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## UN Special Envoy to Syria Mr. Staffan de Mistura Briefed on Syria Transition Roadmap

On May 13, 2015, Mr. Amr al-Sarraj, a non-resident senior researcher in the Transitional Justice team at the [Syrian Center for Political and Strategic Studies \(SCPSS\)](#) met with United Nations Special Envoy to Syria [Mr. Staffan de Mistura](#), along with other officials from his team, at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, to give a presentation on [Syria Transition Roadmap](#), a document published by [SCPSS](#) and the [Syrian Expert House \(SEH\)](#) detailing the Syrian opposition's vision of the democratic transition in Syria. Mr. Alsarraj visit included other meetings to discuss the Syrian crises as a representative of the [Syrian Expert House \(SEH\)](#) and the Idrak Center for Studies and Consultation.

Mr. Alsarraj handed out copies of [Syria Transition Roadmap](#) to Mr. Staffan de Mistura, and his team. A plan that 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.

Furthermore, Mr. Alsarraj presented the U.N Special Envoy to Syria with number of remarks and observations proposed by the Syrians toward his strategies, which if implemented would possibly help resolve the Syrian crisis. Such remarks included the four items stated by a group of Syrian military opposition forces in their reply to the invitation to participate in Geneva negotiations. The main four items included the following notations: the lack of seriousness in the negotiations with the absence of a clear agenda, the certainty that the Envoy is biased in favor of the regime, the underestimation of the role of the revolutionary factions, and finally the involvement of Iran to be part of the negotiations.

Mr. Alsarraj frankly questioned the poor condemnation by the U.N Special Envoy to the number of perpetrated massacres committed against civilians. He implied that denouncing these crimes with stronger statements and declarations could possibly pressure the Syrian regime to ease and lessen its brutal violence against civilians. In addition to that, Mr. Alsarraj explained to the Special Envoy the deep disappointment of the Syrian opposition at the international community's inaction, which failed to end the violence and to deter war criminals of the Syrian regime leaders in particular.

Later, Mr. Alsarraj introduced [Syria Transition Roadmap](#) and the participants who drafted the plan. Moreover, he began explaining detailed indication on each chapter of the plan. First he described the political aspects, which is divided into two phases; the first is to establish a political outline for managing the transitional period by representing a transitional government or a transitional provision body, which represents all Syrians and poses compatibility between their representatives, while ensuring the absence of Assad and his symbols. Furthermore, the transition should operate with a temporary transitional period within an agreed agenda among all Syrians. The second phase is regarding an agenda of the Interim Governing body that produces a political system worthy of all Syrians, their sacrifices, and their revolution through a democratic political process.

The second aspect discussed was the Constitution, which is divided into two portions; Constitutional course in the interim period after the suspension of the Constitution of 2012, and mechanisms of a permanent constitution in the future. Mr. Alsarraj highlighted that the 1950 constitution is the only constitution in Syrian history that was drafted and approved by a Constitutional Assembly, and it is recommended that the 1950 constitution be accepted wholesale initially, with the expectation that amendments to the document would be the first order of business of a future Constitutional Assembly, along with a constitutional declaration that would outline the transition government's mandate, validity, age, and official appointments.. The third aspect was to establish a new electoral system that depends on proportion and open electoral lists. The fourth aspect was to develop a multi-party law. The Fifth was the transitional justice and national reconciliation project proposed by [Syria Transition Roadmap](#). As senior researcher in the transitional justice team, Mr. Alsarraj stressed the need to establish a National Preparatory Committee for Transitional Justice, which would have full authority to oversee the programs in order to uncover the truth and to outline accounting for war crimes. Moreover, he explained individual and collective redress to damages as well as State institutional reform and memorialization.

The sixth aspect conversed was the reform of the legal structure and the Syrian State legislation including the independence of the judiciary through mechanisms and precise standards to protect the judiciary from executive interference in its decisions and in its structure. The seventh aspect was the restructure of the internal security forces apparatus, with a focus on its professionalism, alongside the formation of cleansing committees, in order to rid the security apparatus of guilty, corrupt, and incompetent staff members. The eighth aspect was building a new national army in Syria, which requires restructuring and cleansing as well as integrating the many factions and disarmament after ensuring comprehensive reforms in the military establishment. The last and the ninth item discussed was the reconstruction and building the Foundation of a Prosperous Syria.

The U.N Special Envoy to Syria Mr. Staffan de Mistura inquired Mr. Alsarraj about the advantages and the drawbacks of establishing a no-fly zone in Syria. Mr. Alsarraj responded how it was a humanitarian necessity that should be given a significant attention and a great priority by the Special Envoy. Additionally, Mr. Alsarraj informed the Special Envoy about the horrific massacres committed by the Syrian air force attacks against the civilians in Aleppo and the subsequent massive destruction caused to

that historical city, which civilization's goes back to more than 10,000 years. Also Mr. Alsarraj reported other cities that were destroyed such as: Homs, Daraa, Damascus Suburbs, Deir ez-Zor, and Ar-Raqqah.

When discussing the Islamic State (ISIS), Mr. Alsarraj signified the danger and the risk caused by ISIS against all Syrians. Furthermore, Mr. Alsarraj elaborated that defeating ISIS is a mission that should be carried out exclusively by the Syrian rebels, the Free Syrian Army, and the opposition forces. However, he clarified that toppling the Assad Regime should be the priority since ISIS's terrorism and extremism is strengthened and empowered by the Assad Regime. Not to mention the internal collaboration between the Assad Regime and ISIS.

In response to a question by the Special Envoy to guarantees in the role of minorities in the democratic transition in [Syria Transition Roadmap](#), Mr. Alsarraj replied that the plan calls for a political system that treats all Syrians equally regardless of their ethnic, racial, or national background. Subsequently Mr. Alsarraj indicated that the Assad regime had been deliberately escalating sectarianism and using minorities to face the rest of the Syrians. As a result Mr. Alsarraj pointed out that many documented massacres were committed on a sectarian basis in Syria.

Mr. Alsarraj answered some technical questions about [Syria Transition Roadmap](#) and its provisions. Especially the weak judicial and legal system, the poor implementation of the laws, and the complete absence of control. Mr. Alsarraj also highlighted that the plan embraces strengthening the role of parliament in Syria through the adoption of a parliamentary system. Such parliamentary system establishes election based on fair proportional laws and representatives elected by all Syrians without the predominance of any party, while insuring the involvement of large proportion of women. Finally the two parties discussed a transitional governing body, its agenda, and its time framework that should be implemented to achieve such agenda.

[Syria Transition Roadmap](#), an opposition vision of the democratic political transition in Syria, covers the topics of constitutional reform, political and administrative reform, electoral reform, economic reform, transitional justice, and security sector reform and has been endorsed by the Syrian National Coalition and the Syrian Interim Government.

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