

Syria – Joint Statement on the Ninth Anniversary of the Syrian Uprising (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States of America) (15 Mar. 2020)

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The text of the following statement was released by the Governments of France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Nine years ago today, tens of thousands of Syrians peacefully took to the streets calling for respect for human rights and the end of government corruption. Instead of heeding the Syrian people's legitimate demands, the Assad regime responded with a ruthless campaign of arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, enforced disappearances, and violence. As the Syrian conflict enters its 10th year, the Assad regime's brutal pursuit of a military victory has displaced over 11 million people – nearly half of Syria's pre-war population – and killed more than 500,000 Syrians.

The Assad regime must accept the will of the Syrian people who demand and deserve to live in peace and free of shelling, chemical weapons attacks, barrel bombs, airstrikes, arbitrary detention, torture, and starvation.

We express our satisfaction at the liberation by the Global Coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces of all territory once held by Daesh. However, the threat from Daesh remains, and we are resolved to continue our joint effort through the Coalition to ensure their lasting defeat. We are fighting terrorism with determination and are on the front lines of the fight.

But fighting terrorism cannot and must not justify massive violations of international humanitarian law or continued violence. The reckless military offensive by Assad, Russia, and Iran in Idlib only causes further suffering and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, as medical and humanitarian infrastructures and workers, as well as civilians, are killed. In its latest bloody assault on Idlib, the Assad regime, backed by Russia and Iran, has displaced nearly one million civilians since December alone, the fastest displacement since the start of the conflict. For the latest ceasefire in northwest Syria to endure, a nationwide ceasefire must be established as called for in UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254.

Despite significant efforts by the international community, life-saving assistance is still not reaching large numbers of those in desperate need. As major donors since the beginning of the war, we will continue to support humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, including through cross-border assistance which is a vital necessity, and we demand that all parties, particularly the Syrian regime and its allies, allow safe, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to all people in need in Syria. Yet, we will not consider providing or supporting any reconstruction assistance until a credible, substantive, and genuine political process is irreversibly underway. Absent such a process, reconstruction assistance for Syria would only entrench a deeply flawed and abusive government, increase corruption, reinforce the war economy and further aggravate the root causes of the conflict.

We encourage the international community to continue to provide assistance to Syria's neighbors to share the costs of Syria's refugee crisis. Displaced Syrians must be allowed to return voluntarily and safely to their homes, without fear of arbitrary detention, violation of rights and forced conscription. Yet, the Syrian regime continues to prevent them from doing so.

We will continue to demand accountability for the atrocities committed by the Assad regime and we will continue our efforts to make sure that those who are responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other violations and abuses are identified and held accountable. The international community must come together to support the collection and release of documentation of violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including the critical work of the UN Commission of Inquiry; the UN International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism for Syria; and the UN Secretary General's Board of Inquiry.

The military solution the Syrian regime hopes to achieve, with backing from Russia and Iran, will not bring peace. We reiterate our strong support for the UN-led process in Geneva and UNSCR 2254 to bring about a peaceful and stable Syria.

We – France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States – demand that the Assad regime stop the ruthless killing and engage meaningfully in all aspects of UNSCR 2254, including a nationwide ceasefire, a reformed constitution, release of arbitrarily detained persons, as well as free and fair elections. A credible political process cannot be limited to attempts at convening a constitutional committee. All Syrian citizens, including citizens who are displaced persons and refugees, should be allowed to participate in free and fair elections, under UN supervision.