

International initiative to stop the war in Syria Yes to democracy, no to foreign intervention!

We, the undersigned, who are part of an international civil society increasingly worried about the awful bloodshed of the Syrian people, are supporting a political initiative based on the results of a fact-finding mission which some of our colleagues undertook to Beirut and Damascus in September 2012. This initiative consists in calling for a delegation of high-ranking personalities and public figures to go to Syria in order to discuss the current situation with the main political actors and to pave the way for a negotiated political solution of the armed conflict in Syria which seriously threatens world peace and the existence of Syria as an independent and sovereign nation.

In this perspective we fully support the following declaration:

All eyes are presently on the unfolding war in Syria that is drowning its people in blood. We are highly concerned not only because the conflict has been acquiring a dangerous geo-political dimension. The legitimate and at the beginning also peaceful movement of the Syrian people – along with their Arab brothers – for democratic rights is also in danger of being converted into a sectarian civil war with massive regional and international involvement.

We are conscious that no side can win such a war of attrition in the near future whilst the Syrian and Arab people's resistance against Western and Israeli predominance as well as the regional dictatorships is being threatened and could eventually even be destroyed.

In order to save these achievements and to continue the struggle for democracy, social justice and self-determination of the people, a political solution of the conflict by means of a negotiated settlement is indispensable. Only in this way can religious sectarianism be curbed, foreign intervention averted and the democratic mass movement prevail.

We therefore take action in support of a political solution to end the bloodshed with the following criteria:

- 1) We fully support the beginning of a **political process** which should start by negotiations and a ceasefire. This should go hand in hand with a process of de-escalation and **de-militarisation** that allows the Syrian people to receive the help they urgently need and express their will peacefully and eventually at the ballot boxes.
- 2) Since any solution must be based on the sovereign will of the Syrian people we reject categorically any kind of **military intervention**, wherever it may come from.
- 3) To respect the sovereign right to self-determination means respecting the **democratic and social rights** of the vast majority of the people. Therefore no major political force should be excluded a priori. A sustainable, peaceful settlement must be based on a constitutional process which allows **free elections** organised by a **transitional government** as a result of negotiations.
- 4) Since the conflict has seen a growing instrumentalisation of sectarian affiliations, which hampers the political unification of the people based on democracy, we support all initiatives and tendencies among the existing political and military forces which are promoting **inter-confessional tolerance** on the base of the same rights for all citizens.

By signing this declaration we give our full support to the international delegation heading for Syria in the beginning of 2013 and hoping that this initiative will make a significant contribution to peace in the area.