

SYRIA – BEYOND WAR

Highlighting efforts contributing to peacebuilding in Syria



JULY 2015



Selected Stories

The Syrian Conflict: Four Years On

Chatham House, 5 March 2015

Four years since the beginning of the civil war, Chatham House interviews the UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, who considers the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the prospects for a political solution to the conflict. Watch the interview [here](#).

Statement on a Syrian Policy Framework

ICG, 27 April 2015

On its current trajectory, and with no military or diplomatic breakthrough on the horizon, the Syrian war will worsen. Four years into a popular uprising that gradually degenerated into civil strife and regional proxy war, the conflict's Syrian protagonists – the regime and its loyalist militias versus the broad spectrum of armed rebel factions and the external political opposition – are too fractious, fragile and heavily invested in their current courses to break with the status quo. They are also, as should be clear by now, incapable of military victory in a war rapidly fuelling the growth of a third category of protagonists: Salafi-jihadi groups. The sides' respective state backers are better positioned to change track and affect the course of events, but they are prisoners of their own shortcomings, fears and wishful thinking.

"Whatever the parties to the conflict may think, no side is winning".

Read the full analysis [here](#).

Sieges and Ceasefires in Syria's Civil War

Khaled Yacoub Oweis, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), May 2015

Representatives of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People, an international alliance that nominally supports the Syrian opposition, met in Berlin in March 2015 on the fourth anniversary of the Syrian revolution. Participants in the meeting discussed ways to revive the mission of UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, whose efforts for achieving a ceasefire in Aleppo – Syria's former commercial and industrial hub – have not succeeded in achieving the aspired results. Germany has been particularly supportive of Staffan de Mistura. But the main players in Syria and their regional supporters have shown little willingness to curb the violence, as the conflict, together with the situation in Yemen, is at the heart of what is increasingly becoming perceived as a Sunni-Shia schism.

Read the full paper [here](#).

The Balance-Sheet of Conflict: Criminal Revenues and Warlords in Syria

Omar Hallaj, The Netherlands Institute for International Relations (Clingendael), April 2015

The conflict in Syria is forging new forms of territorial control, and a political economy that is not unlike the patronage system that was previously fostered by the ruling Ba'ath party. As a result of the extended war efforts and the need for revenues to fund them, the national economy is now deeply affected by illicit activities such as trade in antiquities, oil and drugs, as well as smuggling, kidnapping, looting and extrajudicial land expropriations.

Read the full paper [here](#).

“Syrians have overthrown Staffan de Mistura” – an Interview with Subhi al-Refai

Carnegie Endowment, 15 May 2015

Carnegie Endowment’s ‘Syria in Crisis’ interviews the head of the RCC’s Executive Office, Subhi al-Refai on his views on the joint statement released by the biggest ever assembly of Syrian rebel factions, which constitutes an open letter of refusal to attend the consultations addressed to the UN special envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura.

Read the full interview [here](#).

Responding to Syrian Refugees in Turkey

Roger Mac Ginty, 15 April 2015

Roger Mac Ginty shares his insight after spending some days in Turkey speaking with those who are responding to Syrian refugees, and to a few refugees as well. He highlights two points of interest regarding the situation; the first is how negotiation (defined broadly) is central to the story of the accommodation of Syrian refugees. The second is to emphasize the social purpose of religion, a point often overlooked in commentary on religion.

Read the full blog post [here](#).



SYRIA – BEYOND WAR is a newsletter commissioned by swisspeace and NOREF to disseminate information regarding peacebuilding activities in relation to Syria to interested parties on a quarterly basis. Articles shared within it do not represent the opinions of neither swisspeace nor NOREF.

swisspeace is a practice-oriented peace research institute, with offices in Bern and Basel, Switzerland. We analyze the causes of violent conflicts and develop strategies for their peaceful transformation. swisspeace is an associated Institute of the University of Basel and member of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences.

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www.peacebuilding.no

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New initiatives

Syrian Voices on the Syrian Conflict

“Syrian voices on the Syrian conflict” is a series of papers commissioned by **NOREF** and **swisspeace** to provide space for Syrians to share opinions, display their different perspectives about the situation, and shed some light on the efforts to end the violence. Bassma Kodmani’s contribution is the first one out:

“A SOLUTION FOR SYRIA”, Bassma Kodmani , May 2015

Syria is central to the security and future of the Middle East, but conditions for a resolution of the Syrian conflict through a political solution do not exist, says Bassma Kodmani, and pleads for a more serious US-Russia commitment in Syria.

Read the full paper [here](#).

Events

- swisspeace held its summer school on the topic of “**Syria- Lessons for Peace and Conflict Studies?**” on 29 June- 5 July 2015.

More details are available [here](#).

- Egypt hosted the Syrian Opposition Conference in June, the second such conference this year.

More details are available [here](#).