



Syria

Background:

In 2010, pro-democratic supporters who publicly announced their beliefs and ideas were violently put down. The President of the country, Bashar al-Assad, ordered the Syrian national guard to fire upon the protesters. This act sparked what is now known as the Syrian Civil War. After the nation of Syria was refused the resignation of President Assad in which they had demanded, violence erupted. Protesters took up arms against the security forces overseeing their area. Brigades were organized by protesters to fight government forces for the control of their area. Two years later, this violence reached the capital city of Syria. There has also been a historical feud between the Shia and Sunni sects of Islam. This conflict has grown to more than just between those who have opinions about President Assad, who is part of the Sunni sect of Islam. This causes even more tension between the Shia and Sunnis. There are also other conflicts and international issues that have risen out of the Syrian Civil War, such as the Islamic extremist group, the Islamic State (IS). Between 2013 and 2015, 160,000 were killed in this conflict, with a total of more than 250,000 deaths. The treatment of innocent civilians in this conflict is a source of great concern to the United Nations. Both sides of this conflict have committed innumerable war crimes, including murder, torture, rape, kidnappings, and the use of civilian sufferings. These are when one side of a conflict cuts off the access civilians have to basic health necessities such as water, food, and medical supplies. The United Nations has accused the IS of conducting a campaign of terror. Around 19,000 have been killed by IS in Iraq alone. They either kill or inflict major physical pain upon anyone who opposes their beliefs. Public executions and amputations, mass killings, and taking and killing hostages, a few of whom were Westerners, are



common. Another travesty that has risen from this conflict is the effect that chemical weapons have had on the civilian population. In 2013, a controversy was created when rockets filled with a deadly toxin known as sarin, were launched at a civilian area, killing hundreds of people. The controversy came from the accusation aimed at the Syrian Government, who claimed that it was, in fact, a rebel brigade that had fired these missiles. The conflict in Syria has also led to more than eleven million people being displaced, with 6.5 million of those being internally displaced, and the other 4.5 million have sought refuge in surrounding countries such as Jordan, Turkey, and Lebanon have had an influx of refugees, and even countries in Europe have had refugees seeking shelter. Not only do the sides of this conflict displace these people, but they continue to cause enormous detriment to their lives by placing them in areas where receiving international aid is next to impossible, and constantly surround those areas with violent conflict.

UN Involvement:

The United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2254 in 2015 in order for peaceful solutions be sought after and implemented in order to cease the conflict in Syria. This Resolution reaffirmed a resolution in 2012 that stated that the United Nations was in favor of a Syrian-led resolution to the conflict, and led to the creation of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG). Resolution 2254 called for elections to be held in Syria in order to ensure that the civilian population be represented in their government in the hope that these elections would ease tensions throughout the country and create peace. This resolution also calls for a ceasefire across the country. Ceasefires have been implemented and followed in small areas for extended periods of time, but not on a national scale, as is being requested now. In 2016, two task forces were created by the ISSG for the purpose of providing humanitarian aid to the areas



that, as stated before, are in places where aid is near impossible to receive. Intra-Syrian Geneva Talks have also been undertaken for the purpose of resolving the conflict in Syria. The first talks were held in February of 2016, but were postponed due to an extended period of violence and lack of humanitarian aid being provided, but they resumed again in March.

The Security Council has been largely ineffective in the Syrian Civil War due to disagreements between Russia and the U.S. over how to solve the conflict. The U.S. supports Syrian rebel groups and the overthrow of President Assad, citing Assad's relentless bombardment of Syrian civilians as a reason why he should no longer be in power. On the other hand, Russia supports the government of President Assad, promoting the government in its fight against Syrian rebel groups. Russia has good relations with President Assad and his Syrian government and hopes to maintain Russian power in the region by keeping Assad in power, thereby continuing Russian-Syrian cooperation and preventing the U.S. and its Western allies from installing a new government in Syria. While Russia and the U.S. do agree that ISIS must be eradicated in Syria, their disagreement over the future of Syria has resulted in frequent vetoes which continue to prevent the Security Council from resolving the crisis.

Questions to Consider:

1. Why have no political prisoners been released from Syria?
2. What are direct steps that the United Nations has taken to eradicate the IS?
3. How could the Sunni and Shia aspect of the conflict lead to further problems?
4. Does your country promote President Assad, or Syrian rebel groups?
5. How can the disagreement between Russia and Western nations be resolved? Is there a solution which can bridge the gap between the two stubborn parties?



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