Joint Statement on the Occasion of the 13th Anniversary of the Syrian Uprising

2024-03-15

The following statement was released by the Governments of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, and the United States of America on the occasion of the 13-year anniversary of the Syrian uprising.

On this day 13 years ago, the Syrian people took to the streets in peaceful protest to demand their freedom and respect for human rights. The Assad regime met these protests with a ruthless campaign of oppression and atrocities that continues to this day. Since March 2011, the Syria conflict has led to the deaths of more than 500,000 people, and the forced displacement of more than half of the Syrian population. The co-ordinated efforts of the United Kingdom, United States of America, France and Germany are focused on ending the suffering of the Syrian people. We also continue to press for accountability and justice, calling for the release of civilians arbitrarily detained. We welcome and support the work of organisations such as the Commission of Inquiry and the International Independent and Impartial Mechanism, which document the crimes perpetrated in Syria, and the newly established

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Independent Institution for Missing Persons in Syria.

The war in Syria is not over. During the last year, the suffering of ordinary Syrians has continued apace, whether at the hands of the Assad regime, its allies, or Daesh terrorists. Since October, the Assad regime has stepped up its ruthless bombardment campaign, impacting civilians living outside areas under its control. With the support of Russia, the Assad regime has conducted attacks across north-west Syria, resulting in over 500 civilian casualties and the displacement of over 120,000 people. We call for an immediate end to these attacks. Northeast Syria has witnessed further escalation in violence. This includes attacks by Daesh, whose past atrocities must not be forgotten. In this regard, we thank the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the Investigation and Identification Team for their recent report, concluding that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Daesh deployed sulfur mustard during attacks in Marea in 2015. Preventing Daesh’s resurgence remains a top priority. We call on the international community to rally around the

remaining tasks to ensure durable solutions for the residents of al-Hol and Roj camps, and for the issue of the Daesh detainees.

The devastating impact of the February 2023 earthquakes is still felt today. In 2024, the number of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance across Syria has reached 16.7 million. In the north-west, the unhindered and predictable delivery of humanitarian aid, including cross-border humanitarian assistance, is essential to ensuring civilians can access adequate support. Donors and international partners require greater predictability for planning and procurement, and we call on the Assad regime to grant indefinite access at crossing points for as long as needs persist, to ensure a sustainable and reliable response.

We are increasingly concerned by the threats posed by the trade of the illicit drug captagon, from which the Assad regime, with the support of Iran-aligned militia groups and other actors, generates vast profits to fund its oppression of the Syrian people. Global coordination is required to tackle the malign impact of captagon, which is contributing to instability across the region. We call on the Assad regime to end its role in this trade and to take meaningful steps to curb drug trafficking by others in Syria.

We remain committed to ending the human rights violations and abuses suffered by the Syrian people at the hands of the Assad regime. The peaceful demonstrations in Suweida, ongoing since last summer, show that the demands for peace, freedom and dignity that led to protests 13 years ago endure.

Our countries see no possibility of normalisation with the Assad regime, no funding of reconstruction and no lifting of sanctions until there is authentic, meaningful and enduring progress towards a political solution. A Syrian-owned, Syrian-led political settlement in line with UNSCR 2254 is the only viable mechanism that can bring lasting peace for the Syrian people. The conditions for safe, dignified and voluntary returns of refugees to Syria, supported by the international community, are not yet met and we call on the Assad regime to make the reforms necessary to protect the freedom, dignity, and human rights of all. We welcome the announcement by

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Special Envoy Geir Pedersen to convene a meeting of the Constitutional Committee in April in Geneva and we urge all sides to accept the invitation and engage seriously on the work of the Committee.

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