



Syria

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Fast Facts

- ➔ **Capital** Damascus
- ➔ **Area** 185,180 sq km
- ➔ **Population** 17.95 million
- ➔ **Life expectancy at birth**
68.41 years (before the war:
73.1 years)
- ➔ **Inflation** 59.1%
- ➔ **Casualties of war** 191,000
(August 2014)
- ➔ **Refugees within/outside**
Syria three/nine million
- ➔ **Percentage of refugees**
who are children 50%

Understand

At the time of writing, Syria is one of the most dangerous places on the planet. To put it simply, you can't go. And if you can, you shouldn't.

The uprising against the Assad regime that began in early 2011 long ago became a civil war. Syrians themselves have paid the heaviest price – an estimated 200,000 have died in the conflict and millions have been forced into exile. Most such tragedies happen far away from the international spotlight. But Westerners, including journalists and aid workers, have also been targeted, very publicly so, both for kidnapping and execution. By visiting Syria now, you would run the risk of both.

We have not, of course, visited Syria to update our coverage for this edition. For that reason, this chapter contains no information or advice for travellers to the country. Instead, we have shifted our focus to exploring what daily life is like for those still inside the country.



SYRIA EXPLAINED

By Richard Spencer, Middle East Correspondent of the Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph. He has reported regularly from Aleppo and other parts of Syria since the start of the civil war.

One day in May 2013, I stood in the afternoon shadows of the courtyard of Aleppo's Great Umayyad Mosque, as gunfire rattled in the near distance, and took a photograph of a

pile of rubble in the corner. This pile of ragged and forlorn stone was all that remained of the mosque's 11th century minaret, a symbol of Aleppo's Old City, a feature of countless postcards, the finest architectural monument of northern Syria.

It wasn't safe to walk in the centre of the courtyard, because it was in full view of government snipers on the upper floors of buildings a couple of hundred metres away; instead, my guides and I skirted the colonnades, rounding sandbagged positions