



ODUMUNC 2013 Issue Brief for the Security Council



International Response to the Situation in Syria

Old Dominion University Model United Nations Society

Unrest in the Middle East and North Africa is caused by complex and deep political, religious, cultural, ethnic, territorial, and economic tensions, but there had never been a domino effect of countries having revolutions. The Arab Spring revolutions started in December 2010 with a protest in Tunisia. As the Tunisian revolution unfolded, other countries like Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Yemen had similar revolutions. Some were successful overthrowing dictatorial rule, others forcing government changes, while others still cause deaths and chaos.

The longest and bloodiest revolution is taking place in Syria. Syria, at the present moment, is in a disorganized state. The Syrian government is a republic under the authoritarian regime of President Bashar al Assad, who received the presidency after his father died. The Assad's rule relies on the support of the minority Alawites, a sect constituting about 10 percent of Syria's 20 million people. After an initial period of liberalization, he responded to the Arab Spring by aggressive action to restrict protests, especially affecting people of the majority Sunni sect. This escalated in the summer of 2011 in full civil war between rebel factions and government forces, causing over 25,000 deaths, leaving hundreds of thousands homeless or displaced, including about 300,000 refugees in neighboring Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.



The United Nations has been largely paralyzed. After accepting intervention in Libya in 2011, Syrian supporters—especially China and Russia—have refused to allow UN resolutions that would allow similar action in Syria. Any UN action must equally restrict the government and rebel groups, they insist, while insuring Syria's territorial integrity and respecting its sovereignty. Other governments, including the West, much of the Arab world and Latin America, believe the gross human rights violations require aggressive action against the government of Assad. Another major concern is Syria's chemical weapons, which could be used against its people or fall into the hands of terrorist organizations and be a threat to many other countries and regional security.

There are a number of stances United Nations members can take: be opposed to the current government, support Syria and its actions, or be neutral on the situation. The United States is



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against any human rights violation Syria has taken and has taken away any funding that Syria was receiving from them. Russia has decided not to interfere with the situation because it is an internal dispute and anyone interfering is disrespecting Syria's sovereignty.

There are many solutions to the Syrian problem dependent upon the positions and actions U.N. members have taken. For example, The Arab League has suspended Syria's membership and many countries have placed sanctions on Syria.

Resources

[Country background at BBC News Country Profiles](#) (facts, leaders, perspectives and links for all countries)

[Country background at CIA World Factbook](#) (history, people and governments for all countries)

[Russia's Syria Stance](#), *IISS Strategic Comments*, September 2012

[Syria profile](#), *BBC*

[Syria Uprising caused by Arab Spring](#), *BBC*, 21, Sep 2012

[Syria, Foreign Intervention Debated](#), *IISS Strategic Comments*, Sep 2012

[Syrian Uprising Raises The Specter Of Sectarian War](#), *NPR* 4, Jan 2012

[Syria's Chemical Weapons](#), *IISS Strategic Comments*, August 2012

[The Arab Spring One Year Later](#), *NPR*

[The Arab Spring: A Year of Revolution](#), *NPR*, 17, Dec 2011