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Syria

Syria - The war that destroyed everything

Syria has been a self-sufficient country for many decades, it wasn't until 2011 that Syria began to fall apart. Families were broken up, villages destroyed, money lost its value and the majority of the people fled when war broke out in 2011. Food production was extremely affected thanks to the war, but this problem harboured solutions.

Family and land

Population

The population of Syria today is just over 17.5 million. In 2010, the population was 21 million and when you look at a country like Iraq, you see that their population has increased by 10 million since 2010 unlike Syria. The reason why the population of Syria has decreased and not increased is because of the civil war that broke out in 2010. Since then millions have emigrated and thousands have died (Country Guide , 2022) (Law, 2015).

Before the war the majority of Syria's population lived along the coast and in the rural areas of the major cities, these major cities are Damascus and Aleppo. Aleppo and Damascus countryside were exposed to the most damage by the war. Therefore the majority had to move, the UN stated in 2021 that 6.7 million were displaced within the country and 5.6 million had emigrated. So now the majority live in the city (Country Guide , 2022).

Governance system

Syria has a republic and has a president named Bashar Al-Assad. He inherited power from his father Hafez Al-Assad who was president from 1970 to 2000. Hafez changed the constitution and declared Syria a multi-party democracy. But only parties opposed to Al-Assad were allowed to enter parliament (The Country Guide, 2021).

So what one can conclude is that the Syrian state is trying to paint itself as a democracy, but in reality it is the exact opposite. This was the main reason why the civil war broke out, but the president is doing what benefits him, his family and their wife (Country Guide, 2021).

Farming in Syria

According to the Land Guide, agriculture was the backbone of the economy in Syria before the war. Syria grew olives, fruits, cotton, tobacco and even cereals. So

the main crops and by-products were wheat, cotton and grapes. They farmed mostly on the coast and along the major rivers such as the Euphrates. In other words, Syria could make a living from their agriculture before the war started. Syria also had access to sheep meat because a group of people called Bedouins were very good at sheep farming (Landguiden, 2021).

When the war broke out, many farmers fled, irrigation systems were destroyed, and fighting had a major impact on agriculture in Syria. As a result, UN reports show that harvests in the last few years are very low and have never been lower. This was the reason why Syria started importing wheat from other countries such as Russia (Landguide, 2021).

Most of the land that is being cultivated is privately owned, which means the state has nothing to do with it. Barely a third of the country's land is cultivated (Land Guide, 2021).

Geography and climate

Syria is located in Asia specifically in the Middle East and borders Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Jordan. The eastern part of the country is dominated by desert which means it is quite dry, while the western part is quite humid because it is oceanic. The humid weather and rainfall in the western part of the country has resulted in fertile soil. Therefore, it can be said that summers in Syria tend to be hot while winters tend to be mild (SO space , 2021).

In Syria there are many mountains and mountain ranges such as Jabal al-Shaykh, Antilibanon, Jabal al-Zawiya and the Alawit Mountains. On these mountains it is quite common to find snow! In Syria there are also many rivers in Syria some of them are very famous such as the Euphrates and the Tigris (SO room , 2021).

Family

The majority of families in Syria consist of 6 to 7 people and this depends on the nature of family relationships there. In Syria, people rely on their children to take care of them when they grow old, therefore they think that the more children they have, the better. Old age homes are therefore not very common in Syria and those who take their parents to one are considered bad and disrespectful (Alkhatib, 2022).

In Syria, people eat a lot of vegetables such as peas, chickpeas, potatoes and asparagus, but all these must be served with rice and some kind of meat otherwise the meal is not complete. Eating different types is not considered as important as eating rice. People tend to buy their food from various smaller grocery stores that are usually close to home, which leads to a type of relationship between the grocer and the individuals living nearby that benefits both sides in different ways. Because people will shop from their particular store and they might give the different foods free if they do not have the money (Alkhatib, 2022).

All kinds of professions such as doctor, teacher, pilot and pharmacist are available in Syria. This is thanks to the existence of these trainings and the fact that there are families can afford to send their children to be educated. The families who cannot afford to send their children to private schools can send them to government schools, but government schools have lower status and many claim that private schools are better (Alkhatib, 2022).

This is the same with health care, there are both private and government hospitals. The private hospitals can be very expensive and few people can afford to go to one. Therefore, many people turn to government hospitals which means that many people will be in line and the waiting time will be long. In some cases, this has led to families losing their members or the disease spreading to the level that the patient cannot get help anymore (Alkhatib, 2022).

Before 2011, the year the war broke out, the majority of people had access to clean water, electricity, roads, food and telephones. But the war and the bombs have been the reason why many cities have lost access to electricity, roads, food, telephone and in some cases clean water. The war has also been the reason why many have lost their jobs and income (Alkhatib, 2022).

Conflict

The war in Syria has been going on for more than 11 years and a solution to the conflict has still not been found. When the conflict began in 2011, some people wanted Syria to have a new president. The current president, Bashar Alasaad, did not like this and started sending soldiers with guns to silence the people, even though most of the protests were peaceful to begin with. When he started using violence and weapons, more people wanted him out of power and they started receiving weapons from other countries to support them. This is when the civil war really started and this is when innocent civilians started to come into the picture (Alabbasi, 2022).

Their homes were destroyed, their children were traumatized, they lost all their possessions and even family members. The places that were destroyed first were the countryside and that was where all the farmers lived and farmed. Now the countryside is in ruins which means that these farmers lost their jobs and their livelihoods. But it also means that food production in Syria was affected in general, because before the war Syria could support itself on their harvest. But now Syria has to import different crops and food from different countries such as Russia in order for its people to survive. Syria's economy also relied heavily on the fruits, vegetables and crops they used to export to other countries. Which means that the economy was negatively affected when the harvests decreased which in turn led to a decrease in the welfare of the country (Alabbasi, 2022).

The economy was not the only thing that was affected the most but it was the farmers who lost their jobs and their homes. They were forced to flee and ended up in camps in the various neighbouring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. The living conditions and conditions in these camps were extremely poor and harsh. People who lived or still live in these camps have to live in tents, which means that the winters are extremely cold and the summers extremely hot, they do not have access to either proper schools or proper health care, sometimes they do not have access to water and food either, but they have to wait until organisations such as the UN help and they are not treated in the same way as the country's inhabitants but much worse, as was shown when the Syrians were not given any jobs at all. It is not only the farmers who had to flee their homes but 13.5 million other individuals who lived in the capital Damascus and other major cities (Alabbasi, 2022).

In a refugee camp such as Zaatari, for example, more than 120,000 individuals could be living there at the same time and using the living conditions there, the situation could look very bad. Parents had to watch their children suffer from the weather and others from diseases because it was very easy for diseases to spread given how poor the care was. Children's mental health was extremely affected because they were growing up in conditions that a child should not experience. Women and the elderly also had to go through psychologically stressful situations. Elders who had worked hard all their lives and relied on their children to take care of them lost their children, either because they fled their homes or because they lost their lives (Alabbasi, 2022).

Many refugees sought Europe because conditions there were much better than neighbouring countries, but the worst part was the journey to Europe. People travelled to Turkey and Egypt and then made their way by sea to Europe illegally. There were smugglers in these countries who claimed that they could help them, but in fact these smugglers took advantage of the refugees' need to have a chance at a better life. The smugglers took large sums of money from the refugees and then put them on unsafe boats which then sailed out to sea and drowned. Thousands of people drowned in the sea on their way to Europe, such as the guy Allan who was found dead on the coast of Turkey after drowning (Alabbasi, 2022).

Those still living in Syria are not better off, partly because of the bombs and the war that has been going on for longer. But now the bombing has been reduced and limited in some areas, and in other areas there is no bombing at all, but what is preventing people there from living a normal life is the inflation in the country. The currency in Syria, known as the Syrian pound, has lost its value completely, which has led to the prices of various goods and fuels increasing by at least ten times. At the same time, individuals' wages have remained exactly the same since 11 years ago. This means that the people would not have survived a single day if

they had only had their salary, but what allows families to survive is that they have a family member who fled to another country and sends them another currency. The families that do not receive that support will have a hard time making it through a week on their own (Alabbasi, 2022).

Inflation has also caused many people to quit their jobs because they don't think working for a small amount of money is worth it. Which in turn has led to the collapse of many businesses and projects due to the lack of labour in the country. This means that the situation in the country will only get worse and worse if a solution is not found (Alabbasi, 2022).

What can be concluded is that Syria is developing in an unsustainable way and the majority of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals are not being met. It can be concluded that none of the following goals are being met: 1 no poverty, 2 no hunger, 3 good health and well-being, 4 good education, 5 gender equality, 6 clean water and sanitation for all, 7 sustainable energy for all, 8 decent working conditions and economic growth, 9 sustainable industry innovations and infrastructure, 10 reduced inequality, 11 sustainable cities and communities, 12 sustainable consumption and production, 13 combating climate change, 14 oceans and marine resources, 15 ecosystems and biodiversity, 16 peaceful and inclusive societies (Alabbasi, 2022).

Solutions

As the war in Syria is almost over and the bombs are only targeted in certain areas, there are many solutions to make Syria sustainable again. The first solution could be to import seeds from other countries to start farming again on the land they used to farm. Because much of that land can now be cultivated again. This will partly benefit the unemployed because they will have a job and they will get a salary again. The crops that will be produced will also benefit the people who live there, because they will have access to nutritious food that is locally produced and partly cheap. The fact that it is locally grown will also benefit the environment because you will avoid all those greenhouse gases that are emitted when you import from other countries. The economy will also have a chance to recover which means that different aspects from in the society will be able to improve (Osman, 2022).

The government needs to focus on reducing unemployment in order to end the inflation that is going on in the country. If unemployment is reduced, the people will have money to shop from different countries and businesses and the demand will increase. New businesses and shops will also open in order to have enough goods for the demand. The people will also be able to afford both health care and education if they have an income. In other words, the economy will flourish if new businesses and projects are started (Osman, 2022).

This solution has both strengths and weaknesses. The strengths are that there are many unemployed people who will be able to engage in such a project, the workforce is therefore guaranteed. Another strength is that there is good land on which to grow crops and which can produce very large harvests that can feed a large part of the population. But then there are various weaknesses such as who should take care of organizing such a project. It would have been best if the government can organize the project and also market it in different ways. State money will also be needed to buy these seeds and machines that will be needed. If the state is not ready to spend money on such a project, this will be a big obstacle. Because they are large sums of money required and if the state does not want to do this, other international organizations will have to do it. The other weakness is that it will take a long time for agriculture to recover and be like before (Osman, 2022).

Another solution could be that international organizations such as the United Nations can help by raising money for Syria and arranging projects such as importing seeds, among other things. The UN has arranged a project where they opened a water channel that was closed for 9 years. This canal helped to water what they have grown (Osman, 2022).

The strengths of this solution is that the UN may be interested in organizing such projects because their goal is just to help different countries and individuals to have a good life and ensure that they get their rights. Another strength is that the UN is financially competent to arrange these projects. They can arrange cars, machines and food for the individuals who need (Osman, 2022).

The weaknesses of this solution are that the UN will not have Syria as a focus because there are other countries that need help. Many may realize that the UN has helped Syria enough. Another weakness may be that the Syrian state will not allow the UN to enter to the Syrian land (Osman, 2022).

The last possible solution is to build refugee camps that have schools, hospitals, and even buildings that the refugees can live in. In order for this to happen, the Syrian state or the UN must be helped by the country the camp will be in. The strengths of this solution is that the individuals will have the chance to live a semi-natural life. The weaknesses of this solution may be that the country that the camp will be built in does not want to cooperate and believes that the money they will spend on refugees can be spent on their own population (Osman, 2022).

If any of these solutions are implemented, Syria will begin to develop in a sustainable manner. Then many of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals such as no hunger, no poverty, good education and good health and well-being will be achieved (Osman, 2022).

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