

SYRIAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND POST-EARTHQUAKE

HUMANITARIAN AND POLITICAL REALITY IN NW SYRIA

Closing Statement

Dr. Mazen Kseibi

Thanks for the organizers and participants, it was a very useful conference as usual.

Having worked closely with a big number of Syrian civil society organizations in Syria and abroad, and based on our direct outreach to the displaced Syrians in different countries and areas, we would like to re-iterate the following demands and ideas:

- Demand a stop to any normalisation with the regime at humanitarian or political level under any false pretext. The most dangerous catastrophe that could inflict additional damage to the Syrians is the normalization and revival of the Syrian regime which has turned Syria into a narco-state and continues to commit countless crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Syrian people.
- Demand full transparency from the UN OSE and other actors involved in "Steps for Steps", to inform the Syrian people of what concessions are being offered to the Syrian regime in exchange for what. We demand that the Syrian people, including and especially the displaced Syrians, have a direct access and meaningful participation in all talks and discussions around this process and reject any of its outcomes where such meaningful participation is not ensured.
- Reject any plans for the forced return of shelter-less displaced Syrians to regime-controlled areas or any other destinations under any false pretexts or unilateral initiatives by the UN such as "Area Based Returns" or "Pilot Projects" or even "step for step". Instead, the focus should be on securing swift support and assistance to them in their current locations. We call on the donors to develop effective aid mechanism for Turkiye which will alleviate the pressures on the Syrian refugees in the affected areas and protect refugees from the added vulnerability and forced based on previous international precedents such as Haiti and the tsunami disaster
- Reassure that the safe environment as defined by Syrians is the only pragmatic and realistic solution to the situation in Syria, a solution that will allow for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced Syrians and will stop any further waves of refugees and will usher a new era in Syria's history. The safe environment should be the cornerstone of any future political solution and should not be replaced by ad-hoc improvised ill-conceived political adventurisms such as the "steps for steps" or any other approaches which seek to appease the Syrian regime and its Russian allies.
- Reiterate that the targeted sanctions imposed on the Assad regime for the horrific crimes it committed against Syrians and not the Syrian people, whether The Caesar Act or the EU sanctions, are one of the main bulwarks against political and economic normalization with the regime, but at the same time they do not impact the delivery of the humanitarian aid or the earthquake assistance. These sanctions should be coupled with mechanisms to deliver aid directly to Syrians and impose more scrutiny, accountability and control on the UN agencies operations and performance.
- Demand for an independent international inquiry into the unacceptable failure of the UN and its agencies in delivering any aid to earthquake victims in NW Syria in the first 150 hours after the catastrophe.
- Request the main donors along with the UN to put an emergency response plan for the next 12 months to address the damage caused by earthquake in NW Syria, which houses millions of displaced Syrians. The existential humanitarian and livelihood needs of the Syrians cannot wait till June for the regular Syria Conference, they have to be addressed now.



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- Call on the donors to improve assessment mechanisms for the immediate humanitarian needs, but also for the longer term, sustainable aid which will address various impacts of the earthquake in NW Syria on other different sectors such as services infrastructure, education, healthcare and housing. The donors should have immediate and direct engagement with the Syrian organizations on the ground to develop an effective assessment procedure and the consequent short and long-term aid delivery.
- Demand humanitarian air bridge from NW Syria to European countries in order to transport injured civilians that require urgent and complex surgical interventions as well as treatments not available in NW Syria. This humanitarian air bridge is independent from any UNSC resolution and relies on donors' will and decision.
- Call on the key states to end the Russian political blackmail in the UN Security Council regarding "cross-border aid" in NW Syria and ensure that the UN starts sustainably delivering humanitarian aid through all available border crossings using the existing basis in international law for such action, this can be achieved through alternative aid delivery mechanisms to be put in place by the US, UK, EU and Turkiye in order to completely depoliticize aid and make it independent of the regime's network of corruption and political exploitation.
- Provide support for Syrian for capacity building in order to build a new administrative body in NW Syria capable of establishing good governance and manage the current crisis and transition towards the recovery phase.



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