

The Syrian Arab Republic (Syria)

Who:

- **Population:** 22,530,746 (July 2012 est.)
- **Median Age:** 22.3 yrs
- **Ethnic Groups:**
 - 90.3%: Arab
 - 9.7%: Kurds, Armenians and others
- **Religion:**
 - 74%: Sunni Muslim
 - 12%: Alawite
 - 4%: Druze Muslim
 - 10%: Christian



Alawite Muslims are a minority group, of approximately 3 million, that seized control of the government under the leadership of Hafez Assad, in part by promising to protect the rights of other minority groups in Syria. Alawites are viewed as more secular than other Muslims and are settled primarily along the Mediterranean Coast.

Government:

- **Chief of State:** President Bashar al-Assad (since 2000)
- **Head of Government:** Prime Minister Wael al-Halqi (since 2012)
- **Council of Ministers,** appointed by President & Unicameral People's Assembly (last election in 2012)
- Last Presidential election in 2007

The Baath Party has been in control of Syria since Hafez al-Assad seized power in 1970. An Arab nationalist party, they have come to control almost every aspect of public life in Syria (schools, trade unions, social services, military). There is only one other legal political party, the National Progressive Front, but even they accept the Baath Party's "leading role." Many Syrians, however, see it as corrupt and nepotistic because it is so tightly controlled by the Assad family. With few exceptions, the Party leadership has remained loyal to Assad and supported the suppression of anti-government movements. Analysts agree that this is because many are members of the Alawite sect or have privileged positions, and therefore much to lose, if the Assad government collapses.

Economy:

- In 2010 the IMF estimated per capita income at \$2,664.
- **Exports:** crude oil, minerals, petroleum, agricultural goods.
- **Major markets:** Europe and Saudi Arabia.
- **Imports:** primarily from Russia, China and Saudi Arabia