The Syrian Tragedy

EAE Learning objectives for this lesson

Practice discussing current affairs in English. Learn and practice phrasal verbs. Test your written English with a dictation. Comprehension activities to improve your understanding.

At least 400 000 people have died as a result of the Syrian Conflict.

Activity One - **Discussion**, with your partner.

- Do you follow the news about the crisis and war in Syria?
- Do you find it complicated to understand what is going on?
- What is your opinion about this war?
- Do you think that other countries should have done more to protect the people of Syria?
- What are the latest developments in this situation as far as you know?

Activity Two - **Wall Dictation and Synopsis.**

1/ One person has to run to their part of the text, stuck on the wall, and then get back to their partner and dictate it. The first couple to finish writing their text correctly wins the race!

2/ After the wall dictation change partners and resume the text into three sentences which explain the complexity of the Syrian conflict.

Syrian conflict - Text from The Atlantic.

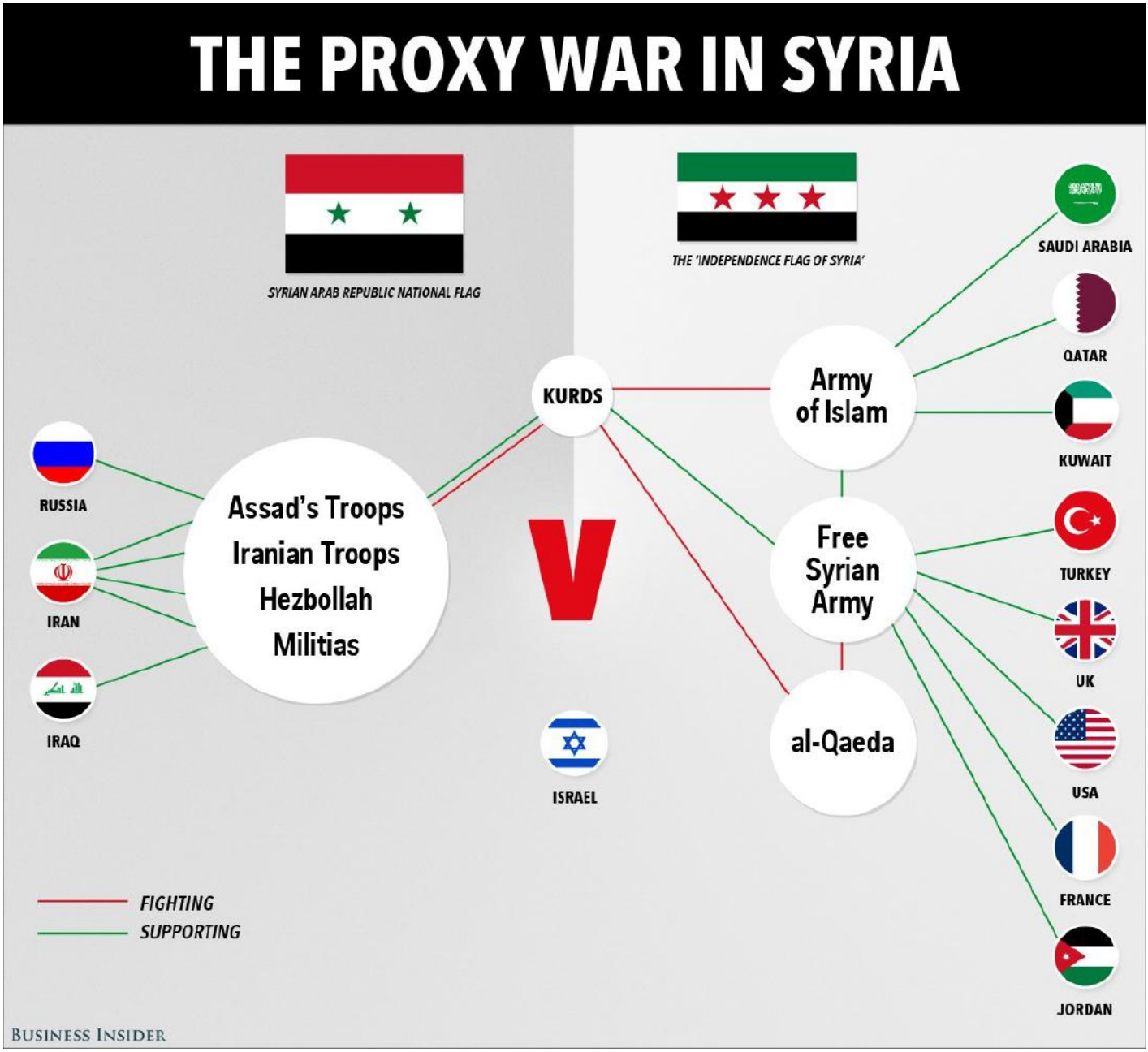
http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/syrian-civil-war-guide-isis/410746/

The combatants involved in the conflict in Syria can be grouped into four broad categories: rebels (from "moderate" to Islamist); loyalists (regime forces and their supporters); Kurdish groups (who aren't currently seeking to overthrow Assad, but have won autonomy in northeastern Syria, which they have fought ISIS to protect); and finally, foreign powers.

Many of the parties I place in this last category are fighting or claiming to fight ISIS. The divide among them is whether to explicitly aim to keep Assad in power (Russia and Iran), or to maintain that he must go eventually while focusing on the Islamic State at the moment (the U.S.-led coalition).

In that sense, broadly speaking, Russia has intervened on behalf of the loyalists and the United States has intervened on behalf of the rebels, though the U.S. has tried to only help certain rebels, providing arms and training to "vetted"

groups. It's this contradiction in U.S. goals—America wants Assad to go but is also fighting ISIS, one of the strongest anti-Assad forces in Syria, in defiance of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" principle—that helps answer another reader's question: "Why is it still so difficult to wrap my own head around our official involvement in the conflict?" Russia's approach is less sensitive to the differences among rebel groups: It opposes all of them. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov summed it up at the United Nations earlier in October: "If it looks like a terrorist, acts like a terrorist, and fights like a terrorist, it's a terrorist, right?"



Activity Three - **Phrasal verb= verb+preposition/adverb**

Phrasal verbs create a different meaning from the original verb.

Ex: ask = try to get information - ask out= invite someone on a date.

Some phrasal verbs are intransitive. This means they cannot be followed by an object.

Ex: He suddenly **showed up.** **"**showed up" cannot be followed by an object

That was a bit embarrassing! I think we will just **lay low. "**lay low" cannot be followed by an object.

Some phrasal verbs are transitive, they can be followed by an object

Ex: I **made up** the story. "Story" is the object of "make up"

I **care about** the results. "Results" is the object of "care about"

Some transitive phrasal verbs are separable. The object is placed between the verb and the preposition.

Ex: I **talked** my mother **into** cooking dinner for me.

I tried to **find** the information **out**

Activity Four - Phrasal Verb **gap fill**..

The Syrian conflict …… of the unrest caused by Arab Spring in 2011. There are three main groups …… each other: the rebels, ISIS and government forces. Syria is now …… into three main areas, each part owned by the three main forces.

Various groups, including ISIS and the government have been accused of severe human rights violations. This has caused a lot of Syrians to try and flee Syria; in March 2015 Al Jazeera …… that about 3.8 million people have been made refugees. The conflict holds the record for the largest sum ever asked for by UN agencies.

Social media has played an important role in the conflict, with youtube, Facebook and twitter used as tools to …… crimes committed by their enemies. It is almost impossible for reliable news sources to …… the facts, due to various attacks on journalists and the governments …… on the media, no one can get close enough to ……..

Fill the gaps with the phrasal verbs below with your partner. The first couple to finish correctly wins the race!

to find out	to split up	to make up
to crack down	to work out	to check out
To pit against	to grow out of	

The Syrian conflict – Origins and Intentions

Read the text paying attention to your intonation and stress.

At home- Look up the words marked with an asterix * .

On top of the gravity of the death toll which has resulted from the Syrian conflict, one of its other most salient* characteristics is the confusion surrounding its origins and the difficulty in disentangling the motivations of the actors involved. This point is accentuated* when we consider the number of players which are or have been involved in the Syrian conflict to this date; this includes the Syrian government, ISIS, the US, Russia, Turkey, Iran, the Kurds and Lebanon's Hezbollah to name but a few. The central internal conflict originated in 2011 when pro-democracy activists protested against the authoritarian and punitive* regime of Bashar-Al Assad. This turned into a civil war when the civilian population became increasingly alarmed at the severity of Al-Assad's clamp down on dissent. Rebel groups began to form with the intention of locking horns with Government forces. When the civil war broke out the violence continued to worsen and state institutions began to break down. Weak state institutions and perpetual violence provided the context for the rise of ISIS which added a new element of complexity to the conflict. Regional and global powers soon became drawn in which has led many commentators to argue that Syria has developed into a brutal proxy war*. Iran and Russia have propped up President Assad's government along with The Shia Islamist Hezbollah movement. The Sunni dominated opposition has called on the help of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan as well as the likes of the UK, France and the US. The two most prominent global powers to have taken part in this conflict are the US and Russia who have clashed as a result of their conflicting interests in the region. Vladimir Putin is seeking to strengthen his long time-ally President Assad as well as assert that Russian is still a major global power. Putin's popularity at home is based in a large part on Russian pride which manifests itself through strength. As the Russian economy continues to fall apart he is forced to demonstrate this pride through tough foreign policy. Conversely, the US wants to get rid of President Assad and defeat ISIS but the Obama administration is hamstrung* by the growing fatigue of the American population to intervention abroad. While world leaders use Syria as a means to go after their political goals it is the average man, women and child who suffers at their expense.

Questions:

- Find definitions for the phrasal verbs in the paragraph.
- How did the Syrian conflict begin?
- What did you learn from this article?

Proxy war = A war instigated by major powers who do not actually become involved

Activity Five - Finish the sentences below with your team. Your aim is to find three different versions to finish each sentence with.

1. If you look back at…
2. However you look at it, the violence in Syria adds up to…
3. Things blow up…
4. We have to catch up with…
5. People should calm down and..
6. We should do away with..
7. The world leaders should go ahead and…
8. We need to go back to…
9. People cannot go without…
10. People have been let down by..



Activity Six : Listening comprehension? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxzMa7j6LN0

Syrian War explained in 5 minutes

1. When are the first shots fired according to this presentation?
2. What happened next?
3. Why does the uprising become a civil war?
4. When does Syria become a proxy war?
5. What does Iran send?
6. What do the gulf states send and to who?
7. What does Obamas secret order authorize?
8. When does Assad use chemical weapons?
9. What does Obama say about that?
10. What happens that transforms the war in 2014?
11. When does America move ahead with air strikes?
12. What creates confusion about where the US stands?
13. What does Russia say and who do they bomb?
14. What's the conclusion of the presentation
15. Did you find this easy to understand?

Activity Seven - **Points of view.** At home watch this video which presents another point of view about the conflict in Syria. Just watch it to find out the general message and main points. You don't have to answer particular questions and you must not try to understand everything.

In the class say what you thought about the video.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkamZg68jpk

The Syrian War What You're Not Being Told

Activity Eight - **Debate** - using some of the following words to explain the different points of view debate the following point as a group.

Should other countries intervene in the conflict in Syria?

Stating an opinion

- In my opinion...
- The way I see it...
- If you want my honest opinion....
- According to Lisa...
- As far as I'm concerned...
- If you ask me…

Asking for an opinion

- What's your idea?
- What are your thoughts on all of this?
- How do you feel about that?
- Do you have anything to say about this?
- What do you think?
- Do you agree?
- Wouldn't you say?

Expressing agreement

- I agree with you 100 percent.
- I couldn't agree with you more.
- That's so true.
- That's for sure.
- **(slang)** Tell me about it!
- You're absolutely right.
- Absolutely.
- That's exactly how I feel.
- Exactly.
- I'm afraid I agree with James.
- I have to side with Dad on this one.
- No doubt about it.
- **(agree with negative statement)** Me neither.
- **(weak)** I suppose so./I guess so.
- You have a point there.
- I was just going to say that.

Expressing disagreement

- I don't think so.
- **(strong)** No way.
- I'm afraid I disagree.
- **(strong)** I totally disagree.
- I beg to differ.
- **(strong)** I'd say the exact opposite.
- Not necessarily.
- That's not always true.
- That's not always the case.
- No, I'm not so sure about that.

Interruptions

- Can I add something here?
- Is it okay if I jump in for a second?
- If I might add something...
- Can I throw my two cents in?
- Sorry to interrupt, but...
- **(after accidentally interrupting someone)** Sorry, go ahead. **OR** Sorry, you were saying...
- **(after being interrupted)** You didn't let me finish.

Settling an argument

- Let's just move on, shall we?
- Let's drop it.
- I think we're going to have to agree to disagree.

