

With Chaos Comes Masses of Information

“Do you really know what is going on around you?”

Brittnee Reed

Take a moment and think, do you know what is going on in the world you live in? The potential military strike on Syria has been making headlines all over news outlets. With the everyday outpour of new information and developments, it can be challenging to stay up to date and fully understand what is going on. However, if war does arise, it is important to be knowledgeable because life as we know it could change dramatically.

After asking the Holy Family University community to tell me anything they know about recent events that have occurred in Syria, their responses were very similar. Mariah Glaser, a junior in the Radiology Department, stated that she has only heard bits and pieces of what has been going on. When asked if she found it difficult to stay informed and up to date with the new developments in Syria she responded by stating, “Yes, I find it very confusing and hard to stay up to date on it, because it is constantly changing and everyone just talks about their opinions instead of the facts.”

Kristyn Connelly, a junior studying Psychology, admitted to not having a clue as to what the problem is in Syria and found it challenging to keep up with all of the information. However despite being unfamiliar with the topic, she did have an opinion on the potential outcome of war stating, “I do not know what the problem in Syria is or if the U.S. is even involved, however I do not think it is a good idea for the U.S. to go to war with Syria because we were already in a war with Iraq and lost a lot of lives. The U.S. does not need to go through that again.”

Rachel Helkowski, a junior majoring in Communications, has found keeping up with the news in Syria so difficult that she has simply given up. Helkowski explained, “I don't bother keeping up with the latest that's happening there because it's constantly changing and there's so many sources to turn to you don't know which is accurate and which is going to give you the best overview. Every time you think you're caught up something else changes.”

However, alumnus Jack Monari, currently studying law at Drexel University, believes that keeping yourself informed with the daily occurrences in Syria is useful. While he admits to not knowing everything, he does feel that he understands the “basic elements and history of the region.” Though he does find staying connected with the news on Syria challenging, “Definitely. I think the hardest part of staying up to date is who in the media to trust. A lot of news outlets report conflicting stories, which just makes the whole situation more confusing for everybody. I also feel that a lot of news programs report stories for the sake of reporting them first, with no checking of the facts. This causes misleading information to make headlines.”

It is clear that the excessive amounts of news coverage dealing with Syria makes it discouraging for the general public to stay informed. While we may think we have it all figured out, there is always something to learn.

A Deeper Insight: Understanding what exactly brought us to this point.

Syria is an Arabic country located in the eastern Mediterranean, which over a period of time has built a close relationship with Iran, Russia and through association, China. These alliances play a huge factor in what has been happening in Syria on a global stage.

To understand the present, you have to put the past in context. For over a thousand years, the Sunni and Shia sects of Islam have fought with one another in the Middle East. This is a core issue in the region and affects many Arab countries. For example, Syria has a Shia president, while the majority of the country is Sunni.

In late 2010, most of the Arab world erupted in protests, uprisings, and civil wars against corruption and lack of personal freedoms. These protests later became known as the Arab Spring. While some Arab governments were overthrown or forced to make concessions, Syria and Libya were the only two to spiral into a civil war. In Libya, the U.N., led by the United States and the U.K., used this opportunity to help the rebels overthrow their anti-West government, leaving Syria as the only nation still undecided by civil war.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad refused to democratically reform his government and began to seriously crackdown on pro-west and democratic supporters. However, when the West approached the U.N. in regards to striking Syria as they did Libya, both Russia and China vetoed the sanctions for a number of reasons:

- Russia is economically involved with Syria
- Russia doesn't mind the Syrian government
- Russia's sole naval base is on the Mediterranean Ocean, located in Syria and a potentially new government could result in losing their base.
- China has ties with Russia and doesn't want another pro-West country to be created.

This left the United States in a predicament because if they militarily support the pro-democratic people in Syria, they would be breaking international law. However, when President al-Assad used chemical weapons against his own people, the doors for intervention opened. Many nations are currently feeling apprehensive in regards to

attacking because they fear the Syrian freedom fighters are actually Muslim extremists using the opportunity to create a fundamentalist Islamic nation.

Over the last few weeks, a chance for peace arose. Secretary of State John Kerry announced that the only way Syria would not be attacked is if the government turned over any and all chemical weapons. Seizing the opportunity, Russia intermediated and made a deal with Syria to help the small Arab nation give up its weapons of mass destruction. Currently, Syria has until mid-2014 to dispose of all of their chemical weapons, and if they fail to comply, there will be serious consequences.

With Syria's recent compliance it looks as though war has been avoided. However, with every day comes a new development that could forever alter the fate of the nation. We never know what will happen tomorrow.

The Top 3 Recent Syrian Developments:

- 1) On September 10, 2013, President Obama gave a televised speech in which he asked Americans to support the strike against Syria.
- 2) United States intelligence believes that Syria has about 1,000 metric tons of chemical weapons, most of which are nerve gases that can cause major health damage such as, convulsions, paralysis, respiratory failure, and death.
- 3) Bloodshed in Syria has not settled down. On September 15, 2013, 91 people were killed, 6 of which were children.

Information above can be accessed through:

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24114746>
- <http://www.juancole.com/2013/09/americans-theyre-threaten.html>
- <http://www.cnn.com/2013/08/28/world/meast/syria-assad-profile/index.html>
- <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/world/meast/syria-whats-next/index.html>