

CHAPTER II SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

This thesis takes issue of Syrian civil war. Before we would explore the process of Syrian conflict turn to civil war and it is connected with the humanitarian crisis, this chapter discusses how actually this conflict began. The Syrian civil war has been started since 2011 until nowadays, this conflict involves many actors. The actors do not come only from the local region but also come from out of Syria. The conflict is going to be worsened by the intervention of other actors that also have their own interest. This chapter tries to connect this civil war with the humanitarian crisis and to give data about the condition of Syrian civilian from time to time since the beginning of this war started. Through this explanation of their condition, furthermore, this chapter also gives a glance of the global world's opinion toward this civil war.

A. The Syrian Civil War

Since the independence of Syrian Arab Republic in 1946, the lifespan of Syrian government mostly could not hold more than one year until the Hafez al-Assad took the control of authority in Syria. The Assad senior provided a stable political condition in Syria but it led to the question, how this was achieved. Actually, Assad senior developed relation with Russia and Iran. He was anti-West, anti-Israel, and pro-Palestinian. It was reflected in Syrian's respond toward loathed Western support Israel and it was occupying the fertile Golan Heights. Hafez was not communicative and connected directly with the people but he was respected partly out of fear.

The Situation and condition in Syria before 2011 give effect to the situation in Syria until present. The conflict begun because some of the factors led the Syria civilian protested the regime in power. Here are some of the factors:

1. The Authoritarian Regime

The Syrian civil war occurred in the Bashar Al-Assad regime. Hafez Al-Assad's son Bashar Al-Assad succeeded him in 2000. Since he had been educated in West, he would like to take a step for liberalizing the country but his ambition was not agreed by the veterans Ba'ath party. Bashar was different from his father because he was connected and liked by the people because his economic reform went well and ensured political stability. In spite of the fact that he enhanced the relation between Syria with the West, Syria was weakening because of assassination's issue of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri. The cadre of Hezbollah of Syria was blamed for this case. Since 2010, Bashar was popular within Syria and Western diplomatic circles. His popularity extremely increased since he used heavy-handed tactics to control the situation.

2. The Economic and Political Problems

The second factor of Syrian war is economic woes that started in 2010. In spite of declining of oil revenues, the GDP grew at an average of 5.5 percent between 2005 and 2009. The percentage of unemployment was over 8 percent, foreign debt reached 12.5 percent of the GDP and much of it was from Russia. The more foreign debt that Syria has, there will be a possibility of Syria to get the foreign political pressure (Haran, 2016).

3. The Issue of Majority and Minority Sectarian

The other factor is a sectarian issue that happens in Syria. The majority population in Syria is Sunni and the minority is Alawite, considered a sub-sect of Shias. Ba'ath party was a secular oasis in the region. The population of Syrian people 59 percent is Arab Sunni and the 41 percent are The Kurds, Alawites, and Christians. Even though Bashar is an Alawite and his wife is a Sunni from Homs, he is popular among most of the minorities. The Bashar Al-Assad was supported by the Alawites and he enjoyed it. Moreover, it indicated that other sects supported him. It is undeniable that there was disharmony between sects. When the Ba'ath party committed

that Syria persisted in being secular. The sectarian threatened by conflict as the armed rebels, mostly Sunnis, began targeting minorities. The condition of Syria was worsened after the involvement of Al Qaeda as the external forces Takfiris and Salafists to Syria (Mariwala, 2014).

4. The Deficit of Democracy

The fourth factor is serious lack of democracy in Syria. The Syrian government was dominated by the Ba'ath party. Hafez al-Assad was one of the actors that established this party in Syria and Ba'ath brought him out to get the power. This party has a good structure of the security agencies until nowadays and has served the regime well. They are really loyal to the president and it means that none of them can replace the role of Bashar Al Assad as the president. The factor of 'There Is No Alternative' has worked successfully effort to support the president. Additionally, this is one of the big issues that discouraged high-powered action by some sections of the West against President Assad.

5. Arab Spring's Effect

In 2010, when North Africa was swept by Arab Spring, it was viewed as the opportunity to eliminate of a convenient regime in the Middle East. The Arab Spring is a conflict between its long-serving government and authoritarian regime and some of the regime leaders in the Middle East. The family leaders mostly are religious family but Assad family is different. His family is long-serving government but they are not extremely religious. The Assad family is has held power since 1971 in Syria. In that case, the Syrians never protest for against the hard-line Islamists even though Assad is Alawite and the majority in Syria is Sunni. The dominant factors which gave effect to the Syrian are still angry are the failure of long-promised economic and their demand for political reforms according to Rodger Shanahan (Sharwood, 2013).

Rodger Shanahan stated that the conflict began when there were some children painted anti regime-graffiti and they were killed when they were imprisoning. The country was full of public protest toward because of the failure of the

government to punish the perpetrators. In April 2011, there was demonstration and protest turning to full-scale armed rebellion. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) was formed as the group that aims to overthrow of the government without any coordination or control. They consisted of betrayer from the military who was anti-government beliefs. They mobilized the members and there were Jihadists that also joined with them, some from Syria and others from elsewhere. It could be concluded that Syrian freedom fighters were people with their own Islamist agendas but FSA was under-armed and undermanned. Moreover, FSA just had little option to form the detached coalition with these inconstant new members on the revolutionary block (Sharwood, 2013).

In this stage, the internal actors of this civil war made the war more complex. Now there are external environments that also involve into this case. For example, some of the countries (Turkey, Russia, China, Iran, USA, France, the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, etc.); INGOs, NGOs, etc. The involvement of internal and external actors turned it into the civil war.

B. The Civil War Turns to Humanitarian Crisis – The Dynamics of Syrian Civil War

The Syrian Civil War was involving many actors. The involvement of the actors encouraged the Syrian conflict to turn into the civil war. The details of the dynamics of the Syrian conflict that turn into civil war since 2011 until early 2017 are described here.

The protest against the regime happened in March 2011. Actually, it was peaceful protests from the children by making gravity to express their disappointment of the regime toward the economic revolution, the lack of democracy in Syria. In 2010, when Arab Spring happened some of Middle East countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and other Arab states had been against by their own citizen. The people were successful against their own government and made the leader step down

from their position. And it inspired the Syrian to step down the harsh government of Assad regime.

The response of the government who use heavy-handed toward that peaceful protest led the public protest which spread around Syria because the government killed the protestors in detention. Then, in March 2011, the bigger protest happened because they had been inspired by Arab Spring that swept neighborhood countries to step down the regime. On 25 April, the government launched bloody crackdown and they shot brutally and indiscriminately. The United States knew what had been done by Syrian government then in May, the United States and the European Union imposed sanctions to the top of Syrian official due to their violence against the demonstrators (Vaessen, 2014).

In the middle of 2011, according to Barack Obama's speech, he said that "the leader of Syria Bashar Al-Assad more wisely if he decides to step aside. United State gives draft resolution to the United Security Council (UNSC) to condemning Assad's government and also threatening sanctions but unpredictable that Russia and China veto the resolution (Phillips, 2011)."

Early 2012, there was extremist group Jabhat Al-Nusra that declared its formation as an Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria officially (Sorenson, 2016). It was the beginning of Jihadist and Extremist group that used the name of Islam involved in this civil war. In February, the veto of Russia and China was success failing the resolution on condemning the violence and its political transition. The United States did not need a long time to take a decision to protest toward veto from Russia and China. On 6 February 2012, the United State closed its embassy in Damascus. In May, the government of Syria would hold the parliamentary election, but it was boycotted by the opposition. President Barack Obama stated, "We had been very clear to Assad regime, but also to their players on the ground, that a red line for us is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized (Kessler, 2013)." Moreover, the United State would supply

Syrian opposition rebels with non-lethal aid. In the end of the year, Akhbar Brahimi as the United Nation special envoy to Syria, held three unusual meeting discussing the utilization of chemical weapon and in those meetings, Russia could be shifting Syria's position.

The event in 2013 started with the initiative of Assad to introduce political reformation to end up the Syrian war. In March until April, the growth of extremist group was rapidly increased. At the same time, the United Kingdom and France told the UN that Assad regime might have used chemical weapons against the opposition. In July and August 2013, there was a chemical assault on Damascus district. Although the evidence proved that chemical weapon was utilized but the Assad regime denied the attack and said that opposition fighters were responsible. In September, Russia and the United States announced the framework of an agreement. Russia proposed a diplomatic a solution regarding solution to the chemical weapon issue: "that Syria the Chemical Weapon Convention and allow its chemical weapon to be brought under international control and dismantled (MELHEM, 2017)." Then the United States agreed with the diplomatic solution that was proposed by Russia. Organization for Prohibition of Chemical weapons (OPCW) came to Syria to monitor the chemical weapons arsenal and to report that the Syrian government built chemical weapon production facilities. In June 2014, the OPCW confirmed that the chemical weapon, all of the equipment, and ammunition weapons in Syria have been destroyed (Arms Control Association, 2016).

In January until February 2014, there were two peace talks which held in Geneva by the United Nation. The peace talks were failed to get a deal with the agreement on the agenda. On 3 June 2014, for the first time since Assad family took over the power in Syria, the government held general elections and another candidate was allowed. However, International community and opposition groups believed that it was just a sham because Bashar Al Assad could win the election since

the process of the election was not transparent. In the same month, IS declared with the head Abu Bakar Al-Baghdadi that they were a caliphate and their territory was between Aleppo and Eastern Iraq.

In the end of 2014, in October, the Syrian government blocked the humanitarian access and cut off main supply in some of the regions. Some of NGOs suggested to the International community take an action to help the civilians. Under those circumstances, the Syrian government allowed the World Health Organization (WHO) to deliver medical supplies to the opposition and civilians. According to the United Nations, the total people that died in that year reached 76,000 people. In 2015, ISIS could take control of Palmyra as the UNESCO World Heritage site. Subsequently, Russia and the United States launched their airstrikes in Syria aiming to support the non-ISIS opposition. In that year, the total of death, according to the I am Syria, was over 21,179 and the refugee reached over 4,3 million people.

In 2016, the United Nations played a role as a mediator in peace talks in Geneva. It was swiftly suspended. On 22 February, the United States and Russia announced that partial ceasefire would start on 27 February and it did not apply to attack the United Nations but to attack terrorism. The next peace talk in March in Geneva reached 12 common points the agreement. On 6 July, Iran, Russia, and Turkey failed to join the ceasefire agreement such as the policy of the four safe zone and their boundaries. According to CNN, in the end of the year, the Syrian government was helped by Russia and Turkey to take control of Aleppo and the ceasefire was violated less than a day after its implementation (Angela Dewan, 2016). According to the New York Times, in that year, 500,000 Syrians had died.

C. The Condition of Syria Since The Civil War Happened

The progress of Syrian civil war time by time makes significant alteration within Syria as a country and Syria in

relation to the world. The alteration felt by Syrians currently was so much problematic situation and it was the disadvantage and also harmful to Syria and also the citizen itself. The alteration of Syria since the beginning of conflict until today could be seen. Some data about the alteration condition of Syria as the country and also the Syrian are shown here.

The situation since the conflict began was dangerous for all of the people that stayed in the conflict area. The war among the government, anti-Assad regime, and the extremist group, and also others actor's intervention lead to the damage which the Syrian people face nowadays. The damage that caused by the war is humanitarian crisis such as violence, damaged infrastructure, the mental health and the disturbed physic of the Syrian citizen.

The Syrian civil war looked like human slaughtering. According to the United Nation and Arab League Envoy to Syria, the overall deaths since 2011 until the last report in 2016, more than 500,000 people had died in the war. The victims were mostly civilian people but it also the victim from pro-government forces, Anti-government, and also some of the foreigners (Gorevan, 2015).

The utilization of weapon during that war destroys the local infrastructure in the conflict area. The citizen that lives in the conflict area lost their house during the bombing. It became a new case that the citizen became homeless and they needed a place to protect themselves from weaponry attack. However, there was no safe place for them. Afterwards, some citizens tried to move away from their area or region to the safe place. There are some of collective center, collective urban, collective rural, or there are some of them are hosted by others for their living place but it is for temporary shelter and short-term stay. Under those circumstances, some citizens are moving away to another country such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt, Germany, Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, etc. Although there is ignorance from Syria, the Gulf country, such as Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia gave permission for the refugees to

come to their country. The phenomenon of Syrian refugees also makes a new International issue.

In that situation, the victims are mostly the people that do not have enough power to survive, such as children. The Syrian children, since their country in unstable condition, have to face violence, abuse, exploitation and are recruiting them as armed groups to kill, maiming, abduction and sexual violence. According to the UNICEF, 6 million children depend on humanitarian assistance including life-saving areas of health, nutrition, immunization, water, and sanitation, as well as education and children protection. However, more than 420,000 children live in the besieged location that has limited access to get the humanitarian aid. More than 1,7 million children are out of school (UNICEF, 2016). It leads new problem because high youth unemployment and it limits the opportunity for them to develop Syria in future. They will be the next generation and the hope of Syria.