

UNDERSTANDING SYRIAN CRISIS: KEY BACKGROUND RESOURCES AS AT APRIL 2020



This summary sheet is produced by TorqAid – www.torqaid.com for people wanting to better understand the Syrian humanitarian crisis. It is regularly updated and can be accessed from the TorqAid website on <http://www.torqaid.com/understanding-syria>

Key Websites

The BBC and Aljazeera provide a generalised overview of the overall political situation both across the Middle East in general, with specific reports on Syria. ACAPS focuses in on an in-depth study of Syria, and particularly the humanitarian situation. Both Relief Web and the Humanitarian Response provide comprehensive summaries of what the key UN agencies and international NGOs are doing, in support of national bodies, to try and provide humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

- BBC - https://www.bbc.com/news/world/middle_east
- Aljazeera - <https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/regions/middleeast.html>
- ACAPS - <https://www.acaps.org/country/syria/crisis/conflict>
- ReliefWeb - www.reliefweb.int/country/syr
- Humanitarian Response - www.humanitarianresponse.info/operations/whole-of-syria

Key Facts and Figures for Syria¹

- Population 14.95 million
- Population displaced, approximately 13 million, of whom:
 - ✓ 6.8 million have crossed into neighbouring countries as refugees
 - ✓ 6.2 million remain within Syria as Internally Displaced People (IDPs)
- 11.7 million people in need

Overall Humanitarian Context in Syria

Background Context

The first BBC guide below outlines the political situation in Syria since the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World war in 1918. The second article describes the situation since 2011, when initial peaceful demonstrations against the Syrian regime, morphed, first into a civil war scenario, and then a larger and more wide-ranging, proxy war involving international powers. The maps at Appendix B indicate the changing areas of control over the period 2015-2018, with the maps at Appendix A, illustrating the evolving situation in the north-west and north of the country from 2019 until the present date.

Useful Publications

BBC – A Short Guide to the Syria civil war (2018) - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-43447624>

BBC - Syria Timeline 1918-2018 - <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14703995>

¹ These taken from the ACAPS site ACAPS - <https://www.acaps.org/country/syria/crisis/conflict>

Current Humanitarian Situation

The ACAPS, ReliefWeb and Humanitarian Response websites on page one, together offer a comprehensive picture of the humanitarian situation across Syria. Since 2011, Over 6.8 million Syrians have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries, primarily Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, with a number of these now resettled in Europe and elsewhere. Of the remaining approximately 15 million people remaining within Syria, 6.2 million of these are Internally Displaced People (IDPs), and a total of 11.7 million people are still in need. The fighting in recent months has focussed on both the north-east, as well as the north-west of the county around Idlib Province, and although a ceasefire in the latter was agreed in early March, the UN (1st April) is now calling for a countrywide truce to be extended to counter the threat of the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic.

The UN launched its 2019 Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) in early 2019, and the Overview of this, and an interim report covering the period January to May 2019, are included below. With a budget of USD 3.32 billion, the priorities of this, were to Save Lives; the Enhance Protection; and to Increase Resilience and Access to Services. The 2020 Syria HRP is currently² being finalised, and this will request a budget of USD 3.30 billion to support 9 million of the 11 million Syrians in need. Complementary to the HRP, is the annual Syrian Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP), led by UNHCR and UNDP, this focussing on support for Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Cited below is the 3RP Regional Strategic Overview for 2020-2021, which has a budget of USD 5.4 billion.

Key Publications

UNOCHA. (2019). *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Plan Overview, Jan-Dec 2019*.

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/hrp_summary_2019.pdf

UNOCHA. (2019). *Syrian Arab Republic: Humanitarian Response Plan Report, Jan-May 2019*

https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_syria_mid_year_pmr.pdf

UNDP/UNHCR. (2020). *Syria Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan (3RP) Regional Strategic Overview 2020-2021*. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73116.pdf>

Further Information

For further information about Syria, and particularly humanitarian consultancy work or training associated with this, please contact Chris Piper, the TorqAid Director.

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² As at the 1st April 2020

Appendix A: SYRIA AREAS OF CONTROL MAPS, OCT 2019 & FEB 2020

Idlib province







-   Turkish-backed Syrian rebels and Turkish military
-  Kurdish forces
-  Syrian government
-  Jihadist forces
-  Syrian rebels

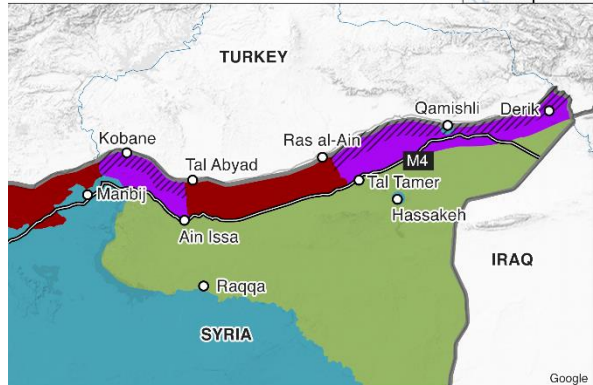


Source: Jane's Conflict Monitor, 24 Feb 2020



Turkey and Russia's deal on north-east Syria

-  Kurdish and Syrian government control
-  30km-deep zone controlled by Syrian and Russian militaries
-  Turkish military and Turkish-backed Syrian rebels
-  Syrian government
-  10km-deep zone patrolled by Turkish and Russian militaries
-  Motorway











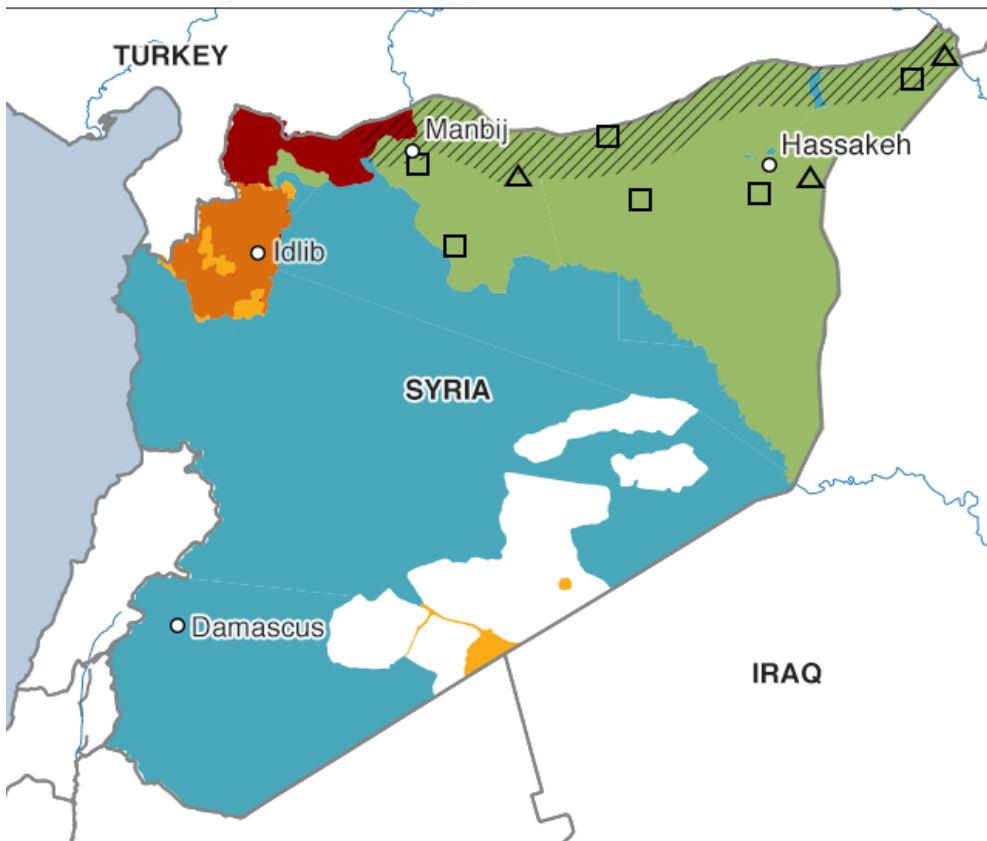
Source: Russian defence ministry, 23 Oct 2019



Oct 2019



-  Kurdish forces
-  Turkish-backed Syrian rebels and Turkish military
-  Jihadist forces
-  Syrian rebels
-  Syrian government
-  Turkey's proposed "safe zone"
-  Camps for displaced people
-  Camps holding IS suspects' families



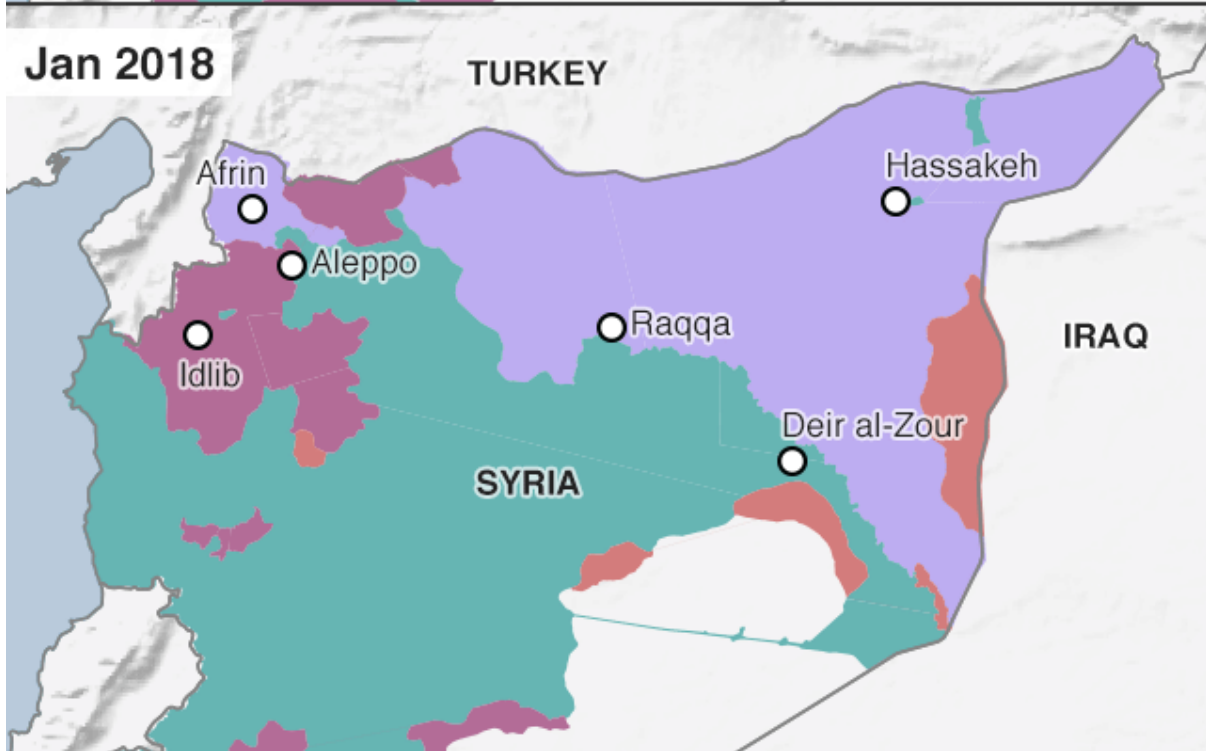
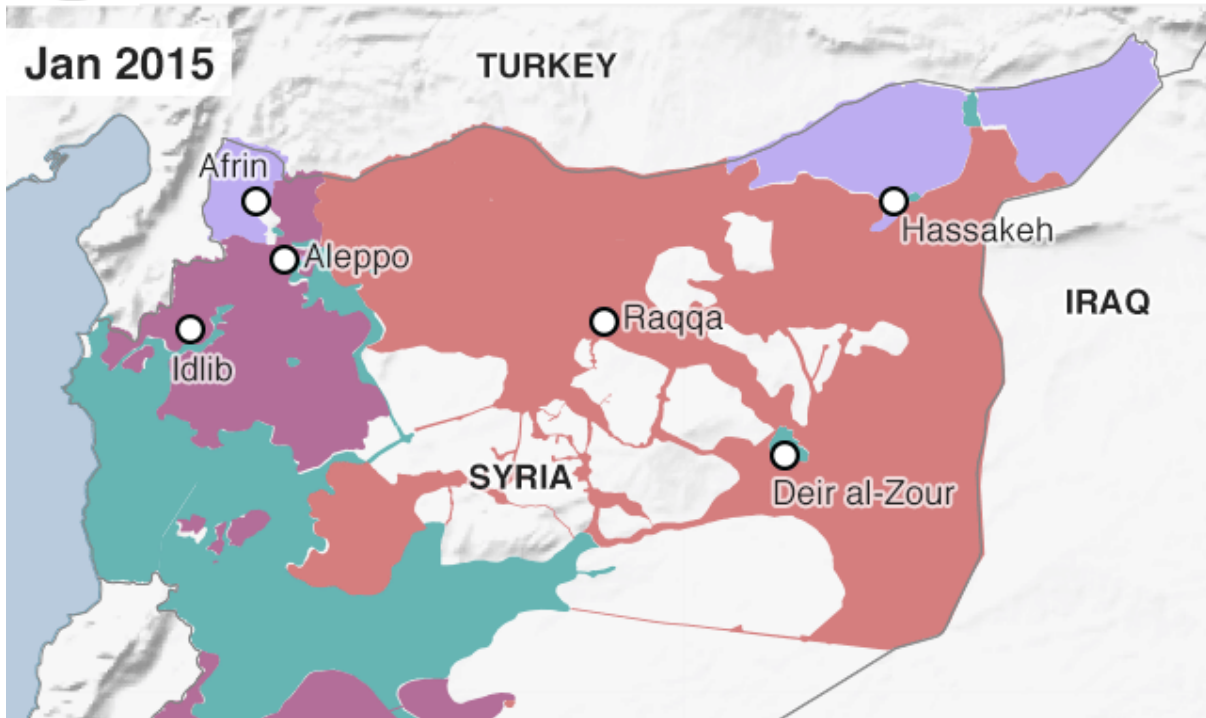
Source: Conflict Monitor by IHS Markit, Reach, 07 October 2019



Appendix B: SYRIA AREAS OF CONTROL MAPS, JAN 2015 & JAN 2018



- Syrian Kurdish forces
- Islamic State group
- Syrian government
- Syrian rebel forces



Source: IHS Conflict Monitor

BBC