

A: Introduction

_____As the Sultanate of Oman, we are present at this Conference in order to further peace talks to bring a long-awaited end to the Civil War conflict in Syria. As friends to the regime of Bashar al-Assad, we refuse to recognize the accusations of corruption being shamelessly thrown against our allies in Syria, but we do recognize that there have been violations of human rights committed against the Syrian people. However, we believe that the actions which the UN and US wish to take against Syria will only hurt the future of the Middle East. With the support of two of the most influential countries in the world, Russia and China, we hope to stabilize the Syrian region, help the Syrian refugees who have been harmed in this conflict, and restore the validity of the Assad-led republic. In these aims, we wish to be diplomatic intermediaries between the various belligerent parties fighting in Syria.

Upon the restoration of peace in Syria, we hope to see a more unified Middle East, in which shared economic prosperity and diplomatic collegiality will allow our region to achieve its full potential. To do this, countries must work together to halt the proliferation of violence, especially from terrorist groups. We hope that in the near future Syria will rejoin its fellow Middle Eastern nations as a land of political stability and economic growth.

B: Key Points

- As a close ally of parties on both sides of the Syrian Civil War, Oman seeks to act as an equitable mediator in bringing the conflict to an end through peaceful negotiation. When peace is achieved, steps must be taken to ensure that terrorism ceases to be a threat, and that a new constitution is established which respects the positive institutions of the government under Assad while allowing for constructive growth.
- Oman recognizes Bashar Hafez al-Assad as the legitimate leader of Syria, but we are a country allied with the United States and other members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, among others, and thus want to see positive change in Syria. We are currently working on various ways of developing relationships between countries to aid the coalition in Syria, and have supported and called for numerous ceasefires in the past.
- With Syria in its current condition, military support will not be provided from Oman, but rather diplomatic support and negotiation for the safety of the Syrian people and as to avoid any further conflict in the region.
- Oman seeks to remain neutral in the Syrian Civil War. We seek peace between the rebel groups and the Assad regime. The rebel groups however are causing far more damage than the Assad regime. It seems to be in the best interests of both Syria and her neighbors for the war to end quickly and efficiently to restore order, governance, and unity throughout the Middle East.

- Because the government of Syria is the only entity within the country with enough power to revive the devastated Syrian economy, Oman seeks regional cooperation to first stabilize the situation in Syria to allow the government to begin reconstruction.
- While Oman recognizes the fact that human rights violations have been committed in Syria, we will not be taking any military action against the Assad regime, as we are seeking peace and stability in the Middle East.
- Oman seeks regional stability, especially with regard to the recent refugee crisis. Variation in oil prices due to regional turmoil hurts all Arab nations, and thus Oman seeks to cooperate with its neighbors to ensure prosperity.

C: Background

_____The Sultanate of Oman is located on the Southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, and is home to roughly 4.6 million people, many of whom live in urban centers along the Northern coast of the country, adjacent to the Gulf of Oman. These settlement patterns reflect the sharp contrast of Omani geography between the inhospitable interior desert and lush coastal region. This difference is particularly evident along the Northern Coast of Oman, in which the majority of Oman's population resides in a coastal plain separated from the barren desert by the Al Hajar Mountains. More than half of the Omani people are of Arab descent, although large numbers of Baloch, of Iranian and Pakistani descent, live at the coast near Al-Batinah. Oman is primarily a Muslim nation. Most Omanis are of the Ibadi branch of Islam, which is similar to the Sunni Islamic faith in most respects but believes in an elected, rather than hereditary, imam. In addition, significant populations of foreign workers, particularly from South and Southeast Asia, reside in Oman's cities. The rugged interior of Oman, though sparsely populated, still holds relatively large population of Bedouin people.

Our great nation, the Sultanate of Oman, is the oldest independent nation in the Middle East. Our rich history reaches back to the sixth century with the arrival of Arab tribes from western regions of Yemen. In the seventh century, Islam was introduced to our nation, where the sect of Ibadism became the prevailing religious denomination for years to come. Although the Ibadi Imamate's rule was interrupted by influences from the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid Empires of Persia, it remained in power until the 20th century. The majority of Omanis remain Ibadi, but the official religion of our Sultanate is simply Islam. In the 1500s, our nation was colonized by the Portuguese, who took our capital city of Muscat. After years of political turmoil, the Yarubid Imamate rose to overthrow the Portuguese and thus began the rule of the mighty Yarubid Dynasty. Oman's empire expanded through former Portuguese territory along the Swahili Coast of Africa. One of the most famous battles of our glorious conquest was the two year long siege on the Portuguese fort, Fort Jesus. After the siege was complete, the Omani Empire reached its peak with the capture of Zanzibar and Mozambique. 30 years later our Empire fell to yet another invasion by the Persians. However, finally in 1749, our people established one of the strongest and long lasting dynasties to have been established in the history of the world.

The Al Said Dynasty ruled over both Zanzibar and Oman, with a schism occurring between the two nations around 1856. When the dynasty split in 1856, Majid bin Said and his descendants ruled the Sultanate of Zanzibar until its fall in 1964. However, the Said dynasty in Oman has remained in power since its founding. One of our most notable leaders was the great Sultan Said bin Talmur, who was known for unifying our country. In 1954, the Imam of Muscat began to claim certain territories which belonged in our lands containing the valuable resource of oil. This provoked our people, and so our leader began the Jebel Akhdar War to liberate our lands. Years of fighting led to the Imam's forces being forced out of the country and Oman to finally be secured under one leader. After the Dhofar Rebellion of 1965, which brought leftist rebels extremely close to the capital city, but thanks to the swift action of Said bin Talmur's son, Qaboos bin Said, the rebels were disposed, and Oman came under the rule of its current leader.

Under Sultan Qaboos bin Said, Oman has grown very prosperous. Sultan Qaboos opened up Oman from the isolationist policies of the past. After a quick expansion of our military, we increased spending on the health, education, and general welfare of our people. Political reform allowed all citizens to vote in major elections, whereas previously, only a select few tribal leaders, intellectuals, and businessmen were allowed to vote. In 1997, women were given the right to vote, and in 2002, our faithful leader extended the right to vote to all citizens of Oman. In 2004, our country elected its first female minister to head the National Authority on Industrial Craftsmanship, the office which preserves the traditional arts and crafts of Oman, and stimulates industry. Our country continues to maintain positive relations with all of the Middle East, despite the progressive agenda of our government. Following protests inspired by the Arab Spring, Sultan Qaboos promised our people even further social and political reform.

The birth of Oman's modern economic industry occurred when commercially feasible quantities of oil were first discovered at Fahud in the central plains of Oman in 1963. The development of the Omani oil industry quickly followed this discovery, and Oman exported its first shipment of oil in 1967. Following this period of early development and exploration, petroleum discovery, refinement, and export has come to encompass a large share of the Omani economy. Currently, two-fifths of Omani GDP and three-fourths of Omani government income is derived from the oil trade.

Although Oman has grown rich from the sale of our abundant oil resources, we acknowledge that our oil reserves are not indefinite and may become depleted in the near future. For this reason, the Omani government has instituted a transitional program which promises to diversify the Omani economy. This program has focused on developing the Omani natural gas market, as well as expanding the stock market and privatizing industries formerly controlled by the government. In addition to oil production, significant Omani industries include agriculture, fishing, and the manufacture of mineral and chemical products.

The modernization of Oman has created a distinctive global culture in which modern values intermingle with the vibrant Omani tradition. This has created a society in which social rules are less stringent than our neighbors. The dinner table is the center of Omani social life, and though Oman has shifted to modern methods of manufacture, the Omani artistic production of

woodwork and precious metalwork is world renowned. Perhaps most indicative of modern Oman is its architecture. In historic cities across Oman, centers of global trade for centuries, the present mixes with the past as architectural styles blend to create the Oman which will continue to blossom in the future.

D: Committee Papers

Governance

We, the nation of Oman, hold formal diplomatic relations with and recognize the legitimacy of the Syrian government under President Bashar al-Assad. We share membership to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) with Syria. This council, which includes most of the states of the Persian Gulf seeks the protection of civil rights within and economic prosperity of the Middle East region. While the Gulf Cooperation Council as a whole remains neutral in relations with the Assad regime, however, we as a nation support the government of Syria. We believe that the Assad regime does uphold their duty to tend to their people. We are an active advocate for human rights, and our national human rights organization is in no way separate from our national government. We are an absolute monarchy that supports the Assad regime, much like the Russian forces, and we hope to contribute to Syria's prosperity and governmental stability. We also hope to act as a sort of outside establishment that all in support of the Assad regime can trust and come to if need be.

In 1947, Syria held their first elections, immediately after gaining absolute independence. The Nationalist (Federalist) party attained the most popular votes, and formed a ruling minority within Syria's government. As time went on, the Syrian people developed a more elitist outlook on politics, and consequently the nationalist minority group grew in power. However, in the midst of the birth of modern Syrian state arose an opposition party, dubbed the "Ba'ath", or "renaissance", which sought to unify the Arab world under one flag. Even though this opposing group gained some publicity, the nationalists won the following elections by a landslide. In a final attempt to overthrow the nationalist party, the Ba'ath party adopted a communist view on national economics, and quickly gained support. In 1947 the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party was formed. In 1955 Shukri al-Kuwatli came back to power. He hoped to gain closer ties with Egypt. In 1958, the United Arab Republic was formed by Egypt and Syria. However, the head of this state, Gamal Abdel Nasser, destroyed Syrian political parties, which the Ba'ath party did not appreciate. Eventually, Syrian army officers took power in Damascus and ended the union. Members of the Ba'ath party took power in 1963. However, Salah Jadid led a force against the Ba'ath rule, which was ultimately unsuccessful. After nearly a decade of turmoil, Hafez al-Assad was elected president in 1971. He is succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad.

Although in the past Oman has been formally uninvolved with the government of Syria, we wish to advocate for the rightful government under Bashar al-Assad.

The stability of the internal government in Oman allows us to step in as an equitable mediator for the struggles in Syria. Our absolute monarchy led by the Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said has been focused on the well being of citizens since the political and economic reforms introduced in 1970. The Basic Law of the Sultanate of Oman protects the freedoms of citizens, and declares that decisions will be made with their best interest in mind. It also states that Oman plans to continue to strive for peace in order to maintain security and independence within the country. Not only do we strive for unity within our country, but hope to end discord in Syria and beyond.

Oman hopes to end the conflict in Syria through mediation, as we are directly affected by the events of this war. We seek to initiate peace throughout the Middle East. We do not plan on, nor have we engaged in violent attacks on either side of the war. We hope only to work with both sides in order to end conflict. We are a member of the GCC, but we maintain good relations with Iran and step forward as neutral in the conflict. Oman continues to have diplomatic relations with Damascus, and remains confident that the most effective way to end conflict is through peaceful communication. We do believe that terrorism within and around Syria must end in order to begin the path towards the unity of Syria. We believe our strong relationship with actors on both sides of the war will assist in beginning negotiation and the end of violence, despite the outcome of the war. For example, we have begun to discuss solutions to the Syrian crisis with Assad, and continue to make progress towards the consent of all internal actors of the Syrian war by promoting the end of hostility. In order to assist with our goals, we plan to use our political ties with Damascus, despite having cut ties with other Arab countries in the Gulf.

As Syria emerges from the devastations of this war, we believe a new constitution will be necessary. The rioting and collapse of a stable government prove that Syria must make major refinements concerning political power. Syria must also make modifications respecting the involvement of citizens in the government to prevent future uprising. However, this does not mean that everything regarding Syrian leadership in the past must be destroyed. We believe that some characteristics of Syrian government before and during conflict remain important and should be considered when reforms are discussed. Many positive principles of the Assad regime can become part of a cohesive government in Syria. With the support of outside parties, we believe Syria can be assembled under one stable, reconstituted government.

Strategic Security

Our regional neighbor country, Syria, is having problems with their people leaving their country, and their national security is weak. This is mainly because refugees are trying to escape the dangerous civil war happening in Syria between the government and “rebels”, and they are trying to find a safer place to live. This is also happening because of the terrorist group ISIS,

which terrorizes their people and causes them to flee. In fact, the Syrian crisis has spurred the emigration of a refugee population, which stands at approximately 4.7 million, with 1.7 million refugees residing in Lebanon and Jordan and even more in Turkey. Civilians feel trapped and fear their own lives as well as the lives of their loved ones. In fact, many other countries, such as Egypt, Germany, and Sweden, are letting these people enter their borders. We, Oman, will not accept refugees from Syria, but we will continue to accept migrant workers from other countries. Although we do not accept refugees from Syria, we will try and help our neighbors with ending their crisis as soon as possible. We recognize Bashar Hafez al-Assad as the legitimate ruler of Syria, and we agree with Russia, China, and Iran's beliefs to defend the government in this Syrian crisis.

Approximately 30,000-40,000 foreign fighters from over 80 different nations are involved in the conflict against the Islamic State, and most of them joined the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Since 2014, the number of foreign fighters joining the conflict has rapidly increased. Oman sided with Saudi Arabia and the United States and others in the anti-Islamic State alliance (IS).

Oman recognizes Bashar Hafez al-Assad as the legitimate leader of Syria, as do many other countries, and although we do not plan on sending troops and reinforcements, we will continue to try our best to solve this important conflict for our allies, Syria.

We, Oman, are trying very hard to solve the crisis in Syria. We are seeking to build connections and a long term, positive relationship between Riyadh and Tehran in order to allow Iran and Saudi Arabia to effectively work together in Syria. While Saudi Arabia backs and is part of a US coalition which supports opposition rebel groups, fighting the Assad regime, Iran's government, like us, recognizes the Assad regime as legitimate. However, only thanks to our work have diplomats from Iran recently met with US and Saudi representatives in Vienna to discuss peace in Syria. Clearly, we are making strides in the effort to secure a stable future for the power vacuum that will inevitably open after the conflict in Syria diminishes. We have also entered talks with Russia to discuss the future development of Syria, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf, as well as furthering Russian and Omani relations. We do not believe it is in the great country of Oman's power to decide whether Bashar Hafez al-Assad should step down, but we will continue to recognize him as the legitimate leader until further decision making, among all invested in the conflict, occurs.

Oman supports a ceasefire coalition initiated by the United Nations, and seeks to work with countries such as the United States and Great Britain, among others. This nationwide ceasefire holds specific terms and conditions to ensure the safety of civilians throughout the Syrian nation, for example, the immediate halt of the use of any indiscriminate weapons, or

weapons that cause unnecessary suffering, and the following of conditions of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to allow refugees and civilians to return to their normal living conditions. Recently, there has been an increase in indiscriminate warfare in Syria, such as several bombings of civilian neighborhoods, and a ceasefire negotiated by John Kerry on behalf of the US and representative Sergey Lavrov, from Russia, aimed stopping these attacks by prohibiting Assad forces from flying over these neighborhoods. Oman, as a US ally, also supports this effort. Oman emphasizes their backing of the UN ceasefire because of their devotion to helping those most affected by the Syrian conflict. Furthermore, Oman called all parties invested in the conflict in Syria to hold a ceasefire period during Eid Al Adha. His majesty, Qaboos bin Said al Said, has stated in news conferences that the cause of his calling of a ceasefire is due to the appeal to his humanitarian side. He desires the bloodshed to stop and wants affected Syrian civilians to have the opportunity to receive aid from relief groups. He believes all parties in Syria should reflect on the meaning of the Islamic holiday Eid Al Adha and use wisdom while making decisions. The Sultan of Oman has declared that the best way to start fixing the Syrian conflict is to hold talks between all Syrian groups, in order to give voice to the civilians who have been affected heavily by ISIS.

Before the Syrian Civil War, Syria was a stable and culturally rich country that was very unified. Its police was still very protective about its own government though, and people could never utter a word against the ruling regime without risking severe punishments. As the war in Syria has gone on though, all of the nations in the Gulf States have lost contact with Damascus, Syria, except for us, Oman, and we will continue to help our regional country neighbor through their tough power struggle against its own people.

ISIS heavily affects the country of Syria in numerous ways. A large number of Iraqi machines, including tanks, other weapons, and ammunition, have been brought to the Syrian battlefield. Civilians have reported they feel trapped and completely enclosed, on the ground by Islamic State troops and in the air by habitual air strikes, which have proven counterproductive. Though ISIS continues to lose territory in Syria and now controls only 5 major cities, the almost 5 million refugees seeking escape from the country are a byproduct of the chaos caused by ISIS/ISIL in the past five year span.

Local Security

Law and order was maintained through the strict enforcement of the Assad Regime which, as was seen in the Arab Spring, was not afraid to use the military to quell protests against the state. Syrians could expect a certain level of security from the state and the rule of law generally was followed in Syria before the war, though it was through coercive and oppressive means.

The Syrian security forces are independent from the military with little judicial oversight. Homs, Syria's central city is on high alert for attacks with governmental troops forcing shops to close and blocking off roads.

Security is a major problem due to the war itself as well as the instability that comes with it. As the government loses its legitimacy due to the areas conquered by rebel-groups people are unsure of the standing of law. Additionally, the war has resulted in major economic disruptions causing many mass poverty among people.

With the Syrian government in shambles, and many areas of the country being considered rebel-held local security along with other public services have fallen apart. In many rebel-held areas attempts to create forms of local security have failed, and even where the Syrian government is still considered to be in control local security is still lacking compared pre-war standards.

There are nine main sides fighting in Syria with various numbers. The Islamic state, or ISIS is estimated to have between 25,000 and 80,000 soldiers with up to two thirds being estimated as coming from foreign countries. ISIS aims to restore the caliphate and unite the entire Islamic world under one political system. The Al-Nusra front with an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 soldiers. The Al-Nusra front is considered to be Al-Qaeda's Syrian counterpart and, like ISIS, wishes to create an islamic state. The Free Syrian Army (FSA), with an estimated 100,000 soldiers is made up of former Syrian army soldiers. It was formed during the Arab spring with the goal of removing the Assad government. The FSA is supported by the U.S. led anti-ISIS group. The Ahrar ash-Sham group with an estimated 10,000-20,000 soldiers is a rebel group focused on removing the Assad government similar to the FSA. However it also wished to create an Islamic state under Sharia law similar to ISIS and the Al-Nusra front. It is considered a terrorist group by the U.S. and therefore the rest of the Anti-ISIS coalition. The Asala wa-al-Tanmiya group, with an estimated 13,000, soldiers also known as The Authenticity and Development Front is a US-backed rebel group made up of various groups including Islamists, military defectors, and civilian rebels. The Sham legion, also known as the Homs Legion is a union of moderate islamist rebel with an estimated 4,000 soldiers. The Ajnad al-Sham Islamic Union, Jaysh al-Islam, and Jaish al-Fatah are all rebel groups with an estimated 3,000, 17,000-25,000, and 10,000 soldiers respectively. Each of these rebel groups have joined in the fighting.

Poor water management and recent policy decisions have reduced Syria's supply of water. Heavy drought, lack of adequate governance and the high threat of radical groups, such as Islamic State, has escalated Syria's food and water crisis.

Due to years of Soviet and Russian support Syria has built up a sizable amount of small arms in its civilian population. Estimations approximate the number of weapons in the civilian population to have been around 700,000 before any conflict began. The war took the already significant number of small arms in Syria and caused it to escalate significantly as arms flooded in through nations like the U.S., Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan. Defectors from the Syrian army also brought even more weapons into the civilian population as an estimated 10,000 Syrian troops are believed to have defected in the first six months of conflict alone. The weapons used range from rifles to combat knives to even nunchucks with more than 50 unique types of arms to have been identified. These small arms have allowed for various rebel factions as well as terrorist groups to combat the government and each other leading to significant casualties among these groups, the Syrian military and civilians. With over 470,000 deaths resulting from the Syrian conflict, many of these are the result of small arms falling into the hands of civilian or paramilitary organizations such as ISIS and resistance forces.

Social Reconstruction

Oman seeks to remain neutral in the Syrian Civil War, however this war has gone on long enough. Our country has begun to suffer losses and damages in effect of this ongoing conflict. We seek to reach a peace between the rebel groups and the Assad regime. The Assad regime has ruled for over 40 years and brought Syria through troubled times, as well as managed to drag its surrounding countries into conflict. The rebel groups however are causing far more damage than the Assad regime. It seems to be in the best interests of both Syria and her neighbors for the war to end quickly and efficiently to restore order, governance, and unity throughout the Middle East.

Although Syria has been left destitute due to the ongoing Syrian Civil War, it has a rich culture and history which exemplified by the many mosques and old cities, six of which are UNESCO World Heritage Sites, which have since been destroyed. Social order is simple. Citizens have basic rights including the limited freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. For Women's rights, Basic Law states that all citizens are equal and any gender-based discrimination is banned. Many immigrant workers are not covered in the laws, however. As of November 2016, Syria and Oman ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which constitutes a comprehensive international treaty regarding the protection of migrant workers' rights. Preserving and enforcing these rights has become increasingly difficult with the rising conflict in Syria. An end to this war would preserve the rights of both our people and those all across the Middle East

Property rights have been a minor issue for Syria until the Civil War began and housing crashed. The Heritage Foundation's 2013 Index of Economic Freedom found Syria to be one of the worst nations in the world. Before the conflict, private property sufficiently protected. The Syrian War has created a huge housing strain on the region, which threatens to spill into Oman if the refugee crisis continues unabated. An already struggling system has been rendered useless in the face of such extreme and violent conflict. Due to our own housing struggles we are unable to

provide lodging and sanctuary for the refugees. We seek to stabilize our own internal housing needs, and provide for our rapidly growing population before taking in people whom we cannot provide for. The refugee crisis has however negatively impacted our own housing efforts, seeing as we would have to provide sanctuary and housing to refugees, housing which we don't have.

Prior to the war nearly 90 percent of Syrian children attended primary or secondary schools and between eight and nine in 10 Syrians had achieved literacy. Syria has been previously known for advancements in education and 97% primary school enrolment rate, which was the highest educated in the Middle East region. The amount of out of school children and adolescents increased by three which had 97% in public schools and 2001 private schools began to outnumber public. Syria also has a well-developed post-secondary education system, which consists of over 200 technical/intermediate institutes, 27 universities (7 public and 20 private), and 6 higher institutes, which are public institutions supervised by the MoHE with higher entry requirements than for public universities, offering diplomas and degrees up to doctorate level. Syrian teaching has advanced hand in hand with Oman schools, rapidly working to close education gaps, and eventually working to strengthen our political and social connections. Together we seek to ground our students in basic discipline and, as well as educate them on the Islam religion. We had continued a rigorous military program teaching our next generations discipline and respect, as well as raising them to a higher education and standards than their parents before. Our students excelled in the program until it was abolished in 2003.

The national religion of Oman and Syria that of Islam, and to Muslim followers we have provided freedom of expression through the Ibadi School of Islam, and public prayer. A majority of our citizens follow the Islam religion, and so see external and alternate courses as a threat to our internal governance, social order, and economic sanctity. Other religions such as Christianity and Judaism have been given right to assembly, and private prayer. Islam is a religion of love, progress, and social justice and equality for all, and so we seek to provide such treatment for our people. Syria follows our lead in tolerance and religious regulation.

Medical aid following the war has become a troubling concern of the Syrian Civil War. The rebel leaders have ordered the assassinations of thousands of doctors and physicians, leaving refugees and citizens vulnerable to disease, and death. Thousands of children have been left to die without medical care, and have fled to us for a hope of medical help. We have been able to serve some, however with our own medical systems, helping so many more becomes impossible. The persecution and cold blooded murder of doctors is a direct violation of moral code, and legal code. Before the war, great progress was made in infancy deaths, maternal deaths, and life expectancy increased. Many issues prevailed at the time which have become worse in light of recent events. Communications between hospital and medical professionals is severely lacking. private medical aid has increased, while public aid has gone down leading to far less availability for the poorest parts of Syria, and for Oman. The doctors and nurses now available are unable to keep up with the injured and wounded casualties. Thousands flee Syria and seek medical aid elsewhere, something that no other surrounding country can provide.

Economic Reconstruction

Syria was economically prosperous before 2011. Wealth was concentrated in the political elite, particularly because of the monopolization of almost all major industries by Rami Makhlouf, President Bashar al-Assad's first cousin. Syria produced and exported oil in large quantities. Syria was independent in the production of food products, and exported valuable wheat and cotton. Prior to the Syrian Civil War, banks were opening branches and foreign investment strong, although any investment required Rami Makhlouf's approval. Syria also synthesized its own medicine, clothing, and other household items.

Syria's economy was highly centralized. This all began when the Baath party came to power in 1963. Centralization of the economy was enforced when socialist ideologies of the party began to be followed by civilians. Around 1993, in conjunction with major oil discoveries, the Syrian government undertook significant economic reforms. Syria's economy took a blow in 2003 when allies invaded neighboring Iraq and regional oil sales and tourism were negatively affected. That year, the economy shrank 2.14%. Syria managed to recover in 2004 due to much higher oil prices in the international market and a strong return from the Iraqi dilemma.

Rami Makhlouf had a significant impact on Syrian extraction and sale of petroleum products. Considered Syria's wealthiest man, Makhlouf has a very large role in what is being bought and sold in any form of Syrian trade. Overall control of Syrian commerce, however, is in the hands of the Syrian government.

Although a large portion of Syria has been taken over by the Islamic State and opposition forces, there is still a considerable amount of land in the central eastern region of Syria that is still under the control of the Syrian government. Much of Western Syria, by contrast, is being contested by various factions in the Syrian Civil War. However, the sectors of Syria are still under control of the government, under president Bashar al-Assad.

Syria's major imports prior to the Civil War were raw materials for machinery, industry, and agriculture, while Syria's exports included oil, cotton, fruit, and cereal grain. Iraq was Syria's primary trading partner, accounting for around 30% of exports. Syria also had many trade partners, including China, India and the US. Syria was an emerging power in the world export market largely due to its location and attractive resources. Syria is very close to Europe, which has one of the biggest consumer markets in the world. Syria also houses the spice cumin, which is exported internationally. Approximately 5% of the country's GDP was devoted to the military, prior to the Civil War, with healthcare and education secondary focuses to national security.

The Syrian government is actively working to achieve equal rights for women. Within the past ten years the government has done well encouraging women's education, and participation in the work force. However traditional values have in some cases challenged women's access to basic legal and social rights. Syria, similar to our own country of Oman and many of our Middle Eastern neighbors, is working to strike a balance between traditional values and beliefs and gender roles in the modern world.

Due to the conflict Syria's economy has been severely impacted, but its banks have continued with their operations. Many local banks that have stayed open are privately owned, and aren't affected significantly by government action. The six main banks that are still in

operation are state owned, and have suffered a lot of destruction from the conflict. They have suffered through physical destruction of their buildings, robberies by gangs and other groups that have formed from this conflict, and tighter inspection from of foreign currency operations. Relative to the severity of the Civil War, however, the Syrian banking sector remains quite resilient.

The conflict has negatively impacted the economy, and if the war continues for a few more years, the economy could decrease at 3.9% per year, based on the current rate of decline. This would make the economy in 2019 the same as it was in the early 1990s. Since the war started agriculture and manufacturing have significantly lowered. One of the main exports of Syria is oil, and with ISIS controlling many oil fields the production of oil has decreased. This has truncated the flow of foreign investment, which has had a major effect on the economy.

Most of Syria's exports are oil, and refined products. There are some oil reserves that are being held by ISIS, which is having a significant effect on the economy, and the amount of oil Syria exports. Syria's export capability is reduced since the control of many oil fields is in flux. Although Syria is not one of the main global exporters of oil, it is one of their country's biggest exports.

The unemployment of Syria from 2003 to 2011 (when the conflict started) was at about 8.2% of the population. When the conflict started it reached an all-time high of 14.9%. In 2005, six years before the conflict started, the unemployment rate was at an all-time low of 5.2%. Since the conflict has started many people haven't had jobs, due to either the fighting or the government.

The sectors that employed the most people prior to the Civil War were industry, excavation, agriculture, retail, and tourism. Agriculture employed 22 percent of people, industry and excavation 25 percent, retail 23 percent, and tourism 12 percent of the population. Excavation employed many Syrians due to the centrality of petroleum exploration and export to the Syrian economy. The second largest sector of employment is agriculture because many of Syria's other exports are things like refined agricultural products such as wheat and cotton.

Before the conflict age 0-14 was 35.6% of the total population, age 15- 64 was 60.9% and age 65 and above was 3.5%. The percentage of the population from 0-14 years of age was at the lowest it had ever been since 1960, while people from 15-64 years of age was at an all-time high. The percentage of citizens at and over the age of 65 was at about historical average levels. After 2011 the percentage of the population of years 65 and above it has been going up at a steadier rate than it had previously. Before 2010 the percentage of the population of years 0-14 was steadily decreasing until it hit a low in 2010. After that, in 2011, the percentage of population has been going slowly up, similar to ages 65 and up. The percentage of the population for 15-64 was going up before the conflict, and since it has started it has gone down a lot. This subset is both the largest and most able-bodied of the Syrian population, so its relative decrease can be attributed to the en-masse emigration of refugees from Syria during which over two million citizens have left.

Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

Oman acknowledges the fact that gross violations of human rights have been committed in Syria. There have been numerous examples of Syria violating humanitarian rights, such as using extreme force against peaceful protesters during the Arab Spring Revolution. However, there have been many reports of political corruption and authoritarianism in Syria, which we do not agree with, as we respect Bashar Hafez al-Assad's rule over Syria. We wish to maintain our relations with the Assad regime and provide aid, not more violence to those suffering due to the poor infrastructure of the Syrian economy, such as crippling inflation and dangerously high unemployment.

There are many other countries in the world who have or are currently dealing with the accountabilities of civil war. One being Chile, whose amnesty law was overturned by their supreme court. For the Nuremburg trials, the officers and leaders were mostly held accountable for the Holocaust and World War 2. For the Bosnian trial, the official figures that were responsible for genocide were held accountable and sentenced accordingly. In the Rwanda trials, individuals such as the prime minister, Jean Kambanda, were charged with genocide. As for South Africa, the commission for truth and reconciliation gave victims the ability to apply for amnesty. But only 849 out of 7112 applicants were granted amnesty. Most of the amnesty went to the crimes which related to the victim being politically motivated, proportionate, or the applicants with full disclosures. Program in Rwanda has been implemented to teach its moral values and fight against discrimination.

All of the rulings mentioned above have been very effective in their own countries, except for the Chilean amnesty policies. It has been ridiculed for allowing the government to commit many human rights violations, but has since been rectified by new government. The various trials have been very effective at convicting the officers who took part in the many human rights atrocities committed in Germany, Bosnia, and Rwanda. The South African reconciliation group has given fair trial to all the victims. Unfortunately for Rwanda, the genocide committed and subsequent trials of condemned officers only strengthened the culture of war and violence within the nation.

Oman has no stance on the effectiveness of the International Criminal Court, as Oman did not have any criminal cases that were dealt with by the International Criminal Court. As for the cases it is dealing with, we do not agree with a single one of their rulings. We also do not support the UN Security Council and The International Criminal Court's trial persecuting and charging Bashar Hafez al-Assad for war crimes. It is very clear that two of the biggest nations in the world are against this ruling. Both China and Russia's vetoes against prosecuting the Bashar Hafez al-Assad's regime signifies that, Bashar Hafez al-Assad is being falsely charged. We, the Sultanate of Oman, are in clear support of Bashar Hafez al-Assad's regime, as we believe that his actions were for the best of the nation of Syria. However, we will not be providing military support.

A country with a population of 4 million, Syria has 8 different languages spoken there with Arabic being the official language of the country. The country also has 79.6% literacy rate. And around 56% of the population were living in the urban cities prior to civil war conflict.

Also, 61% of the population is male. The country is comprised of 90% Arabs and about 7-10% Kurds. Sunni Muslim Arabs make up about 70% of Syria's population while the Shia Muslims/Alawites (of which Assad himself is one) comprise about 12-15%. Druze make up about 3% of the population. The minority Shiites hold much power and privilege in the Syrian government and society. There are also about 500,000 Palestinians living in Syria.

The Sunni Islamic group called Alawites represents around 8-15% of the total population, and are one of the most powerful minorities due to the help from President Bashar al-Assad, who himself is a member of the Alawi community. Also, they have received help from the Bashar governments, having multiple powerful posts in the government and security services. The Sunni Islamists and Kurds are the greatest threat to the Syrian state because of their political movements and agendas, support and influence from outside sources and threat/challenges those groups offer to the government. The minority Shiites/Alawites ruled Syria (Assad hails from that sect) and created tensions with the majority Sunni Muslims; the anti-government movements and uprisings have been carried out mostly by the majority Sunni Muslims. There has very little protection for minority groups, as over 4 million refugees have fled the Syrian Arab Republic as a result of the Syrian civil war. And the number is currently rising. Kurds in Syria have claimed discrimination by Syrian authorities - accusing them of denying social and political rights - but the veracity of such claims has been questioned. Minority Christians and Druze have faced much persecution although some might believe that Assad's largely secular government might be more favorable for them than a majority Sunni/Islamist government. Christians have faced much violence and persecution in general throughout the region.

Majority Sunni Muslim Arabs have supported the rebels and have opposed the Shia Muslim government of President Assad. The government is comprised heavily of Shia Alawites and allies whereas the majority Sunni Muslims make up the opposition groups. Shiites support the Assad forces because they fear oppression should a majority Sunni Muslim group take the helm of power. The conflict is largely sectarian, with minority, pro-government Shia Alawites pitted against the majority Sunni Muslims, however other groups have been pulled in as well. There has been much sectarian violence with groups killing each other. Groups such as Hezbollah have been brought in to kill Sunnis. However, the Sunnis pitted against Shiite/Assad regime/forces simplifies some of the nuances and complexities of the conflict as there are pro Assad Sunni forces as well and elements have been drawn in from Turkey, Iran and other outside influences.

Persecuted minorities have been the focus of many refugee intake programs such as in Australia and the US especially in the post Trump era. Christians have been persecuted by the Islamic State and threatened/forced to convert to Islam or pay money or face death. Yazidis have also faced persecution and death at the hands of the IS with women who faced systematic torture and rape by IS soldiers. Minority Druze have sided with moderate rebels during the war and suffered repercussions. Druze have been mercilessly killed by Al-Qaeda offshoot, Al-Nusra and the IS. Many Alawites have died in the conflict after being drafted into armies to fight for pro Assad forces. Kurdish militants have had success in fighting off the IS and are NATO allies.

Kurds have long sought autonomy and the civil war/conflict might be seen by them as an opportunity to attain such. The conflict is a messy reality among various groups and players.

Cross-Border Issues

The on-going crisis in Syria has left Syria devastated. More than eleven million people have been killed or forced to flee their homes, which puts an increasing pressure on the countries surrounding Syria.

For much of recent history, the Middle East has unfortunately been a place of turmoil and strife. However, following the push towards reconciliation efforts during the globalization of 1980-1990, Syria had reconnected or formed new or stronger bonds with its Arab neighbors, especially with its neighbors of Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon. However, the Middle East experienced severe destabilization at the onset of the Arab Spring, which began in Tunisia in 2011 and quickly spread to Egypt, Syria, and other countries. As the Syrian Civil War has progressed, many neighboring countries (and others worldwide) have broken diplomatic ties with Syria, citing human rights abuses, and lack of communication. However, Syria maintains good terms with Oman, along with Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, China, Russia, Iran, and many more countries. But even prior to the war, Syria's borders had always been insecure and unguarded. The unmoderated boundaries meant that both well-meaning immigrants and terrorist groups were able to slip into or out of Syria undetected. Iraq had previously protested to Syria about this issue, saying that individuals with links to terrorist organizations were flowing into Iraq.

Oman, Iraq, and Lebanon still maintain strong ties with Syria, supporting the Ba'ath government led by Bashar al-Assad. From 1976-2005, Lebanon was militarily occupied by Syria, which ended following the assassination of a heavily-favored Lebanese politician, inciting riots and unrest known as the Cedar Revolution. One of the major political parties of Lebanon is Hezbollah, a pro-Syria organization, that had been aided during the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. The party defends Bashar al-Assad and the Ba'ath party in Syria, as it receives major support in the form of armaments and other military supplies (which Syria has denied). The party has played an active role in the Syrian Civil War, going so far as to send its own fighters into Syria, to assist the government against the Free Syrian Army. However, others, such as Turkey, have severed ties with it, claiming that they refused their assistance in democratizing and stabilizing their government. Likewise, Hezbollah has been suspended from the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

Syria, before the war, was a safe haven in the Middle East for refugees. It had a reputation in the Arab world for being quite welcoming to all refugees who sought shelter, whether it be from economic recession or war. Syria was quite attractive to refugees because it had an accessible border, modest entry requirements, a robust informal economy, available services, and a relatively tolerant religious atmosphere. Around 400,000 Palestinian refugees reside in the country, with waves of them fleeing Palestine beginning in 1948 with the beginning of the Arab-Israeli War. They also had many Iraqi refugees, who came to Syria due to the threat of sectarian violence, the oppression of the Saddam Hussein regime, and the Gulf War and Iraqi invasion.

The Syrian government was responsible for securing Syria's borders. It took security measures to guard borders. Before the civil war, Syria maintained an open border policy, and was welcoming of the thousands of refugees coming from Iraq. However, this system was not without its issues, as many suspected of terrorism were able to pass between the countries with ease, evading government search efforts. This, and a destabilizing influx of Iraqi refugees, forced the Syrian government to enforce a visa immigration policy. With the beginning of the Syrian Civil War, the borders are much less permeable, with the al-Assad administration placing landmines in order to deter freedom fighters and Turkey locking down its borders to prevent too many refugees from exiting Syria.

Before the war, Syria had concerns with deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, and most importantly, water. Syria is a relatively small nation, with the majority of its land consisting of desert. Only a quarter of land in Syria is arable. From 2006 to 2011, Syria suffered from a severe drought, the worst that has ever been recorded. The high temperatures caused dust storms and even less rainfall. Agriculture couldn't be sustained because in places that heavily depended on irrigation, aquifers had been so heavily tapped that the water table in many areas had fallen below the levels to which wells had been dug. Agriculture contributed to 20% of the national income and kept 17% of the population employed. The country's natural resources at this time were insufficient in adequately supporting its population.

The concern over water was only exacerbated by the war. This rising tension may have even been one of the triggers for the war. Water resources are becoming targets in the war, and groups who control water enjoy a tremendous strategic advantage. Access to clean water, especially, is decreasing. Many people in Syria don't have access to this basic necessity and it is causing a health and sanitation crisis.

Prior to the war, Syria had a few terrorist incidents. There were the bombings around the capital of Damascus in 1986 that resulted in hundreds of casualties. In 2008 on September 28 there was a car bomb on the outskirts of Damascus which left 17 people dead and 14 injured. A year later on December 3 2009 a bus blew up in a Damascus suburb which killed at least 3 people. The culprits behind older acts of terrorism were Iraq based groups which only fueled the hostile relations between the two states but the people behind the most recent terrorist attacks leading up to the war are unclear. Although the Syrian government has not been involved directly to an act of terrorism since 1986, the United States has claimed that it can link the Assad government indirectly, and thus has placed Syria on the U.S. State Department's list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.