The Crisis in Syria

(For details on the rise of the Islamic State click here)

Updated: The Responsibility to Protect norm, as agreed to in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, does not sanction a unilateral military response or a response by a "coalition of the willing." Any military response under RtoP must be authorized by the Security Council.

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   I. Crackdown on anti-government protests escalates to armed conflict

The crisis in Syria was prompted by protests in mid-March 2011 calling for the release of political prisoners. National security forces responded to widespread, initially peaceful demonstrations with brutal violence. From summer 2011 onwards, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad refused to halt attacks and implement the meaningful reforms demanded by protestors. In July 2011, accounts emerged from witnesses, victims, the media, and civil society that government forces had subjected civilians to arbitrary detention.
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, torture, and the deployment and use of heavy artillery. The Syrian people were also subject to the Shabiha, a heavily armed state-sponsored militia fighting alongside security forces. Assad consistently denied responsibility for these crimes, placing blame for the violence on armed groups and terrorists, and yet denying humanitarian access to civilians. Alongside the worsening violence, this lack of assistance from the UN and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) caused severe shortages of food, water and healthcare in the country.

As the crisis continued to escalate, opponents of the Assad regime began to loosely organize, creating several opposition organizations such as the Syrian National Council (SNC), an umbrella organization of exiled Syrians, and the Free Syrian Army (FSA), a militarized element largely composed of Syrian military defectors and armed rebels. Though ideological divisions have characterized the fragmented opposition, many groups lost patience with the lack of progress on reforms and began to call the regime’s resignation since the fall of 2011. In August 2011, the FSA began attacking Syrian soldiers with force, marking the first time that the opposition resorted to violence to overthrow the regime and end the government’s widespread attacks on civilians. With the introduction of these new militant tactics came reports that opposition forces had also subjected civilians to human rights violations. The conflict has also grown increasingly sectarian in nature, with civilians being targeted by both sides based on the presumed support or opposition to the Assad regime associated with their ethnic identities.
Though the government-imposed media blackout since March 2011 has made external confirmation of the situation in Syria very difficult, the United Nations Human Rights Council established an independent International Commission of Inquiry in September 2011 to investigate the alleged human rights violations. The Commission has since produced seven reports and concluded that the Syrian government and Shabiha committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as that anti-government groups have been responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

II. Delayed response to escalating crisis

Initially, regional actors, such as the League of Arab States and the Gulf Cooperation Council, were hesitant to respond, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was unable to reach a consensus on decisive action to end the conflict. After nearly a year of fighting, former Secretary-General Kofi Annan was appointed as Joint Special Envoy for the UN and the League of Arab States on 23 February 2012. Annan quickly set forth a six point peace plan, which included commitments from all parties to work with the Special Envoy, a ceasefire, and the access to and timely provision of humanitarian assistance. Unfortunately, the deal failed to end the violence, which by then had become a de facto civil war. The UNSC then authorized the deployment of a UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) of 300 unarmed observers to facilitate the peace plan in April 2012, but activities were suspended in June when the observers’ presence failed to quell the violence and the mission’s mandate came to an end on 19 August 2012. By late July, fatalities and casualties had mounted to 19,000.
and tens of thousands of civilians remained displaced, seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. The following month, Annan resigned from his position, citing the lack of political unity within the UN as a major obstacle to finding a solution to the crisis, and was replaced by Lakhdar Brahimi. Brahimi immediately faced a tumultuous situation, with clashes between government and opposition forces fighting for control of Damascus, mass executions by government forces and a growing humanitarian crisis. As of yet, he has been unable to negotiate an end to the violence, and on 29 January 2013, warned a still seriously divided Security Council that the country was “breaking up before everyone’s eyes.”

In November 2012, opposition forces came together to create a new coalition to be more inclusive and representative of the Syrian opposition. The new body was named the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Force, and has steadily gathered international recognition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people. The Coalition was first recognized by the Arab League on 12 November 2012, then joined by France on 13 November, EU on 19 November, UK on 20 November, US on 12 December 2012, and then others. The Coalition has suffered from a series of high level resignations and an inability to assert overall control over rebel forces on the ground. Its leadership became dominated by Saudi-backed candidates during an overhaul in July 2013. The opposition forces grew increasingly fragmented, divided by ideological barriers between secular and Islamist armed groups as well as
pervasive managerial gaps. In April 2013, Al Qaeda announced its allegiance to the rebel forces and foreign fighters enlisted in the sectarian war in increasing numbers.

The two main Islamist groups are the ‘Al-Nusra Front’ and the ‘Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant’ (ISIL- formerly Islamic State in Iraq and Syria –ISIS). An attack by ISIL on the FSA in September 2013 marked the beginning of rebel-on-rebel fighting. Since January 2014, the FSA and Al-Nursa have been fighting back against ISIL. In February 2014, Al-Qaeda withdrew its support for ISIL, after refusing to endorse a merger of that group with the Al-Nusra Front. As of March 2014, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reports that more than 140,000 have been killed, while there are now 6.5 million people displaced within Syria and another 2.5 million in neighboring countries, according to the UNHRC.

III. Crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Syrian government

As early as 27 April 2011, then UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, informed the UN Security Council that sources in Syria had reported “the use of artillery fire against unarmed civilians; door-to-door arrest campaigns; the shooting of medical personnel who attempt to aid the wounded; raids against hospitals, clinics and mosques and the purposeful destruction of medical supplies and arrest of medical personnel”. The Syrian government also allegedly denied access to international monitors, humanitarian groups and human rights organizations while simultaneously shutting off local social media communications. Based on interviews, the Commission of Inquiry on Syria presented
its initial findings to the Council in Geneva on 28 November 2011, reporting evidence that crimes against humanity had been committed by military and security forces including: sexual violence, torture, arbitrary detention and murder.

Government attacks also shifted from sporadic violence to targeted large-scale killings. The spiraling levels of violence were implemented using cluster bombs, which are prohibited in many states around the world. Among other instances of violence with a high civilian death toll, 108 people died in attack on Houla in July 2012 and 71 men were massacred in Aleppo in January 2013. In a 3 July report from Human Rights Watch, witnesses reported the use of torture in 27 detention facilities run by Syrian intelligence agencies, including at the hands of the commanders in charge. Human Rights Watch also released evidence of a clear chain of command responsibility for atrocities committed all the way up to high-level Syrian officials. Subsequent reports by the Commission of Inquiry also established that gross violations of human rights had been committed by Syrian military and security forces, and stressed the harmful effects on the population, calling for an end to impunity. As of March 2014, the Commission’s investigations confirmed that 17 incidents of intentional mass killing had been perpetrated by government forces and pro-government militias, including the attack on Houla.

Chemical Weapons Attack A number of NGOs made repeated claims of the deployment of chemical agents by the Syrian government, which was known to have stockpiles of such weapons. Individual states such as
United States, France, United Kingdom announced that they had evidence of the government’s small scale use of chemical weapons between March and June 2013. In August 2013, a series of videos, photographs and reports from the ground from Syria indicated that a new chemical weapons attack had killed a high number of civilians in rebel-held areas outside of Damascus, in “the world's most lethal chemical weapons attack since the 1980s.”

The footage showed a large number of children among the victims of the attacks in Ghouta. Casualty estimates vary from 500 to over 1400.

The international community called for an immediate investigation of the use of chemical weapons after the attack on civilians. The team of United Nations inspectors probing the possible use of chemical weapons returned: from Syria on 31 August after two weeks of investigation. It reported that there was “clear and convincing evidence” that Sarin gas had been used in Ghouta, though it stopped short of declaring which side had deployed them. While the Secretary General also refrained from assigning blame, he did state on 16 September “this is a war crime”.

Many voices inside and outside of Syria declared that the international community and the Syrian government had both failed in their responsibility to protect Syrians, a failure that, particularly in light of the attacks, reached what some called a tipping point and required an immediate and meaningful response.

States, in particular the USA, were convinced that the Assad regime was behind the war crime and violation of international humanitarian law, declared publicly that a “red line” had been crossed. The USA and France therefore seriously
considered
a military operation in order to respond to the chemical weapons attack. However, others
questioned whether a military response solely in response to the 21 August chemical weapons attack would actually serve to protect civilians, or if it would be mostly designed to punish the Assad regime. On 14 September 2013 the US and Russia stuck a deal to remove and destroy Syria’s chemical weapons by June 2014.

Under UNSC Resolution 2118, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was tasked with implementing a program of destroying chemical weapons sites inside Syria and transporting materials to be shipped abroad for destruction. Destruction of Syria’s chemical weapons arsenal began on 6 October 2013. The Syrian regime has thus far complied with Resolution 2118, with the OPCW declaring that they had successfully destroyed most of the sites used for the production of chemical weapons in November 2013. On 7 January 2014, the first shipment of priority chemicals left the port of Latakia to be destroyed. By 4 March 2014, one third of Syria’s declared chemical weapons stockpile had left the country and a revised timetable was set for all to be removed by the end of April 2014. It remains to be seen, however, whether the mid-2014 deadline for destroying Syria’s current stockpile of the munitions will be met in light of the ongoing instability.

Despite the deal on chemical weapons, the regime has escalated its conventional weapon offensives, and Human Rights Watch has reported the use of indiscriminate weapons such as barrel bombs and other cluster munitions. The Syrian government has reportedly dropped between 5000 and 6000 barrel bombs since the crisis began, killing 20,000 people, 1,600 of which died in Aleppo in March 2014 alone. Amnesty International has also reported that starvation is being used as a deliberate tactic of war by the regime.
IV. Opposition groups militarize, accused of human rights violations amid clashes with government forces

The FSA also reportedly failed to comply with international human rights and humanitarian law, according to evidence from civil society groups including Human Rights Watch, which reported in March 2012 that FSA forces had committed human rights abuses against civilians including extra judicial killing, capture and torture. On 25 July 2012, Amnesty International released a press statement saying that opposition groups have been deliberately and unlawfully killing captured opponents in Syria, and called on all opposition parties to abide by international humanitarian law. In response to widespread concern, the FSA officials signed a “code of conduct” in August 2012 pledging to refrain from torture, attacking of civilians and other human rights abuses. This coincided with the Commission of Inquiry’s report on 15 August, which concluded that opposition forces had committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in 10 incidents. Meanwhile, Syrian lawyers attempted to collect war crimes testimonies from civilians in the hope to prosecute crimes under international law once the conflict ends. In March 2013, the government accused rebel forces of using chemical weapons in Aleppo, though the opposition maintained that government forces had actually deployed them. Russia announced in early July 2013 that it had evidence that anti-government armed groups had used Sarin gas against government forces, though neither the UN nor the Commission of Inquiry have confirmed this. The UN Secretary-General responded by setting up a team of scientists to investigate the allegations, which were investigating three sites where chemical weapons have allegedly been used when the 21 August chemical attack occurred.

V. Refugees and IDPs

As of March 2014, Syria has topped the list of forcibly displaced people. The UNHCR now
Reports that 9 million Syrians are displaced, amounting to half the population. This included 6.5 million uprooted from their homes within Syria and another 2.5 million who have fled to neighboring countries. The refugee crisis has taken its toll on bordering countries.

According to the UNHCR, as of January 2015, almost 1,623,000 people have sought refuge in Turkey, over 622,000 in Jordan, 133,000 in Egypt, 235,000 in Iraq and almost 1,168,000 in Lebanon. The primary reasons for fleeing appear to be atrocities committed against civilians, reported in January 2013, with journeys to safety made more treacherous by winter conditions. On 24 May 2013, Foreign Affairs noted that refugee populations faced dire conditions in the refugee camps.

Furthermore, the hosting countries are experiencing severe pressure. In Jordan, the World Bank announced in May 2013 that the influx of refugees was affecting the livelihood, public services, and basic commodities of the local communities and offered its financial support to the government, while in March 2014 the UNHCR stated “Syrian refugees in Jordan are hanging on by a thread”. Although Turkey has been more economically equipped to handle the refugee influx, social and political costs arose, resulting in an increased risk of sectarian spillover, particularly in areas sympathetic to Assad. Lebanon is also significantly burdened by the conflict, a country which UNHCR says hosts 230 registered Syrian refugees for every 1000 Lebanese. Lebanon’s hospitals, electricity, transportation systems are
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strained, while food prices are rising. Furthermore, the country is experiencing a re-ignition of ethnic and religious tensions, with violent clashes occurring between Sunni and Shiite communities and between supporters and opponents of Assad. Civil society actors, including Refugee International, warned on 10 July 2012 that Syria’s neighbors’ had been “stretched too thin”, and called for urgent assistance and increased funding from the international community. On 18 March 2014, the UN, acknowledging the strain on Syria’s neighbors, nonetheless again urged the countries to continue keeping their borders open for refugees.

VI. Responses to the crisis

a) Regional Responses

The League of Arab States (LAS) initially stressed that it would not take unilateral action in response to the crisis. However, after nearly nine months of violence against civilians, the League introduced a peace plan, which called on the government to halt violence, release prisoners, allow for media access and remove military presence from civilian areas. When the government failed to uphold the plan in spite of its initial agreement to do so, the League suspended Syria’s membership on 12 November 2011 and imposed economic sanctions on 27 November 2011. On 19 December, Syria signed a peace deal, mandating an Arab League mission to observe and report on the crisis, but the League suspended the mission on 29 January 2012 due to “critical” conditions in the country. The League then encouraged the Security Council to take further action and appointed a Joint Special Envoy with the UN to facilitate a political solution to the crisis. In November 2012 the League, alongside the Gulf Cooperation Council, recognized the National Coalition of the Syrian Opposition, an opposition organization.
formed that same month from various opposition groups in order to have a more inclusive and representative model, as the “the legitimate representative and main interlocutor with the Arab League and GCC”. The Coalition officially took Syria’s seat at the summit of the Arab League in March 2013. On 28 August 2013, the Arab League blamed the Syrian government for the chemical attack of 21 August and urged the international community to take action to deter further chemical weapons use on 2 September 2013.

The European Union

The European Union (EU) imposed economic sanctions, including an arms embargo, visa ban and asset freeze, against the Syrian regime in May 2011, and has heightened the sanctions periodically since then. In November 2012 the EU recognized the National Coalition of the Syrian Opposition as the legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and subsequently released a statement calling for Assad to step down to allow for political transition in January 2013. In March 2013 the EU foreign ministers modified these sanctions, making it possible for European governments to bypass the ban on providing “non-lethal” supplies to the opposition. On 28 May 2013, the European States effectively ended the arms embargo on the opposition in Syria and opened up the possibility to arm anti-government rebels while upholding the arms embargo on the Assad government. Only the United Kingdom and France have expressed the possibility of sending arms, while the majority of the remaining EU member-states are worried that further militarization will only fuel more violence.
On 15 March 2014, EU High Representative, Ashton, expressed her concern about reports which “confirmed the regime's indiscriminate use of murder, torture, rape, hostage-taking, and sexual violence. These are crimes against humanity, war crimes and blatant breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law.”

b) United Nations Responses

Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect

The Special Advisers of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide and on the Responsibility to Protect voiced their concern over the Syrian government's systematic widespread attacks targeting civilians and reminded the government of its responsibility to protect its population in a series of public statements. Notably, in their fifth statement, released on 14 June 2012, they called on the international community “to take immediate, decisive action to meet its responsibility to protect populations at risk of further atrocity crimes in Syria, taking into consideration the full range of tools available under the United Nations Charter” including a referral of the situation by the Security Council to the International Criminal Court (ICC). On 8 July 2013, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention on Genocide, Mr. Dieng, warned against the increasing use of rhetoric by political and religious leaders in the Middle East and North Africa region as it could be used to incite further violence in Syria. On 7 March 2014, Mr. Dieng told the Human Rights Council that ongoing atrocities in Syria were evidence that the international community had already failed Syria in its duty to prevent.

Human Rights Council and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

As discussed above, the Human Rights Council and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights were seized of the crisis early on and in August 2011 mandated an independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations in Syria. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, also repeatedly called upon the Syrian government to assume its responsibility to protect and prevent and prosecute perpetrators of international crimes, and has repeatedly urged the Security Council to refer the case to the ICC, beginning in December.
On 2 December 2013, UN Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay, reported that a UN inquiry had found “massive evidence... [of] very serious crimes, war crimes, crimes against humanity” which were authorized "at the highest level of government, including the head of state".

Security Council In October 2012 the Security Council issued press statements condemning the terrorist attacks in Aleppo and later calling on all relevant parties to implement a ceasefire in honor of Eid al-Adha, Since then, the Council has received significant pressure to refer the case in Syria to the ICC, including from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Advisers on the Prevention of Genocide and RtoP as well as from over 50 Member States who signed a letter saying as much in mid-January 2013.

The Security Council showed rare unity on Syria by passing Resolution 2118 on 7 September 2013, which requires Syria to destroy its current stockpile of chemical weapons. It further prohibits Syria from using, developing, stockpiling, and transferring chemical weapons. Should Syria not fulfill the terms of the resolution, whose compliance will be overseen by the OPCW, the Security Council may consider penalties under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

In July of 2014, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2165, which not only re-iterated the need for ceasefire in heavily populated areas, but also affirmed that the Syrian government has the primary responsibility to protect the Syrian population. In addition, the resolution clarified that the UN agencies and other necessary humanitarian organizations could deliver aid from across the borders of neighboring countries and that to impede the delivery of aid by "withholding consent for the opening of all relevant border crossings" would be in violation of international humanitarian law. The resolution was renewed in December of 2014, authorizing, "UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations to deliver aid from neighboring countries"
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and across conflict lines.”

As of January 28th, 2015, 54 cross-aid deliveries had been made since the adoptions of Resolution 2165 and 2191. However, the Security Council also revealed that cross-line deliveries remained difficult, and that government forces were withholding approvals for medical supplies in aid convoys and access to certain areas remains blocked off to aid organizations.

While the Syrian government declared that humanitarian aid given without consent amounted to an attack, the UN Security Council deemed aid a necessity and pitted its importance over that of state sovereignty.

Luxembourg’s U.N. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas said, "The consent of the Syrian authorities will no longer be necessary." While Syrian U.N. Ambassador Bashar Ja’afari claimed that "The Syrian Government counts on a neutral, effective and responsible role of the United Nations in dealing with the humanitarian situation in Syria, especially in terms of respecting the Syrian sovereignty."

With the passing of resolutions that allowed humanitarian aid to be delivered across borders and in rebel-held areas, one could say that the UN Security Council demonstrated that humanitarian concerns would override Syria’s sovereignty concerns in this particular case.

General Assembly

The General Assembly adopted several resolutions calling for all parties to support efforts to peacefully resolve the crisis. In an attempt to pressure the Security Council to act, the General Assembly requested that UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon brief the Council in January 2013. At this time, the Secretary-General stated: “We must do everything we can to reach Syrians in need. We must intensify our efforts to end the violence through diplomacy, overcoming the divisions within Syria, the region and the Security Council.” On 15 May 2013, the General Assembly adopted
a resolution condemning the conflict's escalation, violations of humanitarian law, and violence, demanding the government meet their responsibility to protect their population, comply with international law, and cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry to investigate claims of chemical weapons. The resolution also asked the Secretary-General to report on the resolution’s implementation to the GA within 30 days. A resolution on 19 December 2013 condemned "t he continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms and all violations of international humanitarian law by the Syrian authorities and the government affiliated shabbiha militias."

c) National Actor Responses

Russia and China attracted significant criticism from Arab and Western leaders for their economic, political and military ties to Syria, and because they vetoed three UN Security Council resolutions which had included language citing the responsibility of the Assad government. Separately, Russia made attempts at unilateral diplomacy with a view to put pressure on the Assad regime to limit its military actions against civilians and allow for some sort of political transition, and in December 2012 publically acknowledged that the Assad regime may well be losing control of the country. In early May 2013, Russia announced its plans to hold a Syria peace conference together with the United States to broker a peace agreement and in September helped forge a deal on Syria’s chemical weapons.

Turkey’s border with Syria has seen skirmishes and shelling since July 2012, and in October, five Turkish civilians were killed by Syrian mortar fire, which Turkey responded to with proportional arms. In February 2013, an
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explosion on the Syrian-Turkish border killed at least 13 people, putting further strain on the deteriorating relationship between the two. After another instance of car bombs on the border in May 2013, killing 43, Turkey warned it would take all steps necessary to protect itself. Though NATO had originally stated it would not intervene in the Syrian crisis, the Organization placed patriot missiles on Turkey’s border with Syria in January 2013 to defend against external attack, at the request of the Turkish government. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO’s secretary general, had previously warned the Syrian government on 3 December 2012 that the international community would not stand by if the Assad regime unleashed chemical warfare against the Syrian people. On 24 January 2014, Turkish armed forces fired on ISIL positions in northern Syria.

Fighting between Syrian government forces and rebels in the Golan Heights has meanwhile challenged the decades-long ceasefire between Syria and Israel in the Golan Heights and complicated the operations of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), charged with monitoring the accord. After two abductions of UNDOF peacekeepers in March and May 2013, the UN has had to contend with troop-contributing countries (TCCs) withdrawing their peacekeepers from UNDOF out of concern for their safety. The mission’s mandate has been renewed every six months and currently runs until 30 June 2014.

Though Lebanon has long had an official policy of disassociation in the Syrian conflict, the influx of refugees and increased cross-border fire from Syria has threatened to embroil the country in its neighbor’s crisis. The announced entry of Lebanese political and military group Hezbollah and their key role in helping the Syrian government re-take the town of Qusayr in June 2013
Crisis in Syria and Yahbroud in 2014 demonstrates how the Syrian crisis is slowly devolving into a full-scale regional crisis.

As the conflict wears on, without distinctive action from international organizations, several national actors have also increased their support to the Syrian opposition politically, economically and militarily. The Free Syrian Army received a steady stream of non-military assistance and then non-lethal military equipment and funding from several governments, including the United States, United Kingdom, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, beginning in June 2012. Meanwhile, the Assad regime receives continued support from Russia, Iran and Hezbollah.

VII. Latest Developments:

On 20 December 2013, Joint Special Envoy Brahimi invited 30 states to a peace conference to be held in Geneva in January 2014. The conference brought members of the Syrian government and the opposition to the same table for the first time since the beginning of the crisis. There was very little progress in the talks, except for a humanitarian truce in the city of Homs. More than 1000 people were evacuated from the city during the truce, amid claims that the government had detained men attempting to flee. Talks floundered over the Syrian government’s framing of the conflict as a fight against terrorism, while the opposition focused on the need to agree to a transitional governing body. Before and during talks both sides continued to press for better strategic conditions on the ground to strengthen their negotiating positions. On 31 January 2014, both parties left
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without agreeing to attend a third round of talks.

Indications that President Assad may seek a third term in an upcoming 2014 election have decreased the likelihood for a third round of talks to go ahead.

On 22 February 2014, the Security Council broke its deadlock and unanimously passed Resolution 2139 to ensure access for humanitarian aid in Syria, urging all parties to lift sieges of populated areas, and condemning the use of barrel bombs and terrorist acts by Al Qaeda-linked organizations. However, the omission of sanctions has weakened the significance of the resolution. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is due to report back on the implementation of the resolution after 30 days.

While the US has encouraged the need for Assad to be removed from power, they have also begun to advocate that, should it be impossible to topple Assad, a gradual shift should occur in Syria. In January 2015 the Obama administration proposed that some members of the Assad regime may remain in order to better secure some type of political stability, with UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura saying that “new factors” should be taken into account, “such as ISIS”.

Local ceasefires have occurred in order to deliver basic aid to civilians, but none have been long-lasting.

(For details on the rise of the Islamic State click here)