



Special Edition
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13 YEARS SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR.



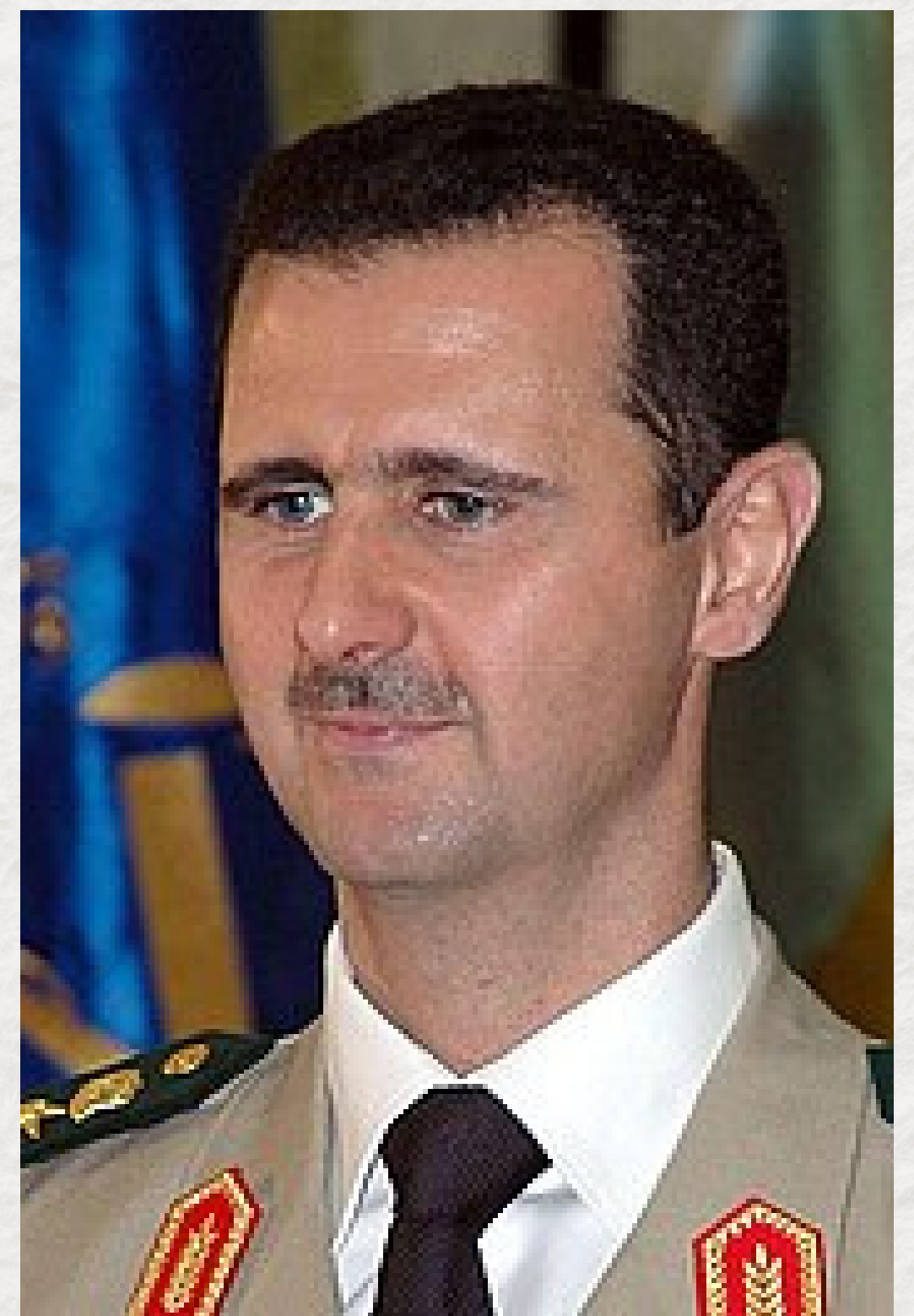
FROM THE USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS TO THE
INTERVENTION OF EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

BY FILIPPO CAIO, DANIEL IPPOLITO

13 YEARS SINCE THE OUTBREAK OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR.

• WHO IS BASHAR AL-ASSAD?

Bashar al-Assad (born 11 September 1965) is the current and 19th president of Syria since 17 July 2000. His father and predecessor was General Hafiz al-Assad, whose presidency in 1971–2000 marked the transfiguration of Syria from a republican state into a de facto dynastic dictatorship. Born and raised in Damascus, Bashar graduated from the medical school of Damascus University in 1988 and began to work as a doctor in the Syrian Army. Unlike his brothers Bassel and Maher, and second sister, Bashar was quiet, reserved and lacked interest in politics or the military. His father had been grooming Bashar's older brother Bassel as the future president but he died in a car accident in 1994 so State propaganda soon began elevating Bashar's public imagery as "the hope of the masses" to prepare him as the next patriarch in charge of Syria, to continue the rule of the Assad dynasty. After the death of Hafiz al-Assad on 10 June 2000, the Constitution of Syria was amended. The minimum age requirement for the presidency was lowered from 40 to 34, which was Bashar's age at the time.

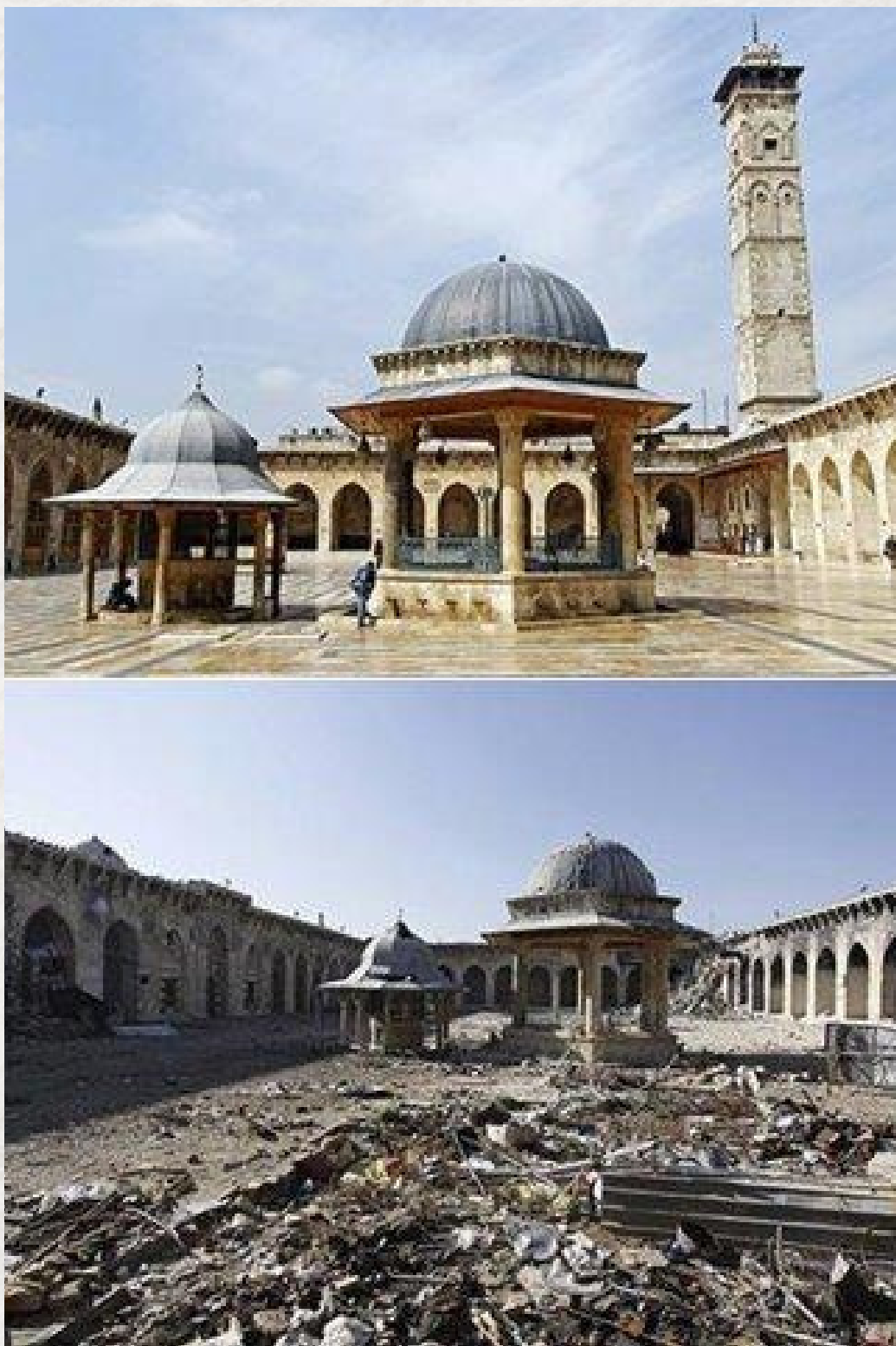


ASSAD IN 2004

• THE BEGINNING OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

In March 2011, popular discontent with the Ba'athist government led to large-scale protests and pro-democracy rallies across Syria, as part of the wider Arab Spring protests in the region. The Syrian government tried to violently suppress the protests that had spread throughout the country, quickly leading to one of the bloodiest civil wars of the 21st century. The insurgents regroup in the Free Syrian Army (formed mainly of Syrian army deserters). They receive funding and weapons from other states such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia. On the morning of 21 August 2013, the crisis became international when Bashar's regime launched a chemical attack with sarin gas surface-to-surface missiles causing between 281 and 1729 deaths and 3600 injuries. From this moment on, there were numerous deployments from many countries such as: The United States, which sided with the rebels, even occasionally carrying out direct attacks against the Syrian army; Russia and Iran, on the other side, sided with the al-Assad Regime by providing logistical and military assistance to its army and the militias that support it.

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ALEPPO UMAYYAD MOSQUE (2011 - 2017)

• DESTRUCTION OF SYRIA'S CHEMICAL WEAPONS

In 2013, following international pressure and a U.S.-Russian agreement, Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and declared its stockpile, which was subsequently destroyed under international supervision. However, numerous confirmed incidents of chemical weapons use in Syria since then, primarily attributed to the Syrian government, have raised serious concerns about the completeness of Syria's initial declaration and the possibility of undeclared stockpiles or continued production. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has repeatedly found Syria in non-compliance with the CWC, and the UN Security Council has condemned Syria's lack of transparency and cooperation. The international community has imposed sanctions and other measures in response to Syria's use of chemical weapons. However, these actions have had limited impact in deterring further use.

In addition to the confirmed use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government, there have also been allegations of chemical weapons use by non-state actors in Syria. These allegations are also under investigation by the OPCW. The disarmament of Syria's chemical weapons arsenal remains a critical issue for international security and human rights. The ongoing conflict and the government's lack of transparency continue to pose significant challenges to fully verifying and eliminating Syria's chemical weapons program. The continued use of chemical weapons in Syria underscores the need for sustained international pressure and cooperation to ensure that Syria fully complies with its obligations under the CWC and that all chemical weapons are eliminated from the country.



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• INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION INITIATIVES

More than 13 years after the start of the Syria crisis, half the population is displaced, both inside and outside the country. Humanitarian needs in Syria are now at an all-time high. 7 out of 10 Syrians require humanitarian assistance. They have been confronted with the impact of conflict, displacement, the COVID-19 pandemic, epidemics, and a devastating earthquake. As the leading donor of humanitarian aid to Syrians, the EU and its Member States have provided sustained humanitarian funding since the start of the conflict. 13 years of conflict in Syria resulted in mass displacement, widespread poverty and destruction, an economic recession, and the spread of preventable diseases. The number of people in need of assistance has been steadily rising since 2012, reaching an unprecedented 16.7 million people in 2024, while 90% of the population lives below the poverty line. The EU, along with its Member States, is the largest donor to the Syria crisis. Over the past 31 years, the EU and its Member States has mobilised more than €33 billion in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance. It has supported Syrians both inside the country and across the region. This includes more than €4 billion in humanitarian aid to Syrians and vulnerable host communities inside Syria and the region, including close to €1.6 billion for Syria alone. All the humanitarian assistance funded by the EU is delivered in partnership with UN agencies, international organisations and NGOs.



AN ECHO VOLUNTEER

It is estimated that, as of April 2024, there have been more than 300 chemical attacks. In addition to the one mentioned above, the deadliest attacks were the April 2017 sarin attack in Khan Shaykhun (killing at least 89 people) and April 2018 Douma chemical attacks (killing 43 people and injuring 500 civilians).