

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Political settlement in Syria

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Introduction

Syrian civil war remains one of the most pressing issues of modern United Nations Agenda. Within an ongoing story of numerous casualties, increasing role of militant or terroristic organizations in international relations, instability in the regions beyond the borders of Syria, reports on genocide and human rights violations, usage of chemical weaponry, sexual slavery, increasing drug business, smuggling of natural resources, international intervention, and deep economic crisis it is obvious that the measures should be taken urgently. Furthermore, the Syrian civil war is one of the major factors for the refugee crisis.

Definition of key terms

Political settlement

An agreement or understanding between political elites which moderates the violence

The Syrian Civil War

A multi-sided armed conflict in Syria, which grew out of the unrest of the 2011 Arab Spring and escalated to armed conflict after President Bashar al-Assad's government violently repressed protests calling for his removal

The Al-Nusra Front (also known as Jabhat Fateh al-Sham)

A Salafist jihadist terrorist organization fighting against the forces of the Syrian government in the Syrian Civil War, with the aim of establishing an Islamic state in the country; is often considered to be the most aggressive and violent part of the opposition.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

A Salafi jihadist unrecognized state and militant terrorist group that follows a fundamentalist, Wahhabi doctrine of Sunni Islam.

The Syrian Moderate Opposition

A general name for small armed groups which do not belong to terroristic organizations and fight against Assad's regime.

The Free Syrian Army

The largest militant group consisting of former members of regular army who aim to overthrow President Assad.

Background information

History

On 15 March, 2011 nationwide demonstrations took place in Syria. Protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad. The Syrian army blocked most unstable towns. In the summer, 2011 the rebels started to take military actions against the Syrian regular army. As the situation worsened, Syrian army started to use tanks and artillery. In April, 2012 truce was declared. Three days after the cease-fire in Syria the first group of UN observers has arrived. May 8th elections to the People's Council, which had a multiparty basis, have been held. Despite the truce, clashes continued. In November, 2012 in Doha, Qatar, the establishment of the "National Coalition of Syrian revolutionary and opposition forces" was announced.

After a year and a half of unrest in Syria, conflict between the regime and the opposition has escalated to civil war. Fighting has reached the capital and numerous members of the government have been attacked. Since then, several more armed groups joined the Syrian civil war, including ISIS, al-Nusra Front and Kurdish militant groups. According to the UN, the conflict has taken lives of more than 220,000 people.

From the year 2014, a list of foreign countries, including the USA, the UK, Turkey, France, and Russia conduct airstrikes on the territory of Syria targeting ISIS's bases.

Chemical weapons

The usage of chemical weapons was confirmed by the UN. The deadliest of them took place in Damascus and Aleppo in 2013. Yet it is not clear whether this kind of weapon was used by the Syrian regular army or the opposition in each act. It was proved, however, that Syrian army obtains the deadly sarin gas, which was the main reason for criticism from the Security Council. Still, this issue requires more in-depth investigation.

The UN has actively participated in solution of this issue. By Resolution 2235 it establishes a mechanism to identify individuals, groups or governments responsible for use of chemical weapons. Moreover, by Resolution 2118 it states the need to eliminate chemical weapon in Syria. The resolution 2319 reaffirms UN's commitment to the problem and supports its previous decisions.

International intervention

The international intervention into the Syria civil war began in 2014 after the ISIS had gained a lot of new territories and rapidly increased in power. While most of military operations are aimed to counter the problem of ISIS, several states have different positions on other essential questions. The US-led coalition and Turkey support the opposition, Russia and Iran advocate for the government of Bashar al-Assad.

Major countries and organizations involved

Supporting Syrian government

- Russia
- Iran
- Iraq

Supporting Syrian opposition

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Turkey
- Saudi Arabia
- France
- Qatar

Terrorist organizations that are not associated with Syrian opposition

- ISIS
- Al-Nusra Front

UN involvement and relevant treaties

The problem of political settlement in Syria remains one of the key points of agenda nowadays. Beyond the humanitarian aid, which was coordinated by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN actively participates in International Syrian Support Group (ISSG) and expresses support to this kind of diplomatic approach to the issue.

Since the protests in 2011, the UN has adopted 8 resolutions concerning political settlement in Syria. By Resolution 2042, the UN establishes the observer group to monitor the current situation. By Resolution 2043, it establishes of the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria. The Resolution 2165, together with the Resolution 2139, ensures “that humanitarian assistance including medical and surgical supplies, reaches people in need throughout Syria”.

The Resolution 2254 is considered as one of the most important ones in the question as it directly states the need for political settlement in the region and reaffirms that these are only Syrians who decide the future of their country.

Previous attempts to solve the problem

On 12 April, 2012 a truce was announced, and on the 8th of May the elections for People’s Council were held on a more democratic base. President Assad agreed with some of the points of the opposition, and tried to conduct reforms inside the government by nominating new ministers. However, the opposing parties continued to commit acts of terrorism, to which the government has responded with violence. These actions were criticized by the

Security Council. With further involvement of other nations into the conflict, these measures failed.

On 27 February, 2016, ceasefire was announced. The key role in that event was played by the USA and Russia. However, the government of Syria was condemned for violations of treaties and unwillingness to discuss the question of Assad's resignation.

On 12 September new truce was announced, but it failed in a week because of numerous continued military actions. Afterwards, the Syrian army began a large attack on the city of Aleppo.

Possible solutions

Although the situation remains controversial, there are several steps that can cease the tension in the region. Among the decisions, there are:

- Combining the strength of countries involved into the conflict against ISIS and other terroristic organizations
- Reaching international agreement on the topic of President Assad's resignations taking into account interests of the Syrian people
- Monitoring the situation all over the country
- Reaching an agreement to cease fire
- Impose hard sanctions on the side which would be responsible for violation of the treaties