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Hadi al Bahra addresses United Nations General Assembly

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Hadi al Bahra
President of the Syrian Coalition
September 26, 2014

Ladies and gentlemen,

Friends, Excellencies

Greetings from my homeland, where peace is now being slaughtered in front of all to see, my bleeding homeland about which a Syrian poet, Meleager of Gadara, who lived there in the first century BC, said: "and if I am Syrian, why is that a wonder? Stranger, we inhabit one homeland, the world."

My homeland, the birthplace of civilization, is now being wreaked by two dangers: despotism and terrorism. My homeland is beyond mere geography, it is God's message to the nations, God's message to man when he wants to be human. My homeland is a homeland for all, the homeland about which French archaeologist Parrot said: "each civilized person in the world should admit that he has two home countries: the one he was born in, and Syria." Yes, the homeland of all humanity is now in danger of rupture due to the tyrannical crimes committed by a criminal regime, which defied all laws and humanitarian values, and because of the extremists who came from beyond the border of more than thirty countries to sow extremism and terrorism in our beautiful homeland.

Friends,

The Syrian people will not bow to a tyrannical regime nor to a small group of terrorists trying to impose their will and world view on them. Syrians have faced the regime's crimes, including its deadly weapons, chemical attacks, barrel bombs, and its indiscriminate massacres that cost the lives of thousands of men, women and children. Our people are now united against the forces of tyranny, extremism and terrorism.

The Assad regime has carefully set the stage for the current Syrian situation since it spread the culture of terrorism, lawlessness, and slaughter by the knife. The world cannot forget the Assad regime was the first to commit such atrocities when it committed the Houla massacre, killing scores of children. Nor will it forget the massacre in Bayda, where children younger than one year old were killed in front of their parents. Our battle with the regime is the main battle because the regime is the one that sowed the seeds of terrorism, murder, and slaughter. The Opposition has documented more than twenty massacres committed using knives.

The regime's forces are as bad as those of ISIL and the sectarian militias that the regime brought from across the border, from Iran and Lebanon and Iraq and other countries, to join it in committing crimes against the Syrian people. We cannot fully defeat ISIL without eliminating the regime, which is its root cause and which continues to nourish it. For this reason, the opposition presented a declaration of principles in Geneva stating that the fight against terrorism will not be decisive unless we form a Transitional Governing Body with full executive powers. This body will be tasked with providing the necessary environment to achieve security and stability in Syria. The most important condition for achieving security is to eliminate terrorism, which cannot be fully eradicated without eliminating tyranny.

The Syrian people have fought against terrorism since its inception because they viewed it to be the result of the regime's crimes and a danger to the Syrian national agenda. The struggle of the Syrian people against terrorism is not new, and it is continuous. In September 2013, the Syrian National Coalition declared its unequivocal position against ISIL. Its forces also began a war against ISIL early this year by themselves, without any support. We welcome the world's partnership with us in our battle against tyranny and its organic outcome, the terrorist organization ISIL.

We are a peace-loving people, who are fighting for our usurped human and constitutional rights. We were forced to take up arms to defend ourselves in the face of the regime's oppression. This regime used all weapons, including those banned by international law, in order to cling to power. We as a National Coalition represent the Syrian people and strive to achieve their demands and aspirations. We seek to rid them of the authoritarianism of Assad's regime, and of all terrorism that resulted from its policies, primarily ISIL. We are committed to achieving security and stability after which we will allow our people to elect their representatives to a General Assembly. This Assembly will re-draft the constitution, and enact laws to allow free and fair elections, and form the Transitional Government. Once this Government is formed, the Coalition commits to dissolve itself. We do not seek to take power. We only strive to guard the aspirations of our people, and fight for the goals of the revolution.

We are saddened to see the current situation of our homeland, where chaos prevails and people suffer from authoritarianism and terrorism at once. Human suffering has been immense. Within the past two months, we have witnessed the killing by ISIL of over 700 of our people in Deir az-Zor and the uprooting of tens of thousands from Ayn al-Arab (Kubani) while the world watched. In recent days, we have seen tens of thousands of civilians flee their homes and cities facing the attacks of this criminal organization. As a result of these attacks, there are now over 200,000 refugees in Turkey. We thus had to call on the

free world to act according to its responsibility and we asked for emergency help to stop ISIL's militias in order to allow refugees to safely return to their homes. We asked the international community to support the operations of the Free Syrian Army in these areas through air support. We also asked it to target ISIL's military forces and to take the utmost caution and precision in order to avoid bombing any civilian-populated areas. And that is indeed what happened. We are pained by any casualties of innocent civilians.

Our revolution against tyranny and our war on terrorism stem from our national interest. The National Coalition has the necessary strategy and plans to rectify our path and correct the mistakes. We have the will and determination to raise the capacity of the opposition's institutions and organizations to ensure they can fill any vacuum that will result from defeating of the forces of terror and tyranny. Our next step will be to return to Syria in order to liberate the land from Assad's authoritarianism and ISIL's terrorism. We will begin to restore stability and to mobilize the economy in the liberated areas. This phase will require moving from the revolutionary chaotic stage to liberation and organized and disciplined work. It will require reactivating the state institutions, owned by Syrian people who paid for establishing and developing them with their money and efforts. We will work to improve their efficiency. We will ensure that employees return to their jobs, workers to their factories, businesspersons to their businesses, and farmers to their farms. We will guarantee that the future Syria will be for all Syrians of all ethnicities, religions and sects. The Syrian state will be committed to the safety and security of all its citizens, and will guarantee there will be no discrimination of any kind.

We in the Syrian national opposition openly declare that both Assad's tyranny and terrorism and ISIL's terrorism are obstacles to achieving our people's aspirations: to build their national, democratic, and just state. A state of freedom, equality and rule of law. We will continue this struggle until the Syrian people achieve their legitimate demands for human dignity and fundamental freedoms.

Friends,

In conclusion, I thank you for believing in the need to join the struggle of the Syrian people against the forces of tyranny and extremism. I am grateful for your partnership with the Syrian National Coalition, the primary stakeholder in the defense of the Syrian homeland and the Syrian people. Syria is our mother and the homeland for all. Your participation with us in our battle against the forces of tyranny and extremism is a battle in defense of your second homeland, the homeland of all humankind, Syria.

Thank you all.

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