

Forum: Political Committee

Issue: Post-Conflict Reconciliation in The Syrian Arab Republic

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Introduction

After years of devastating conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, the journey toward reconciliation is urgent for the country's recovery and future stability. The conflict, marked by violence and deep social fractures, has left deep wounds in society, making reconciliation complex and very hard. However, in these difficulties, the need for healing, unity, and sustainable peace is becoming more and more each day. Due to international support and joint efforts, the Syrian people are trying to rebuild their nation, reconcile differences, and pave the way for a more inclusive and spacious future. This internal conflict, which has existed for a long time in the Syrian Arab Republic, is increasingly in need of reconciliation more than ever. This committee and Syria's steps toward reconciliation are of great importance in terms of this year's RCIMUN theme "International Reconciliation: Resilience in the Face of Shifting Power Dynamics". One of the most vigilant steps on the path to international reconciliation is to solve the problems within the countries themselves.

Definition of Key Terms

Transitional Justice: A group of activities or investigations that focuses on communities with a legacy of human rights violations, genocide, or other forms of violations including crimes against humanity and civil war atrocities, in order to build a more democratic society for a secure future.

Prevention and Mediation: Preventive diplomacy refers to diplomatic action taken to prevent disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur. While it is conducted in different forms and fora, both public and private, the most common expression of preventive diplomacy is found in the work of envoys dispatched to crisis areas to encourage dialogue, compromise and the peaceful resolution of tensions. Successful conflict mediation requires an adequate support system to provide envoys with the proper staff assistance and advice, and to ensure that talks have the needed logistical and financial resources.

Community Engagement: The process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the wellbeing of those people.

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: A common response to widespread human rights violations, particularly following internal armed conflict, is the establishment of a governmental or

independent commission to investigate and record the violations, potentially—although not necessarily— with a view to enabling criminal prosecution.

Restorative justice: An inclusive, flexible and participatory approach to crime that can be complementary or an alternative to the conventional criminal justice process.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR): A process through which members of armed forces and groups are supported to lay down their weapons and return to civilian life. As a complex process, it comprehends political, security, social and economic dimensions aimed at creating an environment where a peace process, political and social reconciliation, as well as sustainable development, can take place.

General Overview

The Syrian Civil War is a violent ongoing conflict in Syria between pro-democracy rebels and the long-standing dynastic regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. War has been a major source of instability in the Middle East since 2011, and the resulting displacement of civilians and refugee migration constitutes one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history.

The conflict stemmed from the Arab Spring protests that swept the Middle East and North Africa in 2011. The reason for this uprising was actually to show the government in a peaceful way that the ever-increasing unemployment should stop, that the society wanted economic freedom, that reform changes should be made, and that human rights should be defended. Protests in Syria initially demanded political reforms and greater freedoms but later escalated into armed conflict following a violent government crackdown on demonstrators. 12 years ago, a peaceful uprising against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad turned into a full-scale civil war. In 2011, a wave of protests known as the Arab Spring swept the Arab world, prompting Syrians to take to the streets to demand political reforms, greater freedom and an end to corruption. The people were tired of the Assad regime, which had been in power for many years. The Syrian government responded to these protests with force, further increasing the anger, and as a result of these events, a long-term civil war began.

The conflict can be examined as follows;

Civil War in Syrian Arab Republic

The first major protests took place in March 2011 in the drought-stricken rural Dar'ā in southern Syria. A group of children were arrested and tortured by authorities for writing anti-regime graffiti; angry locals took to the streets to demonstrate for political and economic reforms. Security forces responded harshly, carrying out mass arrests and sometimes opening fire on demonstrators. The violence of the regime's response drew more attention to the protesters' cause, and within weeks similar nonviolent protests began popping up in cities across the country. Videos recorded by eyewitnesses on their mobile phones showing security forces beating and opening fire on protesters spread across the country.

As the protests grew in strength and size, the regime responded with more violent force. In some cases, this meant surrounding cities or neighborhoods that became centers of protests, such as Bāniyās or Homs, with tanks, artillery, and attack helicopters, cutting off public services and communications. In response, some protest groups began to arm themselves against the security forces. In June, Syrian troops and tanks moved into the northern town of Jisr al-Shughur, causing thousands of refugees to flee to Turkey.

Syria's regional neighbors and global powers began to divide into pro- and anti-Assad camps. The United States and the European Union have become increasingly critical of Assad as his crackdown continues. Barack Obama and many European heads of state called for him to resign in August 2011. In the last half of 2011, Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia were formed as an anti-Assad bloc. The US, EU, and Arab League imposed sanctions targeting senior members of the Assad regime.

Clashes between the government and opponents of reform continued throughout 2012. Efforts by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar to finance and arm rebels became increasingly public in late 2012 and 2013. The Syrian government continued to buy weapons from Iran and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. In late 2012, Hezbollah also began sending its own fighters to Syria to fight the rebels. There have been new calls for international military action in Syria following suspected chemical attack attacks in the suburbs of Damascus on 21 August 2013, killing hundreds of people. The Syrian opposition accused pro-Assad forces of carrying out the attacks. Syrian officials have denied using chemical weapons and maintained that rebel forces were to blame if such weapons had been used.

Many external forces have been involved in these conflicts, which continue to this day, over the years. In general, it took place between Russia, Iran, the Syrian government, the United States, European countries, and Turkey. A ceasefire has been declared many times over the years, but unfortunately, no reconciliation has been reached. The main focus of this committee is on finding ways to reconcile.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Syrian Government: Led by President Bashar al-Assad, the government forces have been fighting to maintain control over Syria. They receive support from allies such as Russia, Iran, and various militias.

Rebel Groups: These include a variety of factions with differing ideologies, ranging from moderate opposition groups to Islamist and jihadist factions. Some of the prominent rebel groups have included the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Ahrar al-Sham, Jaysh al-Islam, and Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS).

Kurdish Forces: The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been a significant player in northeastern Syria, primarily fighting against ISIS. The SDF is largely composed of Kurdish fighters, but also includes Arab, Assyrian, and other minority groups.

Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS): ISIS, also known as Daesh, emerged as a powerful force in Syria and Iraq, aiming to establish a caliphate. While they have suffered significant territorial losses, they continue to carry out attacks in various parts of the country.

Turkey: Turkey has been involved in the conflict primarily to counter Kurdish influence along its

border. It has supported various rebel groups and conducted military operations, particularly in northern Syria.

Russian Federation: Russian Federation has been a key ally of the Syrian government, providing military support through airstrikes, advisors, and equipment. Its intervention has been crucial in defending the Assad regime's position.

Iran: Iran has provided extensive support to the Syrian government, including military advisors, financial aid, and proxy militias such as Hezbollah from Lebanon.

United States and Coalition Forces: The US initially supported certain rebel groups in Syria and later focused on combating ISIS through airstrikes and support for the SDF. It has also deployed troops in northeastern Syria.

Israel: Israel has carried out airstrikes in Syria, targeting Iranian and Hezbollah positions, as well as weapons shipments believed to be destined for Hezbollah.

Foreign Fighters: Various foreign fighters from different countries have joined both rebel groups and jihadist factions, including individuals from Europe, North Africa, and other Middle Eastern countries.

Timelines and Events

2010	The Syrian government prohibits teachers from wearing the <i>niqāb</i> , a veil that covers all of the face except the eyes, while teaching.
February 2010	Numerous smaller demonstrations are held in Syria to call for reform and to show solidarity with pro-democracy protesters in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Syrian security forces managed to control the demonstrations and many people were arrested.
6 March 2011	In the southern city of Dar'ā , Syrian police arrest several children for writing anti government graffiti.
24 March 2011	Dozens of protesters are reportedly killed when security forces open fire on a demonstration in Dar'ā.

9 May 2011	<p>The European Union (EU) imposes an arms embargo and applies travel restrictions and asset freezes to 13 senior Syrian officials. The sanctions do not apply to Assad personally.</p>
23 May 2011	<p>The EU votes to extend sanctions to include Assad.</p>
6 June 2011	<p>Syrian official media report that 120 soldiers were killed by armed gangs in the northern city of Jisr al-Shughūr, near the Turkish border. Members of the opposition claim that the soldiers were executed for refusing to fire on protesters.</p>
10 June 2011	<p>Syrian tanks and troops move into Jisr al-Shughūr. Thousands of residents flee across the border into Turkey.</p>
29 July 2011	<p>A group of defectors from the Syrian military announce the formation of the Free Syrian Army, an opposition militia. The announcement calls on other members of the Syrian military to defect rather than participate in violence against protesters.</p>
3 August 2011	<p>The UN Security Council condemns the Syrian government for its use of violence against protesters.</p>
17 August 2011	<p>In a telephone conversation with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Assad states that military and police operations in Syria have stopped. However, reports of attacks and civilian casualties continue to emerge.</p>

23 August 2011	UN human rights officials estimate that more than 2,200 people have been killed by Syrian security forces since mid-March. The UN Human Rights Council votes to open an investigation into possible crimes against humanity.
8 November 2011	The UN releases a new report estimating that 3,500 people have been killed since the start of protests. Violence continues despite the Syrian government's reported agreement to withdraw its troops from cities.

UN Involvement

The Security Council takes the lead on political action on Syria. In 2021, the 15-member body discussed Syria 12 times, most frequently via informal consultations. Since 2012, the Council has adopted 27 resolutions on Syria or largely related to Syria.

The UN continues to support efforts towards a Syrian-owned and led political solution to end more than a decade of war that has killed upwards of 350,000 people and left 14.6 million in need of humanitarian aid.

On 9 July 2021, the Council adopted resolution 2585 (2021), extending the cross-border mechanism for the provision of humanitarian aid into Syria (the first unanimous resolution on this matter since resolution 2165 (2014)).

Humanitarian assistance by United Nations agencies and their partners continues throughout the Syrian Arab Republic.

UNICEF requires US \$334.4 million to reach children in the Syrian Arab Republic with humanitarian assistance in 2022. The greatest funding requirements are for water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), health and education, among others.

The UN-led Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan for 2021-2022 calls for \$5.8 billion to support almost 6 million refugees in neighboring countries.

The UN Human Rights Council investigates all violations of international law in Syria, having done so since March 2011 through the Independent International Commission of Inquiry.

Relevant UN Documents

Syria Crisis Humanitarian Situation Report, January 2018

Syria Crisis Humanitarian Situation Report, December 2018

United Nations Security Council Resolution, 27 September 2013, S/RES/2118 (2013)

United Nations Security Council Resolution, 14 July 2014, S/RES/2165 (2014)

United Nations Security Council Resolution, 9 July 2021, S/RES/2585 (2021)

North East Syria Situation Report, 5 November 2019

Syria Crisis Humanitarian Situation Report, Mid-Year Report 2019

Whole of Syria Humanitarian Situation Report, November 2021

Syria Humanitarian Situation Report (Cholera) - November 2022

UNICEF Immediate Response Plan For Syria (Earthquake), 16 February 2023

Treaties and Events

Arab League Monitoring Mission (December 2011 - January 2012): The Arab League deployed a monitoring mission to Syria aimed at observing the situation on the ground and promoting a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, the mission was criticized for its limited impact in stemming the violence.

Kofi Annan's Peace Plan (March 2012): Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed a six-point peace plan for Syria, which called for a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops from populated areas, humanitarian access, and political dialogue between the government and opposition. The plan ultimately failed to halt the violence.

Geneva II Conference (June 2012): An international conference to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria that was held in Switzerland. For months, UN, US and Russian diplomats struggled to persuade both sides to attend this conference.

Russian Military Intervention (September 2015): Russia began airstrikes in Syria in support of the Assad government, significantly altering the balance of power in the conflict. Russia's intervention bolstered Assad's position and allowed government forces to make significant gains against rebel groups.

Astana Talks (January 2017 - Present): The Astana talks, brokered by Russia, Iran, and Turkey, aimed to facilitate ceasefire agreements and de-escalation zones in Syria. These talks complemented the UN-led Geneva peace process but focused more on military and humanitarian issues.

Idlib Ceasefire Agreement (March 2020): Turkey and Russia reached a ceasefire agreement for the Idlib province, halting a government offensive and establishing a buffer zone to separate government and rebel forces. However, violations of the ceasefire have continued.

Turkish Military Operations (2019 - Present): Turkey launched multiple military operations in northern Syria, targeting Kurdish forces and establishing a "safe zone" along its border to address security concerns and prevent the creation of a Kurdish autonomous region.

Notes from the Chair

Useful Links

[Syrian Arab Republic situation reports | UNICEF](#)

[Syria | UN News](#)

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Syrian-Civil-War/Civil-war>

<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/syria>

[The Current Situation in Syria | United States Institute of Peace](#)

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