



[The 10-Year Anniversary of the Syrian Revolution Passes](#)

Monday of this week marked the 10th anniversary of the beginning of the Syrian uprising. In March of 2011, thousands of protesters took to the streets across Syria to demonstrate against the repressive regime of despot President Bashar al-Assad. The popular uprising, which was fueled by the Arab Spring, quickly turned into a full revolution after the Assad government attempted to violently suppress the protests. In the 10 years that have ensued, nearly 500,000 people have been killed and 12 million more displaced. The conflict has also spawned a refugee crisis which has reverberated across the world, and over the course of the past decade, human rights abuses have been rife. Back in 2012, the Assad regime broke international law on the rules of war when it killed 1,500 civilians through the use of chemical weapons. Civilians have also been subjected to indiscriminate bombing campaigns from the Syrian government and its international allies, primarily Russia. The fracturing of the country also facilitated the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS, which terrorized civilians within its so-called caliphate. Today, Bashar al-Assad remains in power in Syria, largely propped up by foreign patrons such as Russia and Iran.

The protests in Syria which ultimately sparked the uprising began in the city of Dera'a after several youths were detained by security forces for graffitiing anti-regime slogans on public infrastructure. The Syrian authorities held the adolescents for nearly a month, where they were subjected to a variety of abuses, including torture. The Syrian protests began because of this, but quickly spread to major cities and morphed into broader anti-regime protests catalyzed by the Arab Spring. In response, Bashar al-Assad attempted to suppress the protests with force, which led to several rebel groups and militias forming. These groups then began fighting Syrian government forces, and a full-blown civil war broke out.

While the levels of violence in Syria rose, Syrians sought to escape the fighting, which has created the world's greatest refugee crisis. Up to five million civilians poured over the borders of neighboring countries as refugees, with an additional seven million thought to be displaced across the country. For those that have remained within Syria, economic hardship has been extremely prevalent, with the United Nations citing 80% of the population living in poverty. U.S. sanctions have added to this economic crisis, as has the faltering of Lebanon's economy, as Beirut is Syria's primary link to the rest of the world.

As things stand today in Syria, the Assad regime has gained control of the vast majority of the country, with small rebel enclaves reduced to the northwest of the country. Kurdish forces backed by the United States control swaths of territory around Idlib near the Turkish border, but they are surrounded by government forces. Bashar al-Assad was nearly forced from power on separate occasions over the duration of the past decade, but his foreign backers in Russia and Iran always intervened with military and political support to keep the brutal regime in power at the detriment of the wider civilian population.