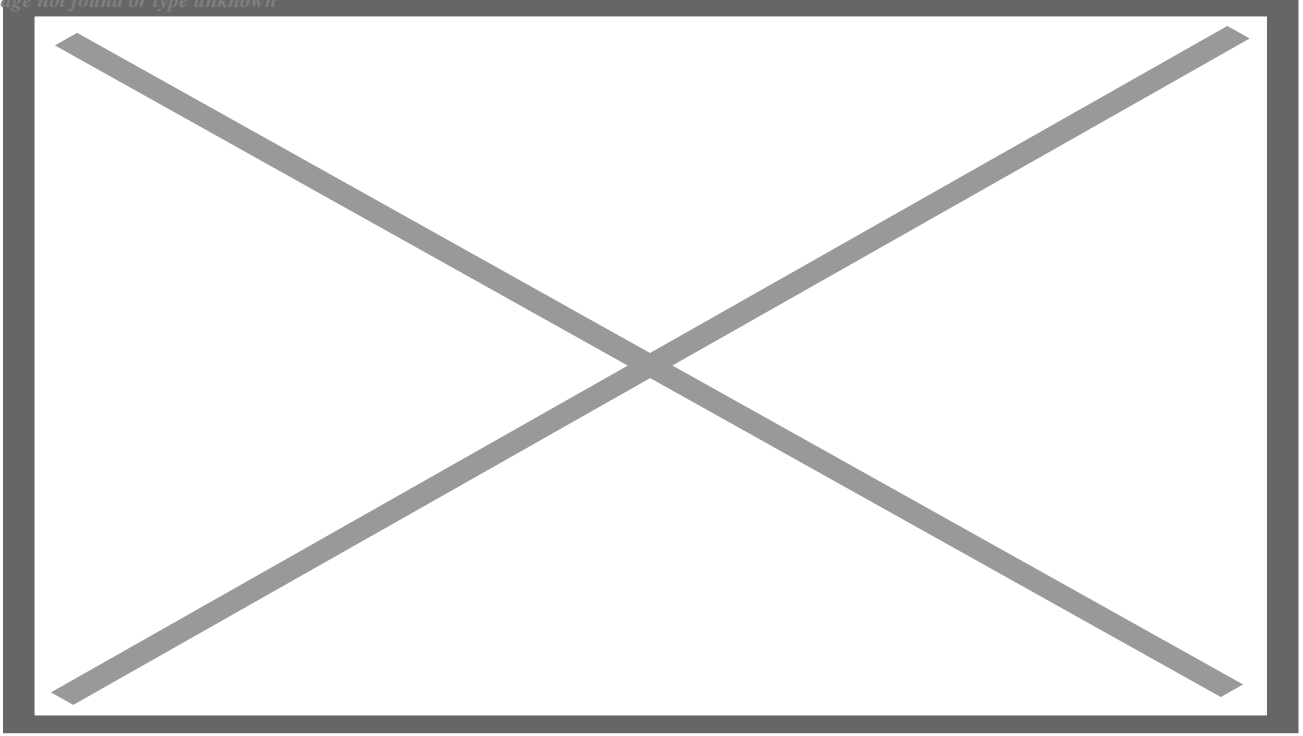


Syria is back

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By Roberto Morejon

Syria's return to The Arab League, from where it was removed in 2011, highlights the strong change in Damascus' political relations with its neighbors, in a process brewed long ago, but accelerated recently.

A Syrian delegation headed by President Bashar al-Assad took part in the thirty-second ordinary session of the Arab Summit which, with the presence of several regional leaders, was held in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

Syria's membership was unique after the Arab League restored its seat after 12 years of marginalization, following the events that unleashed a prolonged war, sustained from abroad.

After a long period of intransigence encouraged by the West in order to corner the Syrian government, new winds are blowing in the Middle East, where many have come to the conclusion that the conflict in the country should be resolved with the help of Damascus.

Between five and six million displaced persons, more than 300,000 dead, serious economic and living conditions effects are some of the effects of an internal war, aggravated by U.S. and allied sanctions.

With the help of Russia and Iran, mainly, and the effort of the nationals and the army to recover ground in the hands of opposition groups, the government of Bashar al-Assad has managed to sustain itself.

Even with the presence of U.S. troops and war equipment plundering the native oil, Syria has been taken into account by its neighbors in a more pragmatic way.

There are many who argue that the distancing of Western countries from the Middle East, now engaged in confrontation with Russia, has contributed to this change.

It is to be expected that with the new climate in the region, conditions for the return of refugees to Syria will be negotiated and the situation in areas not controlled by Damascus, such as the northwestern province of Idlib, will be examined.

An increase in visitors from the Gulf countries to Syria can also be expected, with the consequent encouragement of the revival of small and medium-sized businesses, and even projects aimed at rebuilding the deteriorated electrical infrastructure.

As predicted by the Secretary General of the Arab League, Ahmed Aboul Gheit, the recent diplomatic rapprochements imply the beginning of a process to settle the crisis in Syria, too long fueled by the language of conflagration.

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