

## Syria

<b>Country name</b>	Syria
<b>State title</b>	Syrian Arab Republic
<b>Name of citizen</b>	Syrian
<b>Official language(s)</b>	Arabic
<b>Country name in official language(s)</b>	Sūriyā (سوريا) or Sūrīyah (سورية)
<b>State title in official language(s)</b>	Al Jumhūrīyah al ‘Arabīyah as Sūrīyah (الجمهورية العربية السورية)
<b>Script</b>	Arabic
<b>Romanisation System</b>	BGN/PCGN Romanisation system for Arabic 1956
<b>ISO-3166 code (alpha-2/alpha-3)</b>	SY/SYR
<b>Capital</b>	Damascus
<b>Capital in official language(s)</b>	Dimashq (دمشق)

### Geographical names policy

Geographical names in Syria are found written in Arabic, which is the country's official language. Where possible names should be taken from official Syrian sources and romanised using the BGN/PCGN Romanisation system for Arabic<sup>1</sup>.

It should also be noted that Roman-script forms may be encountered which differ from those arising from the application of the BGN/PCGN Romanisation system for Arabic.

### Languages

Arabic is the official language of Syria. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used for official written purposes. The dialect spoken in Syria is Levantine Arabic. Arabic is a Semitic language and is written from right to left. The Arabic alphabet consists of 28 letters, in addition to which there are several vocalisation marks which are not usually written.

Kurdish (in its Kurmanji form) is widely spoken in the Kurdish regions of Syria. Many educated Syrians also speak English and French. Armenian and Turkish (South Azeri dialect) are spoken among the Armenian and Turkmen minorities respectively. Aramaic is spoken among Arameans and Assyrians. Syriac is used as the liturgical language of various Syriac denominations. Circassian languages are also spoken.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.pcn.org.uk/Romanization\\_Arabic.pdf](http://www.pcn.org.uk/Romanization_Arabic.pdf)

**Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings<sup>2</sup>):**

The **BGN/PCGN Romanisation system for Arabic** contains the following letter-diacritic combinations in addition to the unmodified letters of the basic Roman script:

' (U+2018/02BB)	ī (U+012A)
' (U+2019/02BC)	î (U+012B)
Á (U+00C1)	Ş (U+015E)
á (U+00E1)	ş (U+015F)
Ā (U+0100)	Ț (U+0162)
ā (U+0101)	ț (U+0163)
Ḑ (U+1E10)	Ū (U+016A)
ḑ (U+1E11)	ū (U+016B)
Ḥ (U+1E28)	Ț (U+005A+0327)
ḥ (U+1E29)	ț (U+007A+0327)

**Administrative structure**

Syria is divided into 14 first-order administrative divisions, known as governorates or provinces (*Muḥāfazah* in Arabic). These are sub-divided into 60 districts (*Minṭaqah* in Arabic)<sup>3</sup>, and one city, Madīnat Dimashq (Damascus). These districts are further divided into sub-districts (*Nāḥiyah* in Arabic).

Al Ḥasakah (36° 30' 00" N 041° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	الحسكة
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Ḥasakah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الحسكة
Variant names	Al-Hasakeh, Hasaka
Centre	Al Ḥasakah
Centre in Arabic script	الحسكة
Consists of 4 districts	

Al Lādhiqīyah (Latakia) (35° 30' 00" N 036° 10' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	اللاذقية
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Lādhiqīyah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة اللاذقية
Variant names	Latakiyah, Lattakia
Centre	Al Lādhiqīyah (Latakia)*
Centre in Arabic script	اللاذقية
Consists of 4 districts	

<sup>2</sup> See [www.unicode.org](http://www.unicode.org)

<sup>3</sup> The generics *Muḥāfazah* and *Minṭaqah* change to *Muḥāfazat* and *Mintaqat* when followed by the place name they modify e.g. Muḥāfazat al Ḥasakah.

Al Qunayṭirah (33° 00' 00" N 035° 50' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	القنيطرة
Long form name	Muḥāfazat al Qunayṭirah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة القنيطرة
Variant names	Quneitra, Qnnaytrah
Centre	Al Qunayṭirah
Centre in Arabic script	القنيطرة
Consists of 2 districts	

Ar Raqqah (36° 00' 00" 039° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	الرقّة
Long form name	Muḥāfazat ar Raqqah
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة الرقّة
Variant names	Al-Rakka, Raqqa, Rakka, Raqa
Centre	Ar Raqqah
Centre in Arabic script	الرقّة
Consists of 3 districts	

As Suwaydā' (32° 45' 00" N 036° 45' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	السويداء
Long form name	Muḥāfazat as Suwaydā'
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة السويداء
Variant names	Al-Sweida, Souydaa
Centre	As Suwaydā'
Centre in Arabic script	السويداء
Consists of 3 districts	

Dar'ā (33° 00' 00" Long: 036° 10' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	درعا
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Dar'ā
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة درعا
Variant names	Dera, Dara'a, Deraa, Daraa
Centre	Dar'ā
Centre in Arabic script	درعا
Consists of 3 districts	

Dayr az Zawr (35° 30' 00" N 039° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	دير الزور
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Dayr az Zawr
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة دير الزور
Variant names	Deir ez Zor, Der Zor, Deir Zzor, Deir al Zour, Deir Ezzour, Ad-Deir, Al Dayr
Centre	Dayr az Zawr
Centre in Arabic script	دير الزور
Consists of 3 districts	

Dimashq (Damascus) (33° 30' 00" N 036° 18' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	دمشق
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Dimashq
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة دمشق
Variant names	Madīnat Dimashq, Damascus City
Centre	Dimashq (Damascus)
Centre in Arabic script	دمشق
Not-subdivided into districts	

Ḥalab (Aleppo) (36° 00' 00" N 037° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	حلب
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Ḥalab
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة حلب
Centre	Ḥalab (Aleppo)
Centre in Arabic script	حلب
Consists of 8 districts	

Ḥamāh (35° 10' 00" N 037° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	حماة
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Ḥamāh
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة حماة
Variant names	Hama
Centre	Ḥamāh
Centre in Arabic script	حماة
Consists of 5 districts	

Ḥimṣ (34° 15' 00" N 038° 00' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	حمص
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Ḥimṣ
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة حمص
Variant names	Homs
Centre	Ḥimṣ
Centre in Arabic script	حمص
Consists of 6 districts	

Idlib (35° 50' 00" N 036° 40' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	إدلب
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Idlib
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة إدلب
Variant names	Idleb, Edleb
Centre	Idlib
Centre in Arabic script	إدلب
Consists of 5 districts	

Rīf Dimashq (Rural Damascus) (33° 30' 00" N 037° 45' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	ريف دمشق
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Rīf Dimashq
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة ريف دمشق
Variant names	Damascus
Centre	Dimashq (Damascus)
Centre in Arabic script	دمشق
Consists of 9 districts	

Ṭarṭūs (35° 00' 00" N 036° 10' 00" E)	
Name in Arabic script	طرطوس
Long form name	Muḥāfazat Ṭarṭūs
Long form name in Arabic script	محافظة طرطوس
Variant names	Tartous
Centre	Ṭarṭūs*
Centre in Arabic script	طرطوس
Consists of 5 districts	

\* Al Lādhiqīyah (Latakia) and Ṭarṭūs are Syria's main ports.

#### Other significant locations

PCGN Romanisation	Name in Arabic script	Variant Names	Type of Feature	Location
Ālbū Kamāl <sup>4</sup>	آلبو كمال	Abū Kamāl, Al-Bokamal, Qashla ابو كمال	Populated place	34° 27' 00" N 040° 55' 07" E
Al Qāmishlī	القامشلي	Al Kamishly, Al Qamishly, Alkamishly	Populated place	37° 03' 05" N 041° 13' 42" E
An Nahr al Kabīr	النهر الكبير	Kabir River, Nahr al Kabir, Nahr el Kebir	River	35° 29' 59" N 035° 48' 41" E Syria-Lebanon border
At Tall	التل	Tel, Tall, Tal, Et Tel	Populated place	33° 36' 36" N 036° 18' 35" E
Bāniyās	بانياس	Banias	Populated place	35° 10' 55" N 035° 56' 55" E
Buḥayrat al Asad	بحيرة الاسد	Lake Asad, Lake Assad	Lake/Reservoir	35° 59' 57" N 038° 10' 05" E
Buṣrā	بصرى	Bosra	Ancient site	32° 31' 04" N 036° 28' 54" E
Dā'il	داعل	Dael	Populated place	32° 45' 17" N 036° 07' 47" E
Ḥawrān	حوران	Houran, Hourane	Area/Region	Area in southern Syria around Dar'ā
Ibta'	ابتع	Ibtaa	Populated place	32° 47' 34" N 036° 09' 06" E
Inkhil	انخل		Populated place	33° 00' 00" N 036° 07' 00" E

<sup>4</sup> The name of this town is Ālbū Kamāl which means "People of Kamal". However it is increasingly seen written as the more familiar Abū Kamāl, meaning "Father of Kamal".

Jablah	جبلَة	Jabla, Jableh, Jebleh	Populated place	35° 21' 41" N 035° 55' 32" E
Madīnat ath Thawrah	مدينة الثورة	Revolution City, Ath Thawrah, At Tabaqah	Populated place	35° 50' 49" N 038° 32' 39" E
Nahr al Furāt (Euphrates)	نهر الفرات	Al Furat	River	33° 05' 00" N 043° 29' 00" E
Nahr al Yarmūk	نهر اليرموك	Yarmouk	River	32° 38' 31" N 035° 34' 24" E Syria-Jordan border
Tadmur	تدمر	Tedmor, Palmyra	Populated place	34° 33' 39" N 038° 16' 50" E
Tadmur (Palmyra)	تدمر	Tedmor	Ancient site	34° 33' 11" N 038° 16' 02" E
Ṭafas	طفس	Tafas	Populated place	32° 44' 08" N 036° 04' 01" E
Tall Kalakh	تل كلخ	Tel Kalakh, Telkalakh,	Populated place	34° 40' 16" N 036° 15' 35" E On Syria-Lebanon border
Tall Kūjik	تل كوجك	Tel Kuchak	Populated place	36° 48' 35" N 042° 03' 46" E On Syria-Iraq border

#### Useful references

- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>
- Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics: <http://www.cbssyr.org/index-EN.htm>
- [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com) (for information on the languages of Syria)
- <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/arabic.htm> (for information on the Arabic language & alphabet)
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sy.html>
- BBC Syria Country Profile: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/country\\_profiles/801669.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/801669.stm)
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/apr/14/aramaic-revival-syria> (Aramaic language in Syria)

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May 2011

**Appendix**

**Administrative Structure of Syria (ADM2s)**

The second-order administrative divisions (*miṣṭaqah* in Arabic) are listed below by governorate<sup>5</sup>.

**Al Ḥasakah**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Ḥasakah	الحسكة	Al Hasaka
2	Al Mālīkīyah	المالكية	Almalikia
3	Al Qāmishlī	القامشلي	Al Qamishly, Alkamishly
4	Ra's al 'Ayn	رأس العين	Ras Alain

**Al Lādhiqīyah (Latakia)**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Lādhiqīyah	اللاذقية	Latakia, Lattakia, Latakiyah
2	Al Ḥaffah	الحفة	Al Hfa
3	Al Qardāḥah	القرداحة	Al- Querdaha
4	Jablah	جبله	Jableh, Jebleh

**Al Qunayṭirah**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Qunayṭirah	القنيطرة	Qunaitra, Quneitra, Qnnaytrah
2	Fīq	فيق	Feeq

**Ar Raqqah**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Ar Raqqah	الرقّة	Raqqah, Rakka, Al- Rakka, Raqa
2	Ath Thawrah	الثورة	Al Thawra, Thawra
3	Tall Abyaḍ	تل ابيض	Tel Abiad

**As Suwaydā'**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	As Suwaydā'	السويداء	Soueida, Al-Sweida, Souydaa
2	Ṣalkhad	صلخد	
3	Shahbā'	شهباء	Shahbaa

<sup>5</sup> N.B. Muḥāfazat Dimashq (Damascus Governorate) is not sub-divided into second-order administrative districts.

**Dar'ā**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Aş Şanamayn	الصنمين	Al-Sansmayn
2	Dar'ā	درعا	Dera, Dara'a, Deraa, Daraa
3	Izra'	ازرع	Izraa

**Dayr az Zawr**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Ālbū Kamāl	البوكمال	Abū Kamāl, Al-Bokamal, Qashla ابوكمال
2	Al Mayādīn	الميادين	Al Maydin
3	Dayr az Zawr	دير الزور	Deir ez Zor, Der Zor, Deir Zzor, Deir al Zour, Deir Ezzour, Ad-Deir, Al Dayr

**Halab (Aleppo)**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	'Afrīn	عفرين	Afreen
2	Al Bāb	الباب	Albab
3	As Safīrah	السفيرة	Alsefira
4	'Ayn al 'Arab	عين العرب	Ein-Arab
5	A'zāz	اعزاز	Azaz
6	Jabal Sim'ān	جبل سمعان	Jabal Smaan
7	Jarābulus	جرابلس	Jarables
8	Manbij	منبج	Manbig

**Hamāh**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Ghāb	الغاب	Al-Gab
2	As Salamīyah	السلمية	Alsalamia
3	Ḥamāh	حماة	Hama
4	Maşyāf	مصيف	Misyaf
5	Muḥradah	محرده	Mhardeh



**Hims**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Quṣayr	القصر	Al-Qssaire
2	Ar Rastan	الرستن	Rastan
3	Himṣ	حمص	Homs
4	Mukharram	مخرم	Mukharam al Fawqānī, Mkharam Fokani
5	Tadmur	تدمر	Tedmur, Palmyra
6	Tall Kalakh	تل كلخ	Tel Kalakh, Telkalakh

**Idlib**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Arīḥā	اريجا	Areha
2	Hārim	حارم	Harem
3	Idlib	ادلب	Idleb, Edleb
4	Jisr ash Shughūr	جسر الشغور	Jiser Al-Shoghour
5	Ma'arrat an Nu'mān	معرة النعمان	Marret Al-Nouman

**Rīf Dimashq (Rural Damascus)**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Al Quṭayfah	القطيفة	Al Kuteifeh
2	An Nabk	النبيك	Al-Nabek, al Nabk
3	At Tall	التل	Al-Tal, El Tel
4	Az Zabadānī	الزبداني	Al Zabdani
5	Darāyā	درايا	
6	Dūmā	دوما	Dooma
7	Markaz Rīf Dimashq	مركز ريف دمشق	Rural Damascus, Rif Dimashq, Central Rural Damascus
8	Qaṭanā	قطنا	Katana
9	Yabrūd	بيروود	Yabroud

**Tartūs**

	PCGN Romanisation	Arabic Script	Variant Names
1	Ash Shaykh Badr	الشيخ بدر	Al Sheikh Bader
2	Bāniyās	بانياس	Banias
3	Duraykīsh	دريكيش	Drikish, Al Dreikish
4	Ṣāfītā	صافيتا	
5	Ṭarṭūs	طرطوس	Tartous