

Roadmap for a Political Transition in Syria



المنطة المدنية السورية

Syrian Civil Society Platform



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1- Introduction

Throughout history many negotiations have taken place aiming to resolve conflicts in several countries. Conflict resolutions vary according to the nature and motivations of each conflict; likewise, the interventions vary from one conflict to another. The Syrian negotiations are some of the most complicated negotiations in the last two centuries. Additionally, the Syrian situation is the most tragic one since the end of World War II.

There are many reasons that led the Syrian negotiations to become this complicated. In brief, we summarize the reasons as follows:

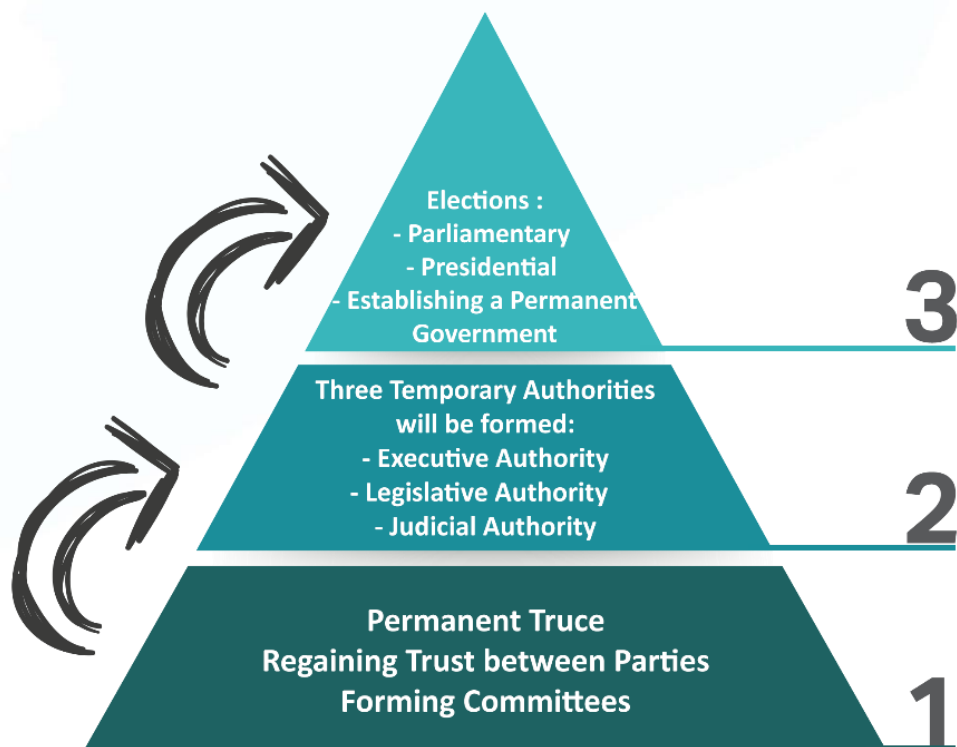
1. Disputes between the U.S. and Russia, most of which are not concerning the Syrian issue.
2. The fact that the Syrian government along with its Iranian ally are determined to have a military resolution.
3. The lack of agreement of the opposition (political and military) on the outlines of the political transition's shape as well as the Syrian state's future shape.
4. The fact that significant opposition parties are not included in the High Negotiations Committee, which includes members from the Coalition.
5. The lack of trust between the local and international negotiating parties.



The aforementioned reasons all together make it very difficult to form a transitional governing body. As a result, from March until October of this year (bearing in mind that this period was one of the bloodiest in the conflict due to the military escalation by the Syrian government and its allies), we were engaged in discussions and dialogues on different levels and tracks in order to find the best mechanism to come up with solutions to facilitate the political transition process.

Through these discussions, we designed a roadmap for the political process. This roadmap depends on an inverse mechanism to build a transitional governing body; starting from below to the top. The roadmap is divided into three major stages. Each stage includes specific conditions to be addressed in order to advance to the next stage. It adopts the Geneva Statements and international resolutions, particularly 2118 and 2254, as a baseline.

2- The Stages of Political Transition





Stage One:

This stage lasts for six months. During this period, joint committees between the parties to the conflict will be formed. The primary objectives of this stage are reaching a permanent truce; regaining trust between parties; creating an appropriate environment and climate for a political transition; and achieving tangible progress on the ground regarding the humanitarian file, (stopping bombardment, breaking sieges, delivering humanitarian aid and releasing detainees - women, elders, children and those who need medical attention in particular).

If the objectives of forming the committees, regaining trust and achieving tangible progress on the ground regarding the humanitarian file are accomplished, we will increase the chances of forming a joint transitional governing body that will lead the country to a new constitutional life upon the agreement between the negotiating parties. Thus, all Syrian's interests and rights are guaranteed and dictatorship is rejected. What happened during the past years makes us certain that if Syria goes back to dictatorship, the situation will be more disastrous than any time in the past. If the formation of committees is agreed upon, we need specific and agreed principles and criteria for those committees to guide their work.

Priorities and Expectations:

- Inclusive ceasefire and security.
- Following-up on the release of detainees and revealing the fate of missing people.
- Breaking the siege of all besieged cities and villages and securing the provision of humanitarian aid.
- Creating conditions for the internally and externally displaced people to return to their homes and helping them rebuild their lives.
- Regaining trust between all parties and launching a transitional process.

Stage two:

This stage lasts for a whole year. During this period, three councils or main bodies will be formed in order to lead the country throughout the transition:

1- Transitional Governing Body: Once the parliamentary elections are finished, this body's role is finished. This body should be formed out of technocratic committees and representatives of all Syrian ethnic and religious communities in order to guarantee representation. All authorities and executive capacities will be transferred to this body.



2- Joint Military Council: consists of five individuals representing the negotiating parties. This council will fully submit to the Transitional Governing Body, and it will establish the core of a new national army.

3-Presidential Council with protocol capacities. It consists of three individuals from the government, the opposition and the third will be agreed upon in order to find a resolution for the dilemma of the position of president regarding Bashar Al-Assad, as a person, as he lost legitimacy to pursue his presidency.

4-The Transitional Governing Body will call for a General National Conference to elect a temporary legislative body consisting of 100 members, which will monitor the executive authority, write a temporary constitution and an election law.

5- The Transitional Governing Body will appoint a temporary Supreme Constitution Court consisting of experts and highly competent persons as well as a temporary High Judiciary Council with the same qualities.

Priorities and Expectations:

- Forming the aforementioned councils and bodies.
- Full accomplishment of the humanitarian file.
- Starting the national dialogue.
- Agreement on the constitution or any other document to govern the political process.
- Once the Transitional Governing Body takes over its duties, all economic sanctions imposed on Syrian state institutions, and not individuals, should be lifted.

Once the Transitional Governing Body takes over all authorities, it will build engagement in the national dialogue process beginning with Track III stakeholders. This will be accomplished by conducting local dialogues in each province, in order to guarantee everyone's participation in the process, which aims to lead the country to a new constitutional life that will end the reign of dictatorship and achieve all of the ambitions of Syrians from all backgrounds. Through these dialogues, representatives of all provinces will be selected to guarantee the participation of diverse Syrians. The national dialogue process should end up with an agreement on the constitution as well as clear mechanisms to form a parliament and run elections. In addition, the Transitional Governing Body should accomplish the release of all detainees, the return of all refugees



who wish to go back to Syria, the improvement of economic conditions, lifting part of the economic sanctions and the return of the army to its barracks.

Stage Three:

This begins after the national dialogue ends. It lasts for six month, starting with running elections to form local councils. Following that, there can be elections to form a parliament, and then presidential elections. Subsequently, the Transitional Governing Body will be dissolved after the formation of a government and transferring all capacities to it. Next, economic sanctions will be completely lifted, reconstruction will start and a transitional justice process will be implemented.

Priorities and Expectations:

- Local, parliamentary and presidential elections.
- Formation of a permanent government as well as permanent judicial institutions (the Supreme Constitutional Court and the High Commission of Justice).
- Lifting the economic sanctions.
- Initiating reconstruction.
- Initiating a transitional justice process.

3- Structure and Committees

Forming technocratic committees will facilitate the processes regarding the humanitarian file whenever there is political will.

The number of committees is not static. However, due to the complexity of the Syrian situation, we believe that six main committees should be formed.

1-Joint Security Committee

This will work on the restoration of safety and security to Syrians. It will also work to end all types of bombardment, end all military operations, withdrawal military from cities and villages, removing military and security checkpoints from the cities and stopping all manifestations of armament. Without a secure environment any political transition process would be fragile, aimless and could collapse at any moment.

2-Breaking the Siege and Humanitarian Aid Delivery Committee



This will work on breaking the siege of all besieged cities and towns, as well as improving the situation of citizens who suffer from the effects of blockade. It will also work on creating all conditions for the besieged people's engagement in the political transition process, not only breaking the siege over them. Everyone has the right to play a role in mapping the landscape of the country's future. The United Nations and international agencies should work on the delivery of all types of humanitarian aid, whether relief or medical aid, to all areas in need unconditionally as well as restoration of services, whether water, electricity, fuel or other necessary services, to the affected areas.

3-Release of Detainees Committee

This will work on preparing lists of detainees and forcibly disappeared people as well as lists of the places and conditions of their detention. It will also work on improving the conditions of those detainees and releasing them.

4-Improving the Conditions of Internally Displaced People and Refugees Committee

This will work on improving the conditions of refugees. It will also work on planning for returning IDPs and refugees, providing housing for them inside Syria. In addition, it should work on eliminating all legal restrictions regarding the movement of IDPs and refugees both inside and outside Syria.

5-Education and Returning Dismissed Employees

This will work on improving the conditions of students, finding solutions for the return of students to schools and universities, as well as creating a new national curriculum that reflects the diversity of Syria. It also should work on the rehabilitation of the educational environment. The committee should find a solution for the dismissed employees in order to bring them back and compensate them.

6-Political Transition Committee

This will work to achieve agreement on a plan to start an inclusive national dialogue, a plan to draft a new constitution, a plan for parliamentary and presidential elections and mechanisms to form the Transitional Governing Body, Military Council and Presidential Council.



4- Standards and Criteria

Standards and criteria are necessary for selecting persons to form committees and structures that will facilitate achieving the objectives we seek. This also limits the process to be related with the process itself and its own objectives. Therefore, we divided them in accordance with these stages:

Stage One: Forming Committees

All persons to be selected should be technically skilled and Syrian experts from both sides.

Stage Two:

The criteria of technically skilled people and representation of all Syrian communities should be merged in order to guarantee the inclusion of representation of all Syrian communities as well as all parties without any discrimination based on race, religion or politics.

In both stages, a set of standards should be taken into consideration:

- 1-Candidates must not be human rights violators.
- 2- They must have integrity, without any suspicions of corruption.
- 3- They must not hold or call for any sectarian thoughts, or discrimination against any Syrian in words or actions.
- 4- There should be no specific and traditional titles that lead to personifying power and political transition.
- 5- Geographical distribution according to provinces should be taken into account as well as the distribution of Syrians from different ethnic and religious backgrounds on the level of each province as well as on the national level in order to achieve the highest range of political and social consensus.
- 5- Women's representation must be at least 30%, and this must be guaranteed in all of the political transition stages.



6- Decision-Making Mechanisms

The fact that there is no constitution or agreed-upon legal rules makes decision-making one of the most difficult tasks. It is even more difficult to reach a consensus to all parties' satisfaction.

While this is bound to be a very complicated negotiation, there nevertheless should be a minimum level of decision-making mechanisms. Therefore, decisions should be divided into two levels:

First Level:

Interim decisions: those that govern the technocratic committees that should be based on consensus, as the tasks of committees are specific and clear. There can be regulations for each committee to facilitate the decision-making process.

Second Level:

Sovereign decisions regarding the Syrian state, such as constitutional recognitions. This should be in the hands of the Syrian people. According to the current situation, the best mechanism is a referendum.

In all committees, the necessity of civil society participation in decision-making should be taken into account. Thus, civil society organizations can conduct community consultations, and hand those consultations along with recommendations to the committees.

7- Role of Civil Society in the Political Transition Process

Civil society is able to play different roles in all of the stages of political transition. Through civil society participation, we can guarantee further inclusion and representation. This also contributes to facilitating consultations, finding solutions for the process, carrying people's voices to decision makers and shedding the light on the issues that decision makers neglect.

Civil society will have different roles in each stage.

Stage One:

Civil society plays a role in preparing the issues that specialized committees will work on. It can play a role in monitoring ceasefires and securing entry for humanitarian aid. It



can also play an effective role in preparing lists of detainees and monitoring the process of releasing them. In order to maintain their independence, civil society organizations should take part in the committees.

Stage Two:

Civil society plays a consultative role by providing recommendations and suggestions to the Transitional Governing Body. This can be a channel to carry people's voices to the Transitional Governing Body, only if it maintains its regulatory role. Civil society also can play a major role in the national dialogue process, so it becomes the main motivator of such dialogues in additions to taking a part in those dialogues.

Stage Three:

Civil society has a key role in monitoring elections to guarantee everyone's participation, as well as the integrity and transparency of these elections.

Participation Criteria:

- 1-Civil society organizations should be independent enough from all of the negotiating parties.
- 2- They should not be involved in any party, government or military framework.
- 3-They should not be involved, nor any of their members, in any type of human rights violations or corruption.

8- Monitoring Mechanisms and Complaints Submissions

There should be efforts to identify mechanisms for monitoring and complaints submission. Otherwise, there can be no guarantee for any process to proceed well. Therefore, there should be efforts to set up different types of monitoring:

- 1-Internal monitoring inside the institution itself along with activating the monitoring authority.
- 2-Public monitoring by civil society organizations.
- 3-International organizations monitoring through the formation of independent and neutral committees to monitor under the supervision of the United Nations.



4-Regarding elections and the implementation of agreements, especially concerning humanitarian terms, the United Nations should monitor along with the Arab League countries and civil society organizations.

5-A special body for monitoring the performance of national governing bodies should be formed. It can be named the National Body for Integrity. It includes people known for integrity with experience and competence in monitoring the performance of these types of bodies.

For Complaints Submission:

There should be a mechanism to enable citizens submitting complaints regarding the performance of committees and the Transitional Governing Body in discharging its mandate, along with monitoring any violation of the agreements to be implemented.

9- Army and Security Forces

The issue of the army and security forces is the most critical one. It will be the fundamental basis for restoring stability to Syria, if it is built upon clear and specific criteria. Even though we cannot find magical solutions for this issue, we still consider structuring the security forces during the transitional period through the Transitional Governing Body according to a set of criteria by the Body. Through the local consultations conducted by the Syrian Civil Society Platform, we have had significant recommendations to support this issue. Thus, we summarise them as follows:

1-The military institution should be restructured, drawing on all the experiences in order to be rebuilt on a scientific basis by stakeholders who believe in the culture and principles of human rights.

2-Defining the total number required for Syria as well as achieving the principle of relative balance as percentages and proportionality based on justice and equality for each province, taking into account the percentages of all of Syria's different ethnic and religious communities.

3- Accountability and exclusion for all officers, members and leaders who committed crimes against the Syrian people.

4-Accountability for all members and officers regarding illicit enrichment based on a principle of 'where did you get this'.



- 5- Surrendering all heavy and medium weapons to the military institution.
- 6- Compensation for all of the dissident members and officers for their unpaid salaries.
- 7- Separating the security forces away from politics.
- 8- The parliament endorses the appointment of military and security leaders.
- 9- All security institutions will be dissolved and merged into three main forces:

A) Ministry of Internal Affairs:

Police and civil defense are subjected to this. Armed actors from all provinces can be urged to be engaged in police and civil defense after being trained to take over the duties of police and civil defense in each province. The locals of each province will be responsible for implementing laws in their own provinces and cities.

B) Intelligence Agency:

This serves as a ministry. It takes over the duties of intelligence and collecting information internally and externally.

C) National Security Force:

It is strictly required that both the Intelligence Agency and the National Security Force not intervene in civil life, and they submit to judicial authority in their work.

11- Maintaining archives for all security force records to reveal the truth later on.

12- Subject to judicial prosecution.

13- No immunity.

14- Creating the position of Minister of Defense, and another for the commander of armed forces.

All of the aforementioned opinions were provided during dialogue sessions and consultations conducted by the Syrian Civil Society Platform.

Mentioning those opinions in this file does not mean – at all- that we absolutely agree on it. Nevertheless, we considered citing them to assist those who think about solutions for the issue of security.

In the end, the roadmap cannot succeed if there are not substantive conditions along with political will to pursue the process.



The context we proceed from is the tragic Syrian situation, in addition to the complication of the international situation which makes it even more difficult to reach an agreement between the two sides. If there is not a political end negotiated by the Syrian parties, then there are no realistic solutions that can be implemented.

