Syria - Profile and Timeline

**End of Ottoman Rule**

1918 October - Arab troops led by Emir Feisal, and supported by British forces, capture Damascus, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule.

The Ottoman governor of Syria, Jamal Pasha, rides through Damascus in 1917

1919 - Emir Feisal backs Arab self-rule at the Versailles peace conference, following the defeat of Germany and the Ottoman Empire in World War I.

1919 June - Elections for a Syrian National Congress are held. The new assembly includes delegates from Palestine.

1920 March - The National Congress proclaims Emir Feisal king of Syria in its "natural boundaries" from the Taurus Mountains in Turkey to the Sinai desert in Egypt.

**French control**

1920 June - San Remo conference splits up Feisal's newly-created Arab kingdom by placing Syria-Lebanon under a French mandate, and Palestine under British control (Sykes-Picot agreement / neighboring Transjordan also became a British Protectorate, as did Iraq).
1920 July - French forces occupy Damascus, forcing Feisal to flee abroad.

1920 August - France proclaims a new state of Greater Lebanon.

1922 - Syria is divided into three autonomous regions by the French, with separate areas for the Alawites on the coast and the Druze in the south.

Uprising

1925-6 - Nationalist agitation against French rule develops into a national uprising. French forces bombard Damascus.

1928 - Elections held for a constituent assembly, which drafts a constitution for Syria. French High Commissioner rejects the proposals, sparking nationalist protests.

1936 - France agrees to Syrian independence in principle but signs an agreement maintaining French military and economic dominance.

1940 - World War II: Syria comes under the control of the Axis powers after France falls to German forces.

1941 - British and Free French troops occupy Syria. General De Gaulle promises to end the French mandate.

1945 - Protests over the slow pace of French withdrawal.

1946 - Last French troops leave Syria.
**Ba’ath Party founded**

1947 - Michel Aflaq and Salah-al-Din al-Bitar found the Arab Socialist Ba’ath Party.

1949 - Army officer Adib al-Shishakhli seizes power in the third military coup in the space of a year.

1952 - Al-Shishakli dissolves all political parties.

1954 - Army officers lead a coup against Al-Shishakli, but return a civilian government to power.

1955 - Veteran nationalist Shukri al-Quwatli is elected president. Syria seeks closer ties with Egypt.

**United Arab Republic**

1958 February - Syria and Egypt join the United Arab Republic (UAR). Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser heads the new state. He orders the dissolution of Syrian political parties, to the dismay of the Ba’ath party, which had campaigned for union.

1961 September - Discontent with Egyptian domination of the UAR prompts a group of Syrian army officers to seize power in Damascus and dissolve the union.

1963 March - Army officers seize power. A Ba’athist cabinet is appointed and Amin al-Hafez becomes president.

**Rise of Assad**

1966 February - Salah Jadid leads an internal coup against the civilian Ba’ath leadership, overthrowing Amin al-Hafez and arresting Salah al-Din al-Bitar and Michel Aflaq. Hafez al-Assad becomes defense minister.
1967 June - Israeli forces seize the Golan Heights from Syria and destroy much of Syria's air force in the Six Day War with Egypt, Jordan and Syria.


1971 March - Assad is elected president for a seven-year term in a plebiscite.

1973 - Rioting breaks out after Assad drops the constitutional requirement that the president must be a Muslim. He is accused of heading an atheist regime. The riots are suppressed by the army.

**War with Israel**

1973 October - Syria and Egypt go to war with Israel but fail to retake the Golan Heights seized during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

![Image of a warning sign in Hebrew and Arabic: Danger, Mines!](image)

*Israel occupied the Golan Heights in 1967 during the Six Day War*

1974 May - Syria and Israel sign a disengagement agreement.

1975 February - Assad says he's prepared to make peace with Israel in return for an Israeli withdrawal from "all occupied Arab land".

1976 June - Syrian army intervenes in the Lebanese civil war to ensure that the status quo is maintained, and the Maronites remain in power.

1978 - In response to the Camp David peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, Assad sets out to gain strategic parity with Israel.

**Riots**

1980 - After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Muslim groups instigate uprisings and riots in Aleppo, Homs and Hama. Assad begins to stress Syria's adherence to Islam.
Hafez al-Assad brought stability, but did so through repression

1980 - Muslim Brotherhood member tries to assassinate Assad.

1980 September - Start of Iran-Iraq war. Syria backs Iran, in keeping with the traditional rivalry between Ba’athist leaderships in Iraq and Syria.

1981 December - Israel annexes the Golan Heights.

**Uprising in Hama**

1982 February - Muslim Brotherhood uprising in the city of Hama. The revolt is suppressed by the military, whom rights organizations accuse of killing tens of thousands of civilians.

1982 June - Israel invades Lebanon and attacks the Syrian army, forcing it to withdraw from several areas. Israel attacks the PLO base in Beirut.

1983 May - Lebanon and Israel announce the end of hostilities. Syrian forces remain in Lebanon.

1983 - Assad suffers a heart attack, according to reports denied by authorities. Assad’s brother Rifaat apparently prepares to take power.

1984 Rifaat is promoted to the post of vice-president.

**Return to Lebanon**

1987 February - Assad sends troops into Lebanon for a second time to enforce a ceasefire in Beirut.

1990 - Iraq invades Kuwait; Syria joins the US-led coalition against Iraq. This leads to improved relations with Egypt and the US.

1991 October - Syria participates in the Middle East peace conference in Madrid and holds talks with Israel that founder over the Golan Heights issue.
1994 - Assad's son Basil, who was likely to succeed his father, is killed in a car accident.

**Rifaat sacked**

1998 - Assad's brother Rifaat is "relieved of his post" as vice-president.

1999 December - Talks with Israel over the Golan Heights begin in the US, but are indefinitely postponed the following month.

**Assad succession**

2000 June - Assad dies and is succeeded by his second son, Bashar.

2000 November - The new President Assad orders the release of 600 political prisoners.
2001 April - Outlawed Muslim Brotherhood says it will resume political activity, 20 years after its leaders were forced to flee.

2001 5 May - Pope John Paul II pays historic visit.

2001 June - Syrian troops evacuate Beirut, redeploy in other parts of Lebanon, following pressure from Lebanese critics of Syria's presence.

2001 September - Detention of MPs and other pro-reform activists, crushing hopes of a break with the authoritarian past of Hafez al-Assad. Arrest continues, punctuated by occasional amnesties, over the following decade.

2001 November - British PM Tony Blair visits to try shore up support for the campaign against terror. He and President Assad fail to agree on a definition of terrorism.

Tensions with US

2002 May - Senior US official includes Syria in a list of states that make-up an "axis of evil", first listed by President Bush in January. Undersecretary for State John Bolton says Damascus is acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

2003 April - US threatens sanctions if Damascus fails to take what Washington calls the "right decisions". Syria denies US allegations that it is developing chemical weapons and helping fugitive Iraqis.

2003 September - President Assad appoints Mohammed Naji al-Otari prime minister.

2003 October - Israeli air strike against Palestinian militant camp near Damascus. Syria says action is "military aggression".

2004 January - President Assad visits Turkey, the first Syrian leader to do so. The trip marks the end of decades of frosty relations, although ties sour again after the popular uprising in 2011.

2004 March - At least 25 killed in clashes between members of the Kurdish minority, police and Arabs in the north-east.

2004 May - US imposes economic sanctions on Syria over what it calls its support for terrorism and failure to stop militants entering Iraq.

Syria and Lebanon

2004 September - UN Security Council resolution calls for all foreign forces to leave Lebanon.
2005 February-April - Tensions with the US escalate after the killing of former Lebanese PM Hariri in Beirut. Washington cites Syrian influence in Lebanon. Damascus is urged to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, which it does by April.

2005 October - Interior minister and Syria's former head of intelligence in Lebanon, Ghazi Kanaan, dies in what officials say is suicide. UN inquiry into assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri implicates senior Syrian officials.

2005 December - Exiled former vice-president Abdul Halim Khaddam alleges that Syrian leaders threatened former Lebanese PM Hariri before his assassination.

2006 February - Danish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus are set on fire during a demonstration against cartoons in a Danish newspaper portraying the Muslim Prophet Muhammad.

2006 September - Attack on the US embassy in Damascus. Four gunmen open fire and throw grenades but fail to detonate a car bomb. Three of them are killed, one is captured.

Diplomatic overtures

2006 November - Iraq and Syria restore diplomatic relations after nearly a quarter century.

2007 March - European Union relaunches dialogue with Syria.

2007 April - US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi meets President Assad in Damascus. She is the highest-placed US politician to visit Syria in recent years. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meets Foreign Minister Walid Muallem the following month in the first contact at this level for two years.

2007 May - Leading dissident Kamal Labwani and prominent political writer Michel Kilo are sentenced to a long jail terms, only weeks after human rights lawyer Anwar al-Bunni is jailed.
**Israeli strike**

**2007** September - Israel carries out an aerial strike against a site in Syria it said was a nuclear facility under construction. In 2011 the UN's IAEA nuclear watchdog decides to report Syria to the UN Security Council over its alleged covert nuclear program reactor program at the site.

2007 Israeli forces destroyed what they said was a nuclear facility under construction. Syria says it was an unused military facility.

**2008** March - Syria hosts Arab League summit. Many pro-Western states send lower-level delegations in protest at Syria's stance on Lebanon.

**2008** April - The US accuses North Korea of having helped Syria to build a secret nuclear reactor at the site bombed by Israel in 2007.

**International acceptance**

**2008** July - President Assad meets French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. The visit signals the end of the diplomatic isolation by the West that followed the assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri in 2005. While in Paris, President Assad also meets the recently-elected Lebanese president, Michel Suleiman, a move toward normalization.

**2008** September - Damascus hosts four-way summit between Syria, France, Turkey and Qatar, in a bid to boost efforts towards Middle East peace. Explosion kills 17 on the outskirts of Damascus, the most deadly attack in Syria in several years. Government blames Islamists.

**Diplomatic thaw continues**

**2008** October - Syria establishes diplomatic relations with Lebanon for first time since both countries established independence in 1940s.

**2009** March - Jeffrey Feltman, acting assistant US secretary of state for the Near East, visits Damascus with White House national security aide Daniel Shapiro in first high-level US diplomatic mission for nearly four years. Meets Foreign Minister Walid Muallem. Trading launches on Syria's stock exchange in a gesture towards liberalizing the state-controlled economy.
2009 May - Syrian writer and pro-democracy campaigner Michel Kilo is released from prison after serving three-year sentence.

Syria has a sizeable Christian community

2009 June - The UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA, says traces of undeclared man-made uranium have been found at second site in Syria - a reactor in Damascus. The IAEA was investigating US claims that the site destroyed in the 2007 Israeli raid was a nuclear reactor.

2009 July - US special envoy George Mitchell visits for talks with President Assad on Middle East peace.

2009 August - Iraq and Syria recall their envoys in a deepening rift over charges of responsibility for a string of deadly bomb attacks in Baghdad. They restore ties later in 2010.

2010 February - US posts first ambassador to Syria after a five-year break.

2010 May - US renews sanctions against Syria, saying that it supports terrorist groups, seeks weapons of mass destruction and has provided Lebanon’s Hezbollah with Scud missiles in violation of UN resolutions.

Nationwide uprising

2011 March - Protests in Damascus and the southern city of Deraa demand the release of political prisoners. Security forces shoot a number of people dead in Deraa, triggering days of violent unrest that steadily spread nationwide over the following months. The government announces some conciliatory measures in an attempt to damp down unrest. President Assad releases dozens of political prisoners and dismisses the government, and in April lifts the 48-year-old state of emergency. However, he accuses protesters of being Israeli agents.

2011 May - Army tanks enter Deraa, Banyas, Homs and suburbs of Damascus in an effort to crush anti-regime protests. US and European Union tighten sanctions. President Assad announces amnesty for political prisoners.
Pro-democracy protests erupted in 2011; the government responded with violence.

2011 June - The government says that 120 members of the security forces have been killed by "armed gangs" in the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour. Troops besiege the town and more than 10,000 people flee to Turkey. President Assad pledges to start a "national dialogue" on reform.

2011 June - The IAEA nuclear watchdog decides to report Syria to the UN Security Council over its alleged covert nuclear program reactor program. The structure housing the alleged reactor was destroyed in an Israeli air raid in 2007.

Opposition organizes / Beginning of Civil War

2011 July - President Assad sacks the governor of the northern province of Hama after mass demonstration there, eventually sending in troops to restore order at the cost of scores of lives. Opposition activists meet in Istanbul to form a unified opposition.

2011 October - Newly formed Syrian National Council says it has forged a common front of internal and exiled opposition activists. Russia and China veto UN resolution condemning Syria.

2011 November - Arab League votes to suspend Syria, accusing it of failing to implement an Arab peace plan, and imposes sanctions. Army defectors target a military base near Damascus in the Free Syrian Army's most high-profile attack since protests began. Government supporters attack foreign embassies.

2011 December - Syria agrees to an Arab League initiative allowing Arab observers into the country. Thousands of protesters gather in Homs to greet them, but the League suspends its mission in January because of worsening violence. Twin suicide bombs outside security buildings in Damascus kill 44, the first in a series of large blasts in the capital that continue into the following summer. Opposition accuses government of staging these and subsequent attacks.
The uprising against President Assad gradually turned into a full-scale civil war

UN pressure

2012 February - Russia and China block a UN Security Council draft resolution on Syria, and the government steps up the bombardment of Homs and other cities, recapturing the Homs district of Baba Amr the following month. The UN says that more than 7,500 people have died since the security crackdown began.

2012 March - UN Security Council endorses non-binding peace plan drafted by UN envoy Kofi Annan. China and Russia agree to support the plan after an earlier, tougher draft is modified. The UN statement falls short of a formal resolution, and violence continues into the summer.

2012 May - UN Security Council strongly condemns the government's use of heavy weaponry and the militia killing of more than a hundred civilians in Houla, near Homs. France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Spain, Canada and Australia expel senior Syrian diplomats in protest.

2012 June - President Assad tells his reshuffled government that they face "real war", indicating the authorities' conviction that the conflict will be long-lasting and require the sidelining of all other priorities. Turkey changes rules of engagement after Syria shoots down a Turkish plane that strayed into its territory, declaring that if Syrian troops approach Turkey's borders they will be seen as a military threat.

2012 July - Free Syria Army blows up three security chiefs in Damascus and seizes Aleppo in the north. A government offensive to recapture the city makes only limited headway.
2012 August - The government suffers further blows. A UN General Assembly resolution demands that President Assad resign, high-level defections gather pace - most notably Prime Minister Riad Hijab - and US President Obama warns that use of chemical weapons would tilt the US towards intervention. UN appoints veteran Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as new UN-Arab League envoy for Syria after resignation of Kofi Annan.

2012 September - The Free Syrian Army claims responsibility for two explosions at the military headquarters in Damascus. The government says four guards were killed in the "suicide attacks".

2012 October - Syria-Turkish tension rises when Syrian mortar fire on a Turkish border town kills five civilians. Turkey returns fire and intercepts a Syrian plane allegedly carrying arms from Russia. Both countries ban each other's planes from their air space. Fire in Aleppo destroys much of the historic market as fighting and bomb attacks continue in various cities. UN-brokered ceasefire during the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha breaks down as government continues attacks.

2012 November - Several major opposition forces unite as National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces at meeting in Qatar, including the Syrian National Council. Arab League stops short of full recognition. Islamist militias in Aleppo, including the Al-Nusra and Al-Tawhid groups, refuse to join the Coalition, denouncing it as a "conspiracy". Israeli military fire on Syrian artillery units after several months of occasional shelling from Syrian positions across the Golan Heights, the first such return of fire since the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

2012 December - The US joins Britain, France, Turkey and Gulf states in formally recognizing Syria's opposition National Coalition as "the legitimate representative" of the Syrian people.

The conflict in Syria displaced millions of people, many of whom sought refuge in camps in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon.

2013 January - Syria accuses Israeli jets of attacking a military research center near Damascus, but denies reports that lorries carrying weapons bound for Lebanon were hit. Unverified reports say Israel had targeted an Iranian commander charged with moving weapons of mass destruction to Lebanon. International donors pledge more than $1.5bn (£950m) to help civilians affected by the conflict in Syria.
2013 March - Syrian warplanes bomb the northern city of Raqqa after rebels seize control. US and Britain pledge non-military aid to rebels, and Britain and France propose lifting European Union arms embargo. Rebel National Coalition elects US-educated technocrat Ghassan Hitto as interim "prime minister".

2013 April - US and Britain demand investigation into reports government forces used chemical weapons. Prime Minister Wael Nader Al-Halqi narrowly escapes death in bomb attack in center of Damascus. Opposition National Coalition chairman Moaz al-Khatib resigns, accusing foreign backers of trying to manipulate the group. His successor is veteran socialist George Sabra, leader of the older opposition Syrian National Council.

2013 May - Israeli and Syrian Army exchange fire in the Golan Heights. EU leaders agree not to renew the bloc's arms embargo on Syria, in a step seen as potentially freeing EU countries to arm the rebels.

2013 May-June - Government and allied Hezbollah forces recapture the strategically-important town of Qusair between Homs and the Lebanese border. Rebel commanders complain that arms supplies taper off over international concerns about Islamists in the opposition camp.

2013 July - In a leadership overhaul, Saudi-backed Ahmed Jarba replaces interim figure George Sabra as leader of the main opposition National Coalition, defeating a Qatar-backed rival. Interim opposition PM Ghassan Hitto quits, citing his inability to form a government in rebel-held territory. Rebels say they capture Khan al-Assal, the last major government-held town in the west of Aleppo Province, after two months of successful government offensives.

2013 September - UN weapons inspectors conclude that chemical weapons were used in an attack on the Ghouta area of Damascus in August that killed about 300 people, but do not explicitly allocate responsibility for the attack.

2013 October - President Assad allows international inspectors to begin destroying Syria's chemical weapons on the basis of a US-Russian agreement.

2013 December - US and Britain suspend "non-lethal" support for rebels in northern Syria after reports that Islamist rebels seize some bases of Western-backed Free Syrian Army.
2014 January-February - UN-brokered peace talks in Geneva fail, largely because Syrian authorities refuse to discuss a transitional government.

2014 March - Syrian Army and Hezbollah forces recapture Yabroud, the last rebel stronghold near the Lebanese border. Israeli air strikes target army facilities in retaliation for bomb attack on Golan Heights that wounded four soldiers.

2014 May - Hundreds of rebels are evacuated from their last stronghold in the central city of Homs. The withdrawal marks the end of three years of resistance in the city.

2014 June - The joint OPCW-UN mission announces that the removal of Syria's chemical weapons material is complete. It also says Syria has destroyed all declared production, mixing and filling equipment and munitions.

ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) militants declare they have established a "caliphate" in the territory they control, stretching from Aleppo in north-western Syria to the eastern Iraqi province of Diyala. They rename their group Islamic State (IS).

2014 August - The United Nations says Islamic State (IS) militants have committed "mass atrocities" in Syria. Tabqa airbase, near the northern city of Raqqa, falls to ISIS militants, who now control the entire Raqqa province.

2014 September - In a nationally televised speech outlining his strategy against ISIS militants, US President Barack Obama says he will not hesitate to take action against the group in Syria as well as in Iraq.

Forces from the United States and five Arab countries launch combined air strikes against militants in and around Aleppo and Raqqa.

2015 January - Kurdish forces push Islamic State out of Kobane on Turkish border after four months of fighting.


Government, which is gradually encircling Aleppo, agrees to suspend aerial and artillery bombardment of the city as part of a UN proposal for local 'freeze zones'.

2015 May - Islamic State fighters seize the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria and proceed to destroy many monuments at pre-Islamic World Heritage site.

Jaish al-Fatah (Army of Conquest) Islamist rebel alliance takes control of Idlib Province, putting pressure on government's coastal stronghold of Latakia.
Russian intervention

2015 September - Russia carries out its first air strikes in Syria, saying they target the Islamic State group, but the West and Syrian opposition say it overwhelmingly targets anti-Assad rebels.

2015 December - Syrian Army allows rebels to evacuate remaining area of Homs, returning Syria's third-largest city to government control after four years.

2016 March - Syrian government forces retake Palmyra from Islamic State with Russian air assistance, only to be driven out again in December.

2016 August - Turkish troops cross into Syria to help rebel groups push back so-called Islamic State militants and Kurdish-led rebels from a section of the two countries' border.

2016 December - Government troops, backed by Russian air power and Iranian-sponsored militias, recaptures Aleppo, the country's largest city, depriving the rebels of their last major urban stronghold.

2017 January - Russia, Iran and Turkey agree to enforce a ceasefire between the government and non-Islamist rebels, after talks between the two sides in Kazakhstan.

2017 April - US President Donald Trump orders a missile attack on an airbase from which Syrian government planes allegedly staged a chemical weapons attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun.