

## Press Release

### *After the Geneva negotiations:* **All Sides Consultation for a Political Solution in Syria**

Syrian personalities from different political and cultural environments will meet on March 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> in Austria

Approximately 50 Syrian activists, intellectuals, professors, journalists, doctors, artists and religious dignitaries of various political, cultural, confessional affiliations and identities associated with the different sides of the conflict are scheduled to meet at *Friedensburg Schlaining* ("Peace Castle Schlaining") on March 8/9 to discuss realistic possibilities of ending the civil war and paving the way for a democratic transition in Syria.

The symposium originated in the „International Initiative for a Political Solution of the Syrian Conflict“ ([www.peaceinsyria.org](http://www.peaceinsyria.org)) which is supported by prominent international personalities, among them the Nobel Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Jean Ziegler, Ernesto Cardenal, Hans von Sponeck, the Mexican bishop Raul Vera and many others. The initiative has been in close contact with the opposing parties for a considerable time. It aims to provide a framework for a political dialogue within the civil society of Syria in order to meet the demands for democracy and social justice in opposition to any foreign military intervention in the Syrian conflict.

The symposium will bring together, for example, Habib Issa, a widely respected opposition veteran who has spent many years in jail and the former social affairs minister Lamia Aasi considered to be among the milieu friendly towards the government; the young women's rights activist Kefah Ali Deeb and the Muslim Brother Hassan al Hachemi. It can count on the presence of representatives of the "National Coordination Body for a Democratic Change" and supporters of the "National Syrian Coalition", religious leaders and representatives of various Kurdish movements like the chairwoman of the Kurdish People's Assembly, Senam Mohamad.

Although this symposium is mainly a civil society event among Syrians, also some representatives from countries neutral in the conflict such as Norway, Mexico, India etc. have been invited as observers. Also, the office of the UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) will send delegates. The co-founders of the peaceinsyria-initiative will act as moderators, among them the Belgian liberation sociologist and Catholic priest François Houtart, the Nicaraguan expert in peace-building Alejandro Bendaña, the Greek coordinator of the Gaza Freedom Flotilla Evangelis Pissias and Wolfgang Gehrcke, spokesperson for foreign affairs in the German parliamentary club of "Die Linke".

The financial support for this event is provided by the Norwegian NGO Karibu and a number of Austrian sponsors close to the Catholic Church such as Caritas-Austria, the Viennese Jesuits, Dreikönigsaktion Austria, the monastery of Klosterneuburg, as well as the UPF.

For the organisational committee of [www.peaceinsyria.org](http://www.peaceinsyria.org) in Austria:

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Waseem Haddad – religious scientist [[waseem.haddad.sy@gmail.com](mailto:waseem.haddad.sy@gmail.com)]

Call for the Vienna Syria peace convention:

[www.peaceinsyria.org/downloads/pol%20call%20syria%20all%20sides%20civil%20society%20conf%20D140210%20en.pdf](http://www.peaceinsyria.org/downloads/pol%20call%20syria%20all%20sides%20civil%20society%20conf%20D140210%20en.pdf)

Preliminary programme of the Vienna Syria peace convention:

[www.peaceinsyria.org/downloads/prelim%20programme%20syria%20all%20sides%20civil%20society%20conf%20D140210%20en.pdf](http://www.peaceinsyria.org/downloads/prelim%20programme%20syria%20all%20sides%20civil%20society%20conf%20D140210%20en.pdf)

Political platform of the initiative:

[www.peaceinsyria.org/mission.html](http://www.peaceinsyria.org/mission.html)

International supporters of the initiative:

[www.peaceinsyria.org/endorsers.php](http://www.peaceinsyria.org/endorsers.php)