

Forum: General Assembly 1 (GA1)

Issue: The situation in Syria

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Introduction

Since 2011, Syria has moved from a domestic uprising into one of the most complex security crises the international community faces today, one that now touches disarmament, chemical weapons, terrorism, arms proliferation, and civilian protection all at once. The protests that began in March 2011 escalated into a prolonged civil war, and the fall of the Assad government in December 2024 opened a transition that remains fragile. The interim government under Ahmed al-Sharaa inherited a state with unsecured weapons stockpiles, an unfinished chemical weapons file, multiple foreign militaries still present on Syrian soil, and a reforming Da'esh presence (Human Rights Watch, 2026). This report looks at four interlinked dimensions of that crisis: the status of Syria's chemical weapons programme, the challenge of detention and reintegration, the proliferation of small arms and the captagon trade, and the continued presence of foreign forces. Each of these threatens Syria's own stability as much as the wider security of the region, and each calls for the kind of coordinated response this committee exists to build.

Definition of Key Terms

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR)

Removing combatants' weapons, disbanding armed groups, and returning fighters to civilian life.

Security Sector Reform (SSR)

Rebuilding armed forces, police, and intelligence services under accountable civilian control.

Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)

The treaty banning the development, production, and use of chemical weapons, in effect in Syria since 2013.

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW)

Portable weapons up to man-portable air-defence systems, defined by the UN as lethal weapons that fire a projectile.

Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)

Unexploded or abandoned ordnance, including landmines, left behind after fighting.

1974 Disengagement Agreement / UNDOF

The accord establishing the buffer zone between Israel and Syria, monitored by the UN Disengagement Observer Force.

Captagon

A counterfeit amphetamine-based stimulant that became Syria's largest illicit export under the former regime.

Background Information

Chemical Weapons

The Syrian government's chemical weapons programme has been a central concern since the 2013 sarin attack on Ghouta, which prompted Security Council Resolution 2118 and the destruction of most of the declared stockpile (United Nations, 2013). Later attribution investigations tied further attacks between 2017 and 2018 to the Syrian air force, and the programme's opacity led the Conference of States Parties to suspend Syria's rights within the OPCW in 2021. Since the fall of the Assad government, inspectors have both regained access and uncovered undeclared sites, prompting the OPCW's Executive Council to reinstate Syria's rights in July 2026 on the condition that verification continues (OPCW, 2026). Delegates should treat this as an unfinished process rather than a resolved one.

Detention and the Fight Against Da'esh

Thousands of suspected Da'esh fighters and their families remain held in camps such as al-Hol, a legacy of the campaign against the group that predates the current transition (Combating Terrorism Center, 2026). Mass escapes from these facilities in early 2026, the transfer of detainees to Iraq, and the announced dissolution of the Syrian Democratic Forces as an independent force have all raised concern that detention arrangements built for a different political moment are no longer sustainable. Syria's accession to the Global Coalition against Da'esh in November 2025 signals an intent to take on more of this responsibility directly, though its capacity to do so remains limited.

Arms Proliferation and Captagon

The collapse of the former regime left large quantities of small arms and light weapons in uncontrolled circulation, while explosive remnants of war continue to injure civilians and restrict the return of displaced people to their homes. At the same time, the captagon trade, once a major revenue source for the former regime, has continued despite

the dismantling of a number of production sites (UNODC, 2025), suggesting that the networks behind it have proven more durable than the government that once sponsored them.

Foreign Military Presence

Multiple foreign militaries remain active on Syrian territory. Israel has expanded its footprint in the south since Assad's fall, citing security guarantees it says are still unresolved; Russia has retained a reduced presence at its coastal bases under a new agreement with Damascus; Türkiye has become the interim government's principal security partner; and the United States has drawn down its own troop presence while continuing to mediate between Damascus and its neighbours. Each of these presences complicates the transitional government's claim to a state monopoly on the use of force, and each is discussed further below.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

The international community has tried to address this crisis through several instruments, with mixed results. The 2012 Geneva Communiqué first set out a framework for a Syrian-led political transition, but it was never implemented under the former government. Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) built on this by laying out a roadmap toward a new constitution and elections under UN supervision; delegates should note that Syria's actual transition has followed a faster and very different path than the one Resolution 2254 envisioned, which is worth considering when drafting new mechanisms. The Astana and Sochi processes, led by Russia, Türkiye and Iran, focused narrowly on de-escalation zones; they had some success reducing violence in specific areas but never produced a lasting political settlement. More recently, Resolution 2799 (United Nations Security Council, 2025) removed sanctions on President al-Sharaa and Interior Minister Anas Khattab, passing 14 to 0 with China abstaining, a sign that the Council is now willing to engage the transitional government directly rather than treat it as illegitimate. Delegates negotiating new solutions should consider why these earlier efforts succeeded or stalled before proposing similar mechanisms again.

Organisations and Major Countries Involved

In the interest of focused debate, this report highlights the four external actors whose positions most shape the security situation on the ground.

United States of America (US)

Having repealed the Caesar Act and lifted comprehensive sanctions in 2025, the US has shifted from isolating Damascus to engaging it directly, even as it withdrew its own troops earlier in 2026 (U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2025). Washington's continued mediation between Israel and Syria suggests it sees a stable transition as being in its own strategic interest, even while keeping only a light footprint on the ground.

Russian Federation

Russia has prioritised preserving its Mediterranean naval and air access above almost any other objective, agreeing to convert its bases into joint training centres under the August 2026 memorandum rather than risk losing them outright (The Moscow Times, 2026). Its decision to shelter former President Assad, despite Damascus's request for his extradition, continues to strain relations with the transitional government.

Türkiye

As the interim government's principal security partner (Euronews, 2025), Türkiye has taken the lead in training Syria's new army, but its position is complicated by its long-standing opposition to the YPG, which it regards as an extension of the PKK. Ankara's insistence on the group's full integration or removal remains one of the most significant obstacles to a durable settlement in the northeast.

Israel

Israel has taken the most unilateral approach of the four, declaring the 1974 Disengagement Agreement void after Assad's fall and occupying the former buffer zone and Mount Hermon. It has linked any further security arrangement to the demilitarisation of southwestern Syria and guarantees for the Druze community (Al-Monitor, 2025), conditions Damascus has yet to accept.

Possible Solutions

The following are intended as starting points for debate and resolution drafting, not as fixed prescriptions.

Chemical Weapons

Delegates may wish to consider a phased, internationally verified framework for completing Syria's chemical disarmament, potentially through a dedicated trust fund that gives former weapons personnel a safe channel to disclose undeclared sites.

Detention

Delegations could explore a shared regional and international framework for the repatriation, rehabilitation, or prosecution of foreign nationals held in camps such as al-Hol, recognising that no single state can absorb this caseload alone.

Arms Proliferation and Captagon

Addressing the arms and captagon trade may call for stronger cooperation between Syria and its neighbours on border security and precursor tracking, alongside incentives, such as buy-back or livelihood programmes, that give armed groups a reason to disarm voluntarily.

Minority Protection

On the coastal and Suwayda violence, delegates might consider an independent, internationally supported monitoring mechanism that builds confidence between communities while investigations into past abuses continue.

Foreign Military Presence

Resolving the question of foreign military presence will likely require parallel bilateral arrangements rather than a single settlement. Delegates should think about what incentives could bring Israel, Russia, Türkiye, and the United States to the same table, rather than negotiating with Damascus separately.

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Appendix

Appendix I — Timeline of Key Security Milestones

Date	Event
8 Dec 2024	Fall of the Assad government
Mar 2025	Constitutional Declaration; coastal massacres
10 Mar 2025	First SDF-Damascus integration agreement
Jul 2025	Suwayda violence (>1,700 killed)
14 Aug 2025	Türkiye-Syria defence memorandum
5 Oct 2025	People's Assembly indirect elections
Nov 2025	Syria joins Global Coalition; Resolution 2799
Jan–Feb 2026	al-Hol handover, escapes, 5,700 detainees moved to Iraq
Apr 2026	US troop withdrawal
9 Jul 2026	OPCW reinstates Syria's rights
9 Aug 2026	Russia bases memorandum
25 Aug 2026	SDF dissolution announced

Key security milestones, December 2024 to September 2026.

Appendix II — Useful Links

[OPCW and Syria hub](#); [OCHA Syria](#);

[UNHCR Syria data portal](#);

[UNMAS Syria](#).