

# **United Nations Security Council Simulation Submission Representing the United Kingdom**

By Anthony Millroy for INT100: International Politics: An Australian Perspective.

## **Proposal:**

Her Majesty's Government proposes that the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolve to support the Syrian Opposition's peace plan immediately: to impose a countrywide ceasefire for six months, with Assad to remain as President during the interim period until democratic elections are held.

The Syrian conflict is a proxy war fought by global and local powers (Bassam & Osborn 2015). The Syrian Government, Ba'athist fighters, the federation of North Syria, ISIS, Jablat Fatah al Sham, and Syrian opposition are in a fluid war of changing parameters (Barnard & Shoumali 2015). Military interventions from the United States of America (USA) (supported by Australia and France), Russia, and Turkey, along with Iranian and Saudi Arabian money and weapons, are all involved.

The conflict was caused by the Assad Government brutally suppressing civil unrest, which grew out of the Arab spring (Malla 2011). Opposition groups formed an alliance called the Syrian Free Army. Fighting, atrocities, and the escalation of conflict brought in other players. As of February 2016, the Syrian Government held almost 40 percent of the country, ISIS held 20-40 per cent (which has since been much reduced by Turkish incursions), and the Syrian Democratic forces held between 15-20 percent (Zraick & Barnard 2016).

The UN and other international agencies have accused almost all participants of atrocities and crimes against humanity (Security Council Report 2016). Both Russia and China have vetoed two attempts at sanctions, and a western and Arab League backed resolutions demanding that Assad step down and a ceasefire commence (Security Council Report 2016). Numerous Security Council resolutions have been passed (Security Council Report 2016). Peace talks between the parties have been held in Geneva off and on since 2011, but they have broken down many times. On the 4th September 2016, talks between the USA's Secretary of State, Kerry, and Russia's Foreign Minister, Lavrov, broke down again.

The United Kingdom has no money for big initiatives and little appetite for military intervention (Landale 2016). David Cameron, together with France's President, Sarkozy, and Germany's Chancellor, Merkel, repeatedly called for Assad to step down, while in 2013, the British House of Commons refused to support the Government's plan to participate in military strikes (Gov.uk 2016). In February 2016, the UK Government pledged 1.2 billion pounds of aid to support education and humanitarian protection (Gov.uk 2016). Domestically, the British Government is most concerned about terrorists being trained in Syria and returning to Britain, and have cracked down on Britons travelling to and from Syria (Gov.uk 2016). Peace talks being held in London today have produced the most compelling proposal yet. Put forward by the Syrian opposition and backed by both Britain

and Saudi Arabia, the plan is to impose a country-wide ceasefire for six months and for Assad to remain as President until elections can be held (Barker 2016).

Other players in this conflict have their own agendas. Russia has been a staunch ally for decades, blocking many resolutions, supplying weapons, and supporting the Assad regime with airstrikes against its enemies. The Russian airbase at Latakia is in Assad's homeland, and the naval base at Tartous is its only Mediterranean port. Vladimir Putin is adamant that only a political solution will work (BBC News 2015). The USA has accused Assad of atrocities and supports the opposition alliance, providing assistance to moderate rebels, and since September 2014 has carried out many airstrikes against ISIS. The USA agrees that a negotiated settlement and formation of a transitional administration prior to democratic elections is the only answer (BBC News 2015). Saudi Arabia supports various rebel groups, takes part in USA airstrikes, and agrees that Assad should leave and a transitional administration be instituted (BBC News 2015). Meanwhile, Iran props up the Assad regime with billions of dollars each year and is Assad's main ally. Iran has proposed a peaceful transition to multi-party elections (BBC News 2015). Turkey is critical to the Assad regime and is a key supporter of the opposition. It allows the USA to use its airbases, but is critical of coalition support for Kurdish separatists (BBC News 2015). Greater than two million refugees are in Turkey, recently making successful attacks against ISIS within Syria to block the formation of a rebel corridor (BBC News 2015).

The UN Security Council has passed resolutions, most recently being resolution 2268, passed in February 2016, to endorse the ending of hostilities, and calling for the resumption of the Geneva talks. In December 2015, resolution 2258 focused on aid delivery and attempted to stop the flow of foreign terrorists out of the region (Security Council Report 2016).

Clearly, given the intransigence of the Assad regime and its willingness to spill its countries' blood at an enormous humanitarian cost, a negotiated settlement will be a torturous process. However, this conflict will not be won on the battlefield, and peace talks and compromise are the only solution. Britain would recommend the resumption of peace talks, compromise, and negotiation towards a political settlement.

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