



Washington, D.C.
May 23, 2013

Your Excellencies,

We welcome your efforts to renew the Geneva Process to bring about a resolution to the war in Syria. We are a group of international organizations dedicated to ensuring women's effective and full inclusion in the mediation and negotiations of conflict. We support the Syrian women to strengthen and unify their voice through evolving coalitions including the Syrian Women's Network. As such, we write to you today to urge the inclusion of Syrian women in any and all forthcoming meetings.

With the violence escalating, countless Syrian women have taken on the mantle of providing relief and humanitarian care for their compatriots. Syrian women leaders of all ages and ethnicities have also been consistent voices and actors in promoting peace and reconciliation, even in the midst of the fighting. They have a right to full representation in any ongoing or planned negotiations. More importantly, their involvement and input is essential to any effort aimed at finding a sustainable solution to this complex conflict.

As you know, women - especially those working in civil society and committed to the peaceful resolution of warfare - have been historically widely excluded from peace negotiations around the world. Their exclusion not only undermines the promotion and protection of women's human rights, but also reduces the chances of reaching and ensuring a sustainable peace agreement for all. We understand that it takes political courage and leadership to ensure a more inclusive process. We look to you for that leadership. To bring peace to Syria anytime soon, it is imperative to include independent Syrian civil society, especially women, in all the spaces and tables where dialogue and negotiations are taking place.

Ensuring the inclusion of Syrian women from a range of civil society groups is of course in line with the UN Security Council's Women Peace and Security agenda as articulated in resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889. It is also in line with the UN General Assembly Resolution GA/65/283 (2011) that was co-sponsored by Turkey and Finland and endorsed by the majority of the GA members. Needless to say, this is also in line with the G8's own commitments including the 2013 "Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence".

The commitment to women's full representation in all decision-making pertaining to the prevention and resolution of conflict is also fully articulated in many of your National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, and President Obama's Executive Order 13595 (2011). In other words, the international community has laid out the policy framework to ensure women's full and effective representation in such serious matters. In the case of Syria it is absolutely essential to put the policies into practice.

We, the signatories herewith, are working collectively to provide our Syrian counterparts the support and assistance they need to prepare and participate in the transition discussions. We need your leadership on this matter and look forward to your response. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at the following: sanam.anderlini@icanpeacework.org.

Yours sincerely,

Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Executive Director
International Civil Society Action Network
Washington, D.C.



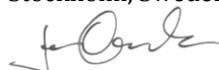
Michelle Bekkering, Director
Women's Democracy Network
Washington, D.C.



Ben Witjes, Director of Programmes
Hivos
The Netherlands



Jens Orback, General Secretary
Olaf Palme International Center
Stockholm, Sweden



Madeleine Rees, Secretary General
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
Geneva, Switzerland



Sarah Taylor, Executive Coordinator
NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
New York, N.Y.



Lena Ag, Secretary General
Kvinna till Kvinna
Stockholm, Sweden



CC:

The Honorable John Baird
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada

Laurent Fabius
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, France

Frans Timmermans
Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands

Espen Barth Eide
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

Sergei V. Lavrov
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation

Carl Bildt
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden

The Rt Hon William Hague MP
First Secretary of State, United Kingdom & Secretary
of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

John F. Kerry
United States Secretary of State

Dr. Ahmet Davutoğlu
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Turkey Baroness

Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the European Union for
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations

Lakhdar Brahimi
United Nations Peace Envoy to Syria