

Council Meeting of the Socialist International  
Istanbul, 11-12 November 2013

RESOLUTION ON SYRIA

The Council of the Socialist International met in Istanbul on 11-12 November 2013, where discussions were held on the grave situation in Syria under the first main theme of the agenda, "Current crises related to the struggles for democracy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, and conflicts threatening peace and security in that part of the world". The SI, which has from the first day of the Syrian uprising stood on the side of those who wish to bring democracy, rights and freedoms to that country, also recalled the previous statements of the SI Council and Congress since the outbreak of the conflict and pledged to continue to give its utmost attention to its resolution.

The most urgent task remains bringing and end to the civil war that has claimed the lives of over 100,000 Syrians. Whilst a state of war, disorder and anarchy exists the conditions for all Syrians will continue to deteriorate and the task of rebuilding the country becomes ever more difficult, making this the absolute priority above all others at this time.

The International reiterates its absolute conviction that a political solution is the only way to bring lasting peace to Syria. The Council therefore regrets to hear of another delay to the Geneva II peace talks and calls upon all parties to return to the negotiating table. A political solution that puts into place a transitional government capable of leading the country to democracy is a necessity.

The end of the civil war and the installation of a transitional government are the two pillars upon which a better future for Syria can begin to be positioned. The Council further considers that a number of vital actions need to be taken, both to support the construction of these pillars and to ease the suffering of the millions affected by the conflict. In this context the Council attaches utmost importance to the preservation of the cultural heritage of Syria.

The SI calls upon the members of the UN Security Council, in particular the five permanent members, to give new impetus to the political process. Confidence in the international community has been severely damaged by months of inaction and its inability to protect ordinary Syrians from violence and conflict. A democratic transition backed by the United Nations would not only be the best solution for Syria but also contribute to restoring faith in multilateralism, which the Socialist International continues to believe is the only means to reach durable solutions and lasting peace.

The full support of the international community is also indispensable to address the refugee crisis caused by the civil war. According to the UNHCR, the number of Syrians forced to flee the country surpassed the threshold of two million people on 2 September. Millions more inside Syria are in desperate need of help but aid has slowed due to the high level of violence. The SI Council calls for coordinated international action to ensure that resources are available to provide for those who have fled their homeland, both as a humanitarian necessity and in order to avoid further destabilisation in neighbouring countries, with those most affected including Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq.

Despite the continuous flow of arms and soldiers over Syria's borders, it remains impossible for humanitarian aid to get through effectively to those in need. The Council therefore supports calls for the adoption by the UN Security Council of a resolution obtaining the agreement of all parties to guarantee safe, full and unhindered access for the delivery of aid by all appropriate ways and means and if deemed necessary by creating humanitarian corridors. The cooperation of the various armed

groups currently battling for supremacy is essential to allow aid to reach its destination and the Council calls for fighters on all sides to permit humanitarian assistance, including through cross border operations if and when provision of urgent humanitarian aid proves impossible from within Syria. It is important also to consider the establishment of a monitoring mechanism on the actual humanitarian situation and the unhindered provision of assistance. It is the firm belief of the international that no group which claims act in the interests of Syrians can legitimately oppose such a measure.

The moves taken to dismantle Syria's chemical weapons are to be cautiously welcomed. As of 31 October, according to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, Syria had destroyed or rendered inoperable all of its declared chemical weapons production and mixing facilities, meeting a major deadline in this ambitious disarmament programme. The SI believes that there is no place in the world for such weapons and that all countries that hold stocks of chemical weapons should take steps to put them beyond use. This disarmament programme must continue and be brought to a successful conclusion. The facility and security with which chemical weapons inspectors have been able to carry out their work in recent weeks indicates that when the will exists, so too can the conditions be present for delivering humanitarian assistance. The removal of chemical weapons from Syria in itself is not enough to bring the conflict and suffering in that country to an end, but the UN Security Council agreement is an important step that could help to pave the way for a political solution, breaking a two-and-a-half year deadlock in the UN.

The Socialist International strongly condemns the violence perpetrated by the regime against the people of Syria. Nonetheless, we acknowledge today the most immediate way that relief can be brought to the Syrian people is for all sides to end the fighting by any means necessary along with the provision of humanitarian assistance, in conjunction with the re-launching of an international diplomacy to pave the way for a transitional government that can begin to build the Syria of the future.

The SI Council, acutely aware of the urgency of the situation, recognises the need for immediate action. To this end, the Council urges:

- An end to the civil war in Syria and a cessation of hostilities on all sides
  - The installation of a transitional government to pave the way for democracy
  - Respect for the rights and freedoms of all minorities in Syria
  - That international and all relevant regional actors must immediately cooperate to achieve the above goals
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