
International Peace Initiative for Syria
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Let's give a voice to the Syrians claiming for a political solution! Support an all sides' civil society conference in Vienna

Every day it becomes clearer that the Syrian war cannot be won by anybody with a positive outcome for the Syrian people. With its internal divisions on every side the civil war has reached the state of an unprecedented bloodshed increased by external interventions. Its continuation will only wreak havoc and spread destruction on all levels of society.

Among its main victims there are the democratic rights of the Syrian people, who originally tried to claim these rights by launching a peaceful popular mass protest movement. However their efforts have gradually been thwarted by an increasing influence of sectarian tendencies as well as a growing regional and global involvement.

Together with many people inside Syria and across the world our initiative for Peace in Syria continues to insist (see initial call www.peaceinsyria.org/mission.html) that the only viable solution is a political settlement with a ceasefire paving the way to a transitional government, based on a power sharing agreement among the societal, political, cultural, economic and ethnic identities maintaining a common State. We are conscious that this is not the ideal solution for any side, and therefore it will be difficult for all sides to accept. Yet a political solution is the only way out, because the continuation of the war will be even worse.

Internationally, most of the involved players have now come to the conclusion that a political settlement is necessary to stop the number of victims from growing. This is being shown also by the recent agreement between the USA and Iran which provides a framework for the Geneva II talks.

However, most of the Syrian people, who - while starving - continue to strive for their democratic and social rights, have lost their voice within the diplomatic efforts which are being made on the level of States. There is an urgent need to let them speak and allow their voices to be heard while important parts of the international community engage in power brokering ignoring the interest of the people on the ground.

As an International Initiative of civil society, we are proposing to hold a conference in Vienna, Austria, with renowned figures of the Syrian civil society from all walks of life and associated with all sides of the conflict, in order to explore possible and realistic ways for achieving a democratic transition acceptable to the vast majority of Syrians. For this proposal, we have received positive signals from across the whole political spectrum of Syria.

Whilst we hope that Geneva II will get off the ground, we strongly believe that the Vienna conference is a necessary complement to it. There is a real need to lend a voice to those who will have no say at the negotiation table, because they are not State-actors. Furthermore any ceasefire agreement will need strong popular support from below. For the time being all eyes are set on the negotiations. Meanwhile we are preparing the Vienna conference to give a voice to those who are claiming from below for a democratic and socially just solution beyond the continued civil war and beyond foreign meddling into Syria. This is needed whether Geneva will yield results or not.