

Syria



Full name: The Syrian Arab Republic

Government: republic under an authoritarian, military-dominated regime

Location: Middle East, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Lebanon and Turkey

Capital: Damascus

Area: 185,180 sq km (71,498 sq miles); slightly larger than North Dakota

Climate: mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus

Terrain: primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west

Natural Hazards: dust storms, sandstorms

Population: 18 million (UN, 2006)

Ethnicity: Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%

Major Language: Arabic

Religion: Sunni Muslim 74%, other Muslim (includes Alawite, Druze) 16%, Christian (various denominations) 10%, Jewish (tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo)

Life expectancy: 71 years (men), 75 years (women) (UN)

Currency: 1 Syrian pound = 100 piastres