



Her Excellency Federica Mogherini,
High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
CC: Foreign Ministers of the European Union

15 June 2016

Your Excellency,

Last month at the Foreign Affairs Council meeting of Ministers, the EU reaffirmed its commitment to achieving lasting peace, stability and security in Syria. We, Syrian civil society organisations and humanitarians, welcome this strong EU commitment to end the suffering of the Syrian people. That is why we are writing to you to ensure that Europe leads the way towards a sustainable peace in Syria, and effectively tackles the dual threats posed by Assad and ISIS, so that our brothers and sisters in refuge can safely return home.

As the largest donor of humanitarian aid, the EU has spearheaded efforts to alleviate humanitarian suffering across Syria. Europe's generosity has made our work possible, providing our organisations the expertise and resources needed to dig bodies out of the rubble and to deliver life-saving aid to those who need it most. Now, we need Europe's leadership to solve the crisis in Syria.

Few beyond the Syrian people and Syria's immediate neighbours, are more affected by the Syrian crisis than Europeans. The terror threat is acute in Europe. And the refugee crisis is testing to its limits the resilience of the stable and hard-fought-for centrist politics established across Europe after World War II. To tackle the threat posed by ISIS and stem the exodus from Syria, we need a long-term solution to the crisis in Syria. Europe has the capacity to lead such a solution by bringing pressure to bear on the parties most responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Since the start of Syria's Cessation of Hostilities, hospitals and schools have deliberately been targeted and bombed by Assad's air forces. Entire cities have been besieged and starved. Innocent civilians have been tortured, in some cases, to death. Time and again, violations to the Cessation of Hostilities have passed without consequence – there has been no cost to violating the cessation; no cost to refusing to negotiate; and therefore no incentive to allow progress towards a solution. Until there are consequences, no cessation will be durable. Civilians will keep dying and refugees will keep arriving at European shores.

Your Excellency, our organisations are doing our best to save and protect lives in Syria. But we cannot stop the barrel bombs on our own. We cannot break the sieges without your help. We cannot prosecute those responsible of torturing, raping, killing innocent civilians. To save lives and solve the crisis, we need Europe's help and your leadership.

As you now prepare to launch a review of the EU's Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, we are appealing to Europe to:

- (i) **enforce the cessation of hostilities and protect civilians.** More than 800 civilians have been killed by Syrian regime and Russian air forces since the start of the Cessation of Hostilities. Airstrikes have targeted, terrorised and killed innocent civilians, and remain the foremost driver of the refugee crisis;

- (ii) **break the humanitarian sieges through the effective delivery of airdrops to all those in need.** The credibility of the ISSG, which the EU and some Member States sit on, is at stake; the 1 June deadline has already passed and aid has not reached all those in need. We urge EU Member States either to provide protection to make airdrops happen or to use their own resources to carry out the ISSG commitment. The international community cannot expect the same regime that is responsible both for the vast majority of sieges and the deliberate prevention of aid convoys, to approve airdrops. Airdrops must therefore be implemented irrespective of the Syrian regime consent, carried out over all areas in need and to be intensive, comprehensive and continuous;
- (iii) **impose targeted sanctions on the Syrian regime and its allies.** Further EU sanctions against those who participate or support indiscriminate killing of civilians - including weapons suppliers, financiers, banks, middlemen, as well as high-ranking Syrian military personnel - will help fight impunity and will impose real costs to Russia and the Syrian regime for failure to respect the Cessation of Hostilities;
- (iv) **support the release of arbitrarily held detainees.** Tens of thousands of innocent Syrians are tortured and killed inside Assad's secret prisons. The EU and its Member States should lead an effort both within Europe and at the UN Security Council demanding independent access to all detention facilities;
- (v) **prosecute war crimes.** We welcome the EU's call for the situation in Syria to be referred to the ICC. But while this route is blocked by Russia, we must not allow the door to be closed on justice. We urge Member States across Europe to investigate and prosecute individuals who have committed war crimes in Syria under domestic or universal jurisdiction. The argument by some that accountability undermines the political process is both immoral and flawed. Accountability creates consequences for further crimes, helps the process of reaching political agreement, and, most importantly, it is demanded by us, Syrians, who have witnessed heinous crimes on an epic scale;
- (vi) **plan for Syria's future stability.** Syrians will lead Syria to its new democratic future. But we will need the help of our international partners not just on short-term stabilisation, but on providing the resources for the long-term development and stability of a future Syria. Planning for this needs to start now. Doing so will give millions of Syrians hope for the future and signal to the regime that the entire international community is working towards a new political dispensation in Syria.

Your Excellency, last year in the strategic review for the EU Global Strategy you stated that *"the European Union has all the means to be an influential player in future – if it acts together"*. The future is now. We need you - the European Union - to be the influential player who takes the lead on the global response to the greatest humanitarian tragedy of our time.

Sincerely,



2. Union of Syrian Civil Society Organizations
3. Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression
4. RMTTeam
5. Jasmine Dream
6. Basamat for Development
7. Rethink Rebuild Society
8. Alaa Basatneh
9. Foundation to Restore Equality and Education in Syria (FREE-Syria)
10. Syrian Women's Network
11. Syrian Nonviolence Movement
12. The Syrian Society in Nottinghamshire
13. Syrian Welsh Society
14. Kurds House
15. Syrian Platform for Peace
16. Scotland4Syria
17. Syrian Community South West UK
18. Zaytoon
19. Zaad
20. Peace and Justice for Syria
21. Emissa for Development
22. Medics Under Fire
23. Union of Medical Care and Relief Organisation
24. Dr David Nott
25. Dr Saleyha Ahsan
26. Dr Ghanem Tayara
27. Hamish de Bretton Gordon - Chemical Weapons Expert
28. Toby Cadman - International Law Specialist