

Owen Brinker
Cedar Falls High School
Cedar Falls, IA, USA
Syria, Conflict

Syria: The Syrian Cost of Civil War

Syria has nearly 2.9 million food insecure people in their country who are at an extreme risk of dying everyday due to starvation (news.un.org). This poses the question of “How are there that many people who are at risk due to starvation? How could the government not help them in any way?” The short answer to that is that the government of Syria simply cannot handle supporting their people. They’re in the middle of a twelve year civil war where they simply cannot afford to help their citizens. Due to lack of support, Syria is one of the most food insecure nations in the world. However, war is not the one and only reason for this insecurity. Together, we will explore what is happening in Syria, why so many Syrian people are going hungry, and what Syria can do to help their people to get them out of their crisis.

Family Life of a Syrian

In Syria, a household is very family based where when it is possible, multiple generations will live in the same household (Evason: cultueralatlas.sbs.com.au). However, due to the civil war that is taking place, that life looks a little bit different. This is since men and women are not viewed as equal. Men are expected to go out and work while the women are expected to stay home and do the cleaning and cooking. There are not as many people living in one household due to most of the men in the family fighting in the war. There is also a large difference in how the household is supported from a financial standpoint. A lot of households have money that is coming from family members that are no longer living in Syria. They’re sending money overseas in order to support their loved ones. Another important aspect that has remained throughout the war is the defending of the family name. This is usually shown by fighting in the war and standing up for what they believe in. Although households have been greatly impacted, school systems have stayed the same. Similar to the United States, there is education at all levels ranging from K-12. However, it is not expected to go to school for all 13 of those years. A Syrian citizen averages about 9 years of education meaning that they will make it through the United States equivalent of elementary and middle school. The price of education and healthcare varies drastically due to the fact that education is completely free whereas healthcare is very expensive compared to the income of the normal Syrian citizen. The average price of healthcare is an average of \$70 USD (macrotrends.net). This is a very expensive price for healthcare when you consider that a person makes on average \$81.102 per month. This drastic price is why a lot of people do not access healthcare. People do not have access to normal necessities of life due to the fact that 90% of the population is living in poverty. That means that they do not have enough money in order to purchase things like food, clothing, healthcare, shelter, household, and hygiene items. Even if they did have the money, it is likely that they would not be able to find the items that they need. The main barriers that Syrians face are the overall effects of civil war taking place. Due to that war, Syrians have to worry about their safety as well as still trying to work a job and provide for their families. That is what leads a lot of families to flee the country as their solution to this barrier. In this case though, that is not an option for a lot of people so they have to stay in Syria and suffer the consequences of the war.

The Dependency of a Syrian

In Syria, 25.4% of their land is arable while only 5.8% is permanent crops (syriaaccountability.org). Due to this low amount of permanent crops, there are not enough crops to support the country. This would mean that the country is going to have to rely on another country's crops through import. This is where Syria runs into a problem. Due to the civil war, it is harder for close allies to grow crops and be able to grow these crops due to their participation in the war as well (Russia). That means that Syria will continue to not have enough food to support their population. More specifically, they're facing a wheat shortage because of this exact problem. By the end of 2022, it was projected that Syria will be short 2 million tons of wheat. That is going to result in more people going hungry because they will not have the resources they need.

The Diet of a Syrian

A typical diet that a Syrian family would have is very similar to a common meal that is seen in the United States. One commonality is the way that they prepare their food. The most common way to prepare food in Syria is by adding spices just like in the United States. The most common spices used include black pepper, allspice, paprika, sumac, cinnamon, nutmeg, cassia bark, coriander, cumin, and cardamom (saveur.com). However, there are indeed some differences. One difference is in the meat that they eat. The most popular kind of meat at a Syrian dinner is lamb (metrosouth.health.qld.gov.au). They still eat chicken and beef just like people do in the United States but they will predominantly eat lamb. Other differences that Syrian meals have is the common consumption of rice. In a meal in Syria, it is very common to have rice as a part of a meal alongside the meat that is being served. The consumption of cheeses, fruits, and vegetables are very similar to the United States. The main difference is that those are expected to be foods in everyday meals. In America, some of those foods are skipped in a daily meal, but that is not the case in Syria. The last thing that occurs within a Syrian's diet is the snacking and consumption of sweets. It is common for a Syrian to have a snack just like any other person. Those snacks usually consist of biscuits, dried fruit, and various sweet treats.

Present Food Dependency of a Syrian

The present status of food security in Syria is not in a good state. The price of food has increased upwards of 532% since 2020 meaning that Syrian citizens cannot purchase their food (Delafortrie:civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu). They simply do not have enough money in order to purchase the food that they need to survive. Although the increase of food is indeed the problem of food security, the thing that has caused the increase in goods is military conflict that is still taking place. The conflict has caused a severe disruption in agriculture as well as farming. That was the main source of food for Syria pre civil war and they are not able to grow the crops that they need meaning that they do not have enough food in the country in order to support their population. The food insecurity in Syria today is very severe. This is shown in an approximate 12.4 million people (about 60% of the population) suffer from food insecurity (reliefweb.int). That means that it is more common to have a food insecurity problem than it is to have a normal amount of food on your plate. The trend that Syria is seeing is an increase in food prices which is leading to an increase to food insecurity. Since the prices have increased so much, citizens do not have enough money to purchase the food that they need. Due to the war, importing of goods is not as prevalent meaning there is not going to be as much food. If there is not as much food, inflation is going to occur which is why citizens are not able to afford the food that they need. In the urban population, most people have the normal health effects of food insecurity. The main health effect is high blood pressure due to the stress of trying to provide food that is simply not there (feeding

america.org). The rural population is not as worried as the urban population since they don't have to transport crops. They already have their crops that they have grown. The urban population is worried about not getting crops that are grown because transportation is not what it was before the outbreak of the war. That civil war has impacted farmers by the forced abandonment and destruction of fields as well as the rapidly changing frontlines (csis.org). The farmers have to worry about their safety first. That means that their crops are going to come second. When they're in danger because of the war, they leave. That means that crops are not going to be fully taken care of where they are going to die and not be sent out to the people who need them. The women are expected to be the main cooks of the family (care.org). This means that they're not eating as much as they should because their first priorities are feeding their husband's and children. This leads to the possibility of not having enough food to feed themselves. For men in Syria, the food insecurities are hitting them in a different way since they're off fighting in the war. Their food supply is making it harder for them to fight because they do not have enough needed energy in order to actually fight (carnegieendowment.org). With the elderly and youth populations, they're commonly together due to them being of no use in the war due to their dependent age groups. That means that both the youth and elderly are depending on the men and women of working age to provide for them. Even though they are not of the working age, food is not always on the table. Minorities are not different from the rest of the population when it comes to food insecurity. This shows that it does not matter what someone's ethnic background is, there is simply not enough food to go around. Food insecurity has taken a toll on the environment in the soil causing erosion (internetgeography.net). Soil erosion occurs because the farm lands are no longer being taken care of. For example, when farmers have to leave Syria for their own safety, no one is there to take care of the land. That erosion will eventually lead to more pollution in waterways which will decrease water quality and marine species making it harder for Syrians to have clean water which is also limiting yet another food supply (worldwildlife.org).

The Ending of the Syrian Conflict

The Syrian Conflict needs to end in order to get the food security back to Syria. The leaders of this effort would be nothing other than the governments involved in the war where the anti-government rebels and the governments involved come to an agreement. It would have to be the leaders of each side who are participating in the war since they are the ones who are in charge of the fighting. No citizen is going to be able to stop that war that has been raging on for over 12 years. Due to the fact that Syria is a part of the United Nations (UN), they're the most likely lead organization that would participate in peace efforts. There is not a whole lot that citizens can do. It is what they can do afterwards that will most drastically help. While actually ending it, the only people that are going to be able to do anything are those in a politically powerful position. If people in that position are able to end the war, citizens of Syria are then going to have to step up. They're going to have to step up in the sense of going back to work. That work would consist of mainly growing crops which would boost the economy once again. Without the citizens returning to their work, their situation will stay the same no matter if their fighting ceases. Although it sounds easy for a country to say "we are never going to go to war again", that is simply impossible. Switzerland and Sweden are the two countries that have the longest streak of peace with their last military conflict being in 1815. However, they have still been in a military conflict. The policies that would need to be implemented are those that would make it so food is still accessible in the event of a military conflict. Some of these policies would include international trade, increased farming, and storage of goods. Without those policies and the inevitable occurrence of another military conflict, Syria will go into the same kind of crisis that they're currently in. The biggest thing that needs to be considered is the outcome of the military conflict. It is easy to say, "let's end the war and everything will return to normal". But that is not the case. The reason that the civil war started was because there was a conflict between different parts of Syria. The reason that the war has not ended is because they have not come to a resolution. With that being said, it is going to be hard to get anything done that is going to let Syria be a food secure country again because there will always be that disagreement if the problem is never resolved.

The way that the ending of the war will be sustainable is through the fact that food would be able to be regulated once again. Without the war happening, farmers will be able to get back to growing the correct amount of crops in which the Syrian population will be able to be supported. It will also be sustainable because once the war ends, there will not be as much military conflict which will mean that farmers and their crops will no longer be disrupted.

Increased Production of Crops

Another solution to the increased hunger is producing more crops. That increased amount of food would mean that they would have enough food to survive and provide for their families. The main leader of the increase of goods produced would be the leaders themselves with government assistance. The farmers would have to play a great part because they're the ones who are growing the plants. Government intervention would also help by decreasing the price to grow crops which would give incentive to farmers to grow more of the crops needed. Funding would come through the government with possible bills/acts that will provide farmers with an increased income. That money would then give those farmers enough money to grow more of the crops that are needed to support the Syrian citizens as well as provide a bit of a cushion by giving them an extra amount of money. Citizens that live in the urban areas are not going to be able to help out in the farming efforts if they are still living in the urban areas. That means that from a citizen standpoint of those that are not in government, the only thing that can be done is to plant crops, grow them, and insure that they are grown well and in a large multitude. The main things that can be implemented in this case is something that is similar to what is already in the United States. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) is responsible for the aid of farmers after disasters as well as conserving natural resources. This would be a very large help in Syria if something along the same lines were created. It would help farmers that struggled greatly throughout the war getting them back on their feet. Once they are back on their feet, they would be able to start to grow crops just like they had done before the war. If they're able to get back to pre-war production, the Syrian citizens would be able to be supported once again. The biggest thing that needs to be taken into consideration is that the reason that Syria is in the crisis of lack of crops is because of the war and that farmers were not able to take care of their crops like what they needed. That means that they are not going to be able to take care of their crops like what they need to if that war doesn't end. Without the war ending, crop production cannot and will not get back to where it once was. This solution will be sustainable since this will get farmers back to pre-war production. Once they're back to normal, they will be able to produce enough crops to support the population.

Receiving of Aid

The final solution that will increasingly help Syria is receiving aid from other countries in the way of helping them through the war as well as giving them materials and basic necessities of life once they are out of the conflict. The main leader(s) of this effort would be the governments of both Syria and whichever country they would be hoping to receive aid from. This would be up to the governments because the foreign aid would be on a large scale, something that a normal citizen would not be able to negotiate. The governments would have to negotiate how much foreign aid they're wanting and how they're going to get. This ultimately would be funded by whichever country that would be willing to support Syria through foreign aid. However, this is when it is going to become difficult for Syria based on what they decide for their outcome of the war. In the Syrian Civil War, there are two main groups fighting. The Syrian Government and the Syrian Rebel Groups who are looking to overtake the government. Since there are multiple sides, let's explore what countries would most likely be able to give in aid depending on how the war ends.

Syrian Government

The countries/groups that support the Syrian Government directly and indirectly are Iran, Russia, Hezbollah, and Turkey. One large factor on international aid and a telltale on if a country may give aid is their export numbers. This is due to the fact that in order to export goods, they would need to have the goods in the first place. That is the same thing with international aid, in order to give international aid, they must already have the resources. Among the countries that are listed, Russia has the highest amount of exports at 484 billion USD and Iran has the lowest amount of exports at 14 billion USD. That shows that it is more likely for Russia to provide aid than Iran due to Russia having more goods. However, there is an issue that would arise even though the Syrian Government has countries with large export values. That problem would be what they are exporting. Between the three countries in support of the Syrian Government, their main source of income is in the natural metals and non-renewable energy resources. Syria does not need those things in order to get their crops back, they need seeds and irrigation systems for cover cropping in order to fix their eroded soil. However, it is possible for those countries to be able to get those seeds and materials for irrigation systems via imports. Of the countries helping the Syrian Government, Russia has the highest import value at 271 billion USD and Iran has the lowest import value at 28.7 billion USD. Again, Syria would be more dependent on Russia due to their highest import values amongst the other allies.

Syrian Opposition

The countries/groups that are in support of the Syrian Opposition directly and indirectly are the United States, Turkey, and the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council). One large difference between the group of countries that are supporting the sides is that there are three countries that are supporting the Syrian Government whereas there are a total of eight countries (including the six from the GCC) that are supporting the Syrian Opposition. Another large difference between the two sides is the amount of exports that are performed. On the Syrian Government side, the highest export value was Russia with \$484 billion. With the Syrian Opposition, the United States has the highest export value with 1.63 trillion USD with the lowest value being Bahrain with 15 billion USD. That means that the Syrian Opposition has a much larger amount of money that they could provide their respective sides. However, the Syrian Opposition side is going to run into similar issues as the Syrian Government as the countries that are supporting them are not known for producing the items needed to retain soil fertility. Therefore, in order to help, those countries would also have the resort to using imports to be able to get those resources. Similarly to the export values, the US has a very high value at 2.73 trillion USD meaning they would be heavily relied on in getting the necessary materials to the correct people.

What can the People Do?

There are not many roles that people can play in the acquiring of the foreign aid due to it being up to the government to actually get the materials needed through foreign aid. However, citizens are going to play the role of how they're actually going to use the resources once they acquire them. They are going to need to ensure that they use the materials that they are given in their entirety. It is also their responsibility to ensure that they're able to use those materials and make sure that they will be able to return to normal pre-war activities which will start to get the entirety of the country of Syria back to their pre-war state. The policies that would need to be implemented would entail agreements between Syria and other countries that would be providing aid for. Those agreements would include what kind of resources they would be receiving and the amount of those objects. Without these agreements, the foreign aid would not be able to take place. The biggest consideration in this case are the countries that are participating in the war and whether they are on the Syrian Government side of the Syrian Revolution's side. This is an important factor because this would be limiting the countries that they would be able to receive

international aid from. Depending on how the war ends and what decisions are made, certain countries may agree or disagree with what they decide. The countries that agree with the final decision would most likely be happy to give international aid. However, the countries that disagree with the final decision would not want to give international aid. The decision of the war is going to impact most if not all Syria's international aid. This would be sustainable for some amount of time because most countries that provide aid are going to have enough of those certain materials where they will be able to share and still have enough for their population. However, international aid is dependent on other countries. If one of those countries has a military conflict or a natural disaster, they're much less likely to want to support another country. That would mean that it is very unpredictable when resources from those other countries could go away. If those countries do stop sharing resources, it could be detrimental to the Syrian citizens and things could return to how they are now.

What is the Best Solution for Syria?

The start of "most of the problems" is when the civil war broke out. When the war started, the production of the crops was not enough for the growing population. Before the war, Syria was one of the most food secure countries in their region. But now, they're one of the most food insecure countries in the world. If the war never started, they would not have the problems that they do now. With that being said, the best solution for Syrians to not be one of the most food insecure nations in the world is for the war to stop. The food that Syria has the least amount of is crops. That would make someone think that the solution to this problem would be to grow more crops thus bringing food security back up to its pre-war state. The reason that there are not as many crops being grown is because farmers are fleeing for their own safety. The other reason that crops are dying is because of the moving frontlines of the war. Frontlines will move into farmlands and destroy most crops. All of this is happening because of the war. Even if the Syrian government could get more crops planted, those crops would not survive. They also cannot rely on international aid for everything either since there is no way that they are going to have enough materials while they're still fighting the war. When a war happens, countries run out of materials. It is also harder for international aid to take place because countries are not as willing to give materials depending on their views of the war. Meaning international aid is not going to bring Syria out of their current state. That leaves only one other solution, and that is ending the war. If the war ends, citizens will return which will bring back the farmers leading to crops being replenished. They will also be able to depend on that international aid until they're able to remain stable on their own once again. Once they have those resources back again without the war, they will return to their pre-war habitats and go back to being one of the most food-secure nations in their region.

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