



Language

, [The Big Story: Syria](#) [1], New Internationalist, no. 485, 2015, pp. 12-29

This supplement on Syria provides a time line and other helpful contextual information about the complex developments in Syria from 2011-15, as well as an analysis of the role of civic activism in rebel held territory. The issue includes a discussion of artistic creativity since 2011, stories of individual journalists opposing Assad or ISIS, of a doctor treating victims of chemical attack, a teacher under ISIS, and an article on the White Helmets.

See also: Abbas, Omar, 'Dr Jalal Nofal: Connecting Relief Work and Civil Activism in Syria', *War Resisters' International*, 11 Nov, 2016

<https://wri-irg.org/en/story/2016/dr-jalal-nofal-connecting-relief-work-and-civil-activism-syria> [2]

An account of the leftist political background of Dr Nofal, his nonviolent resistance (including arrests and imprisonment), and his medical initiatives as a psychiatrist in Damascus from 2011-14. He was smuggled out of Syria early in 2015, but continued from a border town in Turkey to broadcast, to offer training for social workers and support for refugees, and also to help social workers inside Syria.

, [Thomson Reuters Foundation's survey on the 10 most dangerous countries for women in 2018](#) [3], Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2018

The survey reports on the worst countries in the world for women in terms of health (e.g. maternal mortality, lack of access to health care facilities, lack of control over reproductive rights); discrimination (e.g. over land rights, job rights, property or inheritance); culture and religion (e.g. acid attacks, FGM, forced marriages); sexual violence (e.g. Rape, rape as a weapon of war, domestic rape or by a stranger); non-sexual violence (e.g. domestic violence); and human trafficking (including domestic servitude, forced labour, sexual slavery and forced marriage). The methodology is outlined and each listed country is fully described in each of the categories explored by the survey.

Al-Taher, Sarah, [Macht und Ohnmacht der Medien: der Medienkrieg in Syrien und der friedliche Widerstand](#) [4], Diskussionspapier 34, Bund fuer soziale Verteidigung, 2013

Al-Taher begins by observing that, unlike in the beginning of the Syrian Spring 2011-12, the international and western press no longer reported on peaceful protests in Syria. The paper discusses two possible explanations: a problem of information (either a lack of information or an excess of news), or the absence of nonviolent protests in the region. The author refutes the second thesis, arguing that despite the ongoing bloody civil war in Syria, large parts of the society nevertheless participate in peaceful protests.

Alwadi, Nada, [Voices of Syrian women in civil resistance](#) [5], London, OpenDemocracy.net, 2013

Bartkowski, Maciej J. ; Kahf, Mohja, [The Syrian resistance: a tale of two struggles](#) [6], London, OpenDemocracy.net, 2013

Part 1 of a two part series. Part 2 is available at <http://www.opendemocracy.net/civilresistance/maciej-bartkowski-mohja-kahf/syrian-resistance-tale-of-two-struggles-part-2> [7]

Bartkowsky, Maciej ; Kahf, Mohja, [Civil Resistance: A Tale of Two Struggles](#) [8], Part 1 and 2, Open Democracy, 2013



The articles discuss the 'tragedy' of nonviolent resistance being overtaken by armed resistance and the tendency of the nonviolent activism to be obscured, and outline the role of nonviolent resistance in Syria so far.

Hinnenbusch, Raymond ; Imady, Omar, [The Syrian Uprising: Domestic Origins and Early Trajectory](#) [9], London, Routledge, 2018, pp. 358

Scholarly, interdisciplinary analysis of the Assad regime and of the first two years of the uprising. The book explores the nature of the uprising, reasons for the lack of success, and why it turned into an increasingly sectarian civil war.

See also: Hinnenbusch, Raymond, Omar Imady and Tina Zintl, 'Civil Resistance in the Syrian Uprising: From Peaceful Protest to Sectarian Civil War', in Adam Roberts, Michael J. Willis, Rory McCarthy and Timothy Garton Ash, eds. *Civil Resistance in the Arab Spring* (E.V.B.a.), pp. 223-47.

An overview with a focus on the role, possibilities and limitations of civil resistance in the specific context of the Assad regime, and the realities of the civil war from 2012 and the rise of ISIS.

Jin, Zhixin, [How Do Anti-abortion and Abortion Rights Groups Deploy Ideas About Islam in Their Activism Regarding Abortion](#) [10], Journal of Politics and Law, Vol. 12, no. 1, 2018, pp. 38-47

Abortion is a hotly debated topic among Muslim communities. In this paper, the author examines how both anti-abortion and abortion rights groups deploy ideas about Islam. She analysed the language used by these groups when describing Muslim communities and Muslim views and found that a majority of them did not include arguments from both sides. Almost all the Anti-Abortion Websites included generalizations about the Muslim community, and also used the conservative elements in Islamic Religion to persuade more Muslims to join their stance on abortion.

Knapp, Michael ; Ayboga, Ercan, [Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan](#) [11], London, Pluto Press, 2016, pp. 320

A detailed history and sympathetic analysis of the development of a new kind of politics in the autonomous administration created rebel held territory in northern Kurdistan in Syria. Rojava's ideology (a reaction against the previous Marxist-Leninist beliefs of the Kurdish PKK) rejects centralized state control and emphasizes local communal organizing and promotion of ecological and feminist goals. Their armed groups, which include women's units, played a major role in opposing ISIS.

See also: Dirik, Dilar, 'Unbowed' *New Internationalist*, July/August 2020, pp.22-4.

The author notes the 'remarkable progress' made by the Autonomous Administration in Northern and Eastern Syria since July 2012 in promoting women's rights in all spheres. Turkish troops and their proxies occupied parts of Rojava - Afrin in the north in 2018 and the area bordering Turkey in 2019 - expelling hundreds of thousands of Kurds, shutting down all women's organizations and allowing armed groups to terrorize women. Nevertheless, women were continuing to organize more informally and were committed to resist the permanent extinction of their basic rights, and in northern Syria had held protests and rallies.

Mack, Daniel ; Wood, Brian, [Civil Society and the Drive towards an Arms Trade Treaty](#) [12], background paper published by UNIDIR, 2012, pp. 1-29

An informative and detailed account of how the proposal for an Arms Trade Treaty to set international standards and controls upon the sale of arms, promoted in the 1990s by NGOs (such as Oxfam and Amnesty International) and by prominent individuals, for example Nobel Peace laureates, gained governmental support. The goal was not to stop all arms exports, but the more limited one of setting international standards for controlling sale of arms to strengthen national rules and to prevent weapons from intensifying conflicts or worsening human rights abuses. The Treaty was agreed at the UN General Assembly in April 2013 by 157 states, including the US under President Obama.



See also: Campaign Against the Arms Trade, 'Issues - Arms Trade Treaty' <https://www.caat.org.uk/issues/att> [13]

CAAT notes that the Arms Trade Treaty came into force in December 2014 when ratified by 50 states (including the UK), but explains their scepticism about the concept of a 'responsible' arms trade. CAAT claims the UK approves licenses which contravene the approved guidelines. and it should stop promoting arms sales A number of other sources sceptical about the Treaty are listed.

See also: 'Canada, 'Canada joins the Arms Trade Treaty while still selling arms to Saudi Arabia', *Oxfam*, 16 May 2019

<https://www.oxfam.ca/blog/canada-joins-the-arms-trade-treaty-while-still-selling-arms-to-saudi-arabia/> [14]

Oxfam comments that whilst Canadian eventual accession to the Treaty is a major victory for civil society, the government has not made moves to cancel its \$15 billion arms deal with Saudi Arabia, despite the Saudi record on human rights (denounced by the Trudeau government) and the Saudi role in the war in Yemen.

See also: Pecquet, Julian, 'UN Approval of Arms Trade Treaty sets up Obama, Senate Showdown', *The Hill*, 2 April 2013

<https://thehill.com/policy/international/291401-un-adopts-obama-backed-arms-trade-treaty-opposed-by-the-nra> [15]

Commentary on the domestic political context of Obama's decision to back the Arms Trade Treaty, opposed by 53 Senators and the National Rifle Association. In the light of domestic opposition the Obama Administration had delayed support for the UN treaty in the run-up to the November 2012 election. Pecquet also notes that the treaty passed with 154 votes; three countries opposed – North Korea, Syria and Iran – and 23 abstained.

Maher, Shiraz, [Between Twin Barbarisms](#) [16], ed. [Hinnenbusch, Raymond](#) [17], [Imady, Omar](#) [18], New Statesman, 2017, pp. 25-27

A detailed analysis of how Al Qaeda under various organizational guises have been taking over the opposition to Assad and marginalized the moderates, whilst claiming to pursue a 'middle path'. The author also warns that ISIS has not been wholly defeated.

Middle East Institute, [Revolution and Political Transformation in the Middle East](#) [19], ed. [Middle East Institute.](#) [20], Government Action in Response, Vol. 2, Washington DC, Middle East Institute, 2011, pp. 36

Middle East Institute, [Revolution and Political Transformation in the Middle East](#) [21], ed. [Middle East Institute.](#) [20], Agents of Change, Vol. 1, Washington DC, Middle East Institute, 2011, pp. 45

Mobilization, [Mobilization](#) [22], ed. [Mobilization.](#) [23], Mobilization, Vol. 17, no. 4 (December), 2012

contains an overview by Charles Kurzman. 'The Arab Spring Uncoiled', and articles on Egypt, Iran, and Syria.

Nepstad, Sharon Erickson, [Nonviolent Struggle: Theories, Strategies, and Dynamics](#) [24], New York, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 264

Designed as a textbook, it covers history, theoretical developments and debates about the results of nonviolent movements. It categorizes nine types of nonviolent action, which are illustrated by case studies. A separate chapter explores key issues of why and when sections of the armed services defect from a regime challenged by a nonviolent movement.

Ottaway, Marina ; Ottaway, David, [The New Arab Uprisings: Lessons from the Past](#) [25], Middle East Policy



Council, Vol. 27, no. 1, 2020

The authors look back to 2011 and the varied outcomes in four different contexts which shaped the possibility of and the reactions to mass protest. These are: the Maghreb (Tunisia and Morocco); Egypt; the Levant (Syria and Iraq) - states created out of the Ottoman Empire and then dominated by the colonial powers Britain and France; and the Gulf Arab monarchies. They then discuss 'whether the second wave?' in relation to Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon and Iraq and draw some provisional conclusions.

Popovic, Srdja ; Miller, Matthew, [Blueprint for Revolution: How to Use Rice Pudding, Lego Men, and Other Nonviolent Techniques to Galvanise Communities, Overthrow Dictators, or Simply Change the World](#) [26], Melbourne and London, Scribe, 2015, pp. 282

Popovic, an activist against the Milosevic regime in Serbia in the 1990s, went on to find CANVAS, which has offered advice and nonviolent training to activists in former Soviet states and other parts of the world, including Egypt before Tahrir Square and Syria. The book emphasizes the role of CANVAS (but does not address criticism of its role) and foregrounds the author's own experiences and interpretation of nonviolent action. It covers many varied campaigns with examples of how to mobilize successfully and use humour and imaginative forms of protest. It also addresses how to make oppression 'backfire' and the need to persevere in one's effort after apparent success. Written for activists rather than for scholars of nonviolence.

Roberts, Adam ; Willis, Michael J. ; McCarthy, Rory ; Garton Ash, Timothy, [Civil Resistance in the Arab Spring: Triumphs and Disasters](#) [27], Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 360

After a general overview of politics and resistance in the region, experts on individual countries explore the immediate impact of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and Syria, and the subsequent developments, discussing the reasons for reassertion of repression on Bahrain and later Egypt; political breakdown in Libya and civil war intensified by external interference in Yemen and Syria. There are also chapters on the monarchical response to pressure for reform in Jordan and Morocco, and why the Arab Spring did not ignite massive resistance in Palestine. Adam Roberts provides a concluding assessment of the problems of using civil resistance in the Arab Spring, the difficulties of democratization, and the lessons to be learned.

Starr, Stephen, [Revolt in Syria: Eye-Witness to the Uprising](#) [28], New York and London, Columbia University Press and Hurst, 2012, pp. 232

Starr, Stephen, [Revolt in Syria: Eyewitness to the Uprising](#) [29], London , Hurst, 2015, pp. 178 pb

In this book, which was well reviewed, Starr - an Irish journalist - provides a detailed account of the complex nature of Syrian society with its many minorities and why some supported Assad. He had worked in Syria since 2007 and was able to send reports from inside the country to a range of respected US and UK newspapers during the nonviolent uprising and the subsequent civil war. His account is based partly on interviews with a wide range of people with diverse allegiances and viewpoints.

Stephan, Maria, [Support for Nonviolent Fighters Key to Ending War](#) [30], Waging Nonviolence, 2017

Urges external support for groups trying to help people devastated by war and also to create the organizational basis for a better future. Stephan notes the role of women-led 'peace circles' publicizing atrocities, promoting education and psychiatric help for refugee children, and planning for the future.

See also: Al Shami, Leila, 'Syria: Women Continue Resistance against Fascism, Imperialism and Patriarchy', *Open Democracy*, 5 January 2017.

Describes a young woman taking risks to communicate with the outside world before the fall of Aleppo, and then discusses the wider role of women in the opposition.



There are also a number of documentary films on aspects of resistance and constructive action inside Syria:

'Islamic State's' Most Wanted', BBC World Service, July 2016 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03qzk9g> [31])

An account of citizen journalists in Raqaa (capital of the IS Syrian caliphate) taking appalling risks (and sometime suffering death and attacks on their families) to send online reports to the outside world. Hussam Eesa, who managed to escape Raqaa when he knew arrest was imminent in 2014, is interviewed for the programme.

'Syria's Disappeared: The Case against Assad', Channel 4, March 2017
(<https://www.channel4.com/news/syrias-disappeared> [32])

Reveals how prisoners in one of Assad's prisons smuggled out lists of names of those detained. They were written in blood on scraps of material, which any prisoner who was released could take out with him. The story is told by Mansour al-Omari, a human rights activist jailed in February 2012, who eventually managed to attain asylum in Sweden.

'The White Helmets', Netflix documentary, February 2017 (upon subscription)

A film about the White Helmets (Syrian Civil Defence), who had been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, and its 3,000 members across Syria. The documentary received an Oscar nomination and fueled controversy.

Svetlova, Ksenia, [Rising from ashes of Arab Spring, women lead a first Muslim feminist revolution](#) [33], Times of Israel, 2019

Highlights important challenges that women face in the Kurdish part of Syria; Tunisia; Morocco; Egypt; and the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of the Arab Spring.

Volgestein, Rachel, [Eliminating violence against women](#) [34], Council on Foreign Relations, 2017

On the week marking the United Nations Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, *Council on Foreign Relations* published a link featuring six publications from the Women and Foreign Policy Program. The publications are:

- CFR Discussion Paper: *Countering Sexual Violence in Conflict* (Include PDF);
- 'Sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace' (<http://fortune.com/2017/11/17/sexual-harassment-legal-gaps/> [35]);
- 'Rape as a tactic of terror' (<https://www.cfr.org/event/countering-human-trafficking-and-sexual-violence-conflict> [36]) inclusive of a discussion with human rights activist, Yazidi survivor to ISIS' sexual slavery and 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Nadia Murad. The link provides both the video and its script);
- 'The economic costs of violence against women' (<https://www.cfr.org/report/closing-gender-gap-development-financing> [37]);
- 'Ending gender-based violence in conflict' (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/its-time-end-gender-based-violence-conflict> [38]);
- 'Addressing gender-based violence in peace agreements' (Link not retrievable).

Zouhour, Line, [Whither the Peaceful Movement in Syria?](#) [39], Arab Studies Institute, 2013



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