

Syria – Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Small Group on Syria (22 October 2020)

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We, the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States continue to strongly support a political resolution of the Syrian crisis on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

We support the efforts of United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen to move forward with the political process. A political solution as set out in UNSCR 2254 is the only way to bring a sustainable peace, stability, and security to the Syrian people, and would facilitate the withdrawal of all foreign forces that came into Syria after 2011. Such a solution must preserve the territorial integrity, unity, and sovereignty of Syria.

We took note of the Constitutional Committee's launch in 2019. We urge continued engagement with the committee to ensure substantial progress on the discussion of the constitution in line with the committee's mandate and procedures. We stand behind Special Envoy Pedersen's efforts to convene the fourth round of meetings, which must discuss substantial issues in order to achieve meaningful progress. Steps should be made to advance all of the other dimensions of the political process, including towards the convening of UN-supervised free and fair elections in a safe and neutral environment as outlined in UNSCR 2254, in which internally displaced persons, refugees, and the diaspora must be able to participate.

After almost 10 years of conflict, the people of Syria have suffered deeply. Hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions forcibly displaced. Now facing COVID-19 and continued economic difficulties, we want to highlight again the importance of providing safe and unhindered humanitarian access for all Syrians currently in need of it, including areas where conditions are noticeably deteriorating, as in Idlib province and South Syria. We would also like to urge the international community to continue supporting Syrian refugees and their hosting countries and communities until Syrians can voluntarily return home in safety, dignity, and security. We also oppose forced demographic change and commit to disburse no assistance for any resettlement of Syrian refugees that is not in line with UNHCR standards.

Additionally, we want to reinforce that efforts toward a political solution in line with UNSCR 2254 must result in progress toward facilitating the safe, voluntary, and dignified return of IDPs and refugees, the release of Syrian detainees, and holding all those responsible for atrocities accountable. We stress the importance of sufficient international support to assist host countries of refugees to help them in their efforts to fulfill the needs of refugees and maintain the resilience of host communities.

There is no military solution that will bring peace, security, and stability to Syria. Progress on the political process as outlined in UNSCR 2254, in addition to the establishment of a nationwide ceasefire also as outlined in UNSCR 2254, remains the only path forward towards a better future for all Syrians.

We reiterate our commitment to the enduring defeat of ISIS and other UN-recognized terrorist groups throughout Syria including in the Northwest and the South, including al-Qaeda and HTS. We express our deep concern regarding the terrorist threat in the South of Syria and commit to supporting humanitarian efforts there. We deplore the possible further internalization of the Syrian conflict by the transfer of combatants, including militants, and equipment by various parties to other areas of conflict.