



**Joint  
Statement**

**Letter to the International Syria Support  
Group on Cessation of Hostilities agreement**

Members of the International Syria Support Group

22 September 2016

Your Excellencies,

Today US Secretary of State John Kerry set out in clear terms to the UN Security Council that the immediate international response to the Syria crisis – and the critical step to revive the failing cessation – is to prohibit military aircraft from flying over Syria to protect the civilian population. We are writing to you, as members of Syrian and international civil society and humanitarian aid groups, to urge you to turn Kerry's words into action and ensure that any Cessations of Hostilities lays the basis for a serious political process and a much needed end to the Syrian crisis. Because sadly in its current form, the cessation has failed both to save lives and to generate the political pressure needed to improve the humanitarian situation.

We know from experience that without concrete steps to enforce this cessation and protect civilians, it will only end in more bloodshed. We are already seeing evidence to this effect. In the first 72 hours of the cessation over 60 violations took place, according to the Syrian Network for Human Rights. More than 120 civilians have been killed according to the Violations Documentation Center. Madaya, Douma, Homs, Daraa, Latakia, Idlib governorate: all have been attacked in assaults perpetuated by regime forces and their allies. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are under threat of starvation as the regime denies aid access to eastern Aleppo, including the deliberate targeting of UN aid convoys en route to the city, killing 12 aid workers. These attacks will intensify so long as those responsible are permitted to act with impunity and face no consequences for their atrocities.

We cannot cope with yet another failed ceasefire and neither can the international community. Each civilian death that takes place with impunity undermines the credibility of the ISSG and risks playing into the hands of foreign extremists. We, the undersigned organisations, want the violence in Syria to end. We want unfettered humanitarian access to all areas in need. We want an end to the sieges. But to achieve this, as urged by Kerry at the UN Security Council, the ISSG members must be ready to take the necessary measures to enforce the Cessations of Hostilities and to uphold their responsibility to protect civilians inside Syria, including to ground regime and Russian aircraft from flying over Syria. We





therefore call on the members of the ISSG to:

1. Provide greater transparency as to the terms of the cessation agreement and parties' obligations thereunder. All uses of explosive weapons in populated areas or any use of indiscriminate and banned weapons such as landmines, barrel bombs, chlorine gas, sea mines, phosphorous and cluster munitions must be regarded as violations and met with consequences. Similarly, attacks on civilians by foreign militias must be regarded as a violation of the cessation.

1. Establish independent monitoring mechanisms to determine whether the cessation is being upheld, where violations are occurring, and which parties are responsible.

1. Enforce the cessation and apply consequences for violations. We know from experience that a failure to impose consequences for violations will ensure that killing of civilians resumes. You must guarantee that violations will be met with concrete, pre-determined and publicly-articulated steps to protect civilians. We will not support participation in further Geneva talks by Syrian civil society or opposition groups unless enforcement mechanisms are guaranteed.

1. Ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance is impartial and based on needs. It should not be negotiated exclusively with the Syrian regime and should not come at the expense of freedom of movement. Aid must be delivered to all 40 besieged areas designated as besieged by Siege Watch, as well as all hard-to-reach areas. And all effective routes must be pursued including by land and by air. In this regard, ISSG Members must ensure that access to Aleppo will go not only through Castello Road, but also through Ramouseh Road.

1. Break the sieges in Aleppo and across Syria rather than merely engaging in convoy counting. Free movement of people and goods has to be made possible. The distribution of aid must be monitored independently.

1. Any decrease in violence must be accompanied by strong measures to ensure that a political process can materialise. ISSG members must support accountability measures to hold perpetrators of war crimes to account. And pressure should be placed on all parties to secure the release of political prisoners and enforced disappeared persons, as well as full, unconditional and immediate access for independent international monitors such as ICRC to all Syrian detention facilities. Your Excellencies, Syrians are far past the point of last resort. We look to the international community to bring the pressure to bear on the parties—in particular the





Syrian regime, whose indiscriminate violence is the root cause of the Syrian crisis, the exodus from Syria, and the outgrowth of extremism. Syrians have not stopped believing that our country can be peaceful, free, just and inclusive for all Syrians. But to achieve that country we need your help, and we need to take the steps needed to make sure this cessation holds.

Sincerely,

1. Syrian Network For Human Rights
2. Kesh Malek
3. Baytna Syria
4. Independent Doctors Association
5. Etana Syria
6. Vision for Better Syria
7. PAX for Peace
8. Syria Civil Defense - The White Helmets
9. Local Council of Daraya City
10. The Free Women Association in Dara'a (التجمع النسائي الحر)
11. Women of Ghouta Center
12. Monitoring for Documenting and Human Rights Foundation
13. Sham D. Pro
14. Union of Syrian Civil Society Organizations
15. Violations Documentation Center
16. Alaa Basatneh
17. Foundation to Restore Equality & Education in Syria (FREE-Syria)
18. RMTeam
19. Shaml CSOs Coalition
20. Emissa (- إميسّا)
21. Local Development and Small Projects Support office (LDSPS) –  
(مكتب التنمية و المشاريع الصغيرة)
22. Olive Branch (غصن زيتون)
23. ZAAD
24. 11.11.11
25. U.O.S.S.M
26. Doctors Under Fire (Saleh Ahsan, Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, David Nott and Toby Cadman)

