



SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC

Once the centre of the Islamic Caliphate, Syria covers an area that has seen invasions and occupations over the ages, from Romans and Mongols to Crusaders and Turks.

A country of fertile plains, high mountains and deserts, it is home to diverse ethnic and religious groups, including Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians, Christians, Druze, Alawite Shia and Arab Sunnis, the last of who make up a majority of the Muslim population.

Modern Syria gained its independence from France in 1946, but has lived through periods of political instability driven by the conflicting interests of these various groups.

Since 2011 political power, long held by a small mainly Alawite elite, has been contested in a bitter civil conflict initially sparked by the Arab Spring.

Physical Geography

Official name: **Syrian Arab Republic**

Region: **Middle East**

Size in Squared Kilometers: **185,180 sq km**

Bordering Countries: **Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey**

Physical Features: **primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west**

Climate: **mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus**

Cultural Geography

Population: **17,064,854 (July 2014 est.)**

Ethnic Groups: **Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%**

Official language: **Arabic**

Other Languages Spoken: **Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian (widely understood); French, English (somewhat understood)**

Capital: **Damascus**

Other Major Cities: **Aleppo, Daraa, Hama, Al-Hasakah**

Quality of life : **Low**

Political Geography

Founded: **17 April 1946**

Type of Government : **presidential republic; highly authoritarian regime**

Country's leaders:

President: **Bashar al-Assad**

Prime minister: **Imad Mohammad Deeb Khamis**

Country's Military: **295,000 active personnel**

Allies: Iran, Russia, China, North Korea, Angola, Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Brazil. India, South Africa, Tanzania, Pakistan, Armenia, Argentina, Belarus, Tajikistan, Philippines, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and others. From among the Arab League states, Syria continues to have good relations with Iraq, Egypt (after 3 July 2013), Algeria, Kuwait, Lebanon and Oman.

Enemies: Britain, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, United States, Belgium, Spain, and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf

Economic Geography

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): **\$55.8 billion (2014 est.)**

Natural resources: wheat, barley, cotton, lentils, chickpeas, olives, sugar beets; beef, mutton, eggs, poultry, milk, petroleum, textiles, food processing, beverages, tobacco, phosphate rock mining, cement, oil seeds crushing

Currency: **Syrian pound**

Major Exports and Imports:

Exports: crude oil, minerals, petroleum products, fruits and vegetables, cotton fiber, textiles, clothing, meat and live animals, wheat

Imports: machinery and transport equipment, electric power machinery, food and livestock, metal and metal products, chemicals and chemical products, plastics, yarn, paper

Biggest Trading Partners:

Export Partners: Iraq 64.7%, Saudi Arabia 11.2%, Kuwait 7.1%, UAE 6.1%, Libya 4.6%

Import Partners: Saudi Arabia 27.9%, UAE 13.7%, Iran 10.1%, Turkey 9%, Iraq 8.3%, China 6.1%

