

Syria Alert

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Making the Annan plan succeed

Although it came much later than needed, UN Security Council resolution 2042 means an important break-through. An important basis has been laid for concerted international diplomatic effort. What is needed for success now is to continue working on creating the conditions for this process, in which the mission of Kofi Annan plays the leading role.

IKV Pax Christi recommends that the international community, and especially the EU, takes the following measures to support Annan's mission:

- 1. The UN monitoring mission has to be enabled to do its job. It should have between 1800 and 3000 observers, work independently and transparently, report publicly, have a "hot line" to be in contact with Syrian activists.*
- 2. Continue diplomatic dialogue aimed at a detente with Iran, which is another condition for further progress on Syria.*
- 3. Support the momentum of the Syrian nonviolent uprising with bold diplomatic activism and practical support; mediate and facilitate between the different parties on a concrete transitional "road map" that is supported by main opposition forces in and outside Syria*
- 4. Work on concrete plans for a UN role in the protection of Syrian civilians as part of a time table for the Annan plan and subsequent steps.*

1. The Annan plan as an instrument, not an aim

The Annan 6-point plan¹ should in the first place be seen as an instrument for building up an international consensus. It is not a political plan, it is a plan to create the conditions for working on a

¹ The six-point plan asks the Syrian authorities to: (1) commit to working with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people; (2) commit to stopping the fighting and achieving urgently an effective United Nations supervised cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties to protect civilians and stabilise the country; (3) ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting; (4) intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons; (5) ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and a

political solution. The plan gave the Syrian regime a chance to prove its good intentions. It is clear that the international community is moving too slowly according to the Syrian opposition, but looking at where the different members of the Security Council were standing, this was the logical first step. What needs to be done now is continue on this path in order to work on a broad international consensus.

The next step is to ensure that the UN monitoring mission as agreed upon in UNSC resolution 2042 can do its job and ensure implementation of the 6-point plan. It therefore needs to be able to operate independently. That requires the tools, resources and technical equipment to move and communicate freely. The monitoring mission also has to work transparently, with qualified members and report publicly on its findings. According to the Local Coordination Committees the deployment of between 1800 and 3000 observers would be needed.² Finally a hotline between field activists in Syria and monitors' administrative office would have to be established to facilitate monitoring and verification of implementation of the components of the plan.

Another aspect of the Annan plan is that it needs a timetable. When should each of the 6 points be implemented? What next if the deadline is or is not met? Concrete plans have to be developed from a human security perspective, how to protect Syrian civilians? Given the escalation of attacks on the civilian population over the past weeks, politicians have to move beyond emotional cries for "humanitarian corridors" or "safe zones" and come with concrete proposals that are feasible. Part of the international coalition building should also be to look at what is at stake for the different international actors who still support the regime. For example, Russia has its only naval basis in the Mediterranean in the Syrian city of Tartous.

In that light, the talks that have been held by Western leaders with Iran are significant. Given its role as a key supporter of the Syrian regime, a "détente" with Iran is a condition for any political agreement in Syria. Diplomacy is needed and Iran's security concerns have to be taken into consideration.

2. Building on the momentum of peaceful protest

Meanwhile, in Syria, an escalation of violence against the civilian population has taken place, with massacres being committed in Homs, Hama, Idlib and Aleppo provinces. A consistent campaign has

non-discriminatory visa policy for them; (6) respect freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed.

² <http://www.twitlonger.com/show/gvtsqs>

taken place against Sunni-dominated places. In relation to that we see *de facto* demographic changes taking place. In the city of Homs for example, the Alawi and Christian population has disappeared. Many Alawis have withdrawn in the coastal area. This raises fears of *de facto* segregation processes that can have a large impact on the political developments. Yet, contrary to disinformation spread by certain media, the segregation has not been the result of targeted violence by armed opposition groups against the Christian population of Homs.³

At the same time, however, nonviolent activism has again gained momentum. A wave of protests under the slogan “Stop the Killing” took place in Damascus after a young woman carrying this slogan in front of the parliament was arrested. A graffiti campaign around Syria united Kurdish, Assyrian, Druze and Sunni communities and the mixed cities. Preparations also took place for the “Zero Hour”, a concerted effort of massive protest. On Friday 13 April in “The Revolution of All Syrians”, Syria witnessed the highest number of protests since the uprising started, with 715 demonstrations all over the country. According to the Local Coordination Committees, if the Annan plan works, the number of protests could grow to 1000 in a day.⁴ A cease fire could enable a nonviolent momentum that could bring a political break through.

The Syrian opposition has in this scenario work to do too. Different political groups and think tanks are working on plans for the post-Assad phase, but there still is no plan for the transition process itself. That should be on top of the agendas of Syrian and international politicians. Meetings and facilitation of the different political groups and civil society should lead to a concrete plan or “road map” for the transition period.

3. The risk of a proxy war

Impatient because of the lack of progress through international diplomatic efforts and unable to start a military campaign, different countries have started to provide support to the Syrian (armed) opposition. While some countries such as the Netherlands have declared the provision of “non-lethal” technical support and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries declared the payment of the salaries of the Free Syrian Army (FSA), there is a grey area between military and non-military support. Both types of support constitute a form of foreign intervention. Such support to one of the forces on the ground can, if not accompanied with a clear strategy to manage conflict and protect civilians, be a next step towards a proxy war. On the ground, we see that the Assad regime is getting technical support from Iran and Russia, while the FSA is getting support from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar. This may change the situation from a predominantly peaceful popular uprising to an internal armed conflict in which outside forces have a high stake. Then Syria will become the battlefield of the struggle for control over the Middle East. Such a proxy war similar to that in Lebanon and Iraq has to be prevented.

³ <http://www.meforum.org/3208/syria-christian-persecution>

⁴ <http://www.twitlonger.com/show/gvtsqs>

4. Recommendations

The international consensus as reflected in UNSC resolution 2042 and the ongoing dialogue with Iran form basic conditions for a successful diplomatic and political process to end the crisis in Syria. In order to make the Annan plan succeed, the international community needs to take the following measures:

- The European Union should support Kofi Annans efforts to build an international consensus on how to deal with Syria. This means the concerns of Russia should be taken into consideration and dialogue with Iran has to lead to a détente. A concrete timetable has to be prepared for implementation of the different steps and agreed upon measures in case of compliance or non-compliance.
- A crucial role for the Annan plan to succeed will be played by the monitoring mission as agreed upon by the UN Security Council. In order to be successful this mission should have between 1800 and 3000 observers, work independently and transparently, report publicly, have a “hot line” to be in contact with Syrian activists and should be provided the tools, resources, and means of communication and a clear mandate to allow the monitors to work and move independently.
- The still-growing momentum of the peaceful uprising has to be supported. The importance of the locally-based peaceful civilian protest groups in Syria has to be recognized and they should be supported politically, diplomatically as well as logistically and financially. A large number of UN observers, as described above, will enable the number of demonstrations to grow to 1000 a day and will create the necessary safety for the peaceful protest movement to gain momentum.
- Although a lot of work is invested in developing plans for the post-Assad period, there still is no concrete plan for how this transition should take place. Instead of focusing on uniting the opposition in a unified institution, the international community should focus on mediation and facilitation between the different opposition forces to prepare a concrete agreed-upon “road map” for transition. This mediation should also bring the opposition “inside” and “outside” closer.
- The EU should assist in strengthening the legitimacy of the SNC amongst the Syrian people.⁵ Efforts should be made to work with the SNC on securing an inclusive democratic Syria based

⁵ Five criteria for legitimacy are : (1) the support of the people as expressed in continuing non-violent demonstrations; (2) the maximum exercise of democratic deliberation despite the practical difficulties; (3) the continuing quest for descriptive and substantive representativeness of all parties in the absence of electoral representativeness; (4) a growing international recognition, in law and in fact, that they stand on a far superior ground than the regime as the right interlocutors—thereby also a recognition that the massive popular disaffection is a *Revolution*, and not a “civil war”; and, (5) on a moral plane, its continued adherence to the path of either no violence or, in the most dire circumstances, the least possible use of force.

on the rule of law. Such explicit plans for inclusiveness are a necessity for winning the trust of the different minorities in Syria.

- Contacts with the armed actors (FSA) should aim at bringing them under civilian control and respect human rights standards and international humanitarian law. By integrating them into the political strategy, a basis is laid for their possible future role in peace keeping and law enforcement. These contacts should aim at containing violence rather than militarizing the situation.
- Concrete plans for a UN role in the protection of Syrian civilians should be prepared in case the Syrian regime insists on continuing its military attack against the people. Such plans should be part of a timetable to be worked out by the UN and could include a UN arms embargo.

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