

Sant'Egidio's Initiative for peace in Syria

Gathered in Rome upon invitation of the Community of Sant'Egidio, coming from different tendencies, components and platforms within the Syrian opposition, seeking a just and comprehensive peace for our Country, aware of the immense sufferings endured by our people during 7 years of war and considered all the previous meetings and efforts on the path of peace, we are aware that only through dialogue among us and negotiation it is possible to reach a sustainable solution for a lasting peace.

For those reasons we carried out a profound analysis of the current situation on the ground in Syria and progressed with some common reflections on what could be concrete and real solutions for a just and inclusive transition aimed to achieve a comprehensive peace agreement.

We believe that Syria is formed by various ethnoreligious, cultural and political components. We believe that every component has to be involved in the future of the Country.

Considering Syrian identity and the relation between state, religion and citizenship, bearing in mind also that Syria is the common homeland for all its components and citizens, we agreed that Syria is a civil and democratic state of multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-confessional nature and that citizenship is based on the equality, justice and the rule of the law for all Syrians.

We believe that the reasonable system of government has to be a semi-parliamentarian and semi-presidential Republic. The institutional reform has to draw its legitimacy and authority from the people of Syria through direct general elections of one round. The formation of the Government (the Cabinet Government) has to depend on the results of the general elections, where the party or the coalition of parties that win the general elections will have the responsibility

to form the Government. In order to guarantee maximum inclusivity of representation, the formation of a two Houses Parliament could be one option. In such a case, guarantees of a smooth and disciplined legislative enacting process and a guarantee of the representation house in the law enactment process should be put in place. We believe also that the principles of separation, balance and cooperation between the legislative, executive and judicial authorities are among the important pillars of the political system in Syria. The executive branch of Government has to be of dual nature: the President on the one hand and the Prime Minister and the Ministers on the other. The political responsibility of the Cabinet and the Government has to be of a collective nature. The Cabinet should offer its resignation in the case of a non-confidence vote. The executive branch of the Government (the President, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet) has the right to propose laws to the Parliament and the right to participate in the official debate of such laws in the Parliament. The Parliament has the authority to monitor the work of the executive branch of the Government under the rules enshrined in the Constitution. The President as part of the executive in Syria will have various, yet specific powers under the Constitution. The President oversees the application of the general policies and the execution of the main functions of the State, including defense, security and foreign affairs. The Government (the Cabinet, the Ministers and the Prime Minister) is responsible for the daily running of the State's affairs, including defense and security and the State's financial affairs, within the laws and regulations enacted by the Parliament.

In order to put in action those principles and the above reform and restructuration of the system of government, and considering the ongoing efforts of the UN and the international community, we urge that a transition period is put in place in order to guarantee an arranged exit from the war. We believe that the milestones for an effective political transition are the following:

1. The Constitutional Committee (henceforth the Committee) must have its own inner regulations (agenda, system of debate and vote, contribution of experts, auditions, auditioners or whoever it may consider, etc.); it must choose its own president (by national and international consensus, if needed also Syrian a neutral figure), it must be endowed with the power to establish its own sub-committees and to establish a deadline to end its works (not more than 9 months starting from the beginning of its works). The composition of the Committee must reflect the composition of the Country and the balance between the two parties, and must include competent people of both sides.

2. At the very beginning of the works of the Committee, must be cancelled all the arrangements/rules/laws aiming at dissolving/obstructing/impeding the political activities of the opposition and of existing parties. Freedom of expression and of the press, as well as the right to demonstrate peacefully, must be internationally guaranteed, included and not limited to the full activation of constitutional and legal guarantees of democracy and freedom.

3. Together with the constitutional work, the Committee must draft the party law and the electoral law, basically to prevent any void of political activity between the Referendum on the new Constitution and its enforcement.

4. With regard to the Constitutional Referendum, it is necessary to give all Syrians, individually, collectively and through political parties the chance to campaign in every governorate of the Country, with no exception according to the new laws. Their freedom and safety must be ensured.

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5. For this purpose a program of cantonment must be urgently arranged for all the armed forces, militias and armed groups in the country in view to disarm, dissolve or take out the foreign fighters and foreign militias, all the extremist militias and all those who are against the territorial unity of Syria. The cantonment process has to be guaranteed by international forces. The national security has to be guaranteed by a new civil police.

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6. The Constitutional Referendum must be organized and achieved, under international supervision, by an Independent Electoral Commission, where political balance and competence will be guaranteed. This Commission will ask for support by the international community and may be selected by the Constitutional Committee.

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7. A new transitional government will lead the transitional period, beginning its mandate at the end of the work of the Committee. This government will be formed by consensus among the parties.

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8. The transitional government shall organize new general and presidential elections through the Election Commission established by the Committee, with the overall supervision of the UN. Once the new Parliament has convened, it shall implement the provisions of the new Constitution.

9. Complying with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, particularly Articles 12, 13, 14 of UN Security Council 2254, once the Committee commences its works, all the provisions have to be taken for the full implementation of International Human Rights Law and International Humanitarian Law relevant to Syrian case, including:

- The releasing of detainees, political and conscience prisoners starting by women and children;


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- The issuing an effective and comprehensive General Amnesty for all issues related to the events in Syria that started in February 2011;
 - ~~Handwritten initials~~ • All necessary measures for the voluntary and safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their home areas and the rehabilitation of affected areas, in accordance with international law;
 - Take all necessary measures to encounter terrorism;
 - The abolition of all laws, legislations and procedures aimed at prosecuting and punishing the participants of the events in Syria starting in February 2011, including property confiscation and travel ban;
 - Temporary suspension of military service draft and the summoning of reserved troops;
 - The abolition of all citizenships that were granted since February 2011 and the abolition of any legal or administrative measures taken to that effect, (without affecting in any way the restitution of the citizenships of the Syrian Kurds);
 - To ensure the return of civil servants and all the employees of the State who were dismissed and forced to leave their positions.

We ask to the Community of Sant'Egidio to continue our talks and to continue their efforts to promote this Initiative among the international community, notably the UN, the Holy See, Russia, Turkey, the USA, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Jordan and other concerned countries.

We will broaden by consensus the participation to this Initiative, in order to strengthen its accountability. We thank the Community of Sant'Egidio for its efforts and we ask it to remain engaged.

Rome, 2018 October the 29th

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