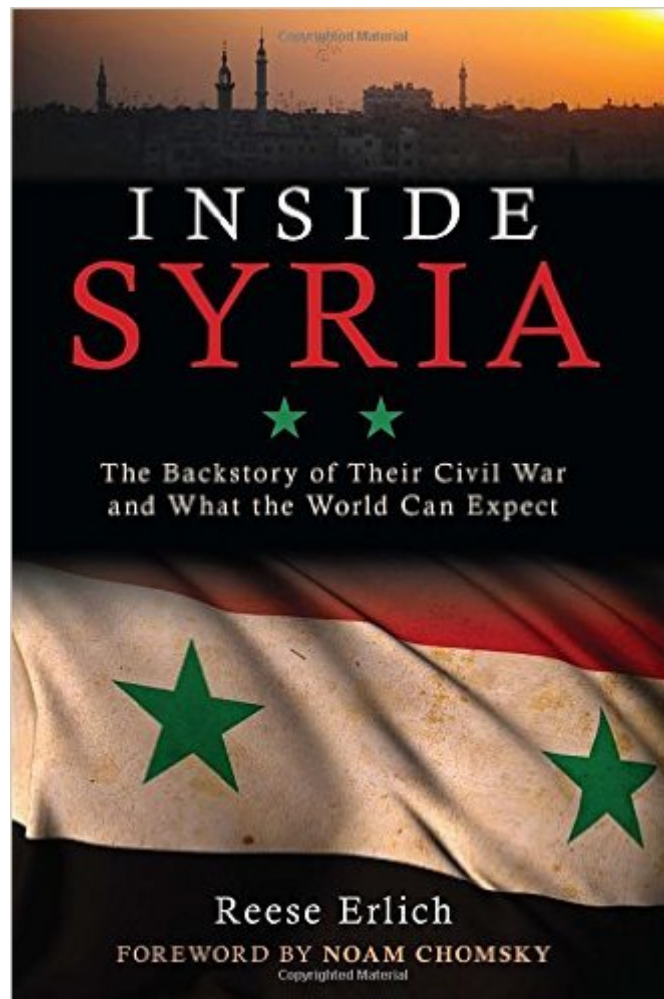


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# Inside Syria: The Backstory Of Their Civil War And What The World Can Expect



## Synopsis

Based on first-hand reporting from Syria and Washington, journalist Reese Erlich unravels the complex dynamics underlying the Syrian civil war. Through vivid, on-the-ground accounts and interviews with both rebel leaders and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Erlich gives the reader a better understanding of this momentous power struggle and why it matters. Through his many contacts inside Syria, the author reveals who is supporting Assad and why; he describes the agendas of the rebel factions; and he depicts in stark terms the dire plight of many ordinary Syrian people caught in the cross-fire. The book also provides insights into the role of the Kurds, the continuing influence of Iran, and the policies of American leaders who seem interested only in protecting US regional interests. Disturbing and enlightening at once, this timely book shows you not only what is happening inside Syria but why it is so important for the Middle East, the US, and the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Syrian Labyrinth  
Book Review  
Dispatches From The Edge  
Conn Hallinan  
Oct. 13, 2014  
Inside Syria: • The Backstory of Their Civil War and What the World Can Expect • by Reese Erlich  
Forward by Noam Chomsky  
Prometheus Press, New York 2014  
Reese Erlich's informative and insightful book • Inside Syria • brings to mind the Greek myth of a vast maze under the palace at Knossos, with one exception: King Minos's labyrinth on Crete concealed a single Minotaur, Syria is teeming with the beasts. Erlich has spent almost three decades reporting from the

Middle East, and he brings his considerable knowledge of the region into this analysis of the Syrian civil war. A winner of the Peabody Award and the Society of Professional Journalists explanatory journalism award for "Inside the Syrian Revolution," Erlich combines on-the-ground reporting with an encyclopedic background in the region's history. It is a combination that is particularly useful for a subject as complex and nuanced as the current war, one that has gradually drawn Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Iran, and the monarchies of the Persian Gulf, along with the U.S., France and Britain. The mainstream media generally considers history an afterthought, which explains why it does such an awful job reporting on the Middle East. Journalists like Erlich, Robert Fisk and Patrick Cockburn understand that the history of the region and current events are one and the same, a sort of paraphrase of William Faulkner's observation that history is as much the present as the past.

The complexity of the Syrian Civil War is illustrated in Appendix 1 which lists the participant groups in the Syrian struggle. There are 13 mostly armed groups opposed to Assad and 5 pro-Assad, 4 influential Kurdish groups and 4 participating foreign groups. Besides the groups in the Appendix there are countries with official and unofficial participation, policies and interests in the outcome. Reese Erlich, a journalist with many years experience reporting on the area walks the reader through them all in a way you can understand. There is a short history and then chapters on how an uprising became a war, chemical weapons use, Assad's supporters, the roles of Iran, the Kurds, Israel, Palestine, Russia and the US. The Syrian people rate highly in this book, but they seem to be incidental to the conflict. They get fired upon and gassed and the blame or credit (depending which side you are on) is leveled at different sides with evidence to prove different points. Erlich writes that pro-Assad support comes from Russia and Iran who have business interests in Syria and the anti-Assad support comes from wealthy jihad donors, to whom the "rebels" demonstrate their pious bona fides. The UN assists with humanitarian aid and fact finding work. What the US taxpayer has funded is not clear. There are visits to places where the author gives short accounts and interviews. The most interesting of these are trips to Gaza, the Golan Heights and the Kurdish areas of Syria. There is little on the sub-title "What the World Can Expect". Basically this is that the war will end some day. Erlich cites the end of Lebanon's civil war and Syria's recent history of religious tolerance as hopeful precedents for this resulting in a civil society.

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