

**Meeting of the Council of the Socialist International**

Mexico City, 30 June – 1 July 2014

**DECLARATION****DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD**

Since the last Council we have seen the promulgation of a new constitution and presidential elections in Egypt. Nonetheless, the SI continues to be concerned by the lack of rights and freedoms in that country and the far-reaching powers granted to the military under the new constitution. In order for Egypt to flourish we call upon the new regime to allow for a broad discourse with the participation of all political organisations, acting as genuine democrats in allowing opposition and debate without restriction or persecution.

The Socialist International rejects the protest law, which has been used to restrict rights to peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression. Similarly, the recent imprisonment of journalists in Egypt is completely unacceptable and condemned by the Socialist International. Freedom of the press is a fundamental pillar of a functioning democracy and we will always stand against such persecution.

In recent months we have been encouraged by the agreement in Yemen of an institutional framework for a unified state on the basis of federalism and democracy. This process gives hope for a durable peace in a nation that has suffered many years of repression, bitterness, division and violence, showing that there is an alternative path to the atrocities recently witnessed in Iraq and Syria. Across the Middle East and North Africa the SI stands shoulder to shoulder with democrats who share our values of freedom of religion, equal rights and decent living standards for all.

In Syria, extremists have been strengthened by the oppression and authoritarianism of the regime, and benefited from the chaos and disorder resulting from the civil war in the country, which has now claimed the lives of over 160,000 people. The SI has from the beginning of the protests and uprising in Syria been on the side of those wishing to bring democracy and peace to their country, and the international community needs to support those democrats to overcome the repression and authoritarianism of the regime and the murder and terror perpetrated by fundamentalist extremists.

The only viable way forward for Syria is a diplomatic solution to the conflict, removing the power vacuum within which organisations such as ISIS are able to freely operate. The Council therefore reiterates its calls for the installation of a transitional government to pave the way for democracy, with respect for the rights and freedoms of all minorities in Syria.

The ongoing conflict in Syria and latest developments in Iraq have dramatic consequences for Jordan, a key country for stability and the progress of democracy in the broader region. Jordan is hosting more than a million refugees. With the assistance of the UNHCR, approximately 20 per cent of the refugees are living in camps, but the rest are being hosted by communities mostly in the north of the country, a situation that puts a very big burden on existing infrastructures as well as the education and health

system. Moreover, taking into account the actual situation in Syria and the level of destruction of the country, a large number of refugees will not be able to return to their homes in the near future.

To address this humanitarian issue, the international community needs to substantially increase its support to Jordan, as well as humanitarian organisations working in Lebanon, where the influx of refugees needs to be addressed in a manner which protects their basic needs and promotes stability in the country. Taking also into account that nine to ten million people inside Syria are in need of humanitarian assistance it is extremely important to secure the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2139 of the United Nations.

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