

Statement of the International Syria Support Group, Vienna, November 14, 2015

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14.11.2015 - Press release 

Meeting in Vienna on November 14, 2015 as the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the Arab League, China, Egypt, the EU (European Union), France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United Nations, and the United States to discuss how to accelerate an end to the Syrian conflict. The participants began with a moment of silence for the victims of the heinous terrorist attacks of November 13 in Paris and the recent attacks in Beirut, Iraq, Ankara, and Egypt. The members unanimously condemned in the strongest terms these brutal attacks against innocent civilians and stood with the people of France.

Subsequently, the participants engaged in a constructive dialogue to build upon the progress made in the October 30 gathering. The members of the ISSG expressed a unanimous sense of urgency to end the suffering of the Syrian people, the physical destruction of Syria, the destabilization of the region, and the resulting increase in terrorists drawn to the fighting in Syria.

The ISSG acknowledged the close linkage between a ceasefire and a parallel political process pursuant to the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, and that both initiatives should move ahead expeditiously. They stated their commitment to ensure a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition based on the Geneva Communiqué in its entirety. The group reached a common understanding on several key issues.

The group agreed to support and work to implement a nationwide ceasefire in Syria to come into effect as soon as the representatives of the Syrian government and the opposition have begun initial steps towards the transition under UN (United Nations) auspices on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué. The five Permanent Members of the UN (United Nations) Security Council pledged to support a UNSC resolution to empower

a ~~UN.(United Nations)~~-endorsed ceasefire monitoring mission in those parts of the country where monitors would not come under threat of attacks from terrorists, and to support a political transition process in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué.

All members of the ISSG also pledged as individual countries and supporters of various belligerents to take all possible steps to require adherence to the ceasefire by these groups or individuals they support, supply or influence. The ceasefire would not apply to offensive or defensive actions against Da'esh or Nusra or any other group the ISSG agrees to deem terrorist.

The participants welcomed ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ Secretary General Ban's statement that he has ordered the ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ to accelerate planning for supporting the implementation of a nationwide ceasefire. The group agreed that the ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ should lead the effort, in consultation with interested parties, to determine the requirements and modalities of a ceasefire.

The ISSG expressed willingness to take immediate steps to encourage confidence-building measures that would contribute to the viability of the political process and to pave the way for the nationwide ceasefire. In this context, and pursuant to clause 5 of the Vienna Communiqué, the ISSG discussed the need to take steps to ensure expeditious humanitarian access throughout the territory of Syria pursuant to UNSCR 2165 and called for the granting of the ~~UN.(United Nations)~~'s pending requests for humanitarian deliveries. The ISSG expressed concern for the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons and the imperative of building conditions for their safe return in accordance with the norms of international humanitarian law and taking into account the interests of host countries. The resolution of the refugee issue is important to the final settlement of the Syrian conflict. The ISSG also reaffirmed the devastating effects of the use of indiscriminate weapons on the civilian population and humanitarian access, as stated in UNSCR 2139. The ISSG agreed to press the parties to end immediately any use of such indiscriminate weapons.

The ISSG reaffirmed the importance of abiding by all relevant ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ Security Council resolutions, including UNSCR 2199 on stopping the illegal trade in oil, antiquities and hostages, from which terrorists benefit.

Pursuant to the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, incorporated by reference in the Vienna statement of October 30, and in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2118, the ISSG agreed on the need to convene Syrian government and opposition representatives in formal negotiations under ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ auspices, as soon as possible, with a target date of January 1. The group welcomed efforts, working with United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and others, to bring together the broadest possible spectrum of the opposition, chosen by Syrians, who will decide their negotiating representatives and define their negotiating positions, so as to enable the political process to begin. All the parties to the political process should adhere to the guiding principles identified at the October 30 meeting, including a commitment to Syria's unity, independence, territorial

integrity, and non-sectarian character; to ensuring that State institutions remain intact; and to protecting the rights of all Syrians, regardless of ethnicity or religious denomination. ISSG members agreed that these principles are fundamental.

The ISSG members reaffirmed their support for the transition process contained in the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. In this respect they affirmed their support for a ceasefire as described above and for a Syrian-led process that will, within a target of six months, establish credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance, and set a schedule and process for drafting a new constitution. Free and fair elections would be held pursuant to the new constitution within 18 months. These elections must be administered under ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ supervision to the satisfaction of the governance and to the highest international standards of transparency and accountability, with all Syrians, including the diaspora, eligible to participate.

Regarding the fight against terrorism, and pursuant to clause 6 of the Vienna Communiqué, the ISSG reiterated that Da'esh, Nusra, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ Security Council, and further, as agreed by the participants and endorsed by the ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ Security Council, must be defeated. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan agreed to help develop among intelligence and military community representatives a common understanding of groups and individuals for possible determination as terrorists, with a target of completion by the beginning of the political process under ~~UN.(United Nations)~~ auspices.

The participants expect to meet in approximately one month in order to review progress towards implementation of a ceasefire and the beginning of the political process.

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Keywords

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