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SYRIAN EXPERT HOUSE MEETS WITH EU OFFICIALS

Delegation Holds High-Level Meetings with EU on Syria Transition Roadmap

Washington, DC – On March 24-26, 2014, [Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies](#) (SCPSS) Executive Director Dr. Radwan Ziadeh and a delegation from the Syrian Expert House traveled to Brussels, Belgium to hold high-level meetings with European Union diplomats and officials on [Syria Transition Roadmap](#), a document recently published by SCPSS and the [Syrian Expert House](#) detailing the Syrian opposition's vision of the democratic transition in Syria.

The Syrian Expert House delegation included Badr Jamous, Secretary General of the Syrian National Coalition and a member of the Syrian Expert House, Mouaffaq Nyrabia, representative of the Syrian National Coalition to the European Union in Brussels, Ekhlal Badawi, a former member of the Syrian parliament and member of the Syrian Expert House, and Rania Kisar, a Syrian activist and founder of the Women's Revolution Committee.

Over three days in Brussels, the Syrian Expert House delegation met with: **Dr. Djamila Chikhi**, adviser for external relations to Marc Shulz, president of the European Parliament; **Walter Stevens**, Chair of the Political and Security Committee, **Andrey Kovatchev**, a Member of the European Parliament and Vice-chairman of the Committee on Foreign Policy and European Affairs; **Bernardino León**, EU Special Representative for the Southern Mediterranean Region; and **Hugues Mingarelli**, Managing Director for North Africa and Middle East at the European External Action Services.

In each of the meetings Dr. Radwan Ziadeh gave an overview of [Syria Transition Roadmap](#) and plans for implementing its recommendations. Additionally, Dr. Ziadeh briefed the EU officials on the work of [the Syrian Commission for Transitional Justice](#) and efforts to establish a [Syrian Special Court](#).

Secretary General Badr Jamous discussed the diminishing prospects for reaching a political end to the Syria conflict, particularly in light of the Syrian government's intent to hold presidential elections in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Secretary General Jamous also noted the Syrian Interim Government's great need for technical and financial assistance. Although it has recently restored electricity and telecommunications infrastructure in Azaz in northern Syria, Mr. Jamous stressed that the interim government will need European expertise and assistance if such efforts are to continue to be met with success.

Former MP Ekhlal Badawi described the role of women in the development of [Syria Transition Roadmap](#) and the role of women in the Syrian revolution, underlining the point that women should not be treated solely as victims – they will in fact be critical leaders of future Syria.

Finally, Rania Kisar gave an update on events from the ground, describing the great necessity for planning on the transition, particularly with regard to addressing the devastating humanitarian catastrophe and providing for the needs of displaced Syrian civilians. Ms. Kisar also detailed the horrors of life in Syria under the occupation of the extremist group the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

The Syrian Expert House delegation repeatedly made clear that the top priority for the international community should be to address the security situation on the ground in the areas of Syria no longer under the control of the Syrian government and stop the killing of Syrian civilians caused by the extensive and indiscriminate bombardment conducted by the Syrian air force. With the Free Syrian Army currently engaged in conflict on multiple fronts -- against the Syrian army, foreign militias, and extremist terrorist groups -- only strong leadership from the international community will bring a hasty end to Syria's humanitarian tragedy.

The Syrian Expert House delegation also participated in a number of private and public events in Brussels. On March 24, the [European Endowment for Democracy](#), which supported the Syrian Expert House delegation's trip to Europe, hosted the delegation for an event on the [Syrian Transition to Democracy](#) at the EED office. After discussing *Syria Transition Roadmap*, the delegation also emphasized the point that supporting the Syrian Interim Government in its efforts to rebuild the liberated areas of Syria would be one of the most effective ways of laying the foundations of democracy in Syria.

On March 25, the [European Foundation for Democracy](#) hosted the Syrian Expert House delegation for a luncheon briefing on *Syria Transition Roadmap*. A variety of EU and non-EU diplomats and NATO officials, among others, attended the luncheon and took part in a discussion on European leadership on Syria. Participants noted that EU policies are derived from the member states themselves and emphasized that a change of course on Syria will have start at a domestic level from within EU member states. On the same day, [MEP Andrey Kovatchev](#) and the National Democratic Institute organized a seminar in the European Parliament on *Syria Transition Roadmap* and the future of Syria. The discussion primarily focused on means for building democratic foundations in Syria in the present, prior to the conclusion of the conflict.

[Syria Transition Roadmap](#) is the result of a year-long consensus-building research process conducted by the Syrian Expert House, a group of approximately 300 Syrian human rights activists, academics, judges, lawyers, leaders of the political opposition, defected government officials, defected military officers, members of local revolutionary councils, and commanders of the armed opposition.

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