

Introduction:

At this simulation we hope to continue the work which has been a core value since our founding: to promote the sanctity and forever present value of human rights across the globe. Promoting freedom and defending those basic rights has not always been the easiest task, but with hard work and the ever-present ideal of diplomacy, anything is possible. In the country of Syria countless atrocities have been committed, there are those who are starving, dying of thirst, all of whom lack access to even the most primitive health care due to the constant bombardment of cities and towns suspected of harboring rebel groups. A ceasefire is necessary and diplomacy is key. Third parties cannot continue to funnel arms into a nation locked in conflict, constantly escalating the scale of violence and ensuring the death tolls will rise by the thousands each day. We will work tirelessly to make sure every human death which can be avoided is, and we may only pray that all of the other delegations here today are wishing for the same as well.

Key Points:

- Human rights: The Moscow Helsinki Group is a humanitarian organization. Originally formed to monitor soviet compliance with human rights provisions in the Helsinki Final Act, our duties have developed to monitor human rights in a variety of countries through our satellite groups formed across the 70's. There is no doubt in our minds that there have been thousands of atrocities and human rights violations committed during the Syrian civil war. With Russia being so heavily involved in the conflict, we must continue to perform our duties of monitoring and following the actions of the Russian government, ensuring they do not have a hand in the violations and, if they do, to hold them responsible for their actions.
- Refugees: Key to the human rights crisis happening in Syria is the massive migration of refugees from Syria into Europe. As a human rights organization, we would like a hand in making sure that these refugees are treated with dignity, respect, and understanding. We understand the difficulty for nations in dealing with this type of massive immigration, especially for those nations that have never experienced this type of refugee crisis. Because of the situations complexity and because we ourselves are a European country with offshoots in and around eastern Europe, we feel our involvement in the management of the refugee crisis is essential and extremely helpful. We would like to see the refugees provided with the basic help they need, such as shelter, food, and clothing. Figuring out this crisis will be of the utmost concern in this conference, and we feel that we have the background and jurisdiction to provide guidance on the handling of these issues.
- Responsibility: Since our founding in 1976, we have dealt with the revelation of human rights violation and the pressuring of authorities to fulfill their duties in intervening to

stop these atrocities. Many nations, primarily the US and Russia, have become heavily involved in the Syrian civil war, most notably through the use of drone strikes and the arming of a multiplicity of different factions. There is no doubt that these efforts have produced some good by destroying ISIS operatives. Yet these efforts have also undoubtedly led to innocent civilian deaths, the arming of radical groups, the influx of arms into Syria, and a general escalation in the conflict. We want to make sure that these nations that have become so heavily involved are made accountable for their mistakes, and how their actions may create ripples that further destroy Syria.

Background:

The Helsinki accords of 1975 were the first step in creating a more peaceful and humanitarian world. To ensure the full implementation of these rights in our own country as well as many others, the Moscow Helsinki group was founded by Yuri Fyodorovich Orlov on May 12, 1976.

The main focus of our group was originally to bring together many different activists across the USSR and center in on the drive for a continued upholding of basic human rights. Following our humble beginnings we started reporting and keeping track of the many different kinds of incidents violating those rights described in the Helsinki accords, such as the abuse of psychiatry and rights of political prisoners. Before the first dissolution of our group, we compiled nearly 200 reports of incidents throughout the Soviet Union and called on many signatory states to follow up on our publications.

The existence of the group led to many other organizations. Helsinki watch groups were created in Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Lithuania, with all the groups being formed by our group as an example. Our ties remain prevalent in countries such as the United States, as it was our group's communication with the Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick which led to the creation of the US Helsinki Commission, ensuring the goals of the Helsinki accords in lands across the Atlantic.

Being re-established in 1989, our goals continued to be supporting those who cannot defend themselves against human rights violations at home and abroad. With the existence of many other groups around us, including those of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, it has become increasingly clear that human rights issues are a continuing goal of the modern world.

Governance:

Beginning in 1970, and lasting until 2000, the Syrian government was under the control of a single man, Hafez al-Assad. The late dictator was adamant about never allowing another person or group become more powerful than him. He kept his hold on the government by spying

on his people, and maintaining a ruthless image. Our group does not support this type of government at all. We believe that the government should have given the people of Syria a say in how they were governed, rather than giving all of the power to a president which caused him to quickly take the form of a dictator. In addition, we do not agree with the way the administration established a sense of fear in and appeared harsh and cruel to the general population. In 1982, over 20,000 rebel, protesters, and innocent civilians were killed by government officials, in what is now known as the Hama Massacre. We believe that the government should've listened to the opinions of protesters and rebels rather than killing them and innocent people. This also could have prevented future protests.

Some of the largest contributors in Syria during this current conflict include ISIS, less influential terrorist groups in the region, groups such as Hezbollah, and the Syrian army and government. The group, ISIS, has been an active terrorist group since December of 2013. Though we mainly monitor Soviet compliance with existing human rights laws, the increasing human rights violations recorded by the UN Commission of Inquiry committed by the group has become alarming. Smaller terrorist groups have also seized certain regions in Syria. Groups such as Hezbollah are considered a terrorist group by many countries and is also a Lebanese political party. At this moment, they are reinforcing their position throughout Syria by bringing more terrorists into the country. They are also fighting with the U.S over weapons. Our organization has had no ties to this group because there hasn't been a fair amount of questioning in their violations of human rights. A third group playing an active role in the conflict in Syria is the Syrian government itself. Since 2000, the president, Bashar al-Assad, and his administration has tried to maintain the tight hold over the country that his father held for three decades, but has failed to do so. The army has attacked protesters and is responsible for many massacres and a high percentage of the deaths during this ongoing conflict. We do not have ties to the Syrian government because we do mainly focus on Soviet violations, but have become concerned with Syria's long history of violations of human rights.

Once the conflict in Syria has ended, we believe that Syria will require a new constitution. This is desperately needed because the repeated violations of its original constitution and the fact that it gave so much power to the Assad family is what caused the conflict in the first place. If there is a constitution that gives citizens the right to elect leaders and restricts the power of government officials, there will be less reason for protests and rebel groups to start again. We also believe a new constitution that gives more power to the people, and doesn't violate their rights will not only improve conflict within Syria but will cause the nation to not be seen as cruel, dangerous, and violent as it is seen today by the rest of the world.

We are advocating for a fair Syrian government that treats its people with respect, rather than one that tortures and attacks them. Currently, the Syrian government is violating several human rights by bombing civilians, unjustly arresting them, and torturing teenagers. Syria needs a government that functions with and for the people, not against them. While both sides have committed war crimes, Assad's regime's relentless attacks against civilians have certainly increased the tension between both sides. Neither are willing to compromise because they both believe that they are right. However, egos need to be put aside by all parties so that the focus can turn to healing the broken country and system of government. The Syrian government is supposed to incorporate the opinions of its people but seems to ignore that. Instead, it focuses on

exerting power and control over the people. The government has a system of checks and balances in place using three different branches of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. This system seems to be failing in Syria because the government is being dominated by the al-Assad family. Assad is drowning out the other branches, and his the military is controlling the system. In order for the conflict between the government and the people to settle down, Assad must be deprived of power, which should happen immediately due to his repeated violations of the Helsinki accords.

Prior to the conflict, the military and the civilians clashed over certain issues but never got as involved as they are now. During the conflict, the military began massacring and killing civilians whenever they saw fit. There was a disregard for the law and the constitution by both the military and civilian governments, so there was really no structure to the fighting. For the military, the conflict is about exhibiting power and getting their way, but for the civilians it is about being able to live safely and happily in their nation. Human rights violations by the Syrian government and military include chemical weapon attacks, enforced disappearances, torture, unlawful killing, shelling of civilian areas, collective punishment, and attacks on medical personnel. Some war crimes committed by rebel groups include unlawful killing, torture, kidnapping, poison gas attacks, and the use of children in dangerous non-combat roles.

Third parties have definitely played a major role in the conflicts in Syria, but some do more harm than good. Russia, in particular, has assisted Assad with military support by bombing rebel strongholds. While they claim to be helping stop Islamic terrorism, in reality they are only murdering civilians and violating even more human rights. In addition, third party involvement seems to be escalating the chaos of the conflict. The support of weapons, fighters, and money has given advantages to both sides, particularly the Syrian government, and fueled the armed conflict. Without these the war may have ended or at least been subdued long ago. This conflict needs a diplomatic solution more than a military victory. If third parties truly intended to help resolve the situation in Syria, they would provide medical or rescue aid to civilians rather than weapons to massacre them. At this point, there is no unity in the country because the war is between the government and divided groups of people. Eventually a government will need to be reestablished, but, for now, the focus should be on preventing and stopping human rights violations. or third parties like Russia, participation is necessary economically because they are protecting themselves. Syria has been a benefactor to Russia by supplying them with weapons. Third parties could play a vital role in ending the conflict, but for now they should step back because their involvement is escalating it.

Strategic Security:

Since March 15th, 2011, Syria has been in an extremely bloody civil war, that has had between 312,000 and 470,000 casualties. The unrest escalated to armed conflict after President Bashar al-Assad's government violently repressed protests calling for his removal. These protests stemmed from the Arab Spring movement, which called for a new form of government other than dictatorship.

The war is currently being fought by several factions: the Syrian government and its allies, several Sunni Arab rebel groups (Free Syrian Army), the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces, jihadist groups who generally cooperate with the rebels, and the Islamic State of Iraq and

the Levant (ISIL). Many international countries have stepped in to offer support, on both sides of the conflict. These countries include Iran, Iraq (Supporting the Syrian government), The United States, France (supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces), and Russia (has shown support for both SDF and the Syrian government). Other countries such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, Netherlands, Australia and Jordan, haven't shown any specific support for either the SDF or the Syrian government, but have contributed to the fight against ISIL. We are a human rights organisation and will support the desire for peace. We will participate in peace talks in order to ensure a safer environment in the region.

In June of 2016, The U.S. State Department estimated that the number of foreign fighters involved in the Syrian conflict reached into the range of 40,000. Earlier Russian estimates put the number at somewhere between 25,000 and 30,000. These foreign militants come from a variety of countries, mainly neighboring countries, and Gulf Arab states, with additional militants coming from nations such as China, Chechnya, the North Caucasus region, and finally the West. The Moscow Group is extremely dedicated to the future of Syria. We want to ensure that human rights are upheld going forward, as well as end the appalling loss of life which is currently occurring the region.

We believe that stability is the best way to prevent future conflict, therefore we will work to ensure that the concerns of the opposition groups are met. However, security is also a large concern moving forward. The peace that we are working to create will not last without a stable government that is able to defend themselves in the event that another conflict breaks out. As the fighting in Syria has been so brutal, and resulted in the loss of nearly 50,000 innocent civilians over the course of the war, the Moscow Group recognizes that a ceasefire is absolutely necessary to protect the human rights of the remaining citizens of Syria. However, while a ceasefire is necessary, it must come with the condition that peace talks begin immediately, and that all groups are represented. In past talks, many voices have been excluded, leading only to further fighting and loss of life. In order to prevent this, the conversation must not be dominated outside foreign powers, and rather the groups in Syria looking for an end to the conflict.

Before the Syrian Conflict there was positive change stirring up as Syria was meeting with multiple nations and creating better relationships with Iraq. In 2006 Syria after almost a quarter of a decade had began diplomatic relations with Iraq again. Conditions were improved as they had also reached out and spoken to the EU as the started diplomatic conversations again. The united state had also sent diplomats to Syria in 2007 along with members of Congress to represent a close on sanctions it had on Syria.

France followed close after and then Lebanon entered diplomatic relations after 70 years since both countries declared independence. After many other following diplomatic missions the US finds proof and accuses Syria of supporting terrorist groups, and feeding Lebanon nuclear missiles. This ended the positive relationship with Syria and put them in the downward spiral to the current situation many witness today. Syria's border before the conflict was uneasy as there was constant disagreement with Iraq on official borders. Neither country was able to acknowledge the border the other had put in place or believed was the true boarder so there was minor conflict and disagreement concerning that.

Syria's army before the conflict was fairly powerful and was used to enter Lebanon on multiple occasions. They had small skirmishes during the Lebanon war, and the troops since then have been used occasionally to police their surrounding countries. Their army was small at only 1.5 million troops, but was good enough for the small missions they accomplished. At the end of the Lebanon war the Syrian army was occupying Lebanon illegally and was eventually forced out in 2005. Since then though there have been multiple accusations of the Syrian military forcing themselves into Lebanese affairs, and even murdering key political leaders. The UN eventually launched an investigation of their involvement, and is still continuing it to this day.

The Moscow group supports the investigation and would like to see an end to the shrouded and very present Lebanese and Syrian conflicts. Their army during the civil war has drastically shrunk. They started out with about a million troops, but in its current state only about 70,000 troops are under the government's control. The Moscow group is very comfortable and happy for the shrinking size of the army, because as it slows the amount of human lives and tortured individuals.

Isis is slowly taking over Syria's government and are very quickly becoming a majority in the country. The Islamic state has murdered 300,000 Syrians and has left many millions displaced or seriously harmed. We the Moscow group identify and acknowledge this crisis and hope to be able to cooperate with the UN or other nations willing to help in order to stop the abuse of the Syrians and help restore their civil rights.

Local Security:

We believe that Russia's further involvement in the Syrian conflict and their continued support for the forces of Assad and various Assad-backed fighters only creates more issues in this increasingly complex conflict. Assad has used chemical weapons to suppress resistance, and his fractured fighting forces have committed multiple atrocities and human rights violations. Russia's routine bombing of Syria has only helped to crumble the country, and this involvement does nothing to assist civilians on the ground or to preserve any sort of peace, infrastructure, or community that might still exist in Syria. Syria is a breeding ground for various fighters, and while Russia and many other parties, such as the US and Turkey, aim primarily to take out ISIS fighters, the bombings are far too unreliable in their targets, and end up having devastating effects.

We believe that Russia should demobilize troops in Syria and not continue to mass bomb cities and towns. This causes many casualties and can result in the death of civilians which violates human rights. People die every day from the bombings and other related crimes by Russia in Syria. Russia is using the attacks on Aleppo as an excuse to bomb the Syrian rebels. Currently war crime accusations are being centered on Russia. Some crimes include using tactics known as bunker busting which is used to take out military installations and is now being used on homes of civilians and rebels alike. Some other crimes include the use of incendiary munitions used to burn the town down. With very little water they are having trouble putting out the fires. With close to 275,000 and only 8,000 combatants civilians there there is much chance for casualty that are not the intended targets. With the UK foreign secretary Boris Johnson, saying:

“Putin’s regime is not just handing Assad the revolver; he is in some instances firing the revolver. The Russians themselves are actually engaged.”

With such mass attacks casualties are piling up. With one instance of purposely targeting a medical health facility. In the month of september and october a recorded 440 deaths have been from russia bombings with at least 90 children injured or dead from such attacks. With many people living in tents the incendiary attacks tend to be very devastating. Laws of war dictate that all parties partaking in war must minimize any risks on civilians which russian has not done. Additionally, Russia continues to support Assad in the use of chemical agents in Syria.

Additionally, the dozens of fighting groups are used by the US and Russia to fight a proxy war, with Syrians as the primary victims. With dozens of different fighting factions, it becomes less and less clear to these countries militaries which are friends and which are foes. The result is the arming of a variety of forces, many of which simply add gasoline to the fire. It becomes increasingly unclear who is loyal to whom, resulting in mistakes like the accidental March 1 strike on US-backed forces by Russian-backed forces.

We would urge that US and Russian forces focus primarily on their shared goal of defeating the Islamic State and of taking Raqqa, ISIS’s de-facto capital. Beyond that, we urge the complete cease of other sorts of proxy fighting, including the bombing of rival forces. With the country in shambles, Syria cannot afford to be used any further as a chessboard for Russia and the US to fight their petty battles. In addition, Russia should withdraw any sort of support they continue to supply to the sadistic Assad regime. The war games of the world superpowers have given the Syrian civil war teeth it should never have had, leading us to the next problem: reintegration.

It would be impossible to discuss the Syrian civil war without discussing the massive displacement and refugee crisis that has ensued, due to the war’s cataclysmic proportions. While the refugees pose a massive problem themselves in regards to reintegration, we too must focus on the actual fighters of this conflict, many of which confusedly factionalize, adding more complexity to the war.

For critical resources such as Oil and Water, we believe that a joint UN task force would be best equipped. Oil is a large motivator for both the US and Russia, and keeping this task as far away from either of these countries is in Syria’s best interest. The distribution of food and water should also be left to the UN, though with a heavier involvement from Russia and the US, whose vast military resources will be key in making sure the process is gone about safely and effectively.

Social Reconstruction:

We believe that Syria has the power to reform itself through our pressure on the authorities for them to reform to a more stable environment. The Assad family had control of the nation. Hafez al-Assad took power through the military in 1970. At his death, his son Bashar al-Assad took over the country. Bashar did hold an election, but ran unopposed. There was stability in daily life, reinforced by the strong and sometime violent ways that religious tensions were suppressed. Before the war, there was stability in civil society often forcibly imposed by the Assad regime. Pro-reform movements were suppressed, leading intellectuals were arrested, and

internet censorship tightened.

Currently, Syria is known to be a place of weapons, terrorists, and no religious freedom. However, it was not always like this. Syria published in their 1973 Constitution that they would protect religious freedom as long as it did not disrupt the public. Other laws and policies have backed this as well. Since then, in their 2012 Constitution the Syrian government has placed restrictions on religious freedom including outlawing “Muslim Extremist Groups” and Jehovah’s Witnesses from practicing their faith. Also, their President must be Muslim. Although some groups were discriminated against, other groups, such as Christianity (which makes up about 10% of their population) were protected. There was ongoing religious tensions, and though the government restricted religious freedoms, as it deemed fit.

In 1876, Syria published its first constitution (with permission of the Ottoman Empire), administering a council of elected and appointed officials, and establishing municipal councils (whose members were chosen by religious leaders). After World War I, Syria was in French control, and after many tumultuous years, they created a new constitution in 1973. This constitution stated in its fourth principle that democracy was the best form of government and that freedom was a “sacred right”. The citizens had different rights depending on their gender, notably women enjoyed more freedoms before the war than during it. In 1919, the first women’s organization (called Noor al-Fayha) was founded. Women obtained the right to vote in 1949, and then in 1953 the right to hold office. Gradually, women were given the opportunity for higher education and paid employment. Another forward step with women’s rights happened in 2003 when the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* was ratified. The Constitution of Syria as of 2012 proclaims that the country will protect the values of national unity, cultural diversity, public freedoms, human rights, social justice, equality, equal opportunities, citizenship and the rule of law. The constitution also states in Article 8 that, “Carrying out any political activity or forming any political parties or groupings on the basis of religious, sectarian, tribal, regional, class-based, professional, or on discrimination based on gender, origin, race or color may not be undertaken.”

The Assad regime was forceful and sometimes abusive in the protection of its power, but many parts of the nation were unaffected by the tyranny and corruption from the top. On a daily level, females did not hold the same rights they do in Western society. For example, they could only travel alone abroad with the permission of a male. While men have always had more rights than women in Syria, we, the Moscow Helsinki Group, hope to guide this conflicted country back into a time of rich culture and more equitable treatment by encouraging the authorities of the nation to advocate for and support human rights.

Syria has signed many treaties that protect their citizens, and in some case the world. On October 14, 2013 Syria signed the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction*. This was “an arms control treaty” verifying that Syria would disable all of its 1,040 stockpile of weapons, which they did as of August 2014. More treaties about warfare are as follows: the *Final Act of the Geneva Conference*, signed August 12, 1949. The *Geneva Conventions*, accessioned November 2, 1953. The *Final Act of the Diplomatic Geneva Conference*, signed signed June 6, 1977. The *Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict*, declaration

October 17, 2003, protects children (under 15) from recruitment and participation in hostilities, as well as the “effects of hostilities (sanitary zones, evacuation), provision of special care and aid (medicine, food, clothing), protection of personal status, family and community ties (identity, registration, reunification, news), cultural environment, education, or limits to the death penalty. Other provisions specifically regulate the treatment of detained or interned children”, as stated by the International Committee of the Red Cross. The *Second Hague Protocol for the Protection of Cultural Property*, signed May 14, 1954, states that only military objectives should be attacked, but also that war criminals have individual responsibility and are given appropriate punishments.

The work we have done has inspired other groups to form Helsinki groups to watch groups in different countries. We became the center of the new network of humanitarian protest in the USSR. In the late 1980s and early 1990s we were no longer alone but one among a variety of new organizations that were engaged in the funding human rights and freedom of expression and carrying out missions to hotspots in different parts of the USSR and later in Russia.

Before the war the Syrian economy was mainly based off of oil and agriculture. Agriculture alone employed 25% of the work group, and 25% of the GDP (gross domestic product). Combined, agriculture and oil took up around 50% of the GDP. It was in this way that the Syrian economy prospered, and housing was paid for. This was also why their economy took a huge blow when natural disasters came their way, disrupting the stable agriculture.

We follow the same rules followed by Russia. Where in the health reform were focusing on the deliveries of services in increasing funding for priority areas. Where in the health reform were focusing on the deliveries of services in increasing funding for priority areas. The NPP age was launched in 2006 with the key aim to improve population health by improving material, technological and human resources provision in the health sector. Some of this in equity is your graphical as the Russian Federation is characterized by a very uneven distribution of health financing across regions. Despite the efforts of the federal center, regional inequality has only been growing. The efficiency of social spending in the Russian federation, including health expenditure, has been assessed as poor because similar health outcomes in times of mortality as in the Russian Federation are observed in another country spending 30 to 40% less on Health. “The foundation of Helsinki España — Human Dimension was initiated during an OSCE conference in Moscow in 1991. The aim was to promote the OSCE’s human dimension through the education of human rights, fundamental liberties, democracy and the rule of law within the university context. To carry out its educative work, Helsinki España acts through an International University Network, comprising 140 universities from 53 different countries. Within this network, Helsinki España organizes international university meetings on human rights, offers courses to prepare experts for their participation in peace missions of international organizations, including the OSCE, the United Nations and the European Union. Helsinki España also trains university volunteers to teach human rights sessions in primary and secondary schools. — Ana Nieto, Executive President, Helsinki España – Human Dimension. Our education focuses on getting human rights into the minds of the future.

Economic Reconstruction:

As the Moscow Group, we hope to assist Syria in recovering from its disastrous economic crisis. In addition, we believe Russia should cease its interest in Syria. Furthermore,

we believe that the current economic sanctions due to human rights violations should remain intact.

Prior to the war, Syria's economy could be described as weak but diversified. Compared to some of its neighbors, such as Lebanon or Iraq, Syria's economy was doing well. This period of minor stability ended with the global economic crisis and stagnant oil prices, which halted economic progress. Syria was on a path to becoming a respectable member of the Levant with developments in private banking, opening of the Damascus Stock Exchange, cut interest rates, and encouragement of corporate progression. Similar to many comparable countries, the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the political elite. The economy in Syria was highly centralized. All of the revenue from crude oil export went directly to President Assad. Any large foreign investment needed the blessing of Assad's inner circle of wealthy politicians and businessmen.

Rebel groups have taken control of Syria's natural resource extraction and sale. Oil and gas resources have been used to fight one another as well as the Syrian government. Many anti-government groups including the The Islamist State of Syria and Iraq and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham have sold and provided fuel to the Assad government.

Syria's largest import was agricultural products. Other imports included raw materials for industry, agriculture, equipment and machinery. The diversion of these agricultural products from their intended recipients has been cited as a war crime by the UN. Syria's chief export was crude oil. Syria exported crude oil at the rate of 350,000 barrels per day. Syria's exports include crude oil, refined products, raw cotton, clothing, fruits and cereal grains.

As of 2010 Syria's military expenditure amounted to 2,366,000,000 which was about 6% of their total budget. Prior to the war, banks were most chiefly responsible for providing loans to the government. As a result of the war, Syrian economy has suffered catastrophic losses. It has become extremely difficult to regulate production and exportation of industries such as oil, agricultural products, phosphates, and livestock because these industries have come under rebel command. Demand in agriculture has skyrocketed, but food production overall has fallen dramatically. Exports have decreased by about 39.1% each year, from \$9.9 billion in 2009 to \$824 million in 2014. The leading export of Syria is raw cotton. The second largest export is calcium phosphate.

The Syrian conflict has negatively affected the majority of the Syrian economy. Syrian oil production has decreased from 431,000 barrels in 2006, to 382,000 barrels in 2009, reducing to 280,000 barrels in 2011. The oil sector, on which Syria depends for most of its revenue, faces the most challenges in Syria including a decline in output and production due to technological problems and a depletion of oil reserves. Foreign investment is key to increasing production, but because of the civil war, Western companies are prohibited from working in Syria. The economic sanctions placed on Syria have restricted its trade with the Arab League, Canada, Australia, United States, Japan, Georgia, Japan, and the European Union in addition to numerous other countries. The total economic damages of the war are estimated to be about \$143 billion according to the UN. Finally, Syria has a negative trade balance of 5.28 billion dollars.

Basic infrastructure and factors of production have also been impacted by the war negatively. Syria has the lowest percentage of the population with access to electricity in the

Middle East. Due to the conflict, water supplies are deteriorating very quickly. Damaged water infrastructure has led to a 50% reduction in access to safe water. In 2010, the Syrian labor force was totaled at 6.02 million people, and in 2012 the numbers had gone up to 6.31 million, showing an unexpected and surprising effect of the conflict. In 2010, the Syrian unemployment rate was at 8.3%, much lower than other Middle Eastern countries, and in 2012 it rose to 14.9%.

Syria's population was about 20 million people. 35.9% of the population was between the ages of 0-14, 60.8% of the population between the ages of 15-64, and 3.4% of the population over the age of 65. The median age was about 22 years old and the population had grown 2% from 2009. Syria was ranked 50th in the world in terms of population growth. Prior to the conflict agriculture alone employed 25% of the total labor force and made up 25% of GDP. Due to poor climate and drought, its GDP has decreased to 17% in 2008. The industrial sector was around 16% of the population and about 37% of the population was of the labor force or in services.

What can be surmised from these findings is the general horror which Syria's economy has undergone due to the escalated levels of fighting between the Assad regime and rebel groups. Economic despair leads to extreme poverty and inflation and it is in the belief of the Moscow group that following a ceasefire steps should be taken to restore the Syrian economy to the relief of its citizenry.

Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation:

The history of human rights in Syria has been considered in a state of emergency since 1963. The Assad regime, part of the Alawite minority, has a long history with human rights violations against the majority Sunni muslim population in Syria.

Sunni muslims under the rule of Bashar al- Assad's father, Hafez, have been subject to discriminatory laws and even the systematic suppression of the masses since 1970, when the Soviet union agreed to help Hafez build military forces which would help further suppression. The Hama Massacre of 1982 marked the most recent beginnings of systematic government violations of human rights. Under the order of president Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian Arab Army and the Defense companies sieged the town of Hama for twenty-seven days with the goal of suppressing a non violent anti- government group called the Muslim Brotherhood. This massacre is reported by the Syrian Human Rights Committee to have amounted in at least 40,000 civilian casualties. Journalists in Syria must censor their writing, specifically with regards to commentary on the government. The consequence for writing freely is detention, torture, or imprisonment in Adra prison. In addition, the Syrian government's history with arbitrary arrest continued in 2016 with no less than 10,047 civilians under arbitrary trial or suspended detention. In June 2010, Muhannad al-Hassani, head of the Syrian organization for human rights, was detained under the accusations that he "brought national morale down." He was sentenced to three years in prison. It is estimated that 17,723 people have died in custody in Syria, with testimonies from prisoners and detainees claiming torture and even murder were used in custody. Religious rights are violated as the government requires the president to be Muslim, showing a favor for Muslim citizens. Syrian government has also shown favor towards Shia Muslims

allowing Shia missionaries to build mosques to convert Sunni to Shiites. LGBTQ+ people have discriminated against since 1949 when the penal code prohibited homosexual relations. In areas controlled by the Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, LGBTQ+ peoples have been arrested, executed, and beaten. Internet censorship imposed by the Syrian government with the help of the Syrian Electronic Army blocks many western and anti-government websites. Mass human rights violations in the Syrian conflict have been considered the worst in the world since 2010. The Moscow Group believes that Syria's long history with human rights violations should be recognized by the public and reversed through the human rights organizations and political reform.

War crimes and gross violations of human rights have occurred during the Syrian conflict, and continue to this day. At the beginning of March 2011, anti-government movements began in Syria with the intention of government reform. This positive human rights development was squashed by government repression of the movement. Further, the backlash against the movement and its organizers resulted in the violation of human rights by both the government, pro-government and non-state armed groups. Between March 2011 and February 2016 the casualties of the Syrian conflict amounted to around 47,000. The United Nations estimates 6.1 million people have been displaced and are in need of humanitarian assistance. As of October 2016, 4.8 million Syrians have sought refuge abroad, making Syria the United Nation's largest refugee population. By mid 2016 an estimated one million people were living in besieged areas with no access to basic necessities such as food and medical care. More than 117,000 civilians have been detained, tortured, or disappeared. The Islamic State (ISIS) as well as the former Al-Qaeda (now known as Jabhat Fath al-Sham) have instituted attacks on civilians using artillery, kidnappings, and executions. As of August 2017, Russian and Syrian bombings have targeted several major health centers including Idlib, Aleppo, Hama, and Homs. Unlawful restriction on humanitarian aid in loss of these institutions has been implied by the Syrian government continued in 2016 with the Syrian government preventing humanitarian institutions who wish to bring aid to displaced civilians with permits. On September 19th, 2016 airplanes struck the UN humanitarian aid convoy and a Syrian Red Crescent in Aleppo killing 20 civilians and one staff member. Medical supplies in Aleppo were to be distributed to 78,000 people. This convoy was previously cleared on a permit to give aid to civilians. Non-state armed groups opposing the government also inflicted serious abuses including indiscriminate attacks against civilians, using child soldiers, kidnapping, and more. Attacks from Non-state groups have repeatedly targeted cities under government control by using artillery and mortar strikes on mosques, schools, and markets. The conflict has led to a humanitarian crisis with an estimated 7.6 million internally displaced and 4.2 million refugees in neighboring countries.

Efforts to end the conflict in Syria have been implemented but with no major progress for the conditions in Syria. Meetings with the International Syria Support Group in February 2016 negotiated an end to conflict with a temporary decrease in civilian casualties which ended quickly. Shortly after peace talks held in September a U.N. convoy was assaulted by airstrike and resulted in 20 casualties. Security Council resolutions including humanitarian access to areas in need, release of detained, abducted or tortured civilians, and end to non-valid reasons for detainment and the use of weapons in populated areas have been violated by both the Syrian government and rebel groups. However, as of March 2017 the top United Nation diplomat working to resolve the war in Syria, Staffan de Mistura, reported that progress had been made in

the previous ten days of peace talks within which a clear agenda around President's Bashar al-Assad's cooperation in an inclusive government, and new constitution and elections held under United Nation's supervision were discussed. Although the recent peace talks have been peaceful, with the civil war in Syria enters its seventh year, Mr. de Mistura also warned that "we shouldn't expect a breakthrough".

Accountability in other countries coming out of a civil war have been addressed in many ways. In the case of Chile's several human rights abuses, persecution of opponents, political repression and state terrorism committed by the Chilean armed forces and the Police, government agents and civilians in the service of security agencies, during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile from September 11, 1973, until March 11, 1990. In these violations, there were 28,000 citizens tortured, 2,279 executed, and 1,248 missing. In addition, some 200,000 people suffered exile and an unknown number went through clandestine centers and illegal detention. The torture methods Chilean prisoners endured were electric shocks, waterboarding, beatings, and sexual abuse. On June 14, 1974, Junta Decree 521 mandated for the creation of the National Intelligence Directorate (DINA). There were thousands of people working in this agency. DINA was instituted to, per Pinochet's wishes, annihilate all forms of opposition, and the formation of any political party also became illegal.

From the years 1991 to 1992, Yugoslavia suffered from pressures of ethnic conflict, economic issues, and the purposeful emotional manipulation of President Slobodan Milosevic. The recent successions of Slovenia and Croatia triggered warfare in both nations, forcing the U.N protective force to neutralize the tension among the nations. Following, the U.N's impositions which sought to dry up the flow of the combatants, Serbian forces attempted an ethnic

In Theory, the International Criminal Court is not only effective, but necessary in order to uphold justice for those who are victims of injustice. The violators of fundamental human rights should be punished, and the International Criminal Court strives to do this. In reality, the International Criminal Court has been ineffective in punishing violators of the law due to the lack of cooperation from the nations in which the violators reside in. Since the International Criminal Court does not have it's own task force they are not able to take action against the violator without the cooperation of the nation the criminal is currently situated in. In addition, many major global powers, including the United States, Pakistan, India, China, Turkey, and Indonesia, are excluded from the International Criminal Court, and therefore civilians in those nations can not be prosecuted. While the ICC is not effective globally due to lack of cooperation, it is effective in the nations that participate. Therefore, although the International Criminal Court is not effective in reality due to the exclusion of major global powers as well as the lack of participation from local task forces, it would be effective if the world came to accept the necessity to persecute those who commit crimes against humanity.

Prior to the conflict, Syria had been a melting pot of religions and cultures. Damascus and Aleppo were cosmopolitan cities with large diverse populations where injustice was seldom experienced. Many fail to acknowledge the kind of society Syria was preceding the start of the war and therefore fail to see the potential of the society. Since the beginning of the conflict, the population of Aleppo has declined by approximately 1.6 million people and thus the diversity of the once cosmopolitan city has evidently decreased. The diverse people of Syria did not only

simply coexist previous to the conflict, it was not uncommon to see people of different religions and ethnicities married. Although, on account of the beginning of the war, intermarriage in Syria has become increasingly difficult and infrequent. The decrease in diversity following the genesis of the Syrian conflict has failed to support the cornerstones of peace and reconciliation which are experience, in terms of coming in contact with religions and cultures unlike one's own, and acceptance.

Previous to the Syrian war, there was no need for protections for minority communities because of the acceptance among the people of Syria for different religions, ethnicities, and cultures. The conflict in Syria has been sectarian, with the majority of the current inhabitants of Syria being Sunni Muslim, making other groups such as Armenians, Palestinians, Arab Christians, Greeks, and more the minority. Without protection for minority groups during the Syrian Conflict, the minority groups have made efforts to flee which factors into the decreasing population of Syria. Minority groups such as Christians and Alawites have been targeted during the war. Christians have felt that they specifically have been targeted during the Syrian war. Prior to the beginning of the war, Christians made up one tenth of the 22 million people living in Syria. 1 in 5 refugees are Christian refugees showing the large amounts of fear this group of people have.

Cross-Border Issues:

Syria's current grave state has left millions of innocent men, women, and children in a desperate state of panic and adversity. None of us can call ourselves humanitarians and watch these families be torn apart and suffer. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." As fellow humans, we have obligation to aid these people and that begins at the borders. Syria's borders have been wrecked and destroyed by the multiple threats of terrorist organizations. Millions of people have flooded the borders of neighboring countries causing international issues and states of emergency.

Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey all border Syria. The border between Iraq and Syria is about 600 kilometres long and most of it is controlled by ISIL, except for the northernmost part which is controlled by Kurdish forces, who make up the majority of the country's population and are discriminated against by the Assad regime. About 250,000 Syrian refugees are located in Iraqi Kurdistan. Tensions between the Syrian government and Iraq have been high since before the conflict and have not made any drastic changes. Syria does not recognize the State of Israel and they consider one another an enemy state. Syria does not accept Israeli passports and Israel usually does not allow its citizens to travel to Syria. No diplomatic relations have occurred since either of their creations. Israel has also refused to take in any refugees. Jordan lies to the south of Syria. Relations between Syria and Jordan were good after the gulf war until the Syrian Civil war began. Clashes on the borders were reported in 2012 and on May 26, 2014, Syrian ambassador Bahjat Suleiman was expelled. Jordan has also been leading airstrikes against the Islamic State. An estimated 1.4 million Syrian refugees are living in Jordan. However, Jordan has recently closed its borders and as a result, about 85,000 refugees are living between Syria and Jordan. Syria first officially established relations with Lebanon in 2008. Since the Syrian Civil War began in 2011, violence has spilled over into Tripoli, Lebanon.

Despite attempts by the Syrian government to prevent people from fleeing and placing landmines all along the border, Lebanon has accepted 1.5 million refugees. The sheer number of Syrian refugees has led to an increase in local tensions between Lebanese sects. Before the Syrian Civil War, Syria had had an embassy in Ankara and Turkey had had one in Damascus. They had strong relations. In 2012, however, diplomatic relations between the two countries ceased, and Turkey has sided with the people rather than the government. Turkey still has open doors for all Syrian refugees and over 2.7 million Syrian refugees live there.

The Syrian Government was responsible for securing its borders. Prior to the war, Syria had an open border policy for all refugees seeking asylum. However, the border with Israel was still strictly policed. Israelis were and still are barred from entering the country. In the beginning of 2007, the number of Iraqi refugees was about 1.2 million. These refugees did not live in camps, but rather moved to urban areas. The city of Damascus hosted 80-90% of the Iraqi refugee population. The Iraqis did not live in refugee camps. Most Iraqis blended in with the urban Syrian culture. However, their presence brought socio-economic issues. The price of food increased by 30%, the price of rentals by 150% and the price of property by 40%. There were two waves of Iraqi refugees entering Syria. One wave in the 1970's and 1980's and the second wave in the later 2000's. Both waves fled Iraq for various reasons. Many left because of persecutions under the regime of Saddam Hussein. Others left because of violence and radical religious groups. The U.S invasion was another factor which led many people to want to leave Iraq. This migration led to schools being overcrowded and an increase in unemployment in Syria. The Syrian government spent \$162 million to help Iraqi refugees. These factors caused problems in Syria leading to stricter rules on cross border regulations.

Between 2007 and 2011 there was a major drought in Syria. It was caused by the unsustainable upkeep of aquifers. The drought led to millions of farmers losing their jobs and moving from rural areas to cities, causing a overcrowding in the cities. This serious drought was one of the main causes for the civil uprising which led to the civil war in Syria. Other major environmental changes include deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, water pollution due to the dumping of sewage and waste into main water sources. The population increase due to Iraqi refugees and Syrian migrants cause other forms of environmental impact. For example, refugees may make a camp in national parks or forest reserves. Camping on these lands can damage these protected areas.

These challenges were exacerbated because of human-driven problems of climate change. Increasing temperatures, along with famine and drought caused political problems. More and more chemical waste was going into the air, causing air pollution which lead to further problems such as people getting sick from the air toxicity, plants and animals dying, and water pollution.

Terrorism in Syria has been an ongoing struggle in Syria since before the civil war. The country has dealt with terrorist groups from both inside and outside of the country. Many of the homegrown terrorists are Islamic extremists that cause acts of brutal violence for the sake of their religion. There was an incident in 1986 where many bombs went off around the capital of Damascus, causing hundreds of casualties. There was another incident on September 28, 2008 when at least 17 people were killed and 14 hurt by a car bomb near Damascus. Since the beginning of the civil war, countless terrorist actions have occurred, leaving cities like Aleppo in complete and total ruin. Many of the countries bordering Syria such as Iraq were attacking Damascus, the capital of Syria. During the war there were verified accounts of 90 and suicide bombs. A radical Islamic group Al-Nusra Front took responsibility for 57 of them. According to other sources, the Syrian government thought "terror was the best approach", meaning that the Syrian government had sponsored its own state terror. Many reporters and state officers were killed at the same time this news had come out.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria is a powerful terrorist organization centralized in Syria. They began as a branch of Al-Qaeda, a terrorist group originating in Iraq. They have become very effective in fighting the Syrian government forces led by Assad. ISIS is led by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi who took control in 2010. The group began in Iraq but soon started to expand into Syria taking control of rebel military forces. ISIS slowly started to gain more power as it took over and destroyed Iraqi towns such as Fallujah, Mosul and Al-Qaim. This path of destruction led to US troops being deployed to fight against the radical extremists. ISIS commits heinous crimes of public execution and torture. They have been known for their videos of decapitations and burnings. Journalists and other innocent people have been the victims of much brutality. ISIS has contributed much to the Syrian Refugee Crisis as many try to flee and escape the horrific actions carried out by the organization. The spread of ISIS has started to slow, and they have lost control of multiple cities but they remain a threat due to the fact they inspire terrorism in Syria and around the world. They are known for their social media presence and recruiting. ISIS is responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians. They pose a threat not only to Syria, but to every nation around the world.

What we find particularly appalling is the fact that Russia has taken in almost no refugees. This is despite the fact that it has contributed to the destruction of major cities and worsened the crisis in Syria with illegal airstrikes. In their support of the Assad regime, Russia has caused countless deaths. What were once beautiful cities and economic centers, like Damascus and Aleppo, have been reduced to piles of rubble. We ask that Russia stop immediately or that action against them be taken.

