

# SIDE EVENT ON THE MARGINS OF THE BRUSSELS V CONFERENCE

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**Remarks from Syrian  
participants**

– *Brussels*

CSSR Brussels

March 23-30, 2021

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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On the margins of the Brussels V Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, which took place on 29 and 30 March 2021, the UN Office of the Special Envoy for Syria (OSE-Syria) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) co-hosted a virtual side event for Syrian civil society actors between 23 and 30 March 2021. The side event aimed at providing a high-level advocacy opportunity for civil society actors to raise issues of concern and priority regarding the Syrian conflict.

Following closed-door discussions among participants in the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) from various geographical areas of the country, the participants presented a number of key messages to the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen and his Deputy Khawla Matar and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borrell. The Syrian participants then video recorded their remarks on behalf of the group which were presented during the political segment of the conference.

# REMARKS FROM THE SYRIAN PARTICIPANTS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT ROOM

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We regret that we have entered the tenth year of the Syrian crisis while Syria is still not at peace, its territory torn-apart and occupied, and economy deteriorating. The reality of the situation in Syria is further complicating, youth are losing prospects, children deprived of education, and families of means of decent livelihood. The numbers of the injured and of persons with disabilities are on the rise, Syrians being displaced from their homes and cities, and mothers spending every night not knowing the fate of their sons or daughters who are either detained, abducted or missing.

In light of the current political impasse and our persisting demands since the Brussels I conference, we would like to reiterate our support to a political solution under UNSCR 2254, to an end to all military operations, and the departure of all foreign forces from Syria, while maintaining the unity and territorial integrity of Syria, and the immediate move towards peace, recovery, and reconstruction.

## *The Humanitarian Dimension*

Across the Syrian territory and in neighboring countries, the humanitarian situation remains critical, especially under COVID-19, deteriorating livelihood situation, the inability to secure daily needs, and the eroding capacity for resilience.

Despite the call by some refugee-hosting countries for increased support, the conditions of Syrians are in constant deterioration, added to increasing pressures, restrictions on freedom of movement, and heightening of hate speech and discriminatory narratives. Hence, we reiterate the call to keep humanitarian work away from the political track, guarantee transparency in aid distribution and reach to recipients, through societal monitoring tools by the beneficiaries, and public, transparent monitoring mechanisms by the donors.

We also reiterate the need to increase support to developmental and livelihood programs and programs to support persons with disabilities to improve the humanitarian situation in balanced manner and without discrimination. We call for increased support and direct funding to local partners and Syrian-led organizations to guarantee the best access to the needy, and call for eliminating any impacts of political sanctions on the humanitarian, livelihood and developmental realities of Syrians, and for ensuring the application of all humanitarian exceptions to guarantee the highest possible access to the needy, including through setting up a permanent liaison mechanism with bodies regulating banking institutions in Europe and the US, with the objective to explain sanctions and counter overcompliance, and whitelisting partner organizations of international donors, with the goal of setting up a Syria-specific payment system.

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## *Social Cohesion*

Despite the senseless consequences of the war on Syrian social fabric, civil society is intent on cooperating and communicating continuously to counter hate-speech, marginalization, labeling and policies of demographic change, in order to provide for a safe environment for all Syrians that guarantees safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and IDPs, and to safeguard the cultural, social and educational rights of all societal components, in the context of equal citizenship and preserving the unity of Syrian territory, arriving at building genuine and sustainable peace.

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## **CSSR, 2021**

The Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) was established in January 2016 by the Office of the Special Envoy for Syria as a mechanism to consult with a broad and diverse range of civil society actors. Through the CSSR, civil society actors can meet, interact and provide their insights and ideas to the Office of the Special Envoy, relevant United Nations actors, as well as international stakeholders.

This mechanism aims at rendering the UN mediation process more inclusive.

The overall supervision and guidance of the CSSR rests with the OSE-Syria. NOREF Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution and Swiss Peace foundation have been mandated by the OSE to provide methodological expertise, operational and technical support to the process.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the UN standpoint.

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