facilitate Syrian children's access to education based on the Turkish curriculum. Syrian educators supplemented the training with their own curricula.

In 2014, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published the circular 'Education and Training Services for Foreigners' (no. 2014/21), leading to the establishment of Temporary Education Centres (TECs) for Syrians. By June 2015, 270 TCEs had been established, providing instruction to about 190,000 Syrian students. During this time frame, 40,000 Syrian students were referred to public schools.

The 2016-2017 academic year marked the start of the process of discontinuing TECs, which concluded in 2020. Only 11 of these centres were in operation in 2020, compared to 370 in 2017 and 23 in 2019. Following that period, all foreign students under temporary protection have been referred to public schools.

In 2016, the Migration and Emergency Education Department was established under the Directorate General for Lifelong Learning to improve access to education for Syrians under temporary protection. The enrolment rate of the Syrian school-age population in education rose from 20.6% in 2014 to 77.91% in 2025. Data shows that 834,891 of the

1,071,604 children under temporary protection in Türkiye have been integrated into education by the end of 2024. The rate of participation in education among all foreign students of school age was recorded as 79.42%.



A Syrian child receiving education in Türkiye (November 2, 2016)

Notably, in preschool education, the number of Syrian students receiving education climbed from 25,761 in the 2016-2017 academic year to 56,500 in the 2022-2023 academic year. During the same timeframe, the enrolment rate rose from 31.09% to 47.40%. Data from 2024-2025 indicates that there have been 48,438 Syrian students enrolled in preschool education institutions. This growth reflects Türkiye's commitment to the education of Syrian children and its efforts to promote early childhood education.

A comparable rise was noted at the elementary school level. The number of Syrian students rose from 308,638 in the 2016-2017 academic year to 335,000 in the 2022-2023 academic year, while the enrolment rate improved from 76.38% to 79.53%. Throughout this time, numerous educational programmes and initiatives were launched to enhance Syrian students' access to basic education and improve their enrolment rates. Data from 2024-2025 indicates that the total number of Syrian students in grades 1 through 4 has been 399,184.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 106,257 students received secondary school-level education, and this figure increased to 193,500 in the 2022-2023 academic year. The enrolment rate at the secondary school level rose from 45.70% to 73.05%. The data indicates a substantial increase in both the number of Syrian students enrolled in secondary education and the overall schooling rate. In 2025, this growth persisted, resulting in a total of 268,771 Syrian students in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8.

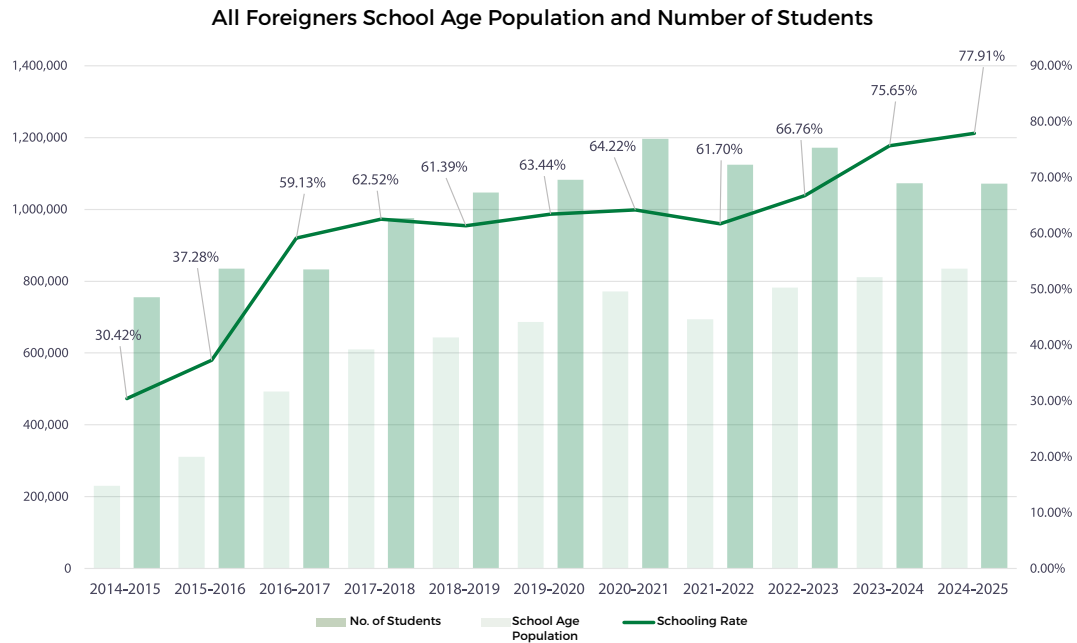
Academic Year	Preschool (Age 5)		Primary School (Age 6-9)		Secondary School (Age 10-13)		High School (Age 14-17)		Total Number of Students	Schooling Rate
	Student Number	Schooling Rate	Student Number	School Enrollment Rate	Student Number	School Enrollment Rate	Student Number	School Enrollment Rate		
2016-2017	25,761	31.09%	308,638	76.38%	106,257	45.70%	51,889	24.33%	492,545	59.13%
2017-2018	36,548	39.06%	374,304	78.75%	137,613	50.58%	61,813	23.93%	610,278	62.52%
2018-2019	32,198	33.09%	365,535	95.50%	173,252	57.66%	72,073	26.77%	643,058	61.39%
2019-2020	35,553	31.51%	338,807	88.61%	222,703	69.98%	89,518	33.31%	686,581	63.44%
2020-2021	35,707	28.06%	353,130	79.75%	271,645	77.92%	110,976	39.86%	771,458	64.42%
2021-2022	43,202	36.59%	311,822	74.68%	263,492	78.43%	75,222	29.76%	693,738	61.70%
2022-2023	50,102	41.36%	335,689	77.85%	283,478	79.98%	113,240	42.69%	782,509	66.76%
2023-2024	56,050	47.40%	365,000	90.85%	278,593	93.53%	112,217	43.96%	811,860	75.65%

#### Total Number of Syrian Students under Temporary Protection in Türkiye by Educational Level (2016-2024)

During the 2016-2017 academic year, 51,889 students received education at the high school level, but this figure rose to 112,739 in the 2022-2023 academic year, with the enrolment rate increasing from 24.33% to 47.56%. The total of Syrian students enrolled in high school education has risen to 118,498 in 2025. The rising number of students enrolled serves as testimony to Türkiye's commitment to educating young Syrians and preparing them for the future.

Grade Level	Girls	Boys	Total Registered Students	Registered Students by Education Level	School-Age Population	School Enrolment by Grade	Total School-Age Population by Level	Percentage	
Pre-School	23,783	24,655	48,438	<b>48,438</b>	113,390	42.72%	<b>113,390</b>	<b>42.72%</b>	
1st Grade	54,848	60,394	115,242		<b>399,184</b>	115,091			100.13%
2nd Grade	49,291	52,309	101,600			108,643			93.52%
3rd Grade	47,106	49,931	97,037			100,159			96.88%
4th Grade	41,490	43,815	85,305			91,484			93.25%
5th Grade	34,963	39,286	74,249	<b>268,771</b>	80,286	92.48%	<b>290,603</b>	<b>92.49%</b>	
6th Grade	32,192	35,380	67,572		67,045	100.79%			
7th Grade	34,230	35,628	69,858		71,958	97.08%			
8th Grade	29,579	27,513	57,092		71,314	80.06%			
9th Grade	25,613	23,133	48,746	<b>118,498</b>	67,014	72.74%	<b>252,234</b>	<b>46.98%</b>	
10th Grade	12,271	10,461	22,732		64,97	35.41%			
11th Grade	9,991	7,831	17,822		63,270	28.17%			
12th Grade	6,705	4,806	11,511		57,753	19.93%			
High School Prep.	32	44	76						
Open Schools	8,860	8,751	17,611						
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>410,954</b>	<b>423,937</b>	<b>834,891</b>	<b>834,891</b>	<b>1,071,604</b>	<b>77.91%</b>	<b>1,071,604%</b>	<b>77.91%</b>	

#### Total Number of Syrian Students under Temporary Protection in Türkiye by Educational Level (2025)



#### Schooling Data of Syrian Students under Temporary Protection in Türkiye by Academic Years (2014-2025)

Moreover, between 2014 and 2023, a total of 955,166 foreign students attended Turkish language courses aimed at enhancing the Turkish language proficiency of foreign children. In an effort to facilitate the integration of Syrian children into the Turkish education system, extensive Turkish language instruction was offered in integration courses, where 114,144 students sat for the Turkish Proficiency Exam (TYS) conducted in 2020 to evaluate their language skills.

Distribution of All Foreign Course Attendees from (2014 to 2024)					
Year	Total Number of Course Attendees	Male Course Attendees	Female Course Attendees	Certificate Recipient Male Course Attendees	Certificate Recipient Female Course Attendees
2014	5,794	880	4,914	613	2,901
2015	102,750	35,494	67,256	23,580	43,608
2016	173,646	70,344	103,302	45,254	67,843
2017	198,977	79,060	119,917	47,475	73,103
2018	306,51	116,09	189,442	68,444	111,463
2019	355,266	140,251	215,015	82,052	128,467
2020	204,291	88,356	115,935	48,296	64,261
2021	328,268	152,053	176,215	104,835	119,651
2022	1,709,112	875,180	833,932	585,736	548,335
2023	398,641	173,202	225,439	57,945	59,699
2024	216,935	83,984	132,951	16,208	16,638
TOTAL	3,999,831	1,815,513	2,184,318	1,080,438	1,235,969

Data of Foreign Attendees and Certificate Recipients by Year

Most Preferred Course Programmes from (2014 to 2024)						
	Programme Name	Total Number of Course Attendees	Male Course Attendees	Female Course Attendees	Certificate Recipient Male Course Attendees	Certificate Recipient Female Course Attendees
1	Social Cohesion and Daily Life / Social Cohesion	1,734,042	925,292	808,750	644,026	574,064
2	Turkish for Foreigners Level A1	479,852	181,535	298,317	89,964	148,868
3	Turkish for Foreigners Level A2	148,623	50,534	98,089	27,785	51,710
4	Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language (Ages 6-12) Level 1	103,085	52,272	50,813	24,959	25,042
5	Intensive Basic Literacy Education Programme	96,619	30,724	65,895	12,464	27,559
6	Basic Literacy Level 1 Level Placement Exam	52,734	34,118	18,616	21,892	13,085
7	Reading Holy Qur'an (Alifba)	45,211	17,433	27,778	7,373	11,820
8	Literacy Level 2 Level Placement Exam	40,768	28,152	12,616	15,334	6,770
9	Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language (Ages 13-17) Level 2	40,083	20,237	19,846	10,520	10,968
10	Turkish A1 Level Hybrid Model	38,891	12,128	26,763	7,587	19,064
11	Family School (For Parents)	38,275	15,607	22,668	3,923	6,456
12	Hygiene Training for Food and Water Sector Workers	37,374	21,911	15,463	15,896	11,350
13	Literacy Level 1	35,265	10,755	24,510	5,578	13,172
14	Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language (Ages 6-12) Level 2	34,899	17,735	17,164	9,653	9,639
15	37-72 Months (3-6 Years) Playroom	32,866	16,528	16,338	8,144	8,039
16	Project "Okullar Hayat Olsun" ("Let the Schools Become Life") Activities	30,654	14,372	16,282	10,809	12,287
17	Literacy and Basic Education Programme for Adults Level 1	29,704	9,910	19,794	1,166	2,547
18	Turkish for Foreigners Level B1	28,696	9,135	19,561	3,950	7,481
19	Addiction Prevention Training Programme of Türkiye	27,856	13,918	13,938	12,661	12,700
20	English Level A1	26,463	9,465	16,998	2,213	4,371

Most Popular Courses for Syrians Under Temporary Protection and Foreign Nationals (2014-2024)

Under the Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (CCTE) Programme, a total of 423,912 students benefitted from regular cash assistance as of November 2024. Since the launch of the programme in 2017, a total of 994,234 students have benefitted at least once.

Similarly, within the scope of the distribution of educational materials, 3,010,560 books were distributed until 2024, and stationery allowance to students continued. 53,005 parents and 32,324 students participated in the various events organised to support social adaptation. In addition, a total of 838,686 students benefitted from psychological counselling and guidance services.

121 Syrian and Turkish children received scholarships for vocational training, and 342,307 Syrian students received transportation services. Furthermore, 336 prefabricated kindergartens and 52 special education kindergartens were built.

Within the scope of the “Syrian Support Workers Programme” in cooperation with UNICEF, 2,523 people were assigned, and this programme ended in April 2023. In 2024, early childhood education processes were supported by providing educational materials, stationery, and equipment materials to public education centres.

The total number of Syrians pursuing higher education in Türkiye likewise increased. By the end of 2024, a total of 60,750 Syrians were enrolled in universities in Türkiye. The current number of Syrian university graduates is 17,379. There are 5,806 Syrian associate degree graduates, 9,223 bachelor's degree graduates, 2,196 master's degree graduates and 154 PhD graduates.



Syrian children receiving education in Türkiye (November 2, 2016)

As a result, the number and schooling rates of Syrian students under temporary protection in Türkiye have increased significantly over the years. The rise in the number of students and schooling rates at various levels, from pre-school to university education, is an indicator of Türkiye's endeavours towards the education of Syrian children. Türkiye spends considerable effort to facilitate Syrian children's access to education along with helping them prepare for their future lives. These data serve as proof of how effectively education policies and programmes are implemented in Türkiye.

At the same time, substantial contributions have been made to the education and employment of Syrians through numerous projects conducted in Türkiye for Syrians under temporary protection. As part of these projects, a wide range of services are being provided, from supporting the integration of Syrian children into the education system to boosting the employability of adults.

It is in this pursuit that the Directorate General of Lifelong Learning under the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) implements "Promoting Inclusive Education for Kids in the Turkish Education System" (PIKTES). This project facilitates the access of children under temporary protection to the Turkish education system as well as their social cohesion. Launched on October 3, 2016, the project is funded by the European Union and implemented in 29 provinces. The project encompasses goals such as enhancing access to formal education for foreign students and establishing a safe, supportive, and high-quality learning environment.



The PIKTES Social Harmony Show Programme (2024)

Accordingly, with the aim of enhancing the hygiene environment in schools, the public education centres and schools that have a large number of foreign students were subsidised in cooperation with the MoNE and UNICEF. In this context, in June 2021, cash transfers were provided to 670 schools in 88 districts in 43 provinces; 45 schools under the PIKTES project in 9 provinces that could not be supported; and 451 public education centres in 81 provinces, including EBA Support Points.

In addition, with the subsidiary payments provided in four tranches, 6 million 252 thousand 120 TL was provided to 382 schools in the 2020–2021 academic year, and 20 million 525 thousand 761 TL was provided to 1,254 schools and institutions in the 2021–2022 academic year. With the subsidiary payments, the basic cleaning needs of schools, such as maintenance and repair works, cleaning supplies, equipment purchases, and mask and disinfectant purchases, were met.

Further, Project “Increasing Employability for Syrian Refugees and Turkish Host Communities in the Renewable Energy Sector” aims to increase the employability of 1,800 Syrian and Turkish citizens over the age of 18 through vocational training and skill

certificates in the renewable energy sector. The project focuses on issues such as local and sustainable economic growth, green infrastructure investments, and the transition from low-skilled to skilled labour. The Korean government, with a budget of 3 million 300 thousand USD, funded the implementation of this project between December 31, 2019, and 2024. Within the scope of the project, 108 courses were launched, and 1,515 trainees received certificates.

Another project carried out for Syrians under temporary protection is the “Early Childhood Education Project for Syrian and Needy Turkish Children in Türkiye Project” (ECE). The goal of this project is to expand early childhood education services and improve access to early childhood education. The project’s goal is to help Syrian and disadvantaged Turkish children aged 3 to 6 years old with their early childhood development. The German government funded the 4.5 million-euro project, which ran from May 29, 2020, to September 30, 2023. The project benefitted 68,137 children, produced 53 storybooks, and distributed them to 23 public training centres.

	Course Name	Male Participants	Female Participants	Total Participants	SA Total Participants
1	Social Integration and Life	148,666	132,823	281,489	197,413
2	Turkish for Foreigners - Level A1	14,402	29,063	43,465	18,688
3	Turkish for Foreigners - Level A2	4,663	13,266	17,929	8,828
4	Qur'an Recitation (Alphabet)	5,022	7,500	12,522	7,986
5	Adult Literacy Training and More... Level I	4,238	8,152	12,390	4,257
6	Family School (For Parents)	4,909	7,174	12,083	10,823
7	Literacy Test for Level I	5,367	2,882	8,249	5,261
8	Turkish Language for Foreign Children (Ages 6-12) Level I	4,033	3,856	7,889	3,276
9	Literacy Test for Level II	4,828	2,730	7,558	4,044
10	Qur'an Recitation with Tajweed	2,717	4,038	6,755	4,429

#### Top 10 Courses Most Popular Among Foreign Trainees (2023)

The “Syrian Support Workers Programme” is also being implemented to assist foreign students in obtaining and continuing their formal education. The project’s goal is to help foreign children integrate and participate in the Turkish educational system, as well as to increase parental involvement in schools. The German government funded the 25 million euro project, which ran from January 17, 2022, to April 2023. The project employed 2,523 Syrian support workers and began the insurance enrolment process for 1,270 people.

The “Strengthening Social Cohesion Project” by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Türkiye reached 132,324 students and 53,005 parents. The project included province-based workshops in scientific, cultural, artistic, and sporting fields, historical and cultural field trips, visits to museums, science, art, and technology centres, various sporting activities, picnics, theatre, cinema, and concerts.

Similarly, as part of the “Social Cohesion and Youth Participation Project” initiated through a work plan signed between the General Directorate of Youth Services of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) Türkiye, 313,683 Syrian and foreign national youth were reached through skill development, and 333,282 youth were reached through participation-oriented programmes as of 2024. The Turkish language education programme educated 3,274 Syrian youth aged 8 to 18 who were unable to attend school or had never started. Furthermore, disadvantaged youth received educational support through study programmes, and 15,292 Syrian students were reached and guided in mathematics, science, social sciences, and language. In addition, 65,760 educational books were distributed to help these young people prepare for their exams.

Under the supervision of the Republic of Türkiye’s Ministry of Youth and Sports, sports activities are used as one of the most important tools for promoting social cohesion in these projects. The “Sport for Solidarity Project,” supported by the Olympic Refugee Foundation and coordinated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, is currently being implemented in Adana, Ankara, Bursa, İstanbul, İzmir, Mersin, and Şanlıurfa.

The project included sports courses, awareness seminars, sports festivals, and youth camps, and it reached 17,800 people. In addition, the European Union-funded “Empowering Vulnerable Youth Through Improved and Inclusive Sports Infrastructure” project ran from 2020 to 2024. As part of the project, sports facilities were built in 12 provinces, primarily in Adana, Hatay, Gaziantep, Mersin, Kilis, and Osmaniye, and construction of 12 football fields, 4 sports halls, 5 youth centres, a swimming pool, and a tennis court were completed.

Following the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, the Ministry of Youth and Sports expressed a need for additional resources during meetings with the Presidency of Migration Management, the EU, and KfW, and the Ministry was allocated additional resources totalling 22 million 500 thousand euros.

With this additional funding, a total of 26 activities were agreed upon with the EU delegation, 14 of which have been completed thus far. These activities include the project’s opening ceremony, provincial sports tournaments such as basketball, football, volleyball, and grass hockey, public information meetings in the project provinces, groundbreaking ceremonies, and facility openings. To date, these activities have directly reached 4,655 people, with a total reach of 10,000, including spectators and families.

The “Supporting Through Sports, the Peace and Protection for Refugee and Host Community Youth in Türkiye” project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNHCR, and Barcelona Foundation, is being implemented in Manisa and İzmir. As part of this project, youth under temporary protection receive football, basketball, volleyball, and handball training, with the goal of strengthening social cohesion through community-based protection activities.

These services provided to individuals under temporary protection in Türkiye help them integrate and coexist with Turkish citizens. These activities significantly improve social cohesion and solidarity.

These projects are important steps towards meeting the educational, social, and sporting needs of Syrians under temporary protection. Integration of Syrians in Türkiye is aided by activities that aim to improve educational accessibility and quality, provide a foundation for a humane life through sports and other social activities, increase employability through vocational training, and ensure access to early childhood education.

### **Rights in the Field of Employment and Vocational Training**

Since 2011, Türkiye has worked to ensure the economic integration of Syrians under temporary protection through a variety of vocational training and employment initiatives. In this context, public institutions and international organisations carry out a variety of activities and projects to enable Syrians to enter the labour market. The United Nations (UN) and many international non-governmental organisations collaborate in Türkiye, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and Iraq as part of the “Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan” (3RP). The plan, which has been in effect since 2015 to contribute to the resolution of regional issues related to the Syrian crisis, provides support to the intervention efforts of five neighbouring countries in the Syrian crisis. In this context, approximately 3.6 billion US dollars in funding have been provided to Türkiye since 2015.

In this regard, cooperation between international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the European Union, and various public institutions regulating the labour market in Türkiye, such as the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Social Security Institution, the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Türkiye (KOSGEB), holds great importance.

Through these institutions, a particular emphasis is placed on the efforts regarding social integration and livelihoods. In addition, a series of legal and executive regulations have been introduced since 2016 in order to enable the employment of Syrians under temporary protection, and the majority of Syrians have been provided with the opportunity to work in positions that are registered and offer insurance and the minimum wage.



Employment Support Project for Syrians Under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens (January 28, 2019)

One of the most prominent international projects in this respect is the “Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye,” which is implemented in partnership with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) as part of the ILO’s “United Nations Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan.” This project, implemented between February 2018 and February 2021, targeted 12,600 Syrians, 4,300 Turkish citizens, 330 public employees, and 500 businesses in various provinces of Türkiye.

Another project is “Promoting Decent Work Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities,” implemented by the ILO Türkiye Office between 2020 and 2021 and funded by the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. This project was implemented to improve labour market access and promote market-driven growth. This project targeted women, youth, and people with disabilities in 14 provinces.



Employment office for Syrians launched in Istanbul (May 18, 2017)

Another significant international project to boost employment is the “Promoting Decent Work for Syrians Under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens” project, which was implemented by the ILO in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services (formerly known as the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services), Social Security Institution (SGK) and Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) between 2018 and 2022 with a budget of 28 million Euros. This project aimed to encourage Syrians and Turkish citizens to seek formal employment and improve their skills and competencies. Through on-the-job training programmes and one-stop offices in the ten provinces covered by this project, it was aimed to pay employers social security premiums and issue work permits for Syrians.

The “Employment Support Project for Syrians Under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens” implemented by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and funded in cooperation with the World

Bank is another significant project to prevent informal employment of Syrians. This project seeks to ensure that Syrians receive services such as vocational training, job counselling, and Turkish language training. This 30-month project, launched in January 2019, reached 14,800 people across Istanbul, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, and Adana provinces.

Through activities conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, as it is currently known, a series of projects designed specifically to facilitate the integration of Syrians and other foreigners under international protection into the labour market are being meticulously implemented. These projects seek to enhance the employment opportunities of foreigners and facilitate the integration of Turkish citizens into the labour market.

As it is known, Syrians under temporary protection status have been granted temporary protection status under Article 91 of the “Law on Foreigners and International Protection” numbered 6458 and the “Temporary Protection Regulation” and “Regulation on Work Permits of Foreigners Under Temporary Protection” have been issued for these individuals.

In accordance with this regulation issued in 2016 for Syrians under temporary protection, the conditions for integration into the labour market were established, and the work permit fee for one year was set at 10,571.60 TL; however, this amount was reduced to 3,932.70 TL to prevent informal employment.

Over the last five years, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has issued 492,930 work permits to Syrians. By years, these figures were 62,370 in 2020, 91,500 in 2021, 113,209 in 2022, 108,520 in 2023, and 117,331 in 2024. To help these foreign workers integrate into the labour market, the Ministry runs projects that focus on vocational training, skill development, and direct employment.

The “Support for Transition to Labour Market Project” is one of the projects that the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has undertaken in this regard. This project aims to support the access of foreigners under temporary and international protection and Turkish citizens to the labour market and aims to reinforce the institutional capacities of the Ministry, Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) and Turkish Red Crescent Society. The project, scheduled to run from 2022 to 2025, was carried out in collaboration with the World Bank.

Another initiative is the “Job Creation and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Host Communities in Türkiye Project.” This project intends to strengthen the economic and social resilience of foreigners under international protection, as well as host communities, in accordance with decent work principles.

These projects will help Syrians and other foreign nationals integrate into the labour market, boost their employability, and adopt a more inclusive approach to Türkiye's labour market. In addition, these projects seek to successfully implement international labour policies and improve economic integration.

The Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) implements projects to help Syrians under temporary protection integrate into the labour market.

The "Employment Support for Syrians under Temporary Protection and Turkish Citizens Project" (İSDEP), implemented under the European Union's FRIT 1 fund, aims to increase Syrians' employability in the labour market and improve İŞKUR's institutional capacity. The project began in March 2018 and ended in December 2022. A total budget of €45.45 million was allotted, and 14,800 people, including 7,400 Syrians under temporary protection (SuTP) and 7,400 Turkish citizens, were expected to benefit from active labour market initiatives. The grant amendment made in 2021 increased the target number of participants to 33,065, and a total of 37,232 people participated in the programme. The programme employed 19,819 workers, including 12,135 Turkish citizens and 7,684 SuTP.

The "Support for Transition to the Labour Market Project (İSDEP2)" (2022-2025) received €80 million in FRIT 2 funding to integrate 17,000 Syrians and Turkish citizens into the labour market through job and vocational counselling services, as well as Applied Training Programmes (UEP). This project is a collaboration between İŞKUR, the Turkish Red Crescent Society, and the Directorate General of International Labour Force (DGIL). As of 2023, 6,805 people received consultancy services, while 6,454 people benefitted from Applied Training Programmes. 26.05% of the participants were women, while 73.95 percent were men. Applied Training Programmes helped 659 people find work.

Another large-scale project is the "Socio-Economic Empowerment and Sustainability (SES) Programme," which is being implemented in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP). This project intends to address the private sector's demand for skilled labour while also providing access to livelihood opportunities. İŞKUR plans to allocate €5.1 million from its €10 million budget. Since 2021, the project has provided vocational training for the food and IT industries, and by 2024, approximately 3,000 people had benefited from these trainings and found work.

Similar to the examples above, the "Supporting Technical and Vocational Training and Labour Market Services for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Türkiye Project" was implemented with the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) to strengthen İŞKUR's institutional capacity. The project began in September 2017 and ended in June 2019. The €1 million initiative was implemented in Adana, Ankara, Gaziantep, Istanbul, Kilis, and Şanlıurfa provinces, with numerous kick-off meetings

with local stakeholders and İŞKUR PLUS offices constructed to expand access to İŞKUR services. Furthermore, İŞKUR staff received training and attended conferences on labour market integration.

Following the earthquake on February 6, 2023, the Social Resilience Programme (SODAP) was formed in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This project provided 767 people with the Applied Training Programme (UEP) in Kilis, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Adiyaman, Malatya, Osmaniye, Diyarbakır, and Adana provinces. Additionally, materials were purchased to improve the capacity of business clubs in Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa.

All of these projects aim to help Syrians under temporary protection integrate into the labour market while also increasing institutional capacity. Each project makes significant contributions to improving labour market services for target groups, increasing employment, and strengthening social cohesion.

Türkiye also provides numerous incentives, investment support, and business development schemes to assist Syrians under temporary protection in starting their own businesses. The 2004 “Agreement on Mutual Promotion and Protection of Investments” serves as the primary legal foundation for this collaboration.

According to this agreement, the total value of direct investments from Syria to Türkiye was registered at \$14 million for the period October 2002–2024. During the same time period, Türkiye received \$191,316 million in total capital inflows.

Within the scope of incentive policies, under the incentive system that went into effect on June 20, 2012, 260 incentive certificates were given to enterprises using Syrian capital between 2012 and 2024, representing a total investment of €9.3 billion. Furthermore, technology development zones (TDZs) house Syrian-owned or Syrian-partnered businesses that specialise in software, electronics, and engineering.

According to a sectoral distribution analysis of 15,006 Syrian-capitalised businesses operating in Türkiye, the wholesale and retail trade sector accounts for the highest percentage, with 7,846 businesses. There are 1,143 companies in the transportation, communication, and storage services sector, 1,414 in the construction sector, and 1,893 in the real estate, rental, and business activities sector. Another important sector is the manufacturing industry, which includes 1,591 businesses. 332 companies operate hotels and restaurants, while another 234 provide social, community, and personal services. There are 115 companies in the electricity, gas, and water sectors; 131 in education services; and 122 in health and social services. The agricultural, hunting, and forestry sector has 129 businesses, while mining and quarrying has 44. There are 12 Syrian companies that conduct financial intermediary activities.

There are 16 companies with Syrian partners or origin that operate in technology development zones (TDZs). These companies primarily operate in the software, electronics, and engineering fields. These companies are located in technology development zones across provinces such as Gaziantep, Hatay, Istanbul, Kocaeli, Mersin, Nevşehir, and Şanlıurfa, contributing to innovative projects.

These projects aim to strengthen the economic resilience and social integration of Syrians under temporary protection. Such initiatives also help Türkiye achieve its regional and international development goals.

### **Humanitarian Aid for Syria**

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior's Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), Türkiye has made significant efforts to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in northern Syria, with the assistance of the Turkish Red Crescent Society as well as various public institutions and non-governmental organisations. As a result, Türkiye established safe zones in northern Syria through the «Euphrates Shield,» «Peace Spring,» and «Olive Branch» operations, establishing camps that can accommodate 5,8 million people. Basic humanitarian needs have been met in these camps.

The briquette house project, which was established to improve the living conditions of Syrians who had lost their homes due to the war, is notable for addressing the housing needs of Syrians living in difficult circumstances within these camps. In accordance with presidential directives, AFAD, with the assistance of relevant governorates and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), attempted to build briquette houses in 284 locations across Syria and promptly implemented the projects.



Briquette houses are being built in the country's north at a rapid pace to welcome Syrians home.

As a result, AFAD effectively continued the construction of briquette houses, which began in 2020, through 2024. The construction of 100,000 briquette houses under the project was completed on December 31, 2022. The completed houses have been designated for the resettlement of Syrian families affected by the war's devastating

consequences. To improve social life in the briquette house zones, mosques, schools, health centres, orphanages, water wells, and bakeries were planned and built. 79 mosques/masjids, 75 schools and education centres, 25 healthcare facilities, 19 orphanages, 106 water wells, and 20 bakeries have been built in this regard.

Türkiye continues to execute extensive shelter projects to facilitate the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of Syrians. In this context, housing projects have been planned in 13 safe locations across Syria, with nine of them already approved. The residences are 60, 80, and 100 square metres in size, with additional social living areas. The project aims to bring back one million Syrians.



An example of the briquette house sites currently under construction at various locations in northern Syria (May 20, 2023).

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Briquette houses in Idlib (November 4, 2022)

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The “Goodness Houses” initiative, orchestrated by the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB) and the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDV), has notably enhanced the living conditions of families residing in tents during severe winter conditions in Idlib, northwestern Syria. Accordingly, 4,300 of the goodness houses were completed and delivered to their owners in 2022.



In 2022, 4,300 “Goodness Houses” constructed in collaboration with the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB) and the Türkiye Diyanet Foundation (TDV) were completed and delivered to their owners.

The materials used to construct briquette houses have also helped to strengthen regional supply chains. Consequently, organised industrial zones were created to increase employment in secure locations, targeting the provision of job opportunities for approximately 100,000 people. The graph below depicts the overall status of Syria’s organised industrial zones established with the assistance of the Republic of Türkiye.

### The Overall Status of the Organised Industrial Zones Established in Syria with the Assistance of the Republic of Türkiye (2023)

Region	Number of Planned Manufacturing Plants	Estimated Number of Employment	Number of Companies Starting Operations	Land Size (Decar)	Manufacturing Plant Parcel Size (m <sup>2</sup> )	Sectors
Çobanbey	1338	20000	95	350	90-100	Footwear, Textiles, Furniture, Agricultural Products, Machinery, Food, Logistics, Medical Products, Iron Casting
Azaz	84	15000	-	358	250-500	Textiles, Agriculture, Food, Heavy Industry
Mare	317	10000	10	130	120-340	Clothing, Iron, Plastic, Food, Cleaning Materials
Soran	194	5000	2	58	152-238	Footwear, Textiles, Olive Oil, Heavy Industry
Al-Bab	400	25000	36	560	250-500	Mesh, Plastic, Machinery, Iron, Food, Olive Processing, Keystone, Cleaning Materials
Jindires	436	5000	-	55	75-125	Mesh, Plastic, Machinery, Iron, Food, Olive Processing, Vehicle Maintenance, Vegetable-Fruit Market, Cleaning Materials
Idlib-Sarmada	88	15000	13	500	600-4000	Plastic Materials, Health Products

Alongside the necessity for shelter and employment, AFAD and relevant non-governmental organisations have been diligently conducting diverse aid efforts to address the nutritional requirements of the population residing in northern Syria. In 2022 and 2023, 425,000 food parcels were distributed throughout the region. Food aids are in high demand, especially in areas where food supplies are limited. Furthermore, the Turkish Red Crescent Society's flour shipment provides the raw materials required for bread production in the area. Every year, 110 thousand tonnes of flour are transferred to northern Syria to meet the demand for bread.

Since 2012, over 44,000 humanitarian aid trucks have been delivered to Syria, meeting needs such as shelter, education, hygiene, and health. Since 2016, 2 million Syrians have received aid in areas such as Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Eastern Ghouta, and Idlib. This assistance was critical in meeting the basic needs of people who had faced significant food security challenges.



National Medical Rescue Teams, made up of volunteer medics from Türkiye, provide health services to civilians in Syrian districts such as Ras al-Ayn and Tal Abyad that have been liberated from terror as a result of Operation Peace Spring (November 18, 2019).

The Turkish Religious Foundation's aid campaigns in a number of Turkish provinces have also helped to ensure that Syrians have access to basic necessities. Thousands of tonnes of aid supplies have been sent to Syria as part of the "Let Goodness be Your Path" initiative, which was carried out in multiple provinces.



Three trucks carrying 75 tonnes of flour prepared as a part of the "Let Goodness be Your Path" initiative launched by the Presidency of Religious Affairs and Turkish Religious Foundation were dispatched to Idlib, Syria (2022).



The Turkish Religious Foundation mobilised to help Syrian families who were freezing to death (2022).

At the same time, Türkiye has constructed health and education centres in areas that have been cleared of terror in Syria. This system effectively works in meeting the health and education requirements of both the Syrians residing in Türkiye and the people in Syria. Field hospitals and educational institutions built in Jarablus, which has been freed from terror, are the most clearly illustrated examples of this circumstance.



The Ministry of Health has established hospitals in Bab and Mare districts, as well as Çobanbey (al-Rai) town, to facilitate the return of Syrians and serve the growing population (October 18, 2018).

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A clinic in Jarablus, which got to receive a variety of services, such as health and education, thanks to Türkiye's helping hand (December 13, 2017)

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Syrian kids continuing their education in Jarablus in the peaceful environment provided by Türkiye (December 13, 2017).

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Türkiye has taken significant steps to compensate for the devastation caused by the conflict and to provide opportunities for the region's youth who have been deprived of an education. The Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences in Al-Bab, the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Azaz, the Faculty of Education in Afrin, and the Vocational School in Jarabulus were established in affiliation with the Gaziantep University by Presidential Decree No. 1616, dated October 4, 2019. These institutions seek to contribute to the region's socioeconomic development and normalisation process by providing educational opportunities for young people.



Afrin Girls' Secondary and High School inaugurated by the Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye (2024)

In this regard, Gaziantep University Jarabulus Vocational School began academic activities during the 2018-2019 academic year, becoming Türkiye's first higher education institution abroad. That school aims to instill hope in the education-deprived youth who have been affected by the conflict by providing them with scientific, technological, and vocational skills. The school offers education in a variety of disciplines, including health, technology, agriculture, and security, and the students contribute to the region's development efforts by enhancing their professional competencies. The school, with 964 graduates so far, is at the same time instrumental in rebuilding the region's socio-economic structure.

The Afrin Faculty of Education, which is affiliated with Gaziantep University, was established to meet the region's demand for teachers. The faculty enables students to uphold scientific and ethical principles, cultivate their problem-solving skills, and adopt innovative approaches in education. The Afrin Faculty of Education offers education in a variety of subjects, such as guidance and psychological counselling, science teaching, and classroom instruction. Additionally, it provides teacher training that is tailored to the region's requirements.



Gaziantep University Afrin Faculty of Education

Azaz Faculty of Islamic Sciences aims to contribute to social peace and religious education in the region by delivering Türkiye's scientific expertise in the field of theology to secure areas in Syria. The faculty is founded on universal values, approaching Islamic thought through the lens of reason and wisdom, with the goal of improving religious education in the region and preventing sectarian conflicts. The faculty also has a mission to represent Türkiye in this region through its graduates.



Gaziantep University Jarablus Vocational School



Gaziantep University Jarablus Vocational School

Al-Bab Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences seeks to offer solutions to the economic and administrative problems of the region by training qualified individuals in high demand in the public and private sectors. The faculty has economics, business administration, accounting, and finance departments that provide students with globally recognised knowledge. In addition, the faculty intends to contribute to the region's development through international scientific research.



Operation Euphrates Shield cleared the Bab district centre of terror, and the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences at Gaziantep University graduated its first students

Türkiye's efforts have not only provided education services, but have also contributed to the preservation of a secure environment in the region, allowing societies to look forward to the future with hope. These institutions, which have a total of 2,829 students and 1,403 graduates, contribute significantly to the internationalisation of Syrian higher education and regional development goals.

In 2023, the Yunus Emre Institute (YEE) opened the Turkish Cultural Centre in Afrin, northern Syria, which has significantly increased Syrians' educational opportunities in Afrin.



Yunus Emre Institute opened the Turkish Cultural Centre in Afrin (2023).

The “Syria Task Force” was established by the Council of Ministers Decision numbered 2017/10829 and dated 11.09.2017 to carry out and coordinate our country’s activities aimed at combating terrorist groups in Syria, normalising life in areas cleared of terrorists, and coordinating aid. The “Syria Task Force Commissions,” which were established in the relevant ministries, play a critical role in coordinating the aforementioned humanitarian assistance.

The Syria Task Force Commission was finally established in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye with the Ministerial Office’s approval numbered 16700080 and dated 15.11.2024. The Commission was formed to coordinate agricultural activities and implement action plans in order to accelerate returns and normalise life in regions where a secure environment has been established.

The development activities of the region consisting of Syria Operational Zones, which encompass three zones (Euphrates Shield Operational Zone, Olive Branch Operational Zone, and Peace Spring Operational Zone) and four provinces (Gaziantep, Kilis, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa) are proceeding at a rapid pace in accordance with the plans and programs established by the Commission.

There are 85,418 registered farmers in the region. The region has 6,511,550 decares of agricultural land, 2,2 million of which is irrigated. Thanks to the Syrian Task Force Commissions, 1,141,338 metric tonnes of agriproduct were cultivated in 2024, including 371,593 metric tonnes of wheat and 383,712 metric tonnes of barley. As part of the plant

production development, farmers in the region received 432,196 metric tonnes of fertiliser support in addition to 5,779 metric tonnes of seeds and 1,255,994 vegetable seedlings.

There are 1,097,449 ovine, 34,728 bovine, and 2,923,000 poultry in the region. A total of 11.7 million doses of vaccines were used to combat ovine and bovine diseases. Türkiye provided 20 planters, 272 pulverisers, 3 tractors, and various agricultural tools to the region's people as part of agricultural mechanisation. Similarly, since 2017, the region has received in-kind aid totalling 16 million 16 thousand 969.68 TRY and current investment totalling 3 billion 154 million 206 thousand 992.65 TRY.

Since 2017, the Turkish Grain Board (TMO), Meat and Milk Board (ESK), and Turkish Agricultural Credit Cooperatives (TKK) have made purchases in these areas, significantly contributing to the region's economy. In this context, 767 thousand tonnes of cereals, legumes, and olive oil, as well as 193 thousand ovine, were purchased for a total of 26 billion 693 million 176 thousand 472 TRY. The Turkish Grain Board (TMO) has established silos for product purchases in the region.

In addition, 148,480 saplings were planted, and 30,000 saplings were delivered to the region by the General Directorate of Forestry (OGM). State Hydraulic Works (DSİ) has also constructed 156 water wells. A total of 914.86 l/s of water was obtained from the aforementioned wells, supplying clean drinking and potable water to approximately 1 million 580 thousand people.

The General Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (BSGM) released 2 million, 60 thousand baby carp fish into dams and lakes. Two mushroom mills and one bakery have been built in the region, and the Ahtarin region's Organised Industrial Zone based on Agriculture is scheduled to be completed in February 2026.

Türkiye's redevelopment activities in Syria continue at full speed today, in a variety of fields ranging from agriculture to education to health, with the Turkish Armed Forces providing a secure environment.

### **3.3. Turkish Armed Forces' Fight against Terrorist Organizations Originating from Syria and Cross-Border Operations: Rationale and Results**

#### **3.3.1. Operation Euphrates Shield**

Türkiye launched Operation Euphrates Shield on August 24, 2016, in accordance with the right to self-defence guaranteed by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, with the primary goal of neutralising terrorists in northern Syria, with the primary

target being the terrorist organisation DAESH, which threatens Turkish security, and ensuring border security. Many developments in the run-up to the operation threatened Türkiye's border security, making a military intervention inevitable. Türkiye has operated on the basis of Syria's territorial integrity, demonstrating extreme sensitivity in order to protect civilians and historical monuments.

Türkiye's desire to ensure the security of its borders is one of the primary justifications for Operation Euphrates Shield. The terrorist organisation DAESH has carried out numerous rocket attacks against Türkiye from the areas it controls in northern Syria. Kilis was targeted by 54 Katyusha missiles between April and May 2016, killing 19 people, including 12 Turks and 7 Syrians, and injuring 67 others. These attacks were carried out from the Azaz-Jarablus line. In this regard, one of the primary justifications for the operation is to prevent similar rocket attacks.



Türkiye is one of the countries that has been most affected by the terrorist organisation known as DAESH. Many civilians have been killed or injured in DAESH suicide bombings inside Turkish borders. DAESH's suicide bombing attack at a wedding in Gaziantep immediately prior to the launch of Operation Euphrates Shield, which suffered 54 civilian casualties, and increasing missile attacks on civilian areas forced Türkiye to enter into military combat against DAESH and expedited the process.

Another key justification for Operation Euphrates Shield was to prevent the creation of a terrorist corridor by the PKK/PYD-YPG to ensure the safety of the citizens of the Republic of Türkiye in the vicinity and the Syrian people. The YPG/PKK, the Syrian branch of the PKK terrorist organisation, attempted to create a corridor by capturing the territory between the northeastern and northwestern sides of Syria but, most

importantly, to establish an autonomous geographical region. Operation Euphrates Shield has thwarted the PKK's attempts to carve a corridor.



The objectives of Operation Euphrates Shield include ensuring the safety of civilians' lives and property in DAESH-controlled areas, as well as establishing safe zones to allow Syrians to return safely.

Based on the aforesaid justifications, Operation Euphrates Shield was launched on August 24, 2016. The operation entailed air and ground incursions. Turkish soldiers fought valiantly in combat to neutralise 4,000 DAESH militants.



Jarabulus was the first to be liberated from DAESH during the operation. Afterwards, the Al Bab campaign ceased DAESH-related activities in the region. Aqil Mountain dominating Al Bab, in particular, was liberated by the valiant endeavours of the Turkish Special Forces, who suffered 17 martyrs, and the road to Al Bab was opened. The Syrians who live nearby now refer to Aqil Mountain as “Albayrak Mountain” in honour of the martyred Infantry Major Bülent Albayrak, who was killed by DAESH mortar, rocket, and bomb vehicle attacks while commanding the campaign.

During Operation Euphrates Shield, the then-named Free Syrian Army (FSA) fought alongside Turkish soldiers. The operation was conducted in accordance with the principle of not causing harm to civilians and infrastructure.



The National Security Council (MGK) communiqué dated March 29, 2017 stated that “Operation Euphrates Shield aimed at ensuring our country’s border security and thwarting the DAESH terror group’s threat and attacks targeting our country, facilitating the repatriation of our Syrian brothers and sisters, and establishing a peaceful and secure living environment for them within the Operation Euphrates Shield area has been concluded successfully.” The operation, which was carried out in collaboration with the Free Syrian Army, resulted in the liberation of 2,015 square metres of DAESH territory, including 243 civilian settlements.



Operation Euphrates Shield ensured Türkiye's border security and ceased DAESH-related activities within the region. Most importantly, the liberation of the Dabiq region, which was a key component of DAESH's narrative, dealt a significant blow to the terrorist organisation's rhetoric. Moreover, PKK was prevented from establishing a corridor to Afrin via crossing to the western side of the Euphrates River.



In the following period, a manifold of reconstruction efforts began in the region liberated from DAESH. Today, Syrians live in peace and safety in this region.



### 3.3.2. Operation Olive Branch

On January 20, 2018, Türkiye launched its second ground incursion into Syria, Operation Olive Branch, in response to developments in Syria and out of necessity for a variety of reasons, the most important of which was to secure its borders. It was a joint operation by the Turkish Armed Forces and the Free Syrian Army.



Türkiye's concerns regarding the security of its borders are one of the crucial justifications for Operation Olive Branch. One of the primary goals of the operation was to dismantle the terrorist corridor that the PKK/KCK/PYD-YPG terrorist organisations were attempting to establish, which posed a significant threat to Türkiye's security.



Moreover, in addition to the PKK terrorist organisation, terrorist attacks on Türkiye from DAESH-controlled areas in northern Syria made military intervention in the region unavoidable. The YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, controlled the Afrin region, posing a serious threat to Türkiye.

Türkiye has defended Syria's territorial integrity since the onset of the Syrian conflict. Terrorist organisations' destabilising effect on the region as a result of their control over specific areas is another major justification for the operation.



The operation's goals included ensuring the safe repatriation of Syrians who had been displaced as a result of the humanitarian crisis caused by events in Syria, as well as providing them with a stable living environment.



Operation Olive Branch was initiated with an airstrike conducted by 72 fighter jets to commemorate the 72 martyrs Türkiye suffered during Operation Euphrates Shield. Afterwards, Turkish Land Forces and Free Syrian Army elements advanced towards Afrin, targeting PKK positions, weapon depots, and logistics centres.



The operation was conducted in accordance with international law and human rights, and it was completed successfully within 57 days. 6,370 terrorists were neutralised during the operation. Maximum efforts were exerted in the protection of civilians. Civil infrastructure and historic structures were not targeted.



Afrin was seized entirely on March 18, 2018, resulting in the liberation of an area of approximately 2,000 km<sup>2</sup> from DAESH and PKK/PYD/YPG elements in less than two months.

As a result of the operation, terrorist elements in and around Afrin were dismantled, and Türkiye's border security was ensured. Additionally, terrorist attacks on Türkiye from the Afrin region were thwarted. The presence of Turkish troops in the region has played a significant role in establishing a peaceful and secure environment.



After the extensive mine and improvised explosive device (IED) disposal that was conducted following the elimination of terrorists from the region, humanitarian aid and infrastructure support activities were deployed to start the normalisation process.



Türkiye has also undertaken reconstruction and recovery projects in education, health, and infrastructure in areas that have been cleared of terrorism.



### 3.3.3. Operation Peace Spring

The Turkish Armed Forces and the Syrian National Army launched Operation Peace Spring on October 9, 2019, in response to threats to Türkiye's border security and attacks against Türkiye by the PKK/PYD/YPG terrorist organisation.



The primary goals of the operation were to ensure border security, prevent the formation of a terrorist corridor in southern Türkiye, and facilitate the return of displaced Syrians to their homes and lands.



The operation also aimed to eradicate the terrorist threat to Türkiye's national security, contribute to protecting Syria's territorial integrity and unity, and liberate the local population from terrorist oppression and persecution.



The National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces and the Syrian Interim Government, the two legitimate opposition groups in Syria at the time, as well as representatives of minorities and tribes in the region, including Christian communities, supported the operation.



The operation was conducted in accordance with international law and the right to self-defence set out in Article 51 of the UN Charter, with the utmost care taken to ensure that no civilians were harmed. During the operation, only the terrorist organisation was targeted, and no infrastructure or historical landmarks were damaged.



Following the operation, regions cleared of terrorism underwent extensive reconstruction and recovery. In this context, nearly 200 thousand Syrians have returned safely and voluntarily to their lands and villages.



Mines, IEDs, bunkers, and tunnels that endanger civilian lives were removed. 35,000 students resumed their studies at schools repaired by the Turkish Armed Forces.



Over 250,000 Syrians have received healthcare services from public hospitals and mobile medical clinics.



464 schools, 87 mosques, and 7 churches were maintained and repaired, with terrorists removed from 605 settlements.



### 3.3.4. Operation Spring Shield

Operation Spring Shield was launched on February 10, 2020, in the Idlib region of Syria.



The operation, conducted by the Turkish Armed Forces in accordance with international law and the right to self-defence outlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter, aimed to prevent the Syrian regime's expansion and ensure the security of Turkish military elements in the region, prevent migration to Türkiye's borders as a result of regime attacks, and ensure the security of the region's people and their safe, voluntary, and dignified return.



Idlib has been strategically significant since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011. The regime's attacks in this region have exposed Türkiye to the possibility of a new migration wave. Additionally, radical terrorist elements in the Idlib region have posed a security risk for Türkiye.





Another reason for Türkiye's decision to launch an operation in the region was the martyrdom of 33 Turkish soldiers on February 27, 2020.



Other objectives of the operation included preventing regime elements from infiltrating Türkiye's borders, responding to attacks on Turkish observation posts in Idlib, ensuring border security, and alleviating Syria's humanitarian crisis.





Operation Spring Shield was conducted on land and air and successfully concluded on March 5, 2020. During the operation, 3,473 regime elements, 3 aircraft, 8 helicopters, 1 UCAV, 93 tanks, 36 armoured vehicles, 67 howitzers/multiple rocket launchers, and 10 air defence systems were neutralised.



As a result of the operation, Türkiye gained control of strategic locations in Idlib, halted regime forces' advance, and assured the security of Turkish observation posts in Idlib.



The wave of migration towards Türkiye's borders has been halted, and reconstruction and recovery efforts have been initiated to ensure the safety of civilians in the Idlib region.





### 3.3.5. Air Operation Winter Eagle

Air Operation Winter Eagle was launched on February 1, 2022, against terrorist structures in the Derik, Sinjar, and Karacak regions in northern Syria and Iraq, which are used as bases by terrorists, to neutralise PKK/PYD/YPG and other terrorist elements, eliminate terrorist attacks against Turkish people and security forces from northern Syria, and ensure Türkiye's border security.

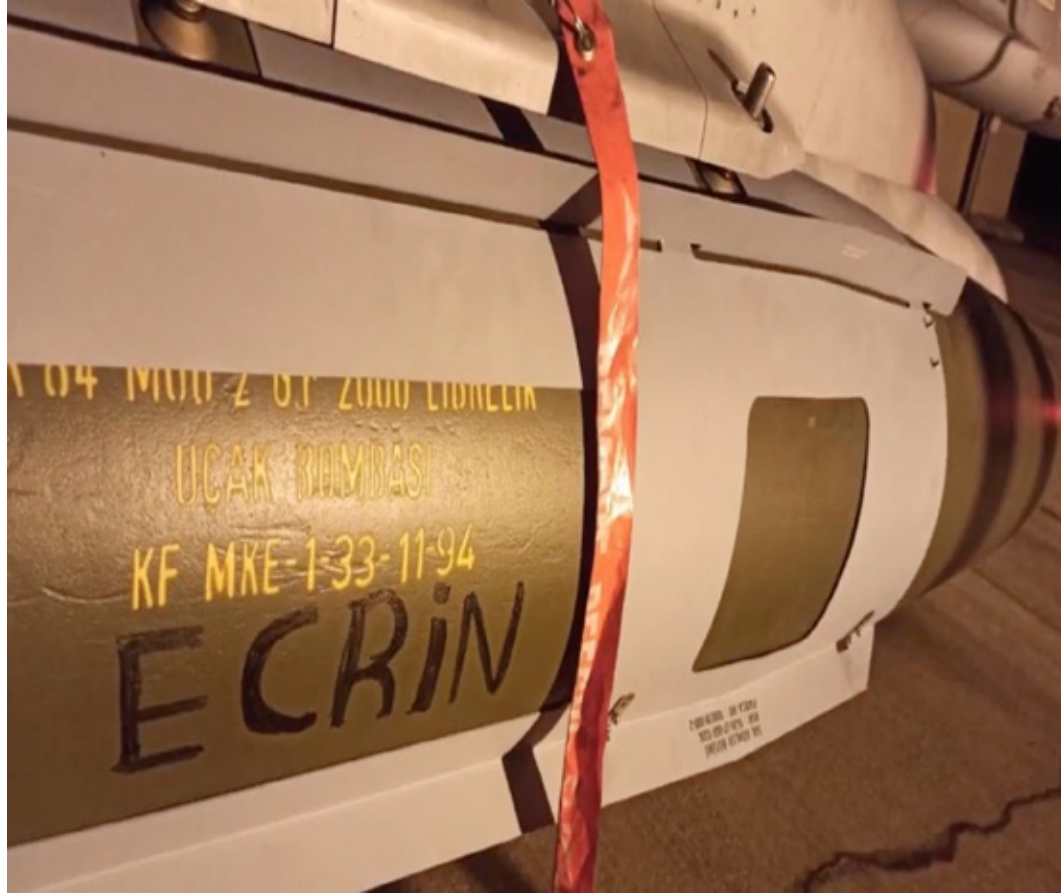
Operation Winter Eagle targeted terrorist structures such as shelters, bunkers, caves, tunnels, ammunition depots, so-called headquarters, and training camps that threatened Türkiye's border security. The operation was planned and executed with tremendous caution to protect the lives and properties of the civilian population and the environment.



### 3.3.6. Air Operation Claw-Sword

Air Operation Claw-Sword was launched on November 19, 2022, in accordance with the right to self-defence permitted by Article 51 of the UN Charter in the northern regions of Iraq (Qandil, Assos, and Hakurk) and Syria (Ayn-el Arab, Manbij, Deir al-Zor cave region, Tel Rifaat, Jizire, and Derik), which are used by terrorists as bases for attacks against Türkiye, in order to neutralise PKK/KCK/YPG and other terrorist elements, cease terrorist attacks against Turkish people and security forces from northern Iraq and Syria, ensure border security, and eliminate terrorism at its source.







# **CHAPTER 4**

## **THE COLLAPSE OF THE BAATH REGIME**





## 4. The Collapse of the Baath Regime

### 4.1. End of the Civil War

Initiated in 2011 due to the Syrian people's aspiration to be "dignified citizens" instead of subjects, the political crisis, which evolved to be one of the bloodiest and most destructive civil wars in the Middle East's recent history, reached its conclusion with the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime on December 8, 2024. Following the fall of the 61-year Baath regime, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths, mass displacement, grave human rights violations, and a plunge into one of the worst humanitarian crises in the country's history, the Syrian Revolution has risen from the ashes.

Held hostage by the interventions of foreign powers and their vested interests, the people of Syria found the opportunity to regain control over their own political future during the course of a large-scale operation by the anti-regime Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in western Aleppo's countryside on November 27, 2024. As a result of the HTS-led alliance's offensive dubbed "Operation Detering Aggression" against Syrian regime forces;

- On November 28, 2024, the armed anti-regime forces took possession of heavy weaponry and military vehicles belonging to the regime in the areas of which they had gained control.
- On November 29, 2024, they swept into Aleppo's city centre.
- On November 30, 2024, various parts of Aleppo and Idlib were taken under control.
- On December 1, 2024, the Syrian National Army took control of the entire town centre of Tal Rifaat with "Operation Dawn of Freedom."
- On December 2, 2024, armed anti-regime groups recaptured 16 more settlements from regime forces in Hama, where they advanced after Aleppo and Idlib provinces.
- On December 3, 2024, armed anti-regime groups took control of several settlements on the route to Hama.
- On December 4, 2024, armed anti-regime groups clashed with Assad regime forces about 5 kilometres outside the city centre of Hama, Syria, and took control of 20 more villages.
- On December 5, 2024, Hama city centre was taken under control.
- On December 6, 2024, anti-regime groups in Syria captured the districts of Rasten and Talbise in Homs province, a strategically important gateway to the capital, Damascus.
- On December 7, 2024, groups advancing against Assad regime forces began to enter the southern suburbs of Damascus.
- On December 8, 2024, the Assad regime largely lost control of Damascus, the capital of Syria, as protesters entered key compounds in the city

Launched on November 27 and concluded on December 8, 2024, the operation resulted in the fall of the 54-year authoritarian regime, revealing that Assad's hold on power was much more fragile than internationally perceived. As a matter of fact, the 13-year struggle of the Syrian opposition caused the Assad regime to be foreign-dependent and internally exhausted, which enabled the 11-day military operation to topple it. The Syrian Arab Army was defeated, leaving behind a large number of weapons, ammunition, vehicles, and equipment, while Bashar al-Assad and his family, who fled Syria, were granted asylum in Russia by President Vladimir Putin. A transitional government has been established in Syria, headed by Ahmed al-Sharaa, to serve until March 1, 2025.





After thirteen years of violent conflict, groups of different ideologies, ethnicities, religions, and political agendas have come together. For the first time, Syria has been given the chance to be governed by an opposition coalition with the support of the Syrian majority.





#### 4.2. Global and Regional Implications of the End of the Assad Regime

Having a central role in the geopolitical balances of the Middle East, Syria stands out as a decisive actor in shaping regional issues and redefining power dynamics. In fact, the Assad regime's downfall presents the potential to drastically change Syria's domestic politics, as well as the alliance structures and power dynamics among regional actors, thereby establishing the country as a strategic axis for the future of regional stability.

In this context, the new era in Syria has the potential to directly impact the future of long-standing unresolved conflicts, including terrorism and radicalisation, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, ethnic and sectarian tensions, and the fragile structures in Lebanon and Iraq. Consequently, the developments in Syria are part of a process that necessitates careful oversight on a global and local level.



Syria is currently at a pivotal historical juncture, marked by significant transformations in its state identity and structure, social dynamics, and economic order. However, the long-term progression of this transformation will be contingent upon a multitude of complex factors. The planning and implementation of the post-Assad political transition process, the strategic approaches of the local and international actors guiding it, the level of harmony among the factions that were effective in toppling the regime, and the interests of regional powers over Syria are among the critical factors that will determine the course of this transformation. This process transcends Syria's internal dynamics and has the potential to reshape the regional and global balances of power. Ensuring an inclusive political transition and establishing a governance model that guarantees the representation of all social factions will directly influence Syria's stability, regional peace, and security environment.



Following the downfall of the Assad regime, the Syrian government has made it its top priority to establish enduring stability by building an inclusive and representative administration structure, thereby transforming Syria from a source of environmental instability into a contributor to regional peace and cooperation. The revolution's success will not only facilitate the establishment of a new political order but also prevent large-scale migration and foster more favourable conditions for the return of Syrian refugees. Nevertheless, accomplishing these goals necessitates not only the new administration's adherence to its responsibilities but also the development of supportive and holistic policies by the regional countries to facilitate this transformation process. In this regard, it is crucial to meticulously plan and execute the steps for Syria's reconstruction and regional integration.



Given the substantial cost it has incurred regarding the Syrian issue, it is often emphasised that Türkiye possesses the greatest influence in shaping Syria's future, and this right should be acknowledged. Türkiye's pursuit of a political solution amidst the Assad regime's intransigence has been obstructed, necessitating Türkiye's more prominent involvement in Syria's future.



Having supported the Syrian opposition for more than a decade, Türkiye prioritises a smooth political transition, the establishment of a state structure inclusive of all segments of society, and the strengthening of civilian governance mechanisms. These steps are viewed as vital to restoring stability in Syria. Another key objective of Türkiye's Syria policy is the preservation and restructuring of state institutions' functionality. As the Iraq experience demonstrates, the governance vacuum resulting from the collapse of state structures poses a risk of increased instability in the region, significantly impacting Türkiye. Türkiye therefore considers the restoration of state authority and safety throughout Syria to be a strategic imperative.

Türkiye regards the preservation of territorial integrity and restoration of security in Syria as main factors for regional stability. In particular, eliminating the presence of terrorist organisations such as PKK/YPG in Syria and neutralising other radical elements are among the top national security priorities for Türkiye. In this context, removing DAESH members and foreign fighters from the region is considered an important step in terms of securing stability in Syria. In addition, establishing favourable conditions for the safe and voluntary return of the Syrians in Türkiye under temporary protection status is among Türkiye's main objectives. This return process is of critical significance not only for Türkiye but also for regional peace and security. Türkiye maintains its active participation in the reconstruction of Syria in line with these objectives.



Türkiye plays an active role in ensuring regional stability and contributing to shaping the future of the Syrian people. Within this framework, Türkiye is at the forefront of efforts to re-establish Syria's international recognition, remove economic sanctions, lead international assistance, and rid the country of terrorist elements by providing support for the transitional government's success in all areas. Türkiye, in this context, is making efforts to act as a diplomatic and strategic facilitator between the Syrian government and international players.

The reopening of the embassy in Damascus and the visits of the Director of National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) İbrahim Kalın and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan to Damascus are among the diplomatic initiatives that Ankara has taken in this direction. These steps reveal Türkiye's commitment to restoring peace and security in Syria and its will to facilitate the process through regional cooperation. Türkiye, with these efforts, aims to restore regional stability and Syria's integration into the international system.



The collapse of the Baath regime in Syria has had significant impacts on regional powers such as Iran and Russia, which are Türkiye's partners in the Astana Process. With the fall of Assad from power, these players' influence over Syria has diminished, significantly limiting of their regional clout. That being said, the end of the regime's sectarian-based policies has led to the de-escalation of tensions that have been fuelling the regional conflicts for some time now and the reduction of the risk of these conflicts spilling over into neighbouring countries. A stable Syria in the post-Assad era offers a strong ground for restoring peace, cooperation, and mutual trust among the countries of the region. Within this framework, engaging multilateral diplomatic processes with key regional stakeholders in rebuilding Syria will not only alleviate the current tensions but also establish a regional security order based on cooperation. This process has the potential of elevating Syria to stability and contributing to constructing a sustainable environment of peace and cooperation across the Middle East.

### 4.3. Risk Factors and Responsibility of the International Public

After 13 years of crisis, the end of the conflicts in Syria does not necessarily mean the country will enjoy full stability in the short term. Even though the political transition process, diplomatic negotiations, reconstruction efforts, and economic development initiatives are at the forefront of the new process, the support to be extended by the international community and the majority of the regional actors for sustainable stability will have a decisive role in the course of this process. In this context, the Syrian public should be granted the right to self-determination and allowed to establish the administrative model of their choosing, free from international interference. Only if this fundamental right is respected will a real opportunity arise to create a governance system that embraces Syria's rich ethnic, religious, and political diversity, serves lasting peace, and is inclusive of all segments of society. This opportunity is crucial for both Syria's future and regional security and peace.



Significant challenges persist for Syria to establish lasting peace and a fresh start by rebuilding social trust following years of conflict and division. The primary challenges include the ongoing de facto division of the country, sovereignty issues, and the future of those regions whose legal status remains unclear. Security threats posed by terrorist organisations such as the YPG/PKK and DAESH, the authority vacuum in the south, social unrest fuelled by the deep economic crisis, and internal conflicts are among the major risks to stability. Additionally, the process is further complicated by the continued military presence of foreign forces in Syria for various purposes, the rivalry among armed opposition groups that occasionally escalates into conflict, and uprisings initiated by Arab tribes against the YPG/PKK control in eastern Syria.



Syria's primary sovereignty issues are the status of opposition areas outside the regime's control and the status of YPG/PKK-controlled areas. In the new term, the new political authority based in Damascus has assumed sovereignty over all areas held by the regime and opposition, thereby resolving this issue to a significant extent. However, the situation with the YPG/PKK paints a different picture. After withdrawing from Tel Rifaat and Manbij, the YPG/PKK continues to escalate the sovereignty debates in the region and maintains its control west of the Euphrates. In this context, Syria's most

significant challenge in the new term is to identify a sustainable solution to these issues and to re-establish the country's stability and integrity.



In this framework, the main security priority for the Syrian government is to bring the areas controlled by the YPG/PKK under the authority of Damascus. The YPG/PKK is likely to seek to gain as much independence as possible from the central authority, given the capacity it has gained with military support from the US and the political support it expects from Western countries. In this process, Türkiye stands out as a determined actor, viewing the termination of the YPG/PKK's presence in the region and the establishment of territorial integrity in Syria as strategic priorities while offering comprehensive support to the efforts of the Damascus administration to establish sovereignty.

One of the biggest threats for Syria in the transition process is the destabilizing potential of the remnants of the Assad regime. Even though foreign militias are largely withdrawn from the country and do not possess the ability to directly threaten the new administration, the interference of external actors who are attempting to manipulate the fragile situation in Syria for their own gain is a cause for concern. Israel, in particular, is likely to increase its efforts to destabilise Syria in this new

period. Although the military presence of foreign forces in the country is already a significant source of tension, Israel's actions are one of the most critical risk factors of the transition period. Israel utilised Syria's transition as an opportunity to broaden its occupation of the Golan Heights and conducted a series of airstrikes that targeted strategic military infrastructure. The Damascus government's endeavours to fortify its authority throughout the nation are not only undermined by such interventions, but they also establish a long-term sovereignty issue and precipitate new tensions in Syrian-Israeli relations. This poses a serious challenge to the success of the transition and risks complicating Syria's reconstruction process. Therefore, minimising the effects of such external interventions should be a priority objective to ensure a stable transition period.



Although the Iranian military presence in the country has been completely withdrawn, the future of Russia's, the other external actor supporting the Syrian regime, limited military presence at Khmeimim Air Base and Tartus Naval Base remains uncertain. On the other hand, political decisions in Washington will largely determine the future of the US military presence in Syria. Particularly, US President Donald Trump's policies, negotiations regarding the YPG/PKK with Türkiye, and the stance of the Damascus administration towards the US military presence will be the key determiners of this process. Within the framework of these dynamics, interventions by the regional and global powers in Syria's internal affairs have the potential to create a power vacuum in the country, which can cause further instability in the region. Furthermore, the risk

of Syria becoming an epicentre of regional hegemonic rivalries raises international concerns. The outcomes of such risks and possibilities for Syria's future will be influenced by the attitudes and decisions of the international community and regional actors.



Ensuring stability in Syria necessitates international cooperation and concerted coordination. The international community's priority in the process of rebuilding the state and nation should be to assist in the attainment of the Syrians' free, democratic, and pluralistic vision for their country by focusing on their will and expectations. This vision is not only the fruit of Syrians' long-standing struggle but also a necessity for lasting peace and stability in the region. In this framework, it is imperative that international actors take responsibility in preventing the recurrence of social and religious-ethnic divisions that happened after the events of the Arab Spring in the Middle East from happening in Syria. Primary objectives must entail preventing the existing divisions among opposition groups from morphing into a spiral of violence as well as contributing to establishing an inclusive leadership structure that garners these groups around common goals. Moreover, encouraging democratic norms in Syria to take root and facilitating the establishment of a governing system that will protect the rights of the society as a whole is both a humanitarian and strategic responsibility of the international community.



It must be kept in mind that the unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Syria is still ongoing. Over thirteen years of ongoing violence had displaced 14 million people, of whom the internally displaced struggle to survive in extremely inhuman conditions. More than 90 per cent of these individuals strive to survive below the poverty line. Additionally, the vast majority of Syria's infrastructure has been destroyed, complicating reconstruction efforts even more. Furthermore, 5.5 million Syrian refugees residing in, especially, Türkiye, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and other countries clearly demonstrate the international scale of the crisis. Given this outlook, the international community must remain committed to its responsibility in resolving the Syrian crisis.



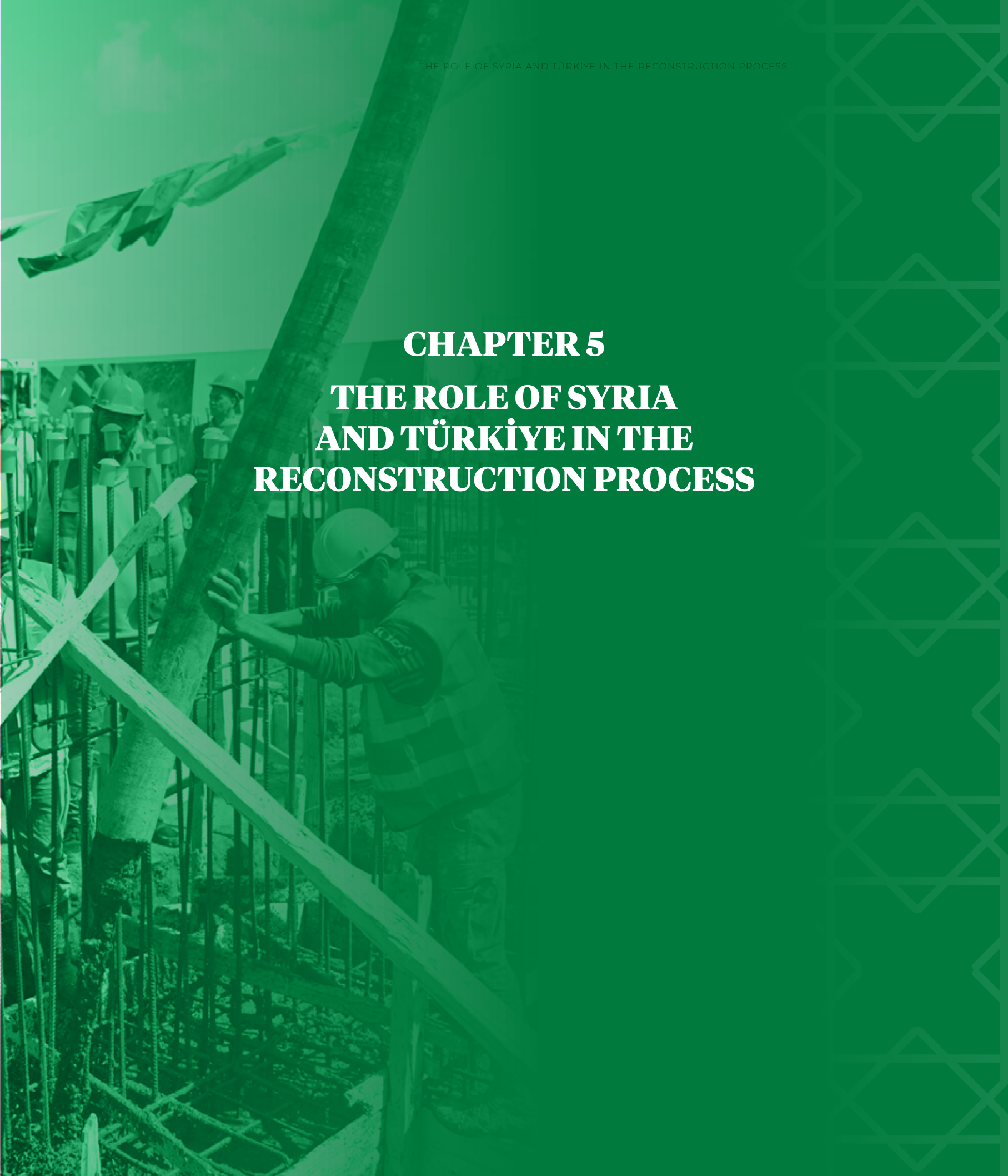
At this critical juncture, when the millions of people forcefully displaced from their homes have an opportunity to rebuild their homeland, the international community must acknowledge the responsibility of its past neglect of Syria and show its concrete support this time. Lifting current sanctions on Syria and providing necessary financial support for the reconstruction process is not only a humanitarian responsibility but also a testament to global solidarity. This support will enable Syrians to self-determine their own future while also playing a critical role in establishing regional peace and stability.





# **CHAPTER 5**

## **THE ROLE OF SYRIA AND TÜRKİYE IN THE RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS**



## 5.1. Türkiye's Contributions and Approach: Preserving Syria's Territorial Integrity and Unitary Structure



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made statements following the Cabinet Meeting held at the Presidential Complex.

*“Türkiye has no interest in the land or sovereignty of any other country. The sole purpose of our cross-border operations is to protect our homeland and citizens from terrorist attacks. Neither the PKK and its affiliates in Syria nor DAESH are interlocutors for our country; on the contrary, they are adversaries. The territorial integrity of Syria must, absolutely must, be preserved. Syria belongs to Syrians with all its ethnic, religious, and sectarian identities. It is the Syrian people who will decide both the present and the future of Syria.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*

***“With the popular revolution in Syria on December 8, the hopes of the separatist organisation have also hit a wall here. The new administration in Syria demonstrates a determined stance on preserving the country’s territorial integrity and unitary structure.”***

With the revolution in Syria in December 2024, a new era has begun both in this country and the region. The new administration in Syria exhibits a determined stance on preserving the country’s territorial integrity and unitary structure. With the end of the 61-year-long Baath regime and the liberation of Damascus by Syrian opposition forces, separatist terrorists have been absolutely trapped. At this stage of the new era, the end of the road is in sight for the terrorist organisation. Türkiye’s desire, expectation, and policy are developing in this direction. Türkiye welcomes the determination of Syria’s new administration in this regard.

Through its cross-border operations, Türkiye has dismantled the terror corridor that was intended to be established in northern Syria, thereby preventing the separatist terrorist organisation from encircling Türkiye from the south under the patronage of imperialist powers. Türkiye has achieved significant successes in its resolutely implemented strategy of “eliminating terrorism at its source” and pushed back the PKK’s affiliates from the border area through its operations in northern Syria.

In the new era, Türkiye will continue to act to preserve Syria’s territorial integrity and unitary structure. In the words of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, “Let everyone know this: the era of playing canton games by leaning on imperialists through weapons, violence, and terrorism is now completely over.” Türkiye will continue its fight against terrorism with great sensitivity both domestically and abroad and will take the necessary steps in cooperation with Syria’s new administration to maintain peace and stability in the region.

### **President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Meeting and Joint Press Conference with President Ahmed al-Sharaa of the Syrian Arab Republic (February 4, 2025)**



During the joint press conference that followed their meeting at the Presidential Complex with President Ahmed Al-Sharaa of the Syrian Arab Republic, who was in Türkiye as part of his second international presidential trip, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed his pleasure to host President Al-Sharaa in Ankara and emphasised the prolonged suffering of the people of Syria due to conflict, oppression, and acts of terrorism, stating:

**“The people of Syria were subjected to all kinds of oppression for thirteen and a half years. They witnessed inhumane massacres, including the use of chemical weapons. Nearly a million Syrians lost their lives in attacks by the former regime and terrorist organisations. Millions of Syrians, on the other hand, were forced to flee their homes, homelands, and birthplaces. However, despite all the persecution they faced, the people of Syria continued their struggle and ultimately achieved a major triumph on December 8. I congratulate my dear brother Ahmed al-Sharaa, and, through him, all the people of Syria for this achievement. On this occasion, I wish Allah’s mercy on all of our martyrs who lost their lives in Syria’s struggle for freedom.”**

President Erdoğan stated that Syria's security and economic stability are priorities for Türkiye and expressed Türkiye's readiness to provide all kinds of support to the reconstruction process in Syria.

**“The people of Syria now have the will required to determine their own future. As Türkiye, we will continue to provide the necessary support to our Syrian brothers in the new era, just as we stood by them during their darkest times. I believe that today's visit marks the beginning of a lasting friendship and cooperation between our countries. I believe that our mutual engagements will intensify in the coming period.”**

President Erdoğan emphasised that Türkiye has consistently supported Syria's territorial integrity and political unity and that the two countries will act in cooperation to this end, indicating the necessity of joint action in the fight against separatist terrorist organisations operating in the northeast of Syria, and said:

**“I was pleased to see that we are in full agreement on almost all issues. We particularly discussed the steps to be taken against the separatist terrorist organisations occupying the northeast of Syria and their supporters. I expressed our readiness to provide Syria with the necessary support in the fight against DAESH, PKK, and other terrorist elements. We also affirmed that we stand with them regarding the control of the camps in the northeast of Syria. I especially would like to express our satisfaction with the strong will displayed by my brother Ahmed al-Sharaa in the fight against terrorism. For the security of our countries and our region, we have no choice but to cooperate in pursuit of the same goal.”**

President Erdoğan highlighted the common objective of Türkiye and Syria to ensure security and stability across the region through cooperative efforts, affirming Türkiye's willingness to offer comprehensive support for the reconstruction of war-torn Syria. Additionally, the President stressed the significance of lifting international sanctions so as to boost the Syrian economy, stating:

**“We stand ready to provide the necessary support for the reconstruction of Syria's devastated urban areas and essential infrastructure. The more Syria's economy develops, the more voluntary returns there will be. However, the economic recovery and infrastructure development of Syria are being adversely affected by international sanctions. As a consequence of our diplomatic initiatives to remove sanctions that were addressed to the ousted regime, a partial relaxation has been achieved. Still, we will persist in our efforts until we achieve a definitive resolution.”**

President Erdoğan indicated Türkiye's ongoing commitment to supporting the Syrian people and cited the steps that have been taken to strengthen diplomatic relations, saying:

**“We have also rendered our Consulate General in Aleppo operational, following the reopening of our Embassy in Damascus. Turkish Airlines has begun to offer flights to Damascus. We continue to offer the new administration all the support we can to help amplify its voice in the international arena. We are dedicated to enhancing our collaboration across all sectors, including trade, civil aviation, energy, health, and education.”**

In his address, President Ahmed al-Sharaa of Syria expressed gratitude to President Erdoğan for the gracious invitation and warm hospitality, citing Türkiye's assistance to Syrian refugees as a historic demonstration of solidarity, and said:

**“The people of Syria will never forget the historic stance of the Turkish state and its people in welcoming millions of refugees. This solidarity has reached its height in recent years, due to the mixing of Syrian and Turkish blood during our struggle for liberation.”**

President al-Sharaa stressed that Türkiye's support plays a critical role for Syria's political and economic progress and stated that the two countries' relations will continue to deepen. President al-Sharaa highlighted the necessity of formulating a common strategy to address security threats in the region, saying:

**“During the meeting, we deliberated on the threats to territorial integrity in the northeast of Syria. We discussed the necessity of increasing international pressure on Israel to enact the 1974 agreement and withdraw from the buffer zone in southern Syria. We also reached an agreement to implement tangible measures to enhance infrastructure investment and trade cooperation.”**

President al-Sharaa reiterated the significance of Türkiye's strategic partnership with Syria and extended an invitation to President Erdoğan to visit Syria at his earliest convenience.

President Erdoğan declared that Türkiye will persist in its support for the Syrian people and that the two countries' cooperation will be enhanced across all areas, while President al-Sharaa pointed out the significance of Türkiye's support and emphasised that the stability in the region will be reinstated through a collaborative effort.







Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye Cevdet Yılmaz made statements at the International Strategic Communication Forum (StratCom Summit '24).

*“As the Republic of Türkiye, our wish is for this transition process to proceed in the healthiest way possible, and to continue with an understanding that encompasses and includes all segments of the Syrian population, from different religions, sects, and ethnic identities. Syrians deserve this. Syria belongs to Syrians! We absolutely do not find it right for external parties to intervene in Syria. The Syrian people have endured great suffering. I want to express here that we are firmly against external interventions that would increase instability in Syria and impose new costs on the Syrian people. We fully respect Syria’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.”*

*Cevdet Yılmaz*

*Vice President of the Republic of Türkiye*

***“I have said it before; they have only two options ahead of them: either repent from terrorism and lay down their arms, or they will not escape being eliminated. Our preference is for this to be achieved with calmness and tranquillity. Our hope is that our region will be rid of the scourge of terrorism without more bloodshed and destruction.”***

Türkiye's priority is establishing peace, development, and stability in our shared geography, where blood and tears have prevailed for years. The revolution in Syria and the steps taken in domestic politics have provided an opportunity to achieve this goal more quickly. With the Syrian revolution, a historic window of opportunity has opened for both Türkiye and the region. Every means and resource at Türkiye's disposal will be used to realise the ideal of a terror-free Türkiye.

Türkiye will not consent to the fragmentation of Syria or the disruption of its unitary structure under any guise. If a risk is perceived in this regard, necessary steps will be taken swiftly. Those who seek to exploit the conflict and the DAESH threat in Syria will have to face the enduring realities of the region. This reality is that there is no place for terrorism in the region's future. The only fate awaiting those who choose terrorism and violence is to be buried with their weapons. Türkiye has repeatedly demonstrated its unwavering determination to protect its survival and security.

***“Our sole aim is to ensure that peace, tranquillity, and stability are strongly established in every inch of our region, starting from Syria. For others, Syria's security and peace may be a secondary issue. But with a country with which we share a 910-kilometre border, we do not have such a luxury.”***

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Turkish officials consistently emphasise that there is no place for any form of terrorism in Türkiye and the region. Türkiye maintains a clear stance that it will not tolerate the emergence of new terrorist hotspots beyond its borders. Highlighting that those who seek to darken the region's future with terrorism will not be allowed to succeed, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated, “We will not allow new walls to be erected between us and our brothers with whom we have shared the same geography for a thousand years.”

It is underlined that no one has the right to inflict new pains, new troubles, and new dramas on the Syrian people, who have suffered all kinds of oppression for 13 years. Türkiye is determined to eliminate this organisation, which oppresses Kurds, abducts their children to send them to death, and does not allow anyone else a right to live or speak, from being a source of threat to the region. Calculations in the region should be made with these realities in mind, and those in positions of responsibility should not fall for provocations.

Terrorist organisation members must leave Syria, and other cadres must lay down their arms and join the new system. If the PKK/YPG terrorist organisation does not take these warnings seriously, Türkiye will take necessary actions. Türkiye has the power, capacity, and capability to do so. Türkiye is determined to continue its fight against terrorism with precision operations targeting separatist terrorist elements in Syria, without harming civilians.



“Director of the National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) İbrahim Kalın meets the new administration’s leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, in the Syrian capital, Damascus.”

“Director of Türkiye’s National Intelligence Organisation (MİT) İbrahim Kalın and the new administration’s leader Ahmed al-Sharaa met in the Syrian capital Damascus. Director of MİT İbrahim Kalın had also paid a visit to Damascus in December. Kalın prayed at the historic Umayyad Mosque and was spotted in a vehicle operated by Al-Shaara, the leader of the new government in Damascus, to which the public paid close attention.



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made statements following the Cabinet Meeting held at the Presidential Complex.

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*“I would like to particularly emphasise the following point: The preservation of Syria’s territorial integrity and unitary structure under all circumstances is Türkiye’s unchanging principle, and we will definitely not take a step back from this. There is no place for any terrorist organisation, including DAESH and PKK, in the future of Syria and our region. The PKK and its affiliates will either dismantle themselves or be dismantled.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan  
President of the Republic of Türkiye*

***“We will maintain our uncompromising stance against attacks targeting territorial integrity. Whoever is competing to seize an advantage amid the chaos will find not only the Syrian people but also our nation standing against them. We are determined to crush the heads of terrorist organisations that threaten the survival of both countries, especially DAESH and PKK.”***

Western countries bring up the issue of combating DAESH to legitimise the presence of PKK/YPG in the region. During the fight against DAESH, foreigners captured have not been accepted back by European countries; therefore, PKK tries to legitimise its presence in the region under the pretext of providing prison services to the U.S. and other Western states.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Turkish authorities emphasise that DAESH is a source of threat that needs to be eradicated not only for Western countries but also for Syria, Iraq, and Türkiye, underlining that Türkiye has been the only NATO ally to fight face-to-face with this brutal organisation over the past 13 years. No one has the right to lecture Türkiye on combating terrorist organisations or to set boundaries based on this issue. Türkiye has defeated the DAESH terrorist organisation, for which attempts to reactive have been undertaken as a tool in regional plans.

It is evident that the new administration in Syria shares Türkiye’s stance on the DAESH terrorist organisation. Joint efforts have been made against DAESH in the region over time. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hakan Fidan, stated that the new Syrian government is ready to take responsibility for controlling DAESH members. Many countries and actors, including Türkiye, have fought against DAESH. Using this as an excuse to protect PKK/YPG in the international arena is wrong.



## 5.2. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Vision and Policies

### PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOĞAN'S VISION



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made statements following the Cabinet Meeting held at the Presidential Complex.

*“Dear Syrian Brothers and Sisters;*

*Türkiye and the Turkish nation are by your side today, as they were yesterday and will be tomorrow. Despite all hardships, you wrote an epic with your blood, your lives, your determination, and your resilience. You never bowed to oppression and oppressors. Even in the most challenging times, you did not fall into despair. From the very first day, you always said, ‘Allah is great,’ you said, ‘He is the Most Merciful and Compassionate,’ you said, ‘He is the Lord of all worlds.’ You trusted only in Him, and sought help only from Him. You stood up again, stronger than ever. Thus, you signed a magnificent heroic story that will be passed down with pride from generation to generation.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Cumhurbaşkanı*

***“As Syria’s neighbour and brother, we are the country that has best understood, analysed, and examined the new process. With the belief that ‘the right wall will not collapse,’ we have always been on the right side of history since the very beginning of the Syrian crisis.”***

With the control of Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and finally Damascus shifting to the opposition as of December 8, a new era has begun in the civil war in neighbouring Syria, which has been ongoing for 13 years. The Baath regime, which had survived through bloodshed, oppression, coercion, and tyranny for 61 years, has completely collapsed in Syria. As a result of these events, the Assad regime left behind a massive wreck filled with massacres and destruction before leaving Syria. During this process, the Assad regime maintained its anti-Türkiye stance, rejecting Türkiye’s calls for resolving the conflict through dialogue. The Assad regime left behind a country where nearly one million people were killed, 12 million people were forced to migrate, and cities were turned into ruins.

The horrific images and tragic human stories emerging from Syrian prisons reveal why the Syrian people had to leave their homes, why they did not trust the so-called amnesty declarations of the regime, and why they were not eager to return to their country. The horrific images from Sednaya Prison have shown the world the inhumane mindset that has ruled Syria for years. Mass graves are being discovered every day in different cities of the country, and new evidence of the Baath regime’s oppression continues to emerge. In addition to the human losses, it is estimated that the damage caused by 13 years of massacre policies has exceeded 500 billion dollars.

From the very first day of the Syrian conflict, Türkiye has fulfilled the requirements of the law of neighbourhood and its status as a great state; it has always defended justice, fairness, and the establishment of an inclusive system. When the massacres began, Türkiye opened both its doors and hearts wide to its Syrian brothers and sisters. In an environment where everyone turned their backs on the Syrian people and their legitimate demands, and abandoned the opposition, Türkiye never turned its back on the oppressed Syrian people, maintaining its humanitarian and moral stance despite all national and international pressures. Throughout the process, Türkiye intervened in situations where the basic needs and demands of the Syrian people were ignored and tried to mobilise the international community.

The humanitarian support provided by the Turkish people and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to the Syrian people has kept the legitimate demands of the Syrian people alive, giving moral support to the opposition even in the most challenging times. Despite the oppression and injustices by global and regional actors, Türkiye has maintained its principled stance, rejecting the recognition of the Assad regime as a legitimate actor without any reforms or consequences. While continuing to support the opposition, Türkiye has also called on the Assad regime for a political solution.

Despite the regime's ongoing hostile attitude, Türkiye has consistently advocated for the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and unitary structure under all circumstances. Under the leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Türkiye has never hesitated to raise its voice against injustice, unlawfulness, and oppression. However, it has never turned this stance into open hostility or blind animosity.



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made statements following the Cabinet Meeting held at the Presidential Complex.

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*“We have repeatedly expressed this from the very beginning: Our sensitivity regarding Syria has never been based on self-interest. We have always approached this issue from a perspective of conscience, with a view of compassion, and acted with humanitarian considerations. Today, we stand firmly in the same place. Let me repeat; the Syrian people are our brothers and sisters. They are our beloved friends, with all their communities and faith groups. The tombs, bridges, fountains, inns, and mosques that adorn Syria from one end to the other are the symbols of our eternal brotherhood. Yes, borders may physically separate countries, but what power can draw borders between hearts? Who can expect us to turn our backs on our neighbours with whom we have lived together for centuries, with whom we share a 910-kilometre border? If one half of our heart is in Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa, the other half is in Afrin, Aleppo, Hama, Homs, and Damascus.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan participated in the Administrators' Day Program and delivered a speech

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*“Just as we have sincerely hosted our Syrian brothers and sisters for 13 years, we will continue to act with the same sensitivity in the upcoming period. We will manage voluntary, safe, and orderly returns with an approach that befits us, our history, our faith, and our culture. We will not engage in approaches that harm our economy, trade, production, and 13-year humanitarian policy.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*

***“I firmly believe that the strong winds of change sweeping across Syria will bring positive outcomes for the Syrian people, especially for the displaced. We hope that as Syria moves towards stability, voluntary, safe, dignified, and orderly returns will increasingly take place. It is my belief and my heartfelt prayer that the 13-year-long longing of our Syrian brothers and sisters for their homeland will finally come to an end.”***

With the end of the Baath regime, the doors to peace and security in Syria have been opened. The legitimacy of Türkiye’s unwavering humanitarian policy, which it has pursued for 13 years, has now been affirmed. Throughout this period, Türkiye has not let down either its own citizens or its Syrian brothers and sisters. As peace takes root in Syria, we expect the number of voluntary returns to rise over time. Guided by the principle that ‘every person takes root in their homeland and naturally wishes to live there,’ Türkiye has reiterated—through President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other state authorities—that every possible facilitation will be provided to Syrians who voluntarily wish to return to their country. Enabling Syrians to return home in peace is not only a humanitarian duty but also a strategic priority for regional stability.

While implementing this policy, the Turkish state and government have adopted a zero-tolerance approach to ensure that no one is forcibly sent back and to prevent anyone from tarnishing Türkiye’s stance, which it has upheld to this day, due to field-related shortcomings, intentional acts, or mistakes. The return process will be managed in a manner befitting Türkiye’s history, faith, and cultural values. Those who long for their homeland and wish to return will be supported, while doors will remain open to Syrians who contribute economically, socially, and culturally to Türkiye. Every step taken in this process will be guided by the dual objective of safeguarding both the rights of Syrians and the interests of the Turkish nation.”



“President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan presided over the Cabinet Meeting held at Çankaya Presidential Palace and made statements following the meeting.”

*“Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*Remember, ‘Men sabera zafera’—he who is patient triumphs. You are the true owners of this glorious victory, which has grown through perseverance after every setback. I greet you with respect on behalf of our country and nation, and I hope that your victory will be auspicious. Just as we have never left you alone in your struggle for freedom and justice, we will stand by you with all our resources in your struggle for development. We will stand united, overcoming hardships and challenges together. I want you to know that we are fully prepared to do whatever it takes to help Syria attain lasting peace, stability, and security. Today, once again, I remember with mercy the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Syria’s freedom since the Hama massacre. I send my heartfelt greetings to all my brothers and sisters, who shed tears of joy, offer prayers, bow in gratitude, and experience the happiness of reuniting with their homes, families, and loved ones in the cities of Syria that have been liberated from oppression.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*

*“My Esteemed Nation, the final weeks of 2024 have sparked the dawn of a new era in Syria, a country with which we share deep-rooted historical, human, and neighbourly ties. We will provide all necessary support to ensure that this new era opens the door to lasting peace, tranquillity, stability, and economic prosperity in Syria.”*

While the war against the Assad regime has been won, the challenges in Syria are far from over. Syrian society and the country’s new administration now face numerous trials, with the foremost being the reconstruction and recovery of the nation. Officials visiting Syria, including those from Türkiye, have reported that the situation on the ground is far worse than anticipated. To rebuild Syria, it is essential to comprehensively rehabilitate its physical infrastructure, as well as its economic and social systems. Long-term strategies—such as economic development projects, the establishment of health and education infrastructures, and the revitalization of agriculture and industry—are indispensable to this process.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has highlighted that, according to United Nations reports, the total cost of the destruction caused by Assad’s tyranny and the war in Syria approaches \$500 billion. He emphasised that it is impossible for war-torn Syria to bear such a burden alone without the support of the international community. President Erdoğan stated, “The Arab and Islamic world should spearhead the reconstruction of Syria and set an example for other nations. Just as we have never left our Syrian brothers and sisters alone for 13 years, we will continue to stand by them with all our capacity.”

It is clear that, alongside the support of the Arab and Islamic world, Syria will also need time to recover. The increased contribution of the international community is crucial to this process. Türkiye is shaping its future plans with these realities in mind.

*“Our hope is that the new administration will continue on its path with an inclusive approach that encompasses and embraces all segments of the Syrian society. As Türkiye, we will continue to stand by the Syrian people in this new era. We will provide all necessary support to our Syrian brothers and sisters in every area where they need assistance.”*

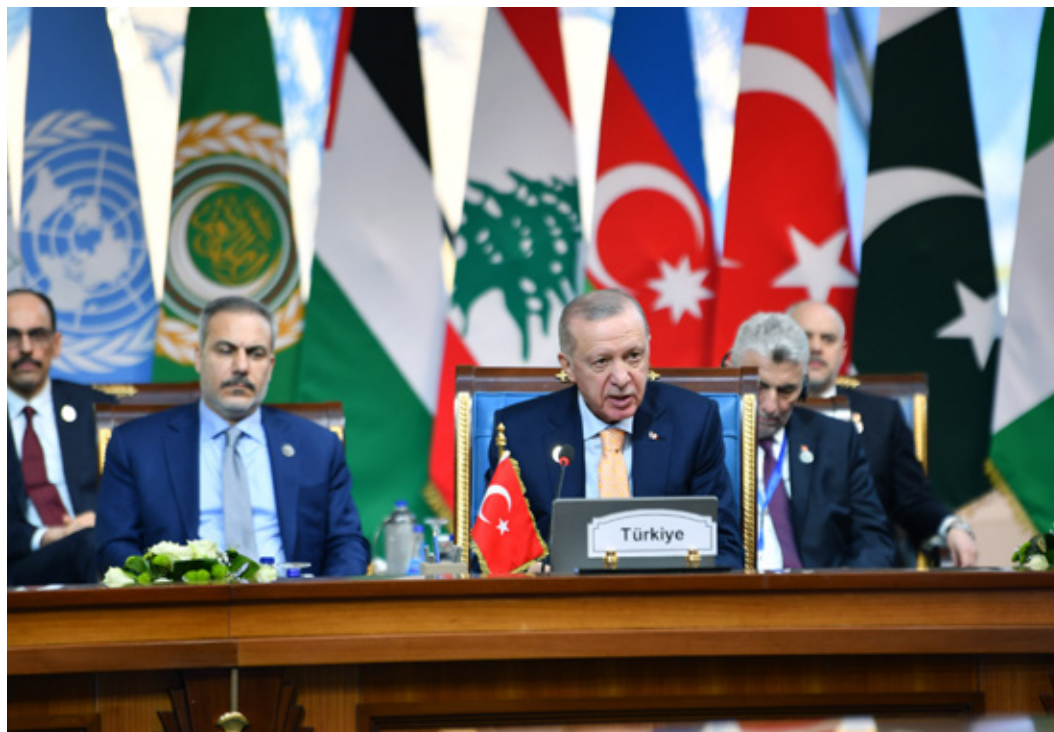
With the fall of the Assad regime on December 8, the first phase of the Syrian revolution has been completed. The next phase of the revolution will focus on establishing a participatory political system as demanded by the Syrian people, ensuring stability through a transitional period, and restoring Syria’s territorial integrity and national unity. In the new era, it is crucial to build an inclusive political structure capable of preventing potential vulnerabilities. The emerging situation necessitates that all stakeholders work together to rebuild the new Syria. For stability to take root in Syria, it is essential to establish a new political system grounded in strong foundations and societal legitimacy.

The future of Syria is expected to take shape around the founding will demonstrated by the new administration. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has stated that relations with Syria will be conducted based on the principle of mutual respect and that Türkiye will fulfil all its responsibilities, as a requirement of neighbourly relations, to safeguard Syria's territorial integrity and political unity.

Türkiye has full confidence that the Syrian people will restore their country in this new era with a profound sense of unity and solidarity. It has become evident that Syria's other neighbours must also recognise that a stable Syria is a source of stability and security for the entire region. President Erdoğan has emphasised that as Syria achieves peace, it will contribute to a greater sense of security for everyone in the region. He has called for collective support for the Syrian people in their recovery and capacity-building efforts, noting that the Syrian people expect similar support from the Arab world and the broader Islamic community.



"Director of the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) İbrahim Kalın meets the new administration's leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, in the Syrian capital, Damascus."



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the 11th Developing-8 (D-8) Summit held in Cairo, the capital of Egypt.

*“We are closely following the recent developments in Syria through a perspective that prioritises the Syrian people’s interests. The Syrian people need unity, solidarity, reconciliation, and to revive their war-torn country swiftly. In this difficult period, we work to contribute to the establishment of stability in Syria. We emphasise at every opportunity the importance we attach to the restoration of Syria’s territorial integrity and unity. Our sincerest expectation is the reconstruction of a terror-free Syria where all ethnic groups live side by side in peace. I believe that we, as the D-8 members, should stand with our Syrian brothers and sisters in this uphill struggle they are waging.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan attended the Administrators' Day Program and delivered a speech.

*“First, we promptly sent our Head of the National Intelligence Organization (MİT), followed by our Minister of Foreign Affairs to Damascus. We established the operations of our embassy without delay. Our Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) conducted inspections in facilities associated with torture, particularly in Sednaya Prison. Our ministries, institutions, municipalities, and civil society organizations are intensively preparing within their respective fields. Soon, we will inaugurate our Consulate General in Aleppo. We will support Syria in every area where assistance is needed—from energy and transportation to urban development, education, health, security, and trade. We will contribute to the new administration to help Syria recover, strengthen its institutional capacity, and enable the state to resume its fundamental functions effectively.”*

*Recep Tayyip Erdoğan*

*President of the Republic of Türkiye*



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan and the leader of Syria's new administration, Ahmed al-Shara, enjoyed tea together while overlooking the view of Damascus from Mount Qasioun in Syria.

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Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) teams continue search and rescue operations for individuals believed to be trapped in Sednaya Prison, the torture centre of the ousted leader Bashar al-Assad, located in the capital city of Damascus

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The building of the Turkish Embassy in Damascus, the capital of Syria, where the Baath regime and the Assad family's rule have been overthrown.

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The Turkish flag was hoisted at the Turkish Embassy in Damascus, marking the resumption of embassy operations after a 12-year interruption.

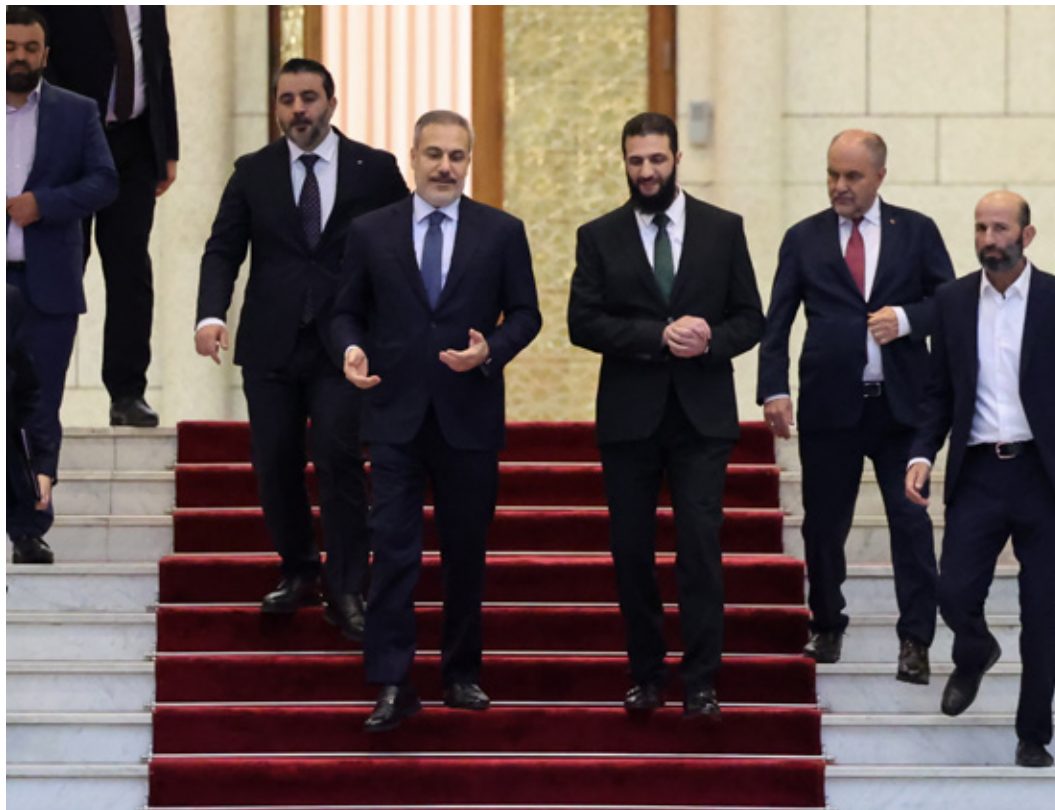
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## PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'S POLICIES

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, during the Cabinet meeting on December 23, instructed cabinet members to undertake initiatives in Syria to address the needs within their respective areas of responsibility. In this context, each ministry will provide support within its domain to help restore the functionality of public institutions and organisations in Syria and to reestablish the state system.

### Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye

In the new period, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues its diplomatic engagements to ensure both the swift normalization of Syria—preserving its territorial integrity and clearing it of terrorism—and to secure international support during the reconstruction process. As part of this process, Türkiye has reactivated its Embassy in Damascus. Additionally, plans are underway to open a Consulate General in Aleppo in the near future.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan spoke at a joint press conference following his meeting with Ahmed al-Shara, the leader of Syria's new administration, in the Syrian capital, Damascus.

*“Hopefully, brighter days and a promising future await our Syrian brothers and sisters. We are not only supporting Syria’s new administration but also calling on the international community to provide assistance to Syria. We are working towards lifting sanctions and rebuilding Syria’s infrastructure. We hope that once Syria’s economy recovers, millions of our refugee brothers and sisters, who are scattered across the world, will return to their homeland, reunite with their country, and their longing will come to an end. Hopefully, as Syria becomes wealthier, safer, and more stable, both Türkiye and our entire region will benefit from this.”*

*Hakan Fidan*

*Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Türkiye*

### **Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Türkiye**

Plans are underway to establish Migration Management offices within the Embassy in Damascus and the Consulate General in Aleppo. Through these offices, the records, identification details, and other official documents of Syrians residing in Türkiye will be shared with relevant authorities in Syria when necessary. After the establishment of Syria’s Ministry of Interior, Türkiye will provide support in essential areas such as civil registration, security, and passport issuance. Assistance will also be extended through the provision of technical equipment and knowledge sharing with Syrian officials. Aid will continue to be delivered to the region under the coordination of AFAD, and new concrete block houses will be added to those already completed as part of AFAD’s projects.

In 2025, the “Pioneer Migrant” program is set to be launched to facilitate the preparations for Syrians who wish to return to their country. As part of this program, one family member will be allowed to cross the border up to three times within six months. To ensure the safe, orderly, and peaceful return of Syrians, two out of six border gates will be designated for this purpose. Staffing at these border gates will be increased, and 24/7 operations will be implemented to provide continuous services. Syrians who wish to return voluntarily will be able to schedule appointments through the centralized appointment system on the website of the Directorate General of Migration Management. On the same day, they will be able to obtain the necessary documents, such as travel permits.

### **Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Türkiye**

Procedures related to personal belongings and household items of Syrians returning to Syria will be streamlined through a “Simplified Exit Form.” Facilitations will be provided

for vehicles with license plates registered by notaries, brought from their home country by individuals holding temporary protection status from Syria. Within this framework, in cases where individuals are making a permanent departure along with their vehicle, a document issued by the relevant notary confirming the closure of the vehicle's registration must be submitted to the customs authority. Upon verification of the consistency of the vehicle's documents, the necessary procedures will be completed in the Vehicle Tracking System, the vehicle's registration will be officially closed, and the departure process will be carried out promptly.

If no record of the vehicle in question is found, the vehicle will be registered in the relevant system, and exit permission will be granted upon submission of a notary-issued document confirming the closure of its registration and verification of the consistency of its documents. For the departure of locally registered vehicles acquired by Syrian citizens in Türkiye, a "Simplified Exit Form" will be issued upon the submission of a notary-issued document confirming the closure of the vehicle's registration to the customs authority, in accordance with the provisions of the "Law on the Sale of Second-Hand Vehicles to Foreigners".

Business relocation procedures for businesses established in Türkiye by Syrians will be completed through a Verbal Declaration Form as per the Customs Regulations. For Syrian citizens carrying personal jewellery items made of precious metals and stones valued over \$15,000 (not intended for commercial use), the requirement to provide proof of declaration upon entry or purchase in Türkiye will be waived until December 31, 2025. Additionally, for the export of Turkish currency exceeding 25,000 TRY or foreign currency exceeding 10,000 EUR (or its equivalent), it will be sufficient to submit a "Cash Declaration Form" to customs authorities.

### **Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure of the Republic of Türkiye**

The General Directorate of State Airports Authority plans to launch projects focused on the restoration of Damascus International Airport. Efforts will also be undertaken to reestablish railway connections up to Damascus. Ongoing work on the M4 and M5 highways, including bridge repairs, will continue. Deficiencies in communication infrastructure will be identified, and support will be provided to address these needs. Additionally, initiatives will be undertaken to revitalize Syria's ports, and technical assistance will be provided for Syria to regain the capability to print its own currency.

### **Ministry of National Education of the Republic of Türkiye**

In coordination with Local Councils in northern Syria, efforts will continue to support educational activities and improve students' access to education. This includes repairing damaged schools, constructing new school buildings, equipping classrooms, developing curricula, and producing and distributing textbooks with the support of philanthropic organisations.

The Ministry will contribute to updating educational curricula in line with scientific and technological developments, students' needs, and the aspirations of the Syrian people. Efforts will also focus on developing vocational education to support economic growth and improve living standards, including the establishment of vocational schools. Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education plans to engage in comprehensive cooperation to support the professional development of teachers and administrators. It also aims to provide psychosocial support to families and children to ease the transition back to school life.

#### **Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Türkiye**

If requested by the Syrian administration, necessary support will be provided in military training and cooperation. Collaboration will be established with the new Syrian administration in the fight against terrorism.

#### **Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye**

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA) is working on resuming its activities in Syria. TİKA is also supporting restoration efforts in the country. As part of this support, there is a plan to begin conservation and landscaping work at the cemetery located in the courtyard of the Ibn Arabi Mosque in Damascus.

#### **Ministry of Health of the Republic of Türkiye**

Support will be provided for the reconstruction of the healthcare system, rehabilitation, medical equipment, and pharmaceuticals. Within this framework, the Turkish Red Crescent Damascus Delegation has been established at the headquarters of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) in the capital, Damascus.

#### **Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources of the Republic of Türkiye**

The Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources will assess Syria's energy and electricity infrastructure and conduct studies on electricity supply.

#### **Ministry of Family and Social Services of the Republic of Türkiye**

The Ministry of Family and Social Services will provide psychosocial support for women and children.

#### **Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities**

The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities has expressed its intention to participate in efforts to support the reconstruction of the state in Syria, as well as the country's infrastructure, superstructure, and human resources, under the directive

of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. More than 16,000 Syrian graduates from Turkish universities are expected to take on key roles in rebuilding the new Syria, contributing to the revitalisation of institutions through their expertise. The Presidency stated that it would identify Syrians who graduated from universities in Türkiye as part of its Türkiye Alumni Program, categorise them by their fields of study, and share its views on utilising these graduates at the highest level with the relevant authorities. In the new era of Syria, Esaad Hasan Sheybani, a graduate of Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, has been appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Interim Government in Syria, while Azzam Garib, a graduate of Bingöl University Faculty of Theology, has been appointed as the Governor of Aleppo.

### **Council of Higher Education (YÖK)**

Türkiye aims to support the development and advancement of universities in Syria. Following mutual consultations, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) has expressed its readiness to share Türkiye's higher education experience with the Syrian administration. The Council has indicated that discussions regarding this matter are still in progress.

### **5.3. Türkiye's Leading Role in the Voluntary Return of Syrians Under Temporary Protection**

Following the fall of the Assad regime, the return of Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye is one of the significant issues that has often captured public attention. The process of voluntary, safe, and dignified return refers to the return of Syrians under temporary protection and other foreign nationals to their country of citizenship, previous place of residence, or a legally recognised location based on their own free will. This process can only be achieved if individuals make their choices freely, without any form of coercion.

In line with this, Türkiye launched the "Voluntary, Safe and Dignified Return Project" in 2023 to support the voluntary return of Syrians under temporary protection. This project is conducted in collaboration with the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Presidency of Migration Management. In the aftermath of the war, essential housing, infrastructure, and social living areas are being developed as part of the project to facilitate the secure return of refugees.

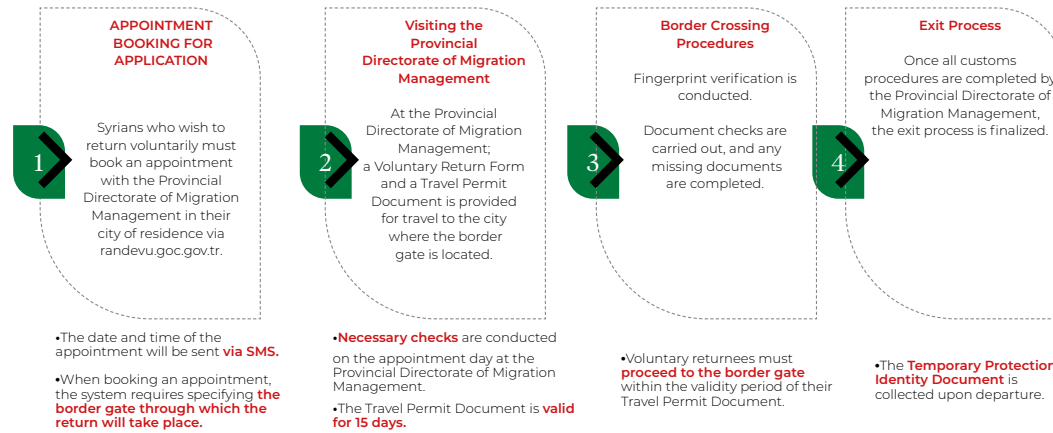
As part of this initiative, nine of the 13 designated residential zones in operational areas secured by the Turkish Armed Forces have received approval, while project efforts are ongoing at three additional zones. The construction of 240,000 independent housing units, tailored to the needs of Syrian families, aims to facilitate the return of one million Syrians under temporary protection.



The Groundbreaking Ceremony of the Voluntary, Safe, and Dignified Return Project in Jarabulus, Syria (2023)

As of December 8, 2024, the return procedures for Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye are being conducted in alignment with international law, ensuring that the process adheres to the principles of voluntariness, safety, dignity, and orderliness. As in previous years, Türkiye maintains a sensitive approach to ensuring that individuals under temporary or international protection are not forcibly returned to their countries of origin. Special emphasis is placed on guaranteeing that returnees enjoy a dignified standard of living and that this process is concluded in a lasting manner. Additionally, the reintegration of returnees into society is carefully monitored.

### Voluntary, Safe and Dignified Return



#### Voluntary Return Process

Syrians under temporary protection who wish to return voluntarily initiate the process by submitting a “Voluntary Return Request Form” issued by the governorate of their province of residence. The return procedures of Syrians under temporary protection are conducted under the supervision of international organisations and non-governmental organisations. To ensure the process is independently monitored, it proceeds with the participation of officials from the Presidency of Migration Management, representatives from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), or Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) officials. In the absence of these representatives, designated non-governmental organisation representatives and relevant provincial authorities oversee the process.

A “Travel Permit Document” is issued to individuals whose return procedures have been completed, enabling their journey to border provinces. Individuals directed to border crossings return to their home country after completing required inspections and returning their temporary protection identity documents. Furthermore, their temporary protection status is concluded by being updated to “Voluntary Return” in the migration registration system “GöçNet”. Türkiye has implemented the necessary arrangements at Gaziantep Karkamış, Şanlıurfa Akçakale, Kilis Öncüpınar, Hatay Zeytinalı, Cilvegözü, and Yayladağı border crossings to ensure that individuals can complete this process voluntarily.

Following the fall of the Assad regime, Türkiye has introduced the comprehensive measures and policies mentioned above to facilitate the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of Syrians under temporary protection. Officials from the Ministry of Interior have emphasised that the return process is conducted in a humane, conscientious, and internationally lawful manner. They have also highlighted that numerous new initiatives have been undertaken to enable the voluntary return of displaced Syrians within Türkiye and internally displaced persons inside Syria.

As a result of Türkiye's humanitarian policies and sensitive management, the number of Syrians voluntarily returning surpassed 25,000 as of December 2024. To accommodate this increase, border crossings began operating 24/7, and the daily processing capacity was expanded from 3,020 to 19,000. By January 12, 2025, a total of 52,622 Syrians returned to their country in a voluntary, safe, and dignified manner. Since 2017, the total number of Syrians who have returned via this process has reached 792,625.



The return of Syrians in Türkiye from the Kilis border crossing is ongoing.

Currently, there are 2 million 920 thousand Syrians under temporary protection in Türkiye, with 61% of them from Aleppo. The number of people from Aleppo is 1 million 239 thousand, while 187,000 people are from Idlib, 106,000 from Deir ez-Zor, 102,000 from Hama, and approximately 95,000 from Hasakah.

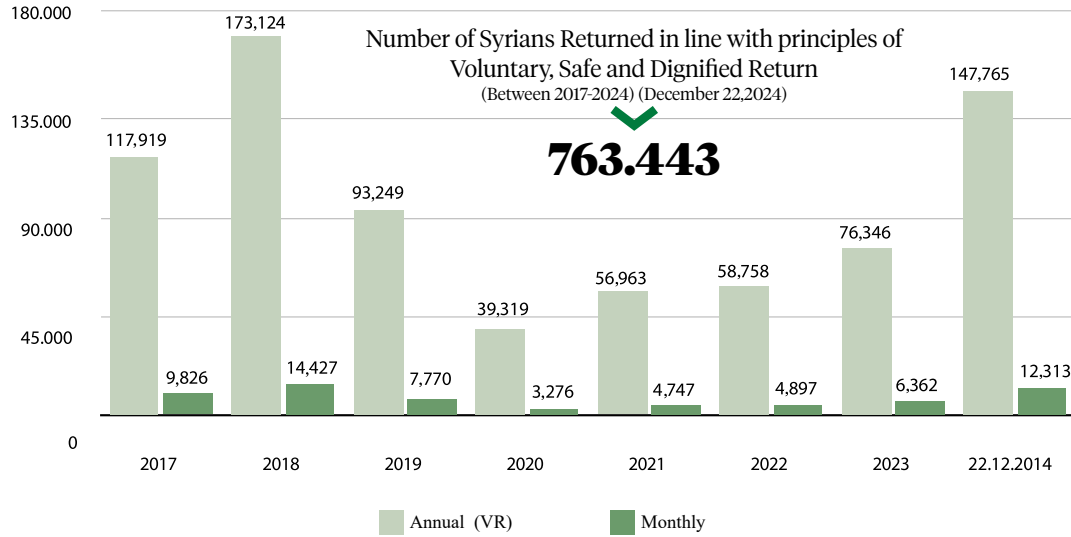
The number of Syrian children born in Türkiye is approximately 875,000, making up 30% of those under temporary protection. According to data released by the Ministry of Interior, the demographic information of Syrians in Türkiye has been carefully documented, ensuring that voluntary returns are organised with full awareness of these details. The return process has been organised to ensure that the education of Syrian students under temporary protection in Türkiye remains uninterrupted.



The return of Syrians from the border gates in Hatay to their homeland is ongoing.

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### Annual Voluntary Return (VR)



#### Annual Voluntary Return by Years

### Daily Voluntary Return

November 25 – December 8 Total (Week)

3,433 individuals / 572 Families

December 9 – 23 Total (2 Weeks)

23,440 individuals / 4,136 Families

The daily voluntary return rate increased by approximately 6.8 times.

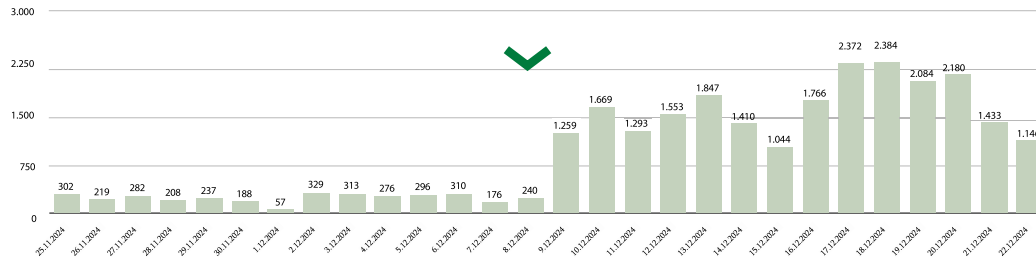
Daily Average

**245 Individuals/Families**

Daily Average

**1,674 Individuals / 4,136 Families**

Number of Syrians Returning in line with the principles of Voluntary, Safe, and Dignified Return on a Daily Basis



#### Return by Days

A centralised appointment system has been established to facilitate voluntary return processes in a more organised manner. Syrians are required to schedule appointments and submit their applications via the Migration Management Directorate's website. Following the appointment process, fingerprint verification takes place, UYAP records are reviewed, and an interview is conducted with a representative from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Turkish Red Crescent or the Provincial Human Rights Board to ensure the return is voluntary. After filling out the voluntary return form, a Travel Permit valid for 15 days is issued to the individuals preparing for their return. Upon arriving at the border gate, customs checks are conducted, and temporary protection identity documents are returned, allowing them to return to their home country.

#### Turkish Provinces Syrians Departed From and Their Destinations in Syria

Turkish Provinces Departed From				Destinations in Syria			
1	GAZİANTEP	3,378	%14.4	1	ALEPPO	1,392	%48.6
2	HATAY	3,206	%13.7	2	IDLIB	7,356	%31.4
3	İSTANBUL	2,438	%10.4	3	LATTAKIA	1,539	%6.6
4	MERSİN	1,746	%7.4	4	DAMASCUS	905	%3.9
5	KAYSERİ	1,398	%5.9	5	HAMA	823	%3.5
6	ŞANLIURFA	1,108	%4.7	6	HOMS	612	%2.6
7	ADANA	1,090	%4.6	7	RAKKA	273	%1.2
8	KONYA	1,053	%4.5	8	DEİR EZ-ZOR	215	%0.9
9	BURSA	1,022	%4.4	9	HASEKE	204	%0.9
10	KİLİS	691	%2.9	10	TARTUS	55	%0.2
11	ANKARA	618	%2.6	11	DERA	46	%0.2
12	KAHRAMANMARAŞ	554	%2.4	12	ŞAM KIRSALI	15	%0.06
13	OSMANİYE	473	%2.0	13	KUNEYTİRE	5	%0.02
14	KOCAELİ	450	%1.9				
15	İZMİR	307	%1.3				
	OTHER	3,908	%16.6				

#### Total

**23.440**

A total of 23,440 Syrians have returned to their homeland.

#### Provinces of Departure and Destinations of Syrians under Temporary Protection Status

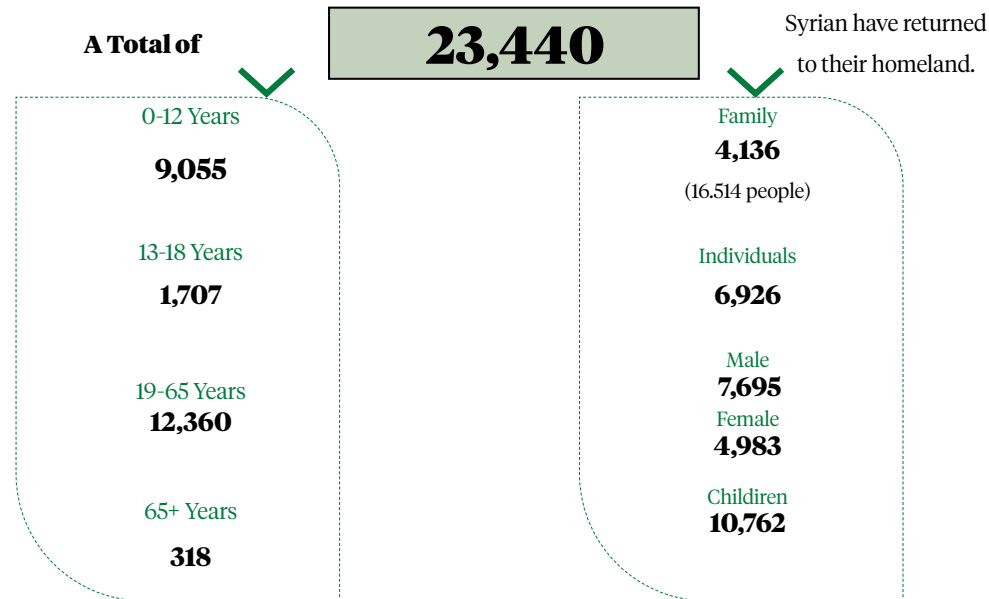
### The Number of Syrians Voluntarily Returning by Year (2025)

Year	Annual Return (Number of Returnees)	Monthly Average (Number of Returnees)
2017	117,919	9,826
2018	173,124	14,427
2019	93,249	7,770
2020	39,319	3,276
2021	56,963	4,747
2022	58,758	4,897
2023	76,346	6,362
2024	147,765	12,313
Total	763,443	
2025 (as of January 12)	52,622	

Türkiye has also facilitated the transportation of the items Syrians need for their return. In addition to household and workplace items, arrangements have been made for Syrians to take their vehicles with them. By registering the vehicles with a notary, they have been authorised for use in Syria, ensuring ease in both transportation and usage. It has been decided that Migration Management offices in Damascus and Aleppo should be established to ensure that documents such as the identity information of children born in Türkiye and marriage and divorce records are valid in Syria. These offices will make the necessary arrangements to meet Syrians' needs for documentation.

To help families prepare for their return, one member of each family has been granted three entry-exit rights between January 1 and July 1, 2025. This practice allows families to visit their homes and see the living conditions in Syria, enabling them to make more informed decisions about their return. To ensure the returns are orderly, two of the six border gates have been authorised for this process to ensure that the procedures continue smoothly.

## Demographic December 8-23, 2024 Characteristics



Demographic Characteristics of Syrians Who Returned to Their Homeland between December 8-23, 2024

The Ministry of Interior plans to open Migration Management offices at Türkiye's embassies and consulates in Damascus and Aleppo to facilitate official procedures for Syrians in Türkiye. Additionally, with the introduction of the "pioneer returnees" program on January 1, 2025, the return process for Syrians is being organised, and services are provided at border gates 24/7 to ensure the seamless execution of this initiative. In this context, between January 1-8, 2025, 1,766 pioneer returnees crossed into Syrian territory with the right to enter and exit three times within six months.

These initiatives are an important indicator of Türkiye's humanitarian and conscientious migration policy, which aims to ensure the voluntary, safe and orderly return of Syrians. A comprehensive approach has been adopted to ensure the peaceful progress of the process in both Türkiye and Syria.

Türkiye continues to develop comprehensive policies at both national and international levels to ensure the safe and voluntary return of Syrians under temporary protection to their home countries. In a statement made on December 9, 2024, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan emphasised Türkiye's commitment to facilitating the return of Syrian refugees and supporting the reconstruction of Syria. Minister Fidan highlighted the significance of establishing an inclusive new Syrian administration, emphasising Türkiye's willingness to assist in Syria's reconstruction in collaboration with regional

actors and international stakeholders while envisioning a harmonious Syria where diverse ethnic and religious groups coexist peacefully.

Türkiye seeks to enhance the effectiveness of managing voluntary returns and to conduct voluntary returns in alignment with humanitarian principles through a range of facilitative measures and initiatives it has put in place. The initiatives implemented under the coordination of the Ministry of Interior are designed to alleviate migration pressure per international standards and guarantee that returns occur in a peaceful setting. In this process, Türkiye's support for the reconstruction efforts in Syria plays a significant role in the long-term success of the returns.

President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan highlighted in his statement following the Presidential Cabinet meeting on December 10, 2024, the importance of the voluntary and safe return of Syrians under temporary protection, stressing that the voluntary return process Türkiye is implementing for Syrians will be managed in a way that aligns with humanitarian values, cultural richness, and the tradition of hospitality.

President Erdoğan emphasised that tangible measures have been taken to facilitate the voluntary return of Syrian refugees, marking a continuation of Türkiye's 13 years of committed efforts in hosting Syrians.



President Erdoğan noted that the Syrian population, which peaked at 3.7 million, has now decreased to 2.9 million in Türkiye and emphasised that Türkiye opened its doors to Syrians, embracing the dynamics between a “host and migrant”. He described the hospitality displayed by the Turkish people as a success that would be inscribed in gold letters in the annals of humanity, referring to it as a badge of honour for the Turkish people to be carried for eternity. President Erdoğan expressed that Türkiye navigated this challenging period with dignity, highlighting that the nation has successfully met its historical and moral obligations.

President Erdoğan pointed to the transformative process affecting Syria and expressed his belief that this transition will bring positive results, especially for the Syrians living in Türkiye and all the people of Syria. He mentioned that with Syria’s return to stability and security, voluntary, safe, and dignified returns would accelerate. He stated that Türkiye has taken tangible steps to facilitate the return of Syrians under temporary protection to their homeland, preparing the necessary infrastructure for these returns to take place in an orderly manner.

President Erdoğan also conveyed that the 13-year-long yearning for home among Syrians is beginning to come to an end, with initial signs of this development being noted. He announced the reopening of the Yayladağı Border Gate to specifically enhance and manage border crossings, signifying a significant advancement in streamlining the return process.

President Erdoğan, in his statement, expressed his belief in this transition process and emphasised that the dignified and safe return of Syrians will mark the beginning of a positive process for both Syria and Türkiye. In this context, the highest office of the state clearly highlights Türkiye’s determination to ensure the safe return of Syrians under temporary protection to their homeland.





**CHAPTER 6**  
**THE POSITION OF TÜRKİYE**  
**IN THE INTERNATIONAL**  
**MEDIA**



## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### MIDDLE EAST LATEST: TÜRKİYE HAS NO 'SECRET AGENDA' IN SYRIA, MINISTER SAYS

*Publisher: AP*

*Date : January 11, 2025*

*Country : USA*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type : Türkiye Related Section*

Türkiye “does not have any secret agenda” in Syria and wants to construct a “new culture of cooperation,” Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said Friday.

One of Türkiye’s priorities in the upcoming year is to clear the region of terrorism, Fidan said, referring to Kurdish militants based in northeast Syria. “The extensions of the separatist group in Syria are now facing destruction and the old order is no longer going to continue,” he told a news conference in Istanbul.

Fidan also criticized the United States’ support for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, as the U.S. seeks to prevent a revival of the DEASH.

“This kills the spirit of alliance and solidarity,” Fidan said. He said Türkiye is “not going to shy away from taking the necessary steps” in terms of military action.

Türkiye views the SDF as an extension of the banned PKK, which is listed as a terror organization by Türkiye and other states.

Referring to Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin’s comments that U.S. troops should stay in Syria, Fidan dismissed the views of the outgoing U.S. administration. “This is the problem of the new government and the old government does not have a say in this,” he said.

The SDF is currently involved in fighting the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army.

Fidan also backed suggestions for Syrian Kurds to join a new national military but said all non-Syrians fighting for the SDF \_\_ a reference to those with ties to the PKK \_\_ should leave the country.



## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### TÜRKİYE PLANS TO START MARITIME AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SYRIA

*Publisher : Bloomberg*

*Date : December 24, 2024*

*Author: Firat Kozok*

*Country : USA*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Türkiye is planning to start negotiations with Syria to delineate maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea, Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Abdulkadir Uraloğlu said.

Such a deal would allow the two countries to “increase their area of influence” in energy exploration, Uraloğlu told reporters in the capital Ankara on Tuesday.

Any future agreement will be in line with international law, he said.

A similar maritime agreement signed between Türkiye and Libya in 2019 heightened tensions between the government in Ankara and Greece over energy exploration in the Mediterranean.

Türkiye emerged as one of the key countries to assert its influence in reshaping the political landscape in Syria after the collapse of former President Bashar Al-Assad’s regime earlier this month. It has strong incentives in engaging Syria’s new rulers as Türkiye hosts about 3 million Syrian migrants while Turkish companies would be at the forefront in benefiting from postwar reconstruction.

Progress in negotiating a maritime deal would require stable political authority in Syria, Uraloğlu said.

In line with recent diplomatic outreach from other regional countries, Türkiye is offering help in rebuilding Syria. Ankara wants to collaborate in infrastructure projects, including ports, the Turkish minister said.



## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

### SYRIANS IN TÜRKİYE CHEER FALL OF ASSAD REGIME

*Publisher: The Wall Street Journal*

*Date: December 08, 2025*

*Country: USA*

*Author: Elvan Kivilcim*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Summary*

Syrians across Türkiye have taken to the streets to cheer the fall of the Assad regime, chanting “God is great,” waving flags and honking car horns. Many expressed gratitude to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has been outspoken about support of the Syrian rebels. More than 3 million Syrian refugees took shelter in Türkiye after a civil war broke out in Syria in 2011.

At a news conference after meeting with the Qatari emir in Doha, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said, “Millions of Syrians who had to leave their country can now return.” He said that it would be the Syrian people who would shape the future of their country.



**GERMANY**

## **ERDOĞAN REITERATES TURKISH SUPPORT FOR SYRIA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY**

*Publisher: Euronews*

*Date : January 07, 2025*

*Country : Germany*

*Author: David O'Sullivan*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

The Turkish president warned that Ankara would act quickly in response to any perceived threats, a reference to Kurdish groups operating in Syrian territory.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan vowed on Monday to uphold Syria's territorial integrity as he promised to continue his country's fight against PKK.

"With the epic revolution that took place in our neighbour Syria, a new era has begun both in this country and in our region," he said during a speech following his cabinet's first meeting of 2025.

Erdoğan reiterated that Türkiye supports Syria in its efforts to avoid destabilisation, and warned that Ankara would act swiftly against perceived threats.

"If we see a risk in this regard, we will take the necessary steps swiftly," he said.

Erdoğan's comments come amid a wave of Israeli airstrikes on weapons and military infrastructure in Syria.

Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes in the country since the outbreak of the country's civil war in 2011, though it rarely acknowledges them. It says its targets are Iranian-backed groups that supported Syria's ousted president, Bashar al-Assad

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**GERMANY**

## **ERDOĞAN'S ENERGY MOVE...TÜRKİYE OFFERS TO HELP SYRIA AND LEBANON WITH ELECTRICITY SUPPLY**

*Publisher: Focus-Internet*

*Date : December 30, 2024*

*Country : Germany*

*Translated in: Berlin*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Türkiye wants to help supply electricity to alleviate the energy crisis in Syria and Lebanon, according to Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar.

A group of Turkish government officials are already in Syria to examine how electricity could be supplied from Türkiye. Türkiye, which has previously backed Syria's rebels, is trying to intensify its relations with Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Sa'ar, Reuters reported. The Turkish Embassy in Sam has also reopened.

### Electricity Generation Decreased Significantly

Bayraktar said that electricity production in Syria has dropped significantly. Before the war, Syria was able to generate 8,500 megawatts of electricity, but now it is only around 3,500 megawatts. Many people in Syria rely on generators to generate electricity. "There is a great need for electricity," the minister said. The Turkish delegation is also examining how Syria can better utilize its own oil and gas resources. "Reuters" also reported that according to its own words, Türkiye wants to support Syria's stabilization and reconstruction through these measures.

### Cooperation for Reconstruction

Turkish President Erdoğan announced that Türkiye will do everything in its power to help rebuild Syria. Türkiye is already providing electricity to some areas in northern Syria.

**GERMANY****TURKISH PRESIDENT ERDOĞAN ON THE SYRIAN BORDER  
ANNOUNCES THE OPENING OF THE YAYLADAĞI BORDER  
CROSSING**

*Publisher: Deutschlandradio*

*Date : December 12, 2024*

*Country : Germany*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Civil war refugees will be able to return home voluntarily and safely. Erdoğan said after the Cabinet meeting that his country will provide all possible support for the reconstruction of the neighboring state. He added that Türkiye will not allow the formation of new terrorist groups on its borders. Türkiye has announced that it will not. With the civil war, millions of people fled Syria to Türkiye.

Federal Defense Minister Pistorius Says Germany Wants to Contribute to Stabilizing the Region After the Overthrow of Syrian Leader Assad

During his visit to Jordan, the Minister emphasized the importance of standing with those who want to see Syria on a better path. This requires patience and determination, the minister said. After more than 50 years of the Assad clan's rule, Syria must not once again become a plaything for outside powers such as Russia, Iran or Lebanon's Hezbollah militia, he said, adding that he will travel to Türkiye in January to discuss the situation in the Middle East.



## ARGENTINA

### **TÜRKİYE PLEDGES TO HEAL SYRIA'S WOUNDS, INCLUDING ALL ETHNICITIES AND RELIGIONS**

*Publisher : Infobae*

*Date : December 09, 2024*

*Country : Argentina*

*Translated in: Madrid*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Türkiye's government said on Sunday it was ready to take responsibility for "healing the wounds" in Syria, insisting that the transition process must include "all religious and ethnic groups" in the neighboring country. "Today, a new day has begun for the Syrian people, who can now determine the future of their country. Türkiye is ready to assume every responsibility to heal the wounds and ensure security, integrity and unity." Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan also wrote on X: "In the coming days, we will intensify our work on this issue with regional countries and international actors. This will enable millions of Syrians who were forced to flee their homes to return to their homeland."

"Conditions for Syrian citizens of all ethnic and religious identities to live together must be rapidly improved," Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz wrote on X. Yılmaz quoted Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as saying in a speech on Saturday that he would like to see a Syria where "citizens of different identities live together in peace, without discrimination and without violating anyone's rights." "Arabs, Turkmen, Kurds, Alawites, Sunnis, Alawites, Sunnis, Nusairis (Alawites) and Christians," the president, who has not yet appeared in public on Sunday, was quoted by Yılmaz as saying yesterday. At a press conference in Doha this morning, Fidan also spoke of an inclusive transition, but ruled out negotiations with SDF, which dominates much of northeast Syria and is dominated by the Kurdish militia YPG.

Ankara sees the YPG as an offshoot of PKK, which is also considered a terrorist organization by the European Union and the United States; Fidan insisted that YPG leaders are not Syrian, but “international terrorists for Türkiye, Iraq and Iran”. But he left the door open to negotiations and cooperation with “legitimate Kurdish parties in Syria” if they changed. “I believe that our Syrian Kurdish brothers and sisters, freed from the tutelage and oppression of terrorist organizations, will succeed in peaceful coexistence in Syria as a whole,” Yılmaz said. At the same time, pro-Turkish militias in northern Syria launched an offensive against the town of Manbij, the main SDG stronghold west of the Euphrates, and now hold most of the town, according to Turkish military sources cited by Anadolu Agency. Ankara has repeatedly demanded that the US, which backs the YPG in its fight against Daesh, remove the Kurdish militias from Manbij, to no avail, and their entry into the town was described in the Turkish press as a liberation. Thousands of Syrian refugees celebrated the fall of the Assad regime in Istanbul on Sunday.



## AZERBAIJAN

### **AZERBAIJAN AND TÜRKİYE HAVE IMPORTANT JOINT WORK ON THE NORMALIZATION OF SYRIA**

*Publisher : Baku News*

*Date: December 13, 2024*

*Country : Azerbaijan*

*Author : Deniz Nasirli*

*Translated in : Baku*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Analyses show that the Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem took a smarter political position in the geopolitical processes in Syria compared to the Armenian-Syrian-Iranian-Indian tandem. Their policy was in support of Bashar al-Assad, while the policy of Azerbaijan and Türkiye was completely opposite.

Azerbaijan and Türkiye's policy towards Syria has proven itself. What role will the Azerbaijan-Türkiye tandem play in the normalization of life in Syria from now on and what results can it bring?

Political scientist Ali Orucov, commenting on the question posed by Baku News, emphasized that the Assad regime's survival until today was only possible with the active support of Iran, Russia and Hezbollah and said, "Iran and Russia's focus on the conflict and Hezbollah's neutralization by Israel left the Assad regime defenseless. In this process, the Syrian army and generals took a passive position, refusing to fight for Assad."

Türkiye was aware of the collapse of the Assad regime and expanded its activities over time. By cooperating with the Free Syrian Army and opposition forces, it did not allow separatist elements such as the PKK/YPG, which were trying to take advantage of the complex situation and supported by the US, to strengthen and expand their sphere of influence. Türkiye's approach to the processes in Syria has been a realistic and constructive policy based on the interests and security of the Syrian people.

Therefore, all options were on the table. He even expressed his readiness to engage with Assad, who caused the tragedy of his own people, for the fate of Syria and Syrians. However, Bashar al-Assad, who backed down from this, especially under Iranian pressure, was left alone on the ground and resisted the armed opposition for 10 days before fleeing to Moscow. Syria's independence and an end to the war are in Ankara's best interests. An 822-kilometer border separates Türkiye and Syria. There are strong ties between the two nations. Since the start of the civil war against the Assad regime, around 5 million refugees have sought refuge and settled in Türkiye. Opportunistic forces have carried out extensive activities against Türkiye and terrorist organizations have become active, posing a serious threat. All this forced Ankara to take decisive action. The result is obvious. The 53-year-old Assad regime, which oppressed its own people, threw its country under the feet of Iran and Russia to protect its own power, and caused the destruction of an ancient civilization, collapsed. Syria is stepping into a new era with Türkiye's active support. The reconstruction of Syria is on the agenda. Starting with the restructuring of the state, it will be necessary to build up this destroyed country almost from scratch. This will require huge investments, vast financial resources, humanitarian, technical and other support. In addition, ensuring Syria's security is an important condition."

The political scientist continued his words as follows: "Of course, Azerbaijan, as Türkiye's strategic ally and brother, should not stay away from these processes. The phone calls between the leaders of Türkiye and Azerbaijan on this issue proved once again that the Ankara-Baku tandem can be effective not only in solving regional issues, but also in solving global problems.

I think Azerbaijan should play a big role and support the reconstruction of Syria. This is beneficial for both Azerbaijan and brotherly Türkiye. As a result of the war, Syria's oil industry has also suffered serious damage. Infrastructures were almost completely destroyed and the country was left in ruins. Azerbaijan has experience in both the oil industry and the construction sector. Why not use this experience and potential in Syria?

The Turkish-Azerbaijani tandem should not allow unfriendly foreign powers to enter Syria.

Any attempt to exploit the current situation for malicious purposes must be resolutely prevented now. As it is known, Iran, Russia, the United States and the terrorist organizations supported by them have not yet completely withdrawn from Syria, continue their provocations and will try to prevent reconstruction and reconstruction efforts, but Azerbaijan should be where Türkiye is and play an important role in preventing the actions of these forces."

**BELGIUM****ERDOĞAN SAYS TÜRKİYE AND LEBANON ARE READY TO ACT TOGETHER ON SYRIA**

*Publisher : Le Soir*

*Date: December 18, 2024*

*Country : Belgium*

*Translated in : Brussels*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Wednesday that his country and Lebanon had agreed to act together on Syria after Bashar al-Assad was ousted by Islamist rebels.

“A new era has begun in Syria. As two important neighbors of Syria, we have agreed to act together,” Erdoğan said at a joint press conference with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati.

“The stability of Syria determines the stability of the region,” Erdoğan said, emphasizing that the reconstruction of this war-torn country is a priority.

The Turkish President added the following: “This is an important period in which we must act in unity, solidarity and reconciliation.”

A coalition of rebel groups led by the Islamist Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) seized power in Syria on December 8, ousting President Bashar al-Assad, who fled to Moscow after more than 20 years of unchallenged rule.



## **BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **ERDOĞAN: THE SUN IS RISING AGAIN IN SYRIA**

*Publisher : NI*

*Date: January 4, 2025*

*Country : Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*Translated in : Sarajevo*

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said on Saturday that Türkiye has taken important steps in shaping the development of events in Syria and that “the sun is rising again” in the neighboring country.

Speaking at the AK Party’s 8th Ordinary Provincial Congress in Ordu, Erdoğan emphasized that the transformation in Syria was a major achievement of Türkiye’s regional policy.

“We did not step into Syria, but we comprehensively addressed all dimensions of its problems and brought it to this situation. The sun is rising again in Syria,” Erdoğan said.

Drawing attention to Türkiye’s proactive approach to protect its southern borders, President Erdoğan said that history is being rewritten just beyond its borders.

Erdoğan said that Türkiye’s multi-pronged strategy in Syria, instead of taking direct steps, has yielded positive results.

He criticized what he called the “orientalist” perspective of some Turkish opposition leaders who see the Middle East as a “quagmire” instead of seeing opportunities for constructive engagement.

These remarks come as Türkiye continues its efforts to shape the future of Syria, while maintaining security along its borders and supporting displaced Syrians affected by the conflict.



## **PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

### **TURKISH AUTHORITY: NEARLY 40,000 SYRIANS RETURNED HOME IN ONE MONTH**

*Publisher : Xinhua*

*Date: January 6, 2024*

*Country : China*

*Translated in : Beijing*

*Translation Type : Broad Summary*

Turkish Trade Minister Ömer Bolat noted that about 40 thousand Syrians have returned to their country from Türkiye in the last one month.

Bolat said in a statement in Hatay that the total number of Syrians returning to their country through Türkiye's border gates since December 9, 2024 has reached about 40 thousand.

According to data from the Ministry of Interior, there are approximately 2.91 million Syrian refugees in Türkiye as of December 2024.



## PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

### **NEW PHASE OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SYRIA: OPPOSITION FORCES CAPTURE DAMASCUS, ASSAD'S FATE UNCERTAIN, TÜRKİYE BECOMES THE "WINNING SIDE"**

*Publisher : CCTV*

*Date : 09 December 2024*

*Country : China*

*Translated in : Beijing*

*Translation Type : Broad Summary*

Syria, which has been in the grip of war for many years, has recently faced a new crisis. Many strategic cities, including the capital Damascus, have fallen under the control of opposition forces. The Russian Foreign Ministry has announced that President Bashar al-Assad has peacefully handed over his powers and left Syria. Speculation that Assad was killed in a plane crash has not yet been confirmed.

For years, the Assad regime had survived largely with the support of allies such as Russia, Iran and Hezbollah. However, Russia's war in Ukraine, Iran's internal problems and

Hezbollah's intense conflicts with Israel have diminished this support. While the Syrian army was weakened by the economic crisis and internal unrest, the opposition forces gained strength with new technologies and strategies.

Recent developments in Syria have created significant opportunities, especially for Türkiye. For years, Türkiye has been organising operations against Kurdish forces in northern Syria and supporting Syrian opposition groups in the process. HTS's mobilisation against Kurdish forces is seen as a development that strengthens Ankara's hand. This may increase Türkiye's influence in the Middle East and weaken the influence of actors such as Iran.

Russia's strategic bases in Syria remain critical for Moscow. Russia has indicated that it may take new military measures to prevent the loss of these bases. The United States has about 1,000 troops in northeast and south Syria and continues to support Kurdish forces. The deterioration of the situation in these regions could lead the US to increase its military presence.

The chaos in Syria also carries great risks for neighbouring countries and the world. Prolonged instability threatens regional security and could create a new wave of refugee crises and terrorist threats.



**FRANCE**

**SYRIA: NEW LEADER ANNOUNCES THAT ALL WEAPONS WILL BE PLACED UNDER “STATE CONTROL”**

*Publisher : Valeurs Actuelle*

*Date : 24 December 2024*

*Country : France*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

--On 23 December, Syria's New Islamist Leader Ahmed Al-Shara Announced That All Weapons In The Country Would Be Under State Control --

According to Le Parisien, Syria's new leader Ahmed al-Shara has announced that all weapons in the country will be placed under state control. The announcement came during a visit to Damascus by Türkiye's foreign minister, who called for the removal of sanctions against Syria. The leader of the radical Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which dominated the coalition that ousted Bashar al-Assad in early December, said consultations would be held with defence and army officials to determine a new military structure. He added that “armed groups will start announcing their dissolution and joining the army”.

Hakan Fidan said US President-elect Donald Trump knew that he should not continue to support Kurdish fighters at the expense of the security needs of NATO ally Türkiye. “When you look at America's interests and assess whether Türkiye or a terrorist organisation like the PKK is more important, Donald Trump understands the equation immediately,” he said. The Turkish minister also insisted that sanctions against Syria should be lifted “as soon as possible so that services can be provided”.

“The international community must fully mobilise to ensure Syria's recovery and the return of the displaced” Fidan said. He also emphasised that the “victory” achieved by the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad belongs to the Syrians and “belongs to no one else”. On Wednesday, Türkiye rejected Donald Trump's remarks on 8 December calling the rebel victory in Syria an “unfriendly takeover” by Ankara.



**FRANCE**

## **TÜRKİYE WANTS TO HELP “REVITALISE” DAMASCUS AIRPORT**

*Publisher : AFP*

*Date : 24 December 2024*

*Country : France*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Türkiye, a supporter of the new Syrian government, announced on Tuesday its readiness to help resume commercial flights from Damascus Airport, following a similar offer from Qatar.

“We have presented an action plan. We will work with the management of our national airports in the first phase to get Damascus Airport back on its feet,” Turkish Transport Minister Abdulkadir Uraloglu said in a video posted on his X account.

The Turkish minister also said that a Turkish delegation had travelled to Aleppo Airport, the second largest city in the country. According to Uraloglu, none of the two Syrian airports has a radar system that can detect aircraft and determine their position in the airspace.

The minister also said Türkiye would “do its part to guarantee railway continuity to Damascus”, adding that Ankara wanted to “revive the commercial potential” of its neighbour with which it shares a border of more than 900 kilometres.

A Qatari official told AFP that Qatar, which sent a large delegation to Damascus on Monday, had offered to help “reopen” the airport in the Syrian capital and “maintain it during the transitional period”. On 18 December, the first plane since the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad on 8 December carried 43 people from Damascus airport to Aleppo airport.



**FRANCE**

**SYRIA...TURKISH RESCUE TEAMS END THEIR SEARCH  
OPERATIONS IN SAYDNAYA PRISON**

*Publisher : AFP*

*Date : 17 December 2024*

*Country : France*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Summary*

On Tuesday, Turkish rescue workers ended the search began the previous day for possible detainees held in underground dungeons at Saydnaya prison in Syria, their head announced.

“The entire building has been searched and scanned and no living person has been found”, Okay Memis, director of the Turkish Disaster Management Agency (AFAD), which had sent 120 rescue workers, told reporters on the spot.

**FRANCE****THE OVERTHROW OF BASHAR AL-ASSAD... FOR SYRIA'S NEIGHBOURS WHAT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS?**

*Publisher : France Info*

*Date : 12 December 2024*

*Country : France*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Türkiye Related Section*

The fall of the Syrian regime is a major benefit for Türkiye, which is becoming a key player in the region, and a setback for Iran, whose influence is waning.

--Türkiye's Hand is Stronger--

The rebel attack on the regime comes at a time when Türkiye is trying to normalise its relations with Damascus in order to allow the return of some of the three million Syrian refugees currently on Turkish soil, which has become a political issue. "Regime change in Damascus increases the likelihood of Syrian refugees returning home en masse" Bayram Balci, a researcher at the International Research Centre at Sciences Po in Paris, told Le Monde. Türkiye is in a strong position because of its support for the groups helping to oust Bashar al-Assad.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also wants to drive Kurdish forces in northern Syria away from his territory. "Erdoğan's aim is to expand the so-called security zone" Didier Billion, Deputy Director of the Institute for International and Strategic Relations, told France 24. Ankara currently controls a "few hundred kilometres" of its 928 km border with Syria, the expert said.

"However, such an initiative could be jeopardised if the Kurds take advantage of the situation to set up an autonomous government" Agnès Levallois, Vice-President of the Institute for the Study of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, told AFP.

In any case, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan can be proud of being "now at the centre of the

game” Adel Bakawan, a researcher at the French Institute of International Relations, told franceinfo. This position allows him to further consolidate his role as a mediator on the international scene, particularly in the context of the war in Ukraine. Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State, also planned to visit the Turkish capital to discuss the situation in Syria.

**FRANCE****POST-ASSAD SYRIA, A SOURCE OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR ERDOĞAN'S TÜRKİYE**

*Publisher: AFP*

*Date: 08December2024*

*Country: France*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

The overthrow of the government of Bashar al-Assad, an enemy of Ankara, strengthens the regional weight of Türkiye, which now has greater influence in Syria, experts point out.

'As the main supporter of the rebels, Türkiye is the big winner in the region' from the fall of Bashar al-Assad, says Paul Salem, vice-president of the Middle East Institute (MEI) in Washington.

However, at a time when Syria is plunging into the unknown, 'this success implies a responsibility (for Ankara) to participate in a successful transition', he notes.

Through its Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, Türkiye said on Sunday that it was ready to help Syria 'guarantee its security' and 'heal its wounds'.

The head of Turkish diplomacy, calling for a 'smooth transition' in Damascus, said he hoped millions of Syrian refugees would return home.

Three million of them live on Turkish soil, fuelling strong anti-Syrian sentiment among the population.

Gönül Tol, director of the Türkiye programme at the Middle East Institute, predicts that 'the prospect of Syrian refugees returning will strengthen support' for Erdoğan among the Turkish public.

The expert also points out that, on the foreign policy front, the fall of Assad will reshuffle the cards between Ankara and Moscow, hitherto an ally of Damascus alongside Tehran.

'Türkiye will enjoy a better balance of power in its relations with Russia', says Ms

Tol, who believes that the war in Syria has made Ankara “vulnerable” to Moscow’s decisions, with Russian bombing raids on the north-west of the country leading to fears until recently of a new influx of refugees at the Turkish border.

Soner Cagaptay of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy agrees: ‘Türkiye’s influence will increase in Damascus, to the detriment of Iran and Russia’. He believes that Ankara must now help the Islamist group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), which led the rebel offensive, to ‘gain international recognition’ and ‘get rid of Russia and Iran’.

‘And this will not work if Türkiye behaves like the new boss of Syria’, he warned.

Sinem Adar, from the Centre for Applied Studies on Türkiye (CATS) in Berlin, believes that ‘it is too early’ to say whether Türkiye is the ‘winner’ from developments in its neighbouring country.

‘Much will depend on the dynamics between the local players, in particular the HTS and the FDS’, the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, which tried in its early days to take advantage of the rebel offensive, “and the dynamics between the HTS and Ankara”, stresses the researcher on X.

The upheaval in the balance of power in northern Syria is also an opportunity for Türkiye to move YPG, allies of the West in the fight against the DEASH but regarded by Ankara as an offshoot of PKK, its sworn enemy, away from its border.

Last week, pro Turk fighters taking part in the rebel offensive regained control of the town of Tal Rifaat from Kurdish forces on the edge of the ‘security zone’ in northern Syria established by Türkiye.

On Sunday, the head of Turkish diplomacy reiterated his concern that Kurdish fighters should not extend their influence in Syria ‘by taking advantage of the situation’, just as Turkish television announced that Kurdish factions were ‘cleansing’ the Manbij region, north-east of Aleppo, of the presence of the YPG.

‘We are in contact with our American friends on this subject. They know how sensitive we are to the issue of the YPG and the PKK’, the Turkish Foreign Minister said on Sunday.

For Gönül Tol, in addition to purely security considerations, ‘Erdoğan will be able to use (the image of) the weakened YPG to restore his nationalist image in his country.

**FRANCE****A FEELING OF REBIRTH”: SYRIANS IN ISTANBUL REJOICE AFTER THE FALL OF ASSAD**

*Publisher: AFP*

*Date: 08December2024*

*Country: France*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

- 'He'll end up in hell' -

'Today is a great celebration for us Syrians,' says Ibrahim Al-Mohamed, 42, one of the three million Syrian refugees living on Turkish soil.

Amid the scenes of jubilation, the father of a family struggled to hide his emotion. 'My son became disabled because of Assad. We were living in Aleppo and a bomb was dropped on the building next door. My son was traumatised, he could no longer speak. He's thirteen now and starting to feel a bit better,' he says, his eyes reddening.

'God be praised, we are rid of Assad', says Ahmed Mohamad, a Koran teacher who arrived from Aleppo eleven years ago after defecting from the Syrian army.

'God willing, he will be beheaded', he adds, running his thumb across his throat to mimic a blade.

Mohamad Cuma 'doesn't care' what happens to Assad. 'He's gone and that's the main thing. Whether he goes to Russia, Belarus or Venezuela, let him go. Either way, he'll end up in hell.'

He now hopes that 'the whole of Syria will be united under one flag', and predicts that 50% of Syrian refugees in Türkiye will return home.

The fall of Assad has also made him rethink his dreams: 'Until last week, my plan was to go on to do a master's degree in the UK', says the civil engineering student at the prestigious Bogaziçi University in Istanbul.

'But now I'm thinking that I could be useful in the reconstruction of Syria, so I'll probably go back



## **TÜRKİYE OPENS ITS EMBASSY**

*Publisher: Zee News*

*Country: India*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

Türkiye opens embassy in Syria: Türkiye is going to reopen its embassy in Damascus after the overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Earlier Türkiye had closed its embassy in the year 2012. Now for the first time since 2012, he will open the embassy once again Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said.

In an interview to Türkiye's NTV television, Fidan said that the newly appointed interim in -charge along with his delegation left for Damascus on Friday. Fidan said The embassy will be operational from Saturday.

Significantly, the Embassy in Damascus was closed in 2012 due to increasing security conditions during the Syrian Civil War and all the employees and their families of the embassy were called back to Türkiye.

Earlier on Friday, thousands of people gathered at the historic main mosque of Damascus for the first gesture after the expulsion of Syrian President Bashar Assad, while a large number of people celebrated the capital's largest square and the entire country.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### NEW SYRIA BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND ARABS

*Publisher: El Arabi El Cedit*

*Date: 11 January 2025*

*Country: United Kingdom*

*Author: Beşir elBakr*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

Türkiye's relations with the new Syria are privileged for many reasons. One of the most important reasons is that Ankara stood against the regime from the beginning of the Syrian revolution, supported the Syrian people and did not leave them alone even in the most difficult circumstances. This does not mean that Arabs do not take responsibility for their brotherly people. On the contrary, the Arabs also provided a lot of assistance and most Arab countries supported it at the beginning of the revolution. Today, however, the attitude of most Arab countries is characterised by a concern not to leave the fate of an Arab country in the hands of foreign parties. Moreover, the Arabs have an opportunity to help Syria, where the state has almost completely collapsed.

In the media of some Arab countries, it is said that one of the most important positive aspects of the overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad regime is the end of Iranian influence. However, no one is in favour of Syria falling under Turkish influence, as the repercussions of the presence of both countries in the region are quite different.

At this stage, the question of competition or co-operation between Türkiye and Arab countries in Syria is on the agenda. It seems that the general tendency is towards co-operation, given the steps taken. This is evident from examples such as the visit of Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi to Ankara or the visit of Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to Abu Dhabi.

One of the factors facilitating Arab rapprochement with Türkiye is that relations between Ankara and Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Cairo have greatly improved in recent years and have evolved from confrontation to reconciliation. There are also signs of an axis between Türkiye, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to provide economic, political and security support to Syria. These developments have also encouraged Europe.

Arab, Turkish and international contacts are ongoing to conclude agreements and lift sanctions, aiming to initiate rapid recovery processes to solve the electricity problem in Syria.

What is reassuring for Arab and international parties is that there are signs of a model close to the Turkish model in Syria. Indeed, this model is based on separating state and religion, ending the polarisation between Islam and secularism and is accepted because it does not impose an Islamic state and is compatible with other religions.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### JORDAN IN THE LAND OF TURKS

*Publisher : Al-Quds Al-Arabi*

*Country : United Kingdom*

*Author : Bessam el Bedarin*

*Translated In : Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

The visit of a high-level Jordanian delegation to Ankara this week was appropriate in terms of timing, location and direction. It is hoped that this visit will contribute to establishing new rules of engagement with an important neighbouring country like Türkiye, reinforcing the principles of good neighbourliness and improving the quality of interaction.

This visit is probably a positive and tactical Jordanian response to the extraordinary developments in the region, especially in the wake of the changes in Syria.

While it could be argued that such a visit is politically overdue, there is no longer any justification for Jordan-Türkiye relations to remain idle or almost frozen; regional transformations will no longer allow this to happen.

In this sense, this visit is an auspicious step and a move in the right direction. A step that will contribute to the fact that the file of relations between our country and the land of Turks will no longer be a field for uncertainties, speculations or merely for displaying differences of opinion; a step that will put aside reservations, disagreements and tensions, and at least activate a mechanism of understanding on vital interests.

While it is important to maintain relations with Arab and Western partners and stand by them, it is clear that their influence over Jordan's moves in international and regional affairs must diminish. Over the years, Jordan has made concessions to please these partners at the expense of its relations and interests with important countries in the region, such as Iran and Türkiye. However, these countries have not only failed to take Jordan's interests into account, but can easily leave Jordan alone without any criticism in order to strengthen their own interests.

We applaud the understanding that is beginning to emerge and that reflects a mature level of diplomatic awareness in Jordan. This understanding shows that Jordan has always been a solid, strong state, with a framework of moral values and the ability to communicate with all parties, which is one of the most important features of Jordan.

We also appreciate this approach, which expresses the necessity for Amman to prioritise its own interests and to overcome its approach to other countries in the region from the point of view of friendly, brotherly or partner countries. This is because today, each side is trying to protect its own interests first and foremost.

Moreover, the Jordanian people respect Türkiye, its leadership and its role, and Türkiye has no record of harming Jordan or the Jordanian people. Our country has suffered before from the mentality of appeasing some brotherly countries at the expense of the interests of Jordanians. These countries, with whom we have repeatedly shown goodwill, have followed different paths behind our backs, establishing good relations with some of the countries with which we have severed our relations. This was done under the pretext of either turning the fear of political Islam into a meaningless threat or focusing on the scenario of non-interference in Arab internal affairs.

It is a profound and wise step to pay a high-level visit to Ankara in this sensitive period and to develop an understanding based on an exchange of interests. Someone who can harmonise in the same room with the villains representing the terrorist Israeli entity from time to time and who cooperates with the Israeli monster can also harmonise or agree with Türkiye when necessary.

As Jordanians, we have warned against the “Shiite Crescent” for years. After the collapse of the ousted Syrian regime, supported by the Jordanian people, there should be no hesitation in engaging with the “New Sunni Crescent”. The crescent is part of our identity. In order to secure Jordan’s interests against the ambitious and mad elements of Tel Aviv, it is essential to provide a safe haven. To this end, it is important to stand shoulder to shoulder with a state like Türkiye. Indeed, Türkiye can contribute to curbing Israel’s right-wing and ambitious policies. However, this co-operation must be accompanied by limits on Türkiye’s ambitions in terms of influence and room for manoeuvre.

Rapprochement with Türkiye after the transformation in Syria is a good and correct step. This step reflects the necessary flexibility, maturity and awareness.

For years, experts in Jordan have been advising the government to diversify its sources and alliances. Over the years, the idea of building balanced and strong relations with Türkiye has long been raised in every platform and proposal. However, this idea was repeatedly rejected and ignored. What is happening now in the Ankara-Aman axis is a positive attempt to close this chapter and open a new one.

Yes, to put it briefly, it is possible to get along with Türkiye.

There’s no harm in trying.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### TÜRKİYE PROTECTS ANYONE WHO FEELS THREATENED IN SYRIA

*Publisher : Al-Arab*

*Date : January 3, 2025*

*Country : United Kingdom*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Broad Summary*

The statements by the Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan open the door to Türkiye's being recognised as a protector in a country still suffering from sectarian and ethnic conflicts. This creates an exceptional situation for Ankara to consolidate its almost absolute influence in Syria.

Türkiye justified its intervention and its recognition of a guardianship role by referring to minorities. This is because, according to observers, Türkiye is concerned that it may face a situation in which Alawites of the ousted leader Bashar al-Assad's sect may revolt or migrate to seek refuge in Türkiye's sizeable Alevi minority. This makes the Turks more concerned about the developments in Syria.

Fidan said that in the new period in Syria, they will be the protector and patron of any minority or majority that feels itself in trouble.

Pointing out that millions of Syrians were displaced during the persecution of the Assad regime and millions of them had to go to Türkiye and other countries, Fidan emphasised that Türkiye did not hesitate to accept those who took refuge in the face of this persecution.

Fidan said, "We are taking all kinds of initiatives to prevent trouble for them (the concerned parties) in Syria. The new Syrian administration is also extremely sensitive on this issue. I hope nothing will happen, but if it does, our President (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan) is extremely sensitive on this issue and his principles are clear. Whoever is persecuted, we stand by them."

“We will show the necessary solidarity with them. Therefore, we look at what is being done, not who it is being done to,” he added.

Türkiye’s stance has emerged because Alawites have recently been subjected to violations that justify their crossing into Türkiye. Indeed, Turkish authorities are concerned about such a situation.

Residents and fighters in the neighbourhood said on Tuesday that the families of Alawite officers who served under Assad were evicted from their homes in a sheltered complex and replaced with opposition fighters and their families.

The Muadamiyat al-Sham complex has 12 buildings and houses hundreds of people. It was one of the complexes allocated to officers during the Assad era.

As a result of the restructuring of the army and its replacement by opposition forces and the demobilisation of officers who served under Assad, the eviction of these officers from their homes does not come as a surprise. However, the immediate relocation of fighters who had lived for years in poor rural areas controlled by the opposition to the homes of Assad officers reflects the sudden change in fortunes of supporters of both sides in this conflict.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### **TÜRKİYE'S ENERGY HUB AMBITIONS HAVE NEW MOMENTUM AFTER ASSAD'S FALL**

*Publisher: Chatham House*

*Date: 17 December 2024*

*Country: United Kingdom*

*Author: Karim Elgendy*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

The sudden collapse of the 54-year Assad dynasty in Syria has opened possibilities for a new regional order. Much remains uncertain, but Türkiye – which has hosted most of Syria's refugees and backed the winning side – is in a leading position to shape that future.

The cost of Syrian reconstruction is estimated to reach \$400 billion, and Turkish companies are well-placed to secure major contracts should Syria's state-led economy transform into a free market.

Diplomatically, Ankara could leverage its support for Syrian rebels to negotiate favourable defence agreements with the new government in Damascus – potentially replicating similar agreements it has with Azerbaijan, Qatar, Somalia, and Libya. Such arrangements would significantly expand Türkiye's strategic depth in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Maritime boundary delimitation presents another crucial opportunity. A new Syrian government might be more amenable to recognizing Turkish Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZs) claims in the Eastern Mediterranean, strengthening Ankara's position in ongoing disputes with Greece and Cyprus.

This could include both Turkish claims and those of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus – a de facto state recognized only by Ankara.

**An Opportunity To Reshape Eastern Mediterranean Energy Architecture**

These opportunities have emerged at a time when Ankara is making a renewed push to establish Türkiye as the region's premier energy hub.

These reinvigorated ambitions were on full display at a major energy summit in Istanbul last month. Turkish officials hosted ministers from key gas producers including Azerbaijan, Libya, and Uzbekistan, alongside representatives from transit countries like Georgia and Eastern European importers. Ankara's vision is that Türkiye will serve as the key transit point between gas producers to its east and south, and markets to its west.

Its existing energy infrastructure provides a good foundation for these ambitions. The Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline, which forms part of the Southern Gas Corridor bringing Azerbaijani gas to Europe, already demonstrates Türkiye's suitability as a transit nation. The country also has seven gas pipelines, five LNG terminals, three floating storage units, and two underground storage facilities – as well as significant excess import capacity that could be used for trading.

The possibility for a new, stable Syrian state creates an opportunity for Türkiye to capitalize on this potential. By creating a gas pipeline to the west of Syria and connecting to the existing Arab Gas Pipeline network (which links Syria, Jordan, and Egypt) Türkiye could offer regional gas producers such as Israel and Egypt a more commercially viable route to European markets than current LNG alternatives.

This would effectively challenge the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum (EMGF) – an alliance that includes Egypt, Israel, Greece, Cyprus, Palestine, Jordan, Italy, and France.

The EMGF's flagship EastMed Pipeline project has struggled with technical and financial viability, with its proposed 1,900-kilometer deepwater pipeline connecting Israel and Cyprus to Greece making little progress. The pipeline was also dealt a significant blow when the US withdrew support in 2022.

A land-based route through Syria to Türkiye's existing infrastructure would provide a shorter, technically simpler, and more cost-effective alternative. This could also present a future opportunity for Lebanon, which recently began offshore exploration work and lacks export infrastructure of its own. Lebanon is not a member of the EMGF and could find a Turkish route especially attractive if its gas exploration efforts prove successful.

Additionally, stability in Syria could allow the revival of the long-dormant pipeline project to connect Qatari natural gas fields with Türkiye via Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. The plan had been rejected by the Assad regime, reportedly to protect Russian gas exports into European markets. It took the Turkish energy minister, Alparslan Bayraktar, just two days after Assad's fall to publicly express openness to revisiting the plan.

--Beyond Fossil Fuels--

Notably, Bayraktar has also signalled Ankara's interest in collaborating with Syria on energy reconstruction beyond fossil fuels.

Türkiye has enjoyed considerable success expanding its renewable energy network – 43 per cent of electricity in the country was generated through a combination of wind, solar, and hydroelectric power in 2023 – providing a practical blueprint for Syria's post-war energy development.

This model is particularly relevant given Syria's abundant solar resources and urgent need to rebuild its power generation capacity to fuel economic development.

A Turkish-Syrian grid integration would serve as a crucial node in an emerging Eastern Mediterranean electricity network. Such infrastructure would help manage renewable energy intermittency and position Türkiye as the northern anchor of a growing regional power system.

The network's other components – the Egypt-Saudi Arabia Inter-connector, the Great Sea Inter-connector (Israel-Cyprus-Greece), and the GREGY Inter-connector (Egypt-Greece) – collectively represent an emerging power architecture that could transform regional energy security and support the integration of renewables. It could also foster economic cooperation and help reduce geopolitical tensions through increased interdependence.

#### Structural Challenges and Strategic Opportunities

Türkiye's strategic opening after Assad's fall presents both opportunities and strategic choices.

The emerging regional power architecture, while promising, faces significant structural and market challenges. The establishment of a stable, internationally recognized government in Syria remains uncertain.

Even with a favourable political outcome in Syria, Türkiye faces a critical decision: whether to pursue traditional gas hub ambitions that may face diminishing returns, seeking influence through traditional pipeline politics – or to leverage this moment to position itself at the centre of the region's clean energy transition.

Türkiye's gas hub aspirations face headwinds. Europe's demand for gas will decline beyond 2030 and international financiers have a reduced appetite for investments in fossil fuel infrastructure.

Prioritizing sustainable energy over conventional gas networks seems the best method by which Türkiye could transform its temporary strategic advantage into lasting regional influence.

Regardless, the choices Ankara makes in the coming months will be pivotal for its future as a regional hub – and for the entire Eastern Mediterranean energy landscape.

**UNITED KINGDOM****MACRON, ERDOĞAN DISCUSS SYRIA TRANSITION, NEED TO INCLUDE ALL COMMUNITIES**

*Publisher: REUTERS*

*Date: 18 December 2024*

*Country: United Kingdom*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

French President Emmanuel Macron and Türkiye's Tayyip Erdoğan agreed that the transition in Syria should be respectful of the rights of all communities in the country, the French presidency said after the leaders spoke by phone on Wednesday.

“They expressed their wish that a peaceful and representative political transition, in accordance with the principles of resolution 2254, respectful of the fundamental rights of all communities in Syria, be conducted as soon as possible,” an Elysee statement said, referring to a United Nations Security Council resolution.



## UNITED KINGDOM

### **'ANKARA IS GETTING WHAT IT WANTS': HOW ERDOĞAN'S BALANCING ACT IN SYRIA PAID OFF**

*Publisher: REUTERS*

*Date: 18 December 2024*

*Country: United Kingdom*

*Author: Ruth Michaelson*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

Less than a week after the deposed Syrian president Bashar al-Assad fled to Moscow, Turkish officials raised their flag over the embassy in Damascus. While many of the shutters on the palatial villa remained closed, the red and white crescent flew over the embassy rooftop for the first time in 12 years.

It was a moment preceded days before by the arrival in the Syrian capital of Türkiye's spy chief, Ibrahim Kalin. In this immediate aftermath of the end of the Assad regime, Kalin rode in a black sedan driven by the leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), Ahmed al-Sharaa, who wore civilian dress as he chauffeured Kalin through the crowded streets. The spy chief prayed beneath the hallowed archways of the Umayyad mosque, before emerging to stunned crowds gathered to see the first foreign dignitary to visit the new Syrian leadership.

Dareen Khalifa of the non-profit International Crisis Group describes Kalin's visit to the Syrian capital as "a victory lap," with Ankara emerging as a major beneficiary from the new government in Damascus. The toppling of Assad has vindicated Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's approach on Syria at home in Türkiye, granted Ankara new opportunities in a power struggle across Kurdish areas in the north-east and afforded it fresh influence as Syria rebuilds.

"Relations between HTS and Türkiye shouldn't be overestimated, it's not a proxy relationship, but Türkiye was smart to wait until things were settled and then go in full force with Kalin's visit and other senior people as well," says Khalifa.

Ankara had for months stalled HTS and delayed the launch of the group's offensive, analysts said, and instead attempted to use a meeting with Russian and Iranian

officials in early November in the hope of finally bringing Assad to the negotiating table. Erdoğan has said that Assad rebuffed his offer to “discuss the future of Syria together”, unknowingly missing his last chance to prevent the sweeping military offensive that ended his family’s brutal 53-year rule.

Not only did Assad refuse, but his forces continued to strike the lone rebel-held pocket of Idlib controlled by HTS, fuelling the group’s desire to launch their offensive. Türkiye appealed to Assad’s Russian allies, Khalifa believes, asking Moscow to speak to the Syrian leader and stop the strikes, with little result. By the time Sharaa, who was formerly known by his nom de guerre, Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, approached Ankara later in November, notifying them that his forces were ready to launch an offensive, they relented because of Moscow’s inability to stop Assad.

“Ultimately Türkiye said OK, teach them a lesson, but Ankara didn’t realise that HTS would seize Aleppo, let alone the entire country,” Khalifa says. “No one thought it would become something this big. Ankara knew what kind of manoeuvre that HTS might pull, that they would give the impression they were going in one direction, east, when actually they wanted to go south. But it wasn’t more than that.”

By the time the insurgents had massed around the outskirts of Homs, pushing south on the highway leading to Damascus two days before Assad fled, Erdoğan publicly threw his support behind what he called “this march of opposition”. Türkiye was monitoring the insurgency intently through its network of intelligence channels as well as public reports, he said, speaking outside a mosque in Istanbul, adding: “May this march in Syria continue without any accidents and troubles.”

Gönül Tol of the Middle East Institute thinktank says the triumph of the insurgency still surprised Türkiye, resulting in what she terms “a catastrophic success” from Ankara’s perspective. “This really surprised Ankara, and of course now they are banking on it – it opens up opportunities particularly for Turkish foreign policy and for Erdoğan domestically, but obviously there are also risks,” she says.

Assad’s fall, says Tol, has allowed Erdoğan a way to bolster his brand as the leader who did the most to protect Syrians while thousands leave, placating his nationalist backers. Turkish officials wasted no time: the foreign minister, Hakan Fidan, said the day after Assad’s ousting that Syrians would return home, and an estimated 7,600 people had crossed the border by the end of last week.

While Ankara recently began a tentative outreach to Kurdish militant groups it has long regarded as terrorist organisations, Tol pointed to the sudden shifts inside Syria that have led to a pivot. Turkish-backed rebel groups are now routing US-backed Kurdish forces from towns across northern Syria, rapidly extending their zone of control.

“While all eyes are on Damascus it’s a free-for-all in the north-east, and Ankara is getting everything it wants,” says Khalifa. “The town of Manbij fell to Turkish-backed

forces without making headlines, so they're pushing in the north-east and getting away with it in ways that would never have happened before.”

Speaking during a conference on Syria in Jordan over the weekend, Fidan made Ankara's strategy plain. “We support the legitimate representatives of Syrian Kurds in their efforts to advocate for their rights in Damascus,” he said, indicating that Türkiye would only accept Kurdish representation in the Syrian capital, but not elsewhere.

Turkish officials showing up in Damascus, says Tol, will be using their newfound leverage over Syria's new rulers to ensure that no autonomous Kurdish administration takes hold in the north-east.

“Post-Assad Syria grants Türkiye a lot of leverage and HTS can use all the help it can get,” she says. The group is seeking to avoid isolation and will use Türkiye's input to ensure they eventually gain recognition from the international community, she adds. But in the interim, Türkiye remains their gateway to the outside world.

“Türkiye will play an important role, helping HTS reconstruct and rebuild, plus Syria needs investment. Türkiye will play an important role every step of the way.”



## UNITED KINGDOM

### TURKISH INTEL HEAD IN SYRIA FOR MEETINGS

*Publisher: Reuters*

*Date: 12 December 2024*

*Country: The United Kingdom*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

Turkish intelligence chief İbrahim Kalın was in Damascus on Thursday, two sources with knowledge of the visit told Reuters, for what the Syrian information ministry said would be talks involving its new rebel leadership.

The ministry said that Kalın and Qatar's head of state security, Khalfan al-Kaabi, arrived in the capital to meet with Syrian rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa and caretaker prime minister Mohammad al-Bashir.

Türkiye's foreign ministry denied the Syrian ministry's additional notice that Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan was also in Damascus for talks, saying he remained in Türkiye.

Fidan attended events in Ankara on Thursday including the arrival of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and is to meet Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Ankara on Friday.

Doha did not immediately confirm that Kaabi had arrived.

Kalın's visit would be the first by a senior foreign official to Damascus since rebels toppled president Bashar al-Assad on Sunday, ending his family's 50-year rule in a swift takeover after 13 years of civil war.

The Turkish intelligence agency MİT did not immediately comment on the visit.

Turkish news outlet Yeni Şafak and broadcaster TVNet published a video of Kalın at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus with heavy security. A Reuters reporter saw at least one car moving towards the mosque amid heavy security and large crowds but it was not immediately clear who was inside the car.

Sharaa, better known as Abu Mohammad al-Golani, leads the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former affiliate of al Qaeda, that spearheaded the overthrow of Assad.



**ITALY**

**FLIGHTS BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND SYRIA WILL RESUME WITHIN  
A WEEK**

*Publisher: ANSA*

*Date: 7 January 2025*

*Country: Italy*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Summary*

Air Connections Between the Two Countries Have Been Disrupted Since 2011

Commercial flights between Türkiye and Syria will resume within a little over a week. This was stated by the head of the Syrian General Civil Aviation Authority, Ashhad al-Salibi.

According to a report in the newspaper Daily Sabah, Ashhad Al-Salibi said that a letter has been sent to the General Directorate of Civil Aviation to get approval for the resumption of flights, that a response is expected within two days and that air connections between the two countries are expected to resume within a week after approval from Ankara.



**ITALY**

## **SYRIA... ERDOĞAN'S GREAT GAME... HOW TÜRKİYE STRENGTHENS ITS INFLUENCE**

*Publisher: Adnkronos*

*Date: 7 December 2024*

*Country: Italy*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

GAnkara, a US ally and a NATO member which in the past was the main supporter of the armed rebellion against Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad, "has every reason to be content. Syrian rebels' attack strengthens Türkiye's geopolitical clout." Thirteen years have passed since the uprising which erupted after the antigovernment protests in 2011 turned into a bloody conflict.

In the escalation in Syria, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and allied armed factions are seen as the spearhead of the rapid advance. They arrived at the gates of Homs and today in Doha, Qatar, talks on Syria are supposed to be held between Iran, Russia -supporters of Assad- and Türkiye. Yesterday foreign ministers of Iraq, Iran and Syria met in Baghdad, capital of Iraq.

--Erdogan's Message to Assad--

Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in remarks reported by Anadolu Agency, said "We have called on Assad to talk about Syria's future together but unfortunately we did not receive a positive response to this invitation. The march of the opposition continues and we hope that it will continue without any event."

Erdogan speaks and Le Monde writes "Ankara has every reason to be satisfied. Without deploying a single additional soldier to Northern Syria, Turkish government is on the verge of seeing two of its oldest desires fulfilled: to extend the shadow beyond the areas controlled by its soldiers mostly near the border and the withdrawal of PKK-linked Syrian Kurdish forces."

Since 27 November, anti-Assad forces have entered Aleppo. Then they headed towards Hama and they are now near Homs. Syrian National Army (SNA - a coalition of pro-

Turkish militias) took control of Tel Rifat, a strategic region controlled by Kurdish-Syrian forces for eight years, and according to the French newspaper, this highlighted Ankara's close connections to SNA which has always been a rival to HTS. This also shows how effectively Türkiye can manage the complex dynamics in the region.



## **FIDAN CALLS FOR REMOVAL OF HTS FROM TERROR LIST AND RESPONDS TO TRUMP**

*Publisher: Al Jazeera TV website*

*Date: 19 December 2024*

*Country: Qatar*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

Fidan stated that Türkiye recognizes the new administration in Syria as a “legitimate” partner for Ankara so the Turkish Embassy was reopened in Damascus and the Ambassador has been instructed to make contact with local and central government authorities.

Fidan said that the United Nations, the European Union and the authorities from other countries have also made contact with the new administration, adding “I think it is time for the international community, starting from the UN, to remove their name from the terror list.”

--Trump’s Remarks--

Hakan Fidan, responding to Donald Trump’s remarks a few days ago characterizing the overthrow of the regime of Bashar al-Assad as Türkiye’s “unfriendly takeover of Syria”, said that it would be a “big mistake” to define it like this.

Turkish minister said “For the Syrian people, this is not a takeover. If there is a takeover, it is the takeover by the will of the Syrian people who are in power right now.”

Fidan also stated that the last thing Türkiye wants is to be seen as the “regional power that has the ultimate control over Syria” and said “What destroyed the region is the culture of domination.”

--The Kurdish Issue--

The Foreign Minister, when asked about the concerns related to a big Turkish military attack on Kurdish regions in northeastern Syria, said that YPG and PKK are an “essential threat” for Türkiye.

Fidan stated that YPG maintains its control over Syrian territories by showing to the West that it helps with the fight against ISIS and he added: "I think this is a misrepresentation of their true identities. They are there as a terrorist organization." Calling on the US to cut its military support to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), of which YPG is the main component, Fidan said that the new government in Syria will have to address the issue of Kurdish forces in their lands and that this will eliminate the need for Ankara to take action.



### **THREE PESSIMISTIC ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE SYRIAN TRANSITION**

*Publisher: Al Jazeera TV Internet*

*Publication Date: 10 January 2025*

*Country: Qatar*

*Author: Mahmoud Alloush*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Türkiye Related Section*

In the Arab region, there are three pessimistic assumptions about the transformation in Syria. These assumptions are often not explicitly stated, but are seen as a cause for concern:

First: Syria's denominational, cultural and ethnic diversity could be threatened by the overthrow of the Bashar al-Assad regime, leaving the stage to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and the imposition of a new authority under its leadership. This could seriously undermine the chances of rebuilding the country according to modern state standards.

Second: This transformation could spell disaster for the Arab region because it could plunge Syria into prolonged chaos. This chaos could have grave consequences for regional security and destabilize political stability in some Arab countries.

Third: After this transformation, Syria could come under Turkish tutelage. Türkiye's role in this process is linked to its eagerness to revitalize the Ottoman legacy in the Arab world, causing concern in some quarters.

Fortunately, these pessimistic assumptions have not prevented Arab countries from opening up to the new authority despite their implicit concerns about this transformation. On the contrary, they have demonstrated their readiness to show their support and contribute to the success of the transition process.

At a time when Iran and Russia are almost completely out of the Syrian equation, the Arab world's hesitation to be active in Syria will naturally reinforce Türkiye's major gains in the country.

However, seeing Türkiye's strong presence in Syria as a threat to Arab interests often ignores two important facts:

First: Türkiye's presence serves as a strong guarantee to guide Syria's transformation, preserve the country's unity and reduce the risk of Syria turning into a failed state that threatens regional stability.

Second: The Turks themselves want the Arab world to be strongly involved in Syria's reconstruction and recovery from the war. This is not only based on the key role that rich Arab countries can play in financing the reconstruction effort. It is also based on the idea that the strategic partnerships that have developed with the Arab region in recent years have laid the foundation for an era of Turkish-Arab cooperation. This cooperation can play an important role in managing regional affairs because the United States is either no longer able or no longer willing, or both, to act as a dominant force in regional geopolitics.

Turkish-Arab cooperation could significantly increase the chances of success in supporting and steering the Syrian transition and help appease some Arab countries' concerns about the transition.

Through its strong influence in the new Syria, Ankara can contribute to the creation of an inclusive government that can mitigate the Islamic aspect of the new administration, as well as help the state to rebuild, recover and emerge from international isolation.

The significant advantages of the Arab role in Syria could be a powerful incentive for HTS to push forward its new agenda as a national Islamist force that appeals to all Syrians and articulates their aspirations for a state of law and institutions.



## **TÜRKİYE'S FOREIGN MINISTER CALLS FOR LIFTING GLOBAL SANCTIONS DURING MEETING WITH SYRIA'S NEW LEADER**

*Publisher: Al Jazeera*

*Publication Date: 22 December 2024*

*Country: Qatar*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Summary*

Türkiye's foreign minister met with the head of Syria's new government, pledging to help in the reconstruction of the war-torn country and the political transition after the fall of the Bashar al-Assad regime.

Meeting in Damascus on Sunday, Türkiye's Hakan Fidan and Syria's de facto ruler Ahmed al-Shara stressed the need for unity and stability in Syria and called for the lifting of all international sanctions against the war-ravaged country.

The meeting took place two days after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced that Fidan would travel to Damascus to discuss the new structure in Syria, and photos and a video released by the ministry show Fidan and al-Shara hugging and shaking hands.

Speaking at a press conference with al-Shara, Fidan said Türkiye "will continue to stand by your side. God willing, the darkest days of Syria are behind us and better days await us."

Fidan said sanctions against Damascus should be lifted "as soon as possible" and that the international community "should mobilize for Syria to get back on its feet and for the displaced people to return."

Al-Shara, holding his first public press conference since leading the operation to oust Assad and seize power two weeks ago, also called on the international community to lift all sanctions against Syria.

The leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) said, "All economic sanctions must be lifted, now the usurper is gone and only the victims remain. The elements of injustice and oppression have disappeared. Now is the right time to lift these sanctions."

The two officials discussed the need to draft a new Syrian constitution that protects minorities in the country. Syrian refugees, Israeli “violations” of Syrian sovereignty and the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) were also on the agenda.

Al Jazeera correspondent Rasul Sardar said Türkiye offered assistance to the new Syrian government and “emphasized the importance of keeping state institutions up and running.”

“Türkiye has been one of the main supporters of the Syrian opposition since the uprising began in 2011. Now Fidan was in Damascus and emphasized the importance of preserving the state apparatus.”, Sardar said.



## **TÜRKİYE’S GAINS FROM THE OVERTHROW OF ASSAD**

*Publisher: Al Jazeera TV Internet*  
*Publication Date: 08 December 2024*  
*Country: Qatar*  
*Author: Semir al Araki*  
*Translated In: Ankara*  
*Translation Type: Summary*

“Türkiye may delay in doing what is necessary, but it will do it in the end.” This is a statement by Hakan Fidan, Türkiye’s Foreign Minister, and it explains much about Türkiye’s approach to crises. The Syrian crisis is one of the best examples of this approach.

Indeed, discussions about a possible military operation in northern Syria to clear PKK-affiliated Syrian organizations from the areas west of the Euphrates have never left the agenda. Again, the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad would provide Türkiye with additional leverage in this regard.

It is also noteworthy that on November 25, the day before the “Deterring Aggression” operation, Yaşar Güler, the Minister of National Defense, announced that the Zap region in northern Iraq had been cleared of the PKK.

Faced with more than 40 years of bloody conflicts without results, the organization and its supporters may believe that the best way forward for the Kurdish issue is full participation in the political process. In particular, this approach may gain more importance with the disappearance of the Syrian Baath regime, historically one of the PKK’s biggest supporters.

--Solving the Refugee Crisis--

This highly complex and sensitive humanitarian crisis has been politicized over the years and played a major role in the losses suffered by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in parliament and municipalities.

This issue has also paved the way for the rise of far-right parties. With a loud propaganda, these parties mobilized some sectors to commit abuses against Syrian refugees.

However, if the Syrian revolution gains control over many cities, especially Aleppo, and eventually over the entire territory, it will allow for the return of more refugees in the future. This will ease the pressure inside Türkiye.

The return of refugees, if realized, will take away the refugee issue, a trump card that racist parties have been using against the government. At the same time, they will lose an important excuse to compensate for their lack of popular support.

It should not be forgotten that solving the Syrian refugee crisis will also help the ruling party to compensate for some of the political losses it has suffered in recent years.

--The Road to 2028--

The impact of the overthrow of Bashar al-Assad and the Baath Party regime will reshape Türkiye's political landscape in preparation for the 2028 elections, especially if Syria stabilizes and a new political system is built. The main factors that will determine this change are:

-Some Kurdish political forces may lose faith in the PKK's capacity to create a separatist entity in northern Syria. In this case, these forces may choose to participate fully in the political process. Such a shift could make a more positive contribution to the drafting of a new constitution and pave the way for President Erdoğan to run again.

-AK Party is likely to regain its former strength and remain comfortably ahead in the party rankings. This will be especially likely if economic conditions improve and inflation rates are reduced.

In conclusion, the overthrow of the Baath regime and the Assad family in Syria would be a "political tsunami" that would have a profound impact not only on domestic politics in Türkiye but also on all dynamics in the region.

**LIBYA****SALLABI: ERDOĞAN IS A BLESSING OF GOD FOR DEFENSELESS PEOPLES**

*Publisher: AlSaaa24*

*Publication Date: 08 December 2024*

*Country: Libya*

*Translated In: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

Ali Sallabi, one of the leaders of the Muslim Brothers, described Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as “a blessing from God for the defenseless people”.

In a Facebook post, Sallabi said: “Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is one of God’s blessings for the Turkish people and vulnerable peoples.”

**LEBANON****TWO SHIP POWER PLANTS FROM QATAR AND TÜRKİYE GOING TO SYRIA**

*Publisher: El Akhbar*

*Date: 07 January 2025*

*Country: Lebanon*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

Two ship power plants to generate 800 megawatts of electricity from Syria, Qatar and Türkiye

will cover the cost. Head of the Syrian Electricity Transmission and Distribution Authority Khaled Abu Diy told SANA “The 800 megawatts to be produced by the two ships from Türkiye and Qatar”.

He said that this amount corresponds to half of what is currently being produced in Syria, will lead to a 50 per cent increase in the citizen’s share of electricity’. He said, ‘electricity work on the provision of transmission lines to meet the needs of the two ships continues that after the transmission lines are delivered from the ships to the nearest transformer, electricity network,’. Abu Diy said that ‘the power plants and transformers were built under the former regime and the damage suffered was enormous,’ he added.

Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said that Türkiye will supply electricity to Syria and Lebanon and that it was ready to provide electricity initially through exports from Türkiye. that it can be provided, that after looking at the situation on the transmission lines will become clearer’, he pointed out.

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has previously discussed the reconstruction of Syria. He promised that Ankara would do whatever was necessary.



**LEBANON**  
**QATAR PRINCE AND ERDOĞAN DISCUSSED DEVELOPMENTS IN  
GAZA AND SYRIA**

*Publisher:El Mudun*  
*Date:17 December 2024*  
*Country:Lebanon*  
*Translated in: Ankara*  
*Translation Type: Full Text*

Qatari Prince Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan discussed the strategic relations between the two countries and ways to strengthen and develop these relations in various areas in Ankara. According to the statement of the Qatari Emirates Council, regional and international developments, especially the situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the latest developments in Syria, were also discussed during the talks held on Tuesday.

According to the statement of the Qatari Emirate, the talks held on Tuesday discussed regional and international developments, especially the situation in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as the latest developments in Syria. The Emir of Qatar, who arrived in Ankara today for a business trip to Türkiye, was welcomed by Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

In a statement made by the Turkish Presidency, it was stated that Sheikh Tamim and Erdoğan discussed regional and international issues. During the meeting, Erdoğan emphasized the preservation of Syria's territorial integrity and united structure. The Turkish President also emphasized the need for cooperation from the international community in the reconstruction process of Syria.

The statement from the Presidency indicated that the two leaders discussed Türkiye-Qatar relations, regional and global issues. During the meeting, Erdoğan stated that Türkiye stands by the Syrian people and government to protect Syria's territorial integrity and unity, and that Türkiye is fighting against all terrorist organizations to protect its national security and to end the instability in Syria as soon as possible.

**EGYPT****UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS, THE BIGGEST WINNER WILL BE  
TÜRKİYE**

*Publisher: El Masri El Yevm*

*Date: 15 December 2024*

*Country: Egypt*

*Author: Abdullatif el Menavi*

*Translated in: Cairo*

*Translation Type: Broad Summary*

Türkiye intervened in the conflict in Syria with some strategic goals. The most prominent of these goals are: countering separatist Kurdish movements, managing the refugee crisis, limiting rivals such as Iran and Russia, and strengthening its regional influence.

The overthrow of Assad has helped to achieve some of these priorities, as the new power in Damascus appears to be more aligned with Turkish interests. In this context, the visit to Damascus by the Turkish Foreign Minister and the head of the Turkish Intelligence Agency is a clear indication of the nature of the relationship with these groups that overthrew Assad. The existence and expansion of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which Türkiye identifies as terrorists and is affiliated with the PKK, is a major concern for Türkiye.

Ankara's rapprochement with opposition groups and their support could weaken the SDF. Consequently, Türkiye's influence in shaping the political and security scene in northern Syria is growing stronger.

In addition, Türkiye hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees. This situation poses a huge burden on Türkiye's domestic politics and economy. Therefore, post-Assad changes could lead to improved security situations, the start of reconstruction efforts, and the gradual and voluntary return of refugees.

Post-Assad reconstruction efforts will create major economic opportunities, especially for Turkish companies, thanks to Türkiye's geographical proximity and experience in construction and logistics services.

In the diplomatic arena, Türkiye could become a major force in shaping Syria's political future. This could also increase its influence in the Arab world and its ability to maintain balance between the West, Russia and Iran. This would therefore create a distinct position for itself in terms of competing interests in Syria after Assad.

Despite these potential gains, there are challenges. After all, Assad's overthrow would not only not lead to immediate stability, but would also create a governance vacuum and could exacerbate conflict. The future of relations between opposition groups, organizations, and regional powers will determine the nature of further developments: will there be stability or conflict leading to a governance vacuum?

In addition, will rival powers such as Iran and Russia, which have always had deep influence in Syria, easily give up their interests?

On the other hand, the US's stance on the Kurdish issue and its broader strategy in Syria could conflict with Ankara's interests and confuse Türkiye's efforts to strengthen its own gains.

Are there other winners?

**PAKISTAN****THE KEY TO SYRIA IS IN TÜRKİYE'S HANDS**

*Publisher: Jang*

*Date: 02 January 2025*

*Country: Pakistan*

*Author: Furkan Hamit*

*Translated in: Ankara*

*Translation Type: Full Text*

Türkiye is striving to achieve the glory of the era and to become a superpower in the world during the Erdoğan era. Türkiye prevented the alliance of Western countries with Armenia in order to establish influence in the region, and thus Azerbaijan seized Nagorno-Karabakh silently and strategically with its unmanned aerial vehicles and military power. Thus, Azerbaijan not only easily got rid of the occupying Armenia, but also forced it to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijani territory. Armenia, which received the support of Western countries and especially France, was forced to recognize Nagorno-Karabakh as Azerbaijani territory due to Türkiye's military power. In addition, Türkiye established its dominance in Libya and forced France to withdraw along with the Arab countries. Türkiye not only managed to overcome the difficulties it faced in Syria due to the Russia-Iran alliance, the US-Kurdish alliance and the Syrian refugees taking refuge in Türkiye, but also managed to profit from this situation. Türkiye, together with its neighboring country Iran, not only completely ended Russia's dominance in Syria, but also opened a path for itself in Syria for the first time since the Ottoman Empire.

Türkiye is emerging as a regional superpower due to its military power. It has not only confronted several regional powers at the same time, but is also forcing all of them to retreat from Syria. Türkiye has become important not only in the region but also globally. Not only the United Nations, but also Russia, Ukraine and the US have generously praised Türkiye's global role in the Ukraine-Russia war, and especially the steps it has taken to access global grain markets. Türkiye's aggressive stance in Syria and its strong stance in Gaza reflect its desire to reshape the Middle East. Trump praised Türkiye's and President Erdoğan's intelligence, high position and influence in the region, and said, "Türkiye will hold the key to Syria. You have not heard anyone say this, but it is

true, and peace is not possible without Türkiye's role in the region." President Erdoğan first expressed his happiness for the Syrian revolution by reading the Surah Al-Fath at his party's group meeting in the Turkish Grand National Assembly and thanked God for the end of the 61-year Assad regime. In his speech to his party, Erdoğan said, "I wholeheartedly congratulate my Syrian brothers for the victory" and said that the 13-year rebellion being crowned with victory in 12 days was a great success. Erdoğan said that he had offered to meet with Assad many times but Assad did not even feel the need to respond, and that there was no trace of Assad in Syria anymore.



**RUSSIA**

## **SURPRISE SYRIAN SUCCESS COULD MAKE ERDOĞAN DIZZY**

*Publisher : Ria Novosti*

*Date : 22 December 2024*

*Country : Russia*

*Author : Petr Akopov*

*Translated in : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Although Vladimir Putin has rightly pointed to Israel (which gained the opportunity to occupy part of Syrian territory and destroy the material and technical capabilities of the Syrian army) as the main beneficiary of the developments in Syria, the key role in Syria now belongs to Türkiye. Not because pro-Turkish forces have come to power in Damascus (they are not), but because Ankara now has the main instruments of influence on the neighbouring state in its hands.

As for the means, among them are the partial control of the northern border, which is the most significant border for Syrians, by pro-Turkish forces; the presence of millions of Syrian refugees in Türkiye and already their return to their homeland; the threat of a military operation against the Kurds in Syria who control the eastern part of Türkiye's border; and the acceptance of Türkiye's role by both Trump and the European Union (EU). All make Erdoğan a key player in the new Syria game, and generally inspire a sense of confidence regarding the strength Turkish officials have in the international arena.

An article published recently on the website of the state-run TRT Haber, 'Solution to Global Crises: Türkiye', states that Ankara has strengthened its position as a key country in resolving world crises thanks to President Erdoğan's mediation role, having successfully mediated in the conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Armenia, as well as in Syria, Libya and the crisis between Somalia and Ethiopia.

Although only the last example listed can truly be considered a successful mediation (Erdoğan recently organized an important meeting between the leaders of two

neighboring African countries that had long been hostile to each other), this list reflects the self-confidence of Turkish officials. They really believe that they are very successful in turning other people's problems into their own achievements, and therefore will only increase their efforts in various axes.

By the way, the axes mentioned in particular for Türkiye are not actually that different. Their common feature is that they all fall within the sphere of Turkish interests: some as former parts of Ottoman Empire, some are Islamic countries, and some are regions inhabited by Turkic peoples.

Last week, Erdoğan's statement, "If World War I had ended differently, Aleppo and Damascus could have been provinces of Türkiye," created a stir. Due to a mistranslation, the phrase was presented as if the Turkish president was claiming that they would still be part of Türkiye. However, especially if certain border areas where Turkmens live are excluded, of course, Ankara has no territorial claims. Moreover, the Turks would only take these areas if Syria completely collapses, but all major external players want to avoid such a scenario. The idea of Turks' annexation of all Arab regions into their own territory is impossible: Arabian Damascus could only be a part of the caliphate, not the Turkish nation-state.

Türkiye's demand for leadership is not limited to the Middle East.

This week, Erdoğan said, "Türkiye is bigger than Türkiye. As a nation, we cannot limit our horizon to an area of 782,000 square kilometers. Just as a person cannot escape their fate, Türkiye and the Turkish nation cannot escape or hide from their destiny. We are moving towards the goal of becoming a great and powerful Türkiye leading the era with steady steps."

Yes, Türkiye has a glorious past. The Ottoman Empire included most of the Arab world, and the caliphate was the last joint project that combine Muslim supreme spiritual and state power chronologically. However, this empire, which included Syria, Libya, parts of the Caucasus, and Crimea, began to weaken in the early 19th century and ended its existence a century later.

Although the Turks had fought many wars with the Russians in the past, the main role in falling apart of the Ottoman Empire was played by the British and the French. Especially London and Paris developed a plan to divide the Ottoman Empire. Later, they also attempted to divide the remaining part of the empire, Türkiye (Anatolia), and only the support of the Soviet Union (USSR) allowed Atatürk to protect Turkish lands and independence.

Today, although Türkiye is a member of NATO, it has a special position including in its relations with Russia. Co-operation between our countries goes hand in hand with rivalries in different regions. Syria is one of these regions and will remain so, as the close relationship between Moscow and Damascus, which started in the second half

of the 1950s, will not be easily broken, despite the fall of the half-century-long Assad dynasty.

Türkiye's rapidly strengthening of its position in Syria should not lead Ankara to be giddy with success, both in Syria and in other axes.

Over the past three decades, Türkiye has used three geopolitical concepts: Islamic unity, Pan-Ottomanism, and Pan-Turkism. Islamic Unity and Pan-Islamism largely address Arab countries, while Pan-Turkism mainly targets the former Soviet geography inhabited by Turkic peoples and the Turkish states (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan). It is impossible for Russia not to be concerned about Türkiye's excessive influence in this region, particularly through the Organisation of Turkic States (OTS).

This is exactly what has happened in recent years: OTS has shifted from interactions as cultural, educational, and humanitarian matters to economic and logistical projects, seeks unification, and gradually increases cooperation in security and defense. This directly challenges Russia's interests in the region, even if it is nicely veiled.

Central Asia should not be turned into an arena of geopolitical competition field between the great states of Eurasia, namely Russia and Türkiye. Central Asia's destiny is to be the geopolitical balance center of the continent. The peace and development of this region will be ensured by both the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Union, as well as by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) established by Moscow and Beijing for these specific purposes.

Türkiye wants to join BRICS, but it also had similar plans regarding the SCO and even the Eurasian Union. If joining the SCO is hindered by NATO membership, there are no obstacles to rapprochement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). This will be in harmony with Türkiye's interests and power, unlike the ambitious but doomed to failure Great Turan project.



**RUSSIA**

## **ERDOĞAN: TÜRKİYE NEVER COMPROMISE ON THE INTEGRITY OF SYRIA**

*Publisher : TASS*

*Date : 18 December 2024*

*Country : Russia*

*Translated In : Ankara*

*Translation Type : Broad Summary*

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in a joint press conference with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, stated that Türkiye will never compromise on Syria's territorial integrity.

The President said, "Our priority is to normalize the daily lives of Syrians through construction (infrastructure and housing). It is also important for us to establish a permanent administration that encompasses all segments of society there. It is also important for the countries in the region and for the Syrians themselves. Preserving Syria's territorial integrity and unitary structure is another issue on which our country will never compromise."

Erdoğan emphasized that Türkiye and Lebanon are ready to act jointly, adding that the stability of Syria means the stability of the entire region, and that Lebanon, like Türkiye, has accepted Syrian refugees without hesitation.

'The common goal of both Türkiye and Lebanon is to revive Syria. We will continue to do what is required. Of course, strong support from the international community is necessary for the successful completion of this process. We expect everyone who understands that the stability of Syria means the stability of the region to contribute,' the Turkish leader emphasised.



## SAUDI ARABIA

### **TURKISH MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE: IN SYRIA WE DISCUSS STRATEGIC RELATIONS WITH OUR INTERLOCUTORS**

*Publisher : Al Arabiya*

*Date : 02 January 2025*

*Country : Saudi Arabia*

*Translated in : Jeddah*

*Translation type : Full Text*

Turkish Ministry of National Defense sources revealed that, following the activation of state institutions in Damascus, they have been engaging in discussions with their Syrian counterparts to establish strategic relations and cooperate in various fields.

The sources added that the necessary support will be provided based on the roadmap that will be prepared according to the needs identified following these talks, Al Arabiya correspondent reported.

The ministry was also quoted as stressing the need to confront 'terrorist organisations' in Syria during the new phase, in line with the position of the new Syrian administration.

--Idlib Points--

In response to a question about the closure or reduction of observation points in the Idlib region, Defense Ministry sources stated: "The region is a vast and dynamic area where developments are constantly and closely monitored. According to the developments, the Turkish Armed Forces make assessments and plans are constantly updated. In this context, necessary measures are taken, such as redeployment of forces or any other required needs."

Regarding the current situation in eastern Euphrates, sources explained that clashes between the so-called Syrian National Army (SNA) and Kurdish forces, primarily the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), continue in the region.

Türkiye considers YPG, the armed group that leads the US-allied Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), to be an extension of PKK militants who have waged an insurgency against the Turkish state for 40 years and are considered a terrorist organisation by Ankara, Washington and the European Union.

--Escalation of Hostilities--

Conflicts have escalated since the fall of Bashar al-Assad. On December 9, Türkiye and the Syrian groups it supports took back the city of Manbij from the SDF.

While Ankara, together with its Syrian allies, has carried out numerous cross-border attacks against the YPG-led SDF in northern Syria, it has repeatedly demanded the United States, its NATO ally, end its support for the fighters.



## SAUDI ARABIA

### **A TURKISH COMPANY IS AMONG THE OPTIONS FOR SYRIA'S ELECTRICITY SUPPLY**

*Publisher : Al-Arabiya*

*Date : 30 December 2024*

*Country : Saudi Arabia*

*Translated in : Jeddah*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

Türkiye's "Karpowership" company, which owns a fleet of floating power plants, announced on Monday, December 30, that it is one of the options being evaluated to provide electricity to Syria.

The move comes as part of talks between Türkiye and Syria's new administration following the ouster of Assad this month following a 13-year civil war.

"Many alternatives for power generation are being considered and we are one of them," Karpowership said in a statement in response to a Reuters question about its involvement in electricity supply talks.

The company added: "There are ongoing talks between the two countries, but it is too early to talk about any details at this stage."

Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said that Türkiye is ready to export electricity to Syria.

Bayraktar said that options include providing electricity through a common grid between the two countries, as well as the use of floating electric ships.

Karpowership, a subsidiary of the Karadeniz Holding Group, is a leading electricity producer that provides electricity to at least 12 countries in Africa and South America with its ships docked at their ports.

The company's largest ship has a generating capacity of 470 megawatts, about 10 percent more than Syria's total installed power capacity.

But for the project to be successful, Syrian ports must have the necessary equipment to connect ships to the electricity grid.



## SAUDI ARABIA

### **1 BILLION EUROS OF EUROPEAN FUNDING TO HELP SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TÜRKİYE... APPROXIMATELY 3 MILLION SYRIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN TÜRKİYE**

*Publisher : Al-Arabiya*

*Date : 17 December 2024*

*Country : Saudi Arabia*

*Translated in : Jeddah*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced on Tuesday, December 17, that “Türkiye will receive an additional one billion euros (\$1.05 billion) in 2024 to support Syrian refugees in the country.”

Leyen said the new funding was in addition to the nearly 10 billion euros Ankara has received since 2011 to support those fleeing the Assad regime.

Both the EU and Türkiye host large numbers of Syrian refugees.

While more than 1 million Syrians benefit from international protection within the EU, approximately 3 million Syrian refugees live in Türkiye.

“All repatriation operations must be voluntary, safe and dignified,” Leyen stressed.

She added: “We are working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to ensure that the necessary conditions are met.”

On the other hand, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that the EU’s comprehensive and long-term support, including infrastructure investments in Syria, is vital for Syrians to be able to return to their homes.

Following the meeting between Erdoğan and Leyen, both sides stressed the importance of stabilizing Syria and preserving its territorial integrity.

In a new development, the European Union announced the reopening of its office in Damascus on Tuesday, following direct contacts with Syria’s new administration on Monday.



## VATICAN

### **BROAD CO-OPERATION BETWEEN SYRIA AND TÜRKİYE**

*Publisher : L'Osservatore Romano*

*Date : 23 December 2024*

*Country : Vatican*

*Translated in : Rome*

*Translation Type : Full Text*

--Jolani Met With Minister Fidan--

While Syria's new leader and head of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Mohamed al-Jolani, is busy reassuring the international community about Syria's future and determining the organs of governance (yesterday a woman, Aisha al-Dibs, was appointed to head the office responsible for women's affairs), relations between Damascus and Ankara are strengthening.

During the visit of Hakan Fidan, the head of Turkish diplomacy, to the Syrian capital, al-Jolani announced that cooperation with Ankara would also be extensive on an economic level. He also emphasized that all the country's weapons would be placed under state control and assured that he wanted to protect all minorities, a point also emphasized by Fidan. Fidan also acknowledged that the main actors in the rebellion against Assad were Syrians, and called for no place in the new Syria for "the separatist Kurds of the YPG", and wished that the international community would lift sanctions against Damascus "as soon as possible", telling Israel to "abandon any territorial ambitions towards this country".

The relationship between Syria and Türkiye presents the potential for tensions with Israel at a time when Benjamin Netanyahu's government is trying to expand its presence in the Golan through settlements and expansion of the population, according to a plan approved in mid-December.

There are also contacts with other countries in the Arab world. A Saudi delegation met with al-Jolani at the Presidential Palace in Damascus, and a mission from Amman, led by Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, arrived in the capital this morning.

'No direct contact' with the new leaders was announced by Iran, which wants to prevent Syria from becoming "a haven for terrorists".

In Raqqa, there are still tensions between the Syrian Democratic Forces and so-called Daesh members.

# RECEP TAYYİP ERDOĞAN'S

## PEACE DIPLOMACY: THE CASE OF SYRIA

This book focuses on Türkiye's humanitarian foreign policy in both regional and international contexts since the onset of the Syrian conflict, exploring the roadmap, strategy, and field practices in Syria's peace-building process after the conflict ended. This work explores significant historical periods, including Syria under Ottoman rule, the French mandate, the era of independence and political conflicts, as well as the time of the Ba'ath regime. Furthermore, it seeks to elucidate the Syrian conflict by examining the developments from the onset of the conflict in Syria to the current day. To truly capture the essence of the Syrian conflict and its intricate dynamics, a thorough examination of the Arab Spring, alongside its domestic and foreign impacts, has been undertaken. Additionally, Türkiye's position in this process, along with its political, military, and humanitarian approach to the Syrian conflict, is presented through the political contacts and statements made by the President of the Republic of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. This book highlights Türkiye's humanitarian, hospitable, and compassionate approach towards asylum-seekers within its borders, as well as its assistance efforts for the people of Syria and its achievements in foreign policy and public diplomacy. Furthermore, Türkiye's involvement in reshaping a new democratic framework in Syria following the collapse of the Ba'ath regime clearly illustrates its role as a regional and international actor.

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