



Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates,

It gives us great pleasure to welcome you to this session of the Arab League Model United Nations. The Agenda for this conference, **“The Joint Defense Council: Addressing the Turkish Occupation of Northern Syria,”** is of critical importance and presents a complex challenge. As the Executive Board, we are excited about the discussions and debates that will take place. The agenda at hand is extensive and intricate, and a fruitful debate on it would require your shared participation. **It is entirely up to you to determine how you want to move this committee forward.** This agenda necessitates looking at the topic from several perspectives, which takes extensive study and knowledge of the issue at hand. The delegates are advised to not limit their research only to the contents present in the guide and to acquire their research from other sources too. The Executive Board strongly recommends delegates, particularly first-timers, to thoroughly analyze your country's position on the agenda and come up with substantive proposals while keeping your country's foreign policy in mind. As you prepare to attend the conference, you must comprehend the agenda at hand as well as the history of it.

We hope this guide will provide you with a comprehensive understanding of the issue and assist you in your preparation. We look forward to engaging discussions and innovative solutions.

Sincerely,

Mohammed Faraazuddin (Chairperson)

Mohammed Siyahi (Vice Chairperson)

Introduction to the Arab League

Powers and Mandate

The Arab League, officially known as the League of Arab States, was founded in 1945 to promote economic, cultural, and political integration among its member states. It currently has 22 members, spanning North Africa and the Middle East. The League's primary objectives include fostering collaboration, safeguarding sovereignty, and resolving conflicts within the Arab world. The Arab League operates through various councils and committees, including the Joint Defense Council, focusing on collective security and defense matters.

RoP:

Rules Of Procedure: The MUN Rules of Procedure (RoP) are established to maintain decorum and ensure order throughout a Model United Nations conference. These guidelines are essential for facilitating an effective and organised debate.

Attendance and Roll Call:

1. Be present at all sessions.
2. Respond with "Present" or "Present and Voting" during roll call.
3. Roll call is conducted at the beginning of each session to ensure quorum.

Quorum:

1. At least one-third of the delegates must be present to start the session.
2. A simple majority (more than half) is needed to pass a draft resolution.

Debate:

Speakers' List

1. The primary method for delegates to speak.
2. Delegates speak in the order they are listed.

Formal Debate

1. Follow the speakers' list.
2. Set time limits for speeches.

Moderated Caucus

1. A more flexible debate format.
2. Set time limits for the caucus and individual speeches.

Unmoderated Caucus

1. Informal discussion without a structured order.
2. Set a time limit for the caucus.

Point of Order

1. Used if procedural rules are violated.
2. Chair decides on the issue.

Point of Personal Privilege

1. Used to address personal discomfort.
2. Chair responds immediately.

Point of Inquiry

1. Used to ask procedural questions.

Motions:

Motion to Set the Agenda

1. Determines the order of topics.
2. Needs a majority vote to pass.

Motion to Adjourn the Meeting

1. Ends the meeting until the next session.
2. Needs a majority vote to pass.

Motion to Suspend the Meeting

1. Pauses the meeting for a break.
2. Needs a majority vote to pass.

Motion to Close Debate

1. Ends discussion and moves to voting.
2. Needs a two-thirds majority to pass.

Resolutions:

Draft Resolutions

1. Written proposals for committee action.
2. Require sponsors and signatories to be considered.

Amendments

1. Changes to the draft resolution.
2. Require discussion and a vote to be adopted.

Voting on Resolutions and Amendments

1. Usually requires a simple majority to pass.
2. Voting can be done by roll call or show of hands.

Conduct:

Respectful Behaviour:

1. Be respectful and diplomatic.

2. Use polite and professional language.

Yielding Time:

1. Delegates may give their remaining speaking time to the Chair, another delegate, or for questions.

Key Terms:

1. **Motion:** A proposal for action or discussion within the committee session.
2. **Clause:** A specific section within a working paper or draft resolution.
3. **Simple Majority:** More than half of the members must agree.
4. **Special Majority:** Two-thirds of the members must agree.
5. **Working Paper:** A document containing policy proposals from delegates.
6. **Draft Resolution:** A formal document outlining proposed actions and solutions.
7. **Bloc:** A group of countries or political parties with shared interests and goals.

Background of the Conflict

Historical Context:

The conflict in Northern Syria is rooted in the broader Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011 as a series of protests against President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The situation escalated into a multi-faceted war involving various factions, including the Syrian government, opposition groups, Kurdish forces, and Islamist militants. Turkey's involvement in Northern Syria has added another layer of complexity to the conflict. In recent years, Turkey has conducted several military operations in Northern Syria, citing the need to counter Kurdish militant groups it considers terrorists and to establish a buffer zone along its border.

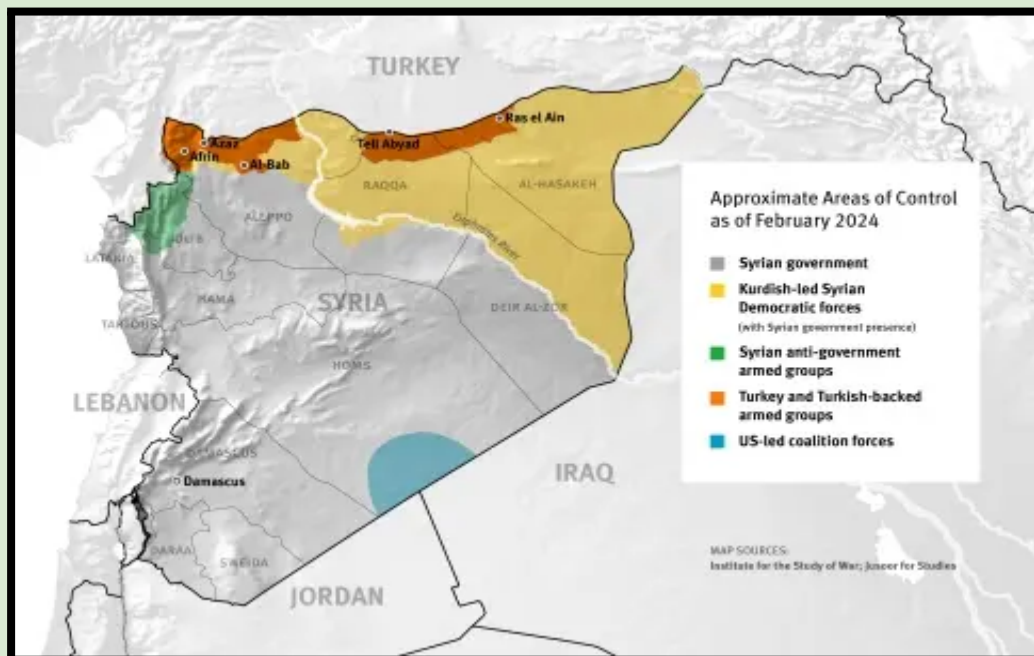
The Arab Spring & The Syrian Civil War as crucibles to the situation:

The Arab Spring and the subsequent Syrian Civil War significantly shaped Türkiye's actions and justifications for its military operations in northern Syria. The initial unrest of the Arab Spring destabilized the region, leading to a power vacuum in Syria that allowed various factions, including Kurdish groups, to assert control over territory previously held by the Assad regime. Türkiye, concerned about the implications of Kurdish autonomy near its borders, viewed the PKK-affiliated Syrian Kurdish groups as a direct threat due to their ideological ties and historical conflict with Türkiye.

From Türkiye's perspective, the Syrian Civil War not only posed a security challenge but also presented strategic opportunities. As the conflict escalated, Türkiye sought to prevent the consolidation of Kurdish autonomous regions along its southern border, fearing that this could embolden Kurdish separatist aspirations within its own borders. Türkiye's military interventions, therefore, aimed at weakening Kurdish influence and establishing buffer zones controlled by friendly Syrian opposition groups, such as the Syrian National Army (SNA), which Türkiye supports, however, geopolitically, Türkiye's actions in Syria reflect its broader regional interests and alliances. Türkiye's historical role as a NATO member and its aspirations for regional influence have influenced its approach. The presence of ISIS and other extremist groups in northern Syria provided a pretext for Türkiye's initial military actions to secure its border regions and combat terrorism. Today, Türkiye's involvement has been justified by Actors supporting it, as a means to create stability and facilitate the return of Syrian refugees, which aligns with its domestic political priorities and international obligations. IR Critics and Scholars argue that Türkiye's interventions have exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in Syria, leading to massive displacement, human rights abuses, and the destabilization of already fragile areas. However, Türkiye maintains that its actions are necessary for national security reasons and to protect its territorial integrity against perceived threats posed by Kurdish groups affiliated with the PKK. These interventions have profound implications for regional stability and the humanitarian situation in Syria, contributing to ongoing debates about sovereignty, interventionism, and international law.

Turkish Occupation:

Turkey's military presence in Northern Syria, particularly in regions such as Afrin, Jarabulus, and Ras al-Ayn, has been a point of contention. These operations have been justified by Turkey on the grounds of national security, aimed at combating the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) and the Islamic State (ISIS). However, this occupation has led to significant humanitarian concerns, including displacement of local populations, civilian casualties, and disruptions to local governance.



In Pic: Situation Today, [source](#).

Regional and Power Dynamics

Regional Actors

- **Syria:** Syria, which is under the Presidency of Bashar Assad, has been engulfed in a civil conflict since 2011. It should be noted that now the government is actively working to regain control over all Syrian territories including Northern Syria. In the eyes of the Assad regime, Turkey is an occupying force and stresses that Turkish forces should be pulled out of the country, Syria's borders must be recognized and protected. The Syrian government has also made other deals with Russia and Iran in

order to safeguard its rule and fight different oppositions. However, the Syrian government to this day struggles to claim its authority over Northern Syria some of which has been reclaimed due to the presence of Turkish forces and Kurdish administrations.

-Kurdish Army: The predominant parties include the Kurdish forces in Northern Syria chiefly the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and People's Protection Units (YPG). They want independence and have proved nimble in combating ISIS with the backing of the United States. The Kurds living in Northern Syria have their own partially authorized regional administration along with internal security forces and an army. Nevertheless, Turkey views the YPG as an affiliate branch of the PKK – or the Kurdistan Workers' Party, considered by Turkey as a terrorist organization. Such thinking has made Turkey launch an attack on Kurdish militias in Northern Syria. The Kurdish forces have also in the recent past had to affiliate with the Syrian government and the Russian federation for self-protection against the Turks.

International Actors

USA: The United States has backed the Kurds in their struggle against ISIS and arm supplies them as well as strategic support. That is why the international security forces' presence in Northern Syria consists of the U. S. military to achieve the defeat of ISIS and prevent the further destabilization of the region. However, the U. S. has also attempted to uphold friendly relations with Turkey being a member of NATO. Now critics over the next years over the policies of the behavior of the US included decisions to pull back troops from some regions leaving its Kurdish partners exposed to attacks by the Turkish forces. The U. S. stays involved in the protection of Kurdish forces and civilians though its position towards Turkey is rather ambiguous.

Russia: Russia is a close friend to the Syrian government and has assisted Assad in his fight against the rebels. Russia is simply an intermediary in Northern Syria, it helps the Syrian government and Kurdish forces negotiate with Turkey. Russia wants to ensure that Assad is brought back to power with a precise control over Syria while balancing the Russian-Turkish relations. Air bases and troops from Russia have played a significant role in supporting the Syrian government which is also part of the defensive structure of Russia. Russia wants to have its strings attached to the Middle Eastern countries like Syria, so as to check the influence of the United States in the area.

United Nations: The United Nations has spoken for the calamity that this conflict is and has warned about its effect on the suffering civilian population. It demands a cease-fire and encourages all the factions to adhere to the norms of the international humanitarian law. The UN also gives assistance to refugees and attempts to negotiate peace agreements. An example of this is the UN getting restricted access to adequately address conflict situations due to security concerns or limitations set by parties to a conflict. Nonetheless, the UN has not discontinued calling for humanitarian corridors and cease fire to deliver aid to the people in need.

Bloc Positions

-Saudi Arabia & UAE: Both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE condemns the Turkish military involvement in Northern Syria as infringement on the sovereign rights. In this case, they align themselves with the Syrian government's opposition to Turkey, urging for the regard of Syria's sovereignty. Both countries have supported the opposition groups against Turkey, besides, they have raised concern in the International forums. It is tactical positioning that forms part of the regional power's strategy to reign in Turkey and check its promotion of political Islam.

-Qatar: The friendship between the two nations remains strong in which Qatar backs Turkey's operations against Kurdish organizations considered as terrorists. Qatar supports Turkey's demand for the right to ensure borders and threats to security, safety. However, while supporting Turkey, Qatar simultaneously demands the non-violent assistance of civilians and a desire for the confrontation's peaceful resolution. The proportionality is also understandable in the context of Qatar's general policy of advocacy of mediation and negotiations besides humanitarian assistance.

-Egypt: Egypt, with President el- Sisi strongly condemning Turkey's interference in the Northern Syria region, regarding it as interference on the sovereignty of the respective nation. On the YPG and Assad situation, Egypt has backed the Syrian government's campaign to regain territory and has denounced Turkey's operations. Egypt's stance is due to its regional conflict with Turkey and counterterrorism and anti-political Islam movements against groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

-**Turkey:** Turkish government legitimate their military operations in the North region of Syria through the security measures and attacking Kurdish organizations such as YPG who are regarded as the branch of the PKK. Currently, Turkey wishes to avoid the emergence of an independent Kurdish state and to provide a safe area for refugees from Syria. Major operations are Euphrates Shield in 2016, Olive Branch in 2018 and Peace Spring in 2019. Turkey claims that these operations are about stopping terrorist threats near its borders and ensuring the stability of the region to assist in the refugee crisis by bringing the Syrian people into safe zones. Turkey insists on the fact that all the actions committed by it are permitted by international law and the right to defense. The operations have brought about a geopolitical change that rewired the United States-Russian relations besides altering the course of the Syrian war.

-**Kurdish Authorities:** North Syrian Kurdish officials, most especially the SDF and AANES, are those who wish to keep their independence and have been important partners in the fight against ISIS. They seek protection from the Turk's aggression and political acknowledgement of their self-governance. Thus, the Kurdish forces insist on a political settlement providing for the creation of their self-governing entities and protection of ethnic minorities. They have been seeking asylum and political backing from the Syrian government and Russia so as to ensure that they optimize on their realities. Local government has also been adopted by Kurdish administrative personnel where they allow different ethnic groups to be given policies. However, they are still in threat from Turkish operations and the overall geography of the Syrian war.

Gray Areas & Challenges

Since the Syrian Civil War began, different groups like the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration, Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), Syrian regime forces, and others have controlled different parts of the region. This division makes it hard to have a unified government and ensure safety for everyone, as ethnic and religious differences add to the problems. Kurds, Arabs, and other groups in the region often disagree over who should control what part of the land. Türkiye's involvement, especially to control Kurdish influence and manage refugees, has made these disagreements worse, and made it difficult to reconcile. This has led to more conflict and made it difficult for people from different backgrounds to trust each other.

Outside countries like Türkiye, Russia, the United States, and Iran also play roles in the region. They support different groups to protect their own interests. Türkiye, for example, is concerned about Kurdish separatism and wants to change who lives in certain areas. This outside involvement has kept local conflicts going and made it hard for the region to become stable and peaceful. Rebuilding is slow because groups argue over resources and money. This lack of jobs and money makes people frustrated and more likely to join extremist groups, which keeps the area unstable. The humanitarian crisis is severe as well. Many Syrians have had to leave their homes, either within Syria or to other countries, because of the fighting. They struggle to get basic things like food and medical care. This crisis makes it even harder to create peace and stability. (*humanitarian problems elaborated later on in this BG*)

More recent UNSC actions, including resolutions focused on humanitarian access and accountability for human rights violations, have also encountered limitations in their effectiveness¹. For example, Resolution 2504, adopted in January 2020, renewed authorization for cross-border humanitarian aid deliveries into Syria, aiming to alleviate the humanitarian crisis. Yet, access remains restricted in many areas due to bureaucratic hurdles, security risks, and the politicization of aid distribution.

Sanctions imposed by the UNSC on individuals and entities implicated in human rights abuses and obstruction of humanitarian assistance have sought to exert pressure and enforce compliance with international law. However, enforcement mechanisms have often been undermined by lack of cooperation and enforcement gaps, allowing perpetrators to evade accountability.

The UNSC's inability to achieve consensus and enforce robust measures has perpetuated a cycle of political instability and further exacerbated the conflict in Syria, with the UNSC²

Timeline of Turkish Occupation of Northern Syria (2019-2024)

2019

¹ <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2024-06/syria-68.php>

² <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15635.doc.htm>

-09.10.2019: Turkey launches Operation Peace Spring targeting the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in northeast Syria. This operation aimed to create a "safe zone" along the border to resettle Syrian refugees and reduce the YPG's presence.

-13.10.2019: Turkish forces capture the town of Ras al-Ayn after heavy clashes with the SDF.

-17.10.2019: A ceasefire agreement is brokered by the United States, temporarily halting the Turkish offensive.

-22.10.2019: Turkey and Russia agree on a deal to push Kurdish forces away from the Turkish border and conduct joint patrols.

2020

-22.02.2020: Turkish-backed forces capture several villages in the Aleppo countryside from the Syrian government.

-27.02.2020: At least 33 Turkish soldiers are killed in an airstrike by Syrian government forces in Idlib, leading to a significant escalation in Turkish military involvement in Syria.

-05.03.2020: Turkey and Russia agree on a ceasefire in Idlib, reducing hostilities but not ending them.

2021

-27.07.2021: Turkish drone strikes target YPG positions in northeastern Syria, causing significant casualties and further straining Turkish-Kurdish relations.

-30.10.2021: Turkish artillery shells Kurdish positions in northern Syria, continuing its efforts to diminish YPG influence.

2022

-01.05.2022: Turkey launches Operation Claw-Lock, focusing on Kurdish militant positions in Iraq and Syria to prevent cross-border attacks.

-15.08.2022: Turkish forces intensify their operations in northern Syria, with drone strikes targeting Kurdish military sites.

-22.12.2022: Turkish airstrikes damage critical infrastructure in northeastern Syria, causing widespread blackouts and fuel shortages.

2023

-20.11.2023: Turkey initiates Operation Claw-Sword, targeting Kurdish-held areas and resulting in extensive damage to civilian infrastructure, including water and power stations.

-22.11.2023: Heavy bombardment of Qamishli and other areas, leading to significant civilian displacement and infrastructure damage.

-29.11.2023: Attacks on medical facilities and health infrastructure escalate, severely impacting healthcare services in the region.

-30.12.2023: Turkish airstrikes cause substantial power cuts in Derik and al-Hasakeh, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

2024

-15.01.2024: Continued Turkish airstrikes and artillery shelling in northeastern Syria result in further civilian casualties and destruction of infrastructure.

-01.03.2024: Fuel and water shortages reach critical levels in areas affected by Turkish operations, leading to increased humanitarian aid needs.

-15.06.2024: Reports indicate ongoing Turkish military activities and their detrimental impact on civilian life in northern Syria.

Legal and Humanitarian Considerations

The situation in Afrin and northeast Syria following Türkiye's military operations has been marked by severe humanitarian implications and widespread human rights violations. Türkiye's incursions, such as Operation Peace Spring in October 2019 and subsequent actions, have led to significant demographic changes through forced displacements and resettlements aimed at altering ethnic compositions. Kurdish populations, along with other minorities like Yazidis and Christians, have been disproportionately affected, facing indiscriminate shelling, summary killings, and unlawful occupation of homes. These actions have been condemned for violating human rights, prompting mass displacements and worsening living conditions amidst blockades and restricted access to essential supplies. The ongoing threats of further military actions continue to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis, leading to continued civilian casualties and damage to critical infrastructure.

A [Human Rights Watch's comprehensive report](#), reveals a dire humanitarian situation characterized by widespread human rights violations. The report documents egregious acts including abductions, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, sexual violence, torture, and enforced disappearances perpetrated by Türkiye-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) factions and the Military Police. These abuses are compounded by violations of housing, land, and property rights, including looting, pillaging, property seizures, and extortion.

Türkiye's military operations and occupation have led to significant demographic changes in northern Syria, particularly affecting Kurdish populations and other minorities. Despite assertions of establishing "safe zones," the reality for residents—numbering 1.4 million—is one of lawlessness and insecurity. The Turkish government, through its armed forces and intelligence agencies, exercises control over these areas, providing support and oversight to SNA factions accused of committing these atrocities. In various literature of importance, Türkiye's responsibility as the occupying power is profound, its direct involvement in overseeing abuses, including alleged war crimes, is a serious question to navigate through³.

Efforts to establish accountability and restitution for victims have largely failed, perpetuating a cycle of impunity. The ongoing humanitarian crisis underscores the urgent need for Türkiye to address these violations and ensure the safety and rights of all civilians under its control in northern Syria.

The coming back of Syria into the Arab League-has more implications than the Arab League seeks to achieve, it is imperative that the Syrian re-entry has paved the way for dialogue and serious political re-considerations of battle behavior. Arab League Nations can help Syria restore areas of the north that it may have lost during the conflict so far, in addition to getting sanctions set aside, the restoration of possession of the area is a larger concern for the regime.

Key Issues to Consider

1. How can the Arab League support Syria's sovereignty while addressing Turkey's security concerns?
2. What measures can be taken to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected areas?
3. How can the Arab League facilitate a political resolution that addresses the interests of all parties involved?
4. What role should international actors, such as the UN and NATO, play in resolving the conflict?

³<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/syrian-arab-republic/north-west-syria-situation-report-16-may-2024-enar>

Links for Research:

- [RULAC. "Military Occupation of Syria"](#)
 - [Human Rights Watch. "Questions and Answers: Turkey's Threatened Incursion into Northern Syria."](#)
 - [Carnegie Endowment. "How Syria Changed Turkey's Foreign Policy"](#)
 - [Carnegie Endowment. "Why Turkey's Syria Policy May Be About to Change."](#)
 - [Politico. "8 Questions About Turkey's Incursion into Syria, Answered."](#)
 - [The New Humanitarian](#)
 - [Human Rights Watch](#)
 - [Human Rights Watch](#)
 - [Arab League Condemns Turkey's Syria Incursion, Calls for UN Action](#)
-