

# Stop Calling the Syrian Conflict a 'Civil War.' It's Not.

by [Hanin Ghaddar \(/experts/hanin-ghaddar\)](/experts/hanin-ghaddar)

Dec 14, 2016

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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## Doing so gives the Assad regime a veneer of legitimacy and has a serious impact on international accountability.

In the past five years, Syria has become many things: a refugee crisis, a regional quagmire, a western nightmare, a terrorist haven, a Russian power play and the core of Iran's ambitions. To the international community, however, it's a civil war. The United Nations, Western governments, media and European Union all refer to the Syrian conflict this way. In December 2015, Secretary of State John F. Kerry emphasized the need to "end the nation's civil war." In September this year, the *New York Times* published a long explainer on the conflict, answering, among other questions, "What is the Syrian civil war?"

These simplifications are inaccurate and dangerous. They absolve the international community of responsibility, and give Bashar al-Assad a veneer of legitimacy. They liberate Russia and Iran -- actively involved with troops in the conflict -- from culpability. And they allow internal terrorist groups to justify their involvement and violence. There is no doubt that civil war is one of the many layers of the Syrian conflict. Local factions are fighting each other. In truth though, this is a war on the people of Syria, carried out by the Assad regime and his allies...

**[Read the full article on the Washington Post website.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/12/14/stop-calling-the-syrian-conflict-a-civil-war-its-not/?hpid=hp_hp-cards_hp-card-posteverything%3Ahomepage%2Fcard&utm_term=.d69c9bfeb694)**

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*Washington Post*

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