

Russian Delegation

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Introduction

Despite the difficulty of the current conflict in Syrian Arab Republic, our delegation's main concern lies with fighting terrorism and returning Syria to stability and peace. Thus, the faster a feasible political solution is achieved, the greater the chance the world will have to defeat Islamist terrorism. This is where Russian interests lie today. Our task, however, is not to interfere with Syria's domestic affairs. We are solely interested in stabilizing legitimate power and inflicting a decisive blow on international terrorism. Of course, oppositional powers cannot be completely ignored by us, at least for the mere reason that they are directly involved militarily. Since the enemy is clearly determined – the Islamic State – any other military group that pays no mind to using firearms and is not on Damascus' side interferes with the anti-terrorist operations and contributes to destabilization.

Achieving a ceasefire and making progress at the negotiating table can now become possible thanks to the work of the Russian military and our organization of peace talks. Not only did the ceasefire in Aleppo, organized by us, make 647 members of illegal

military groups put down their arms and leave, (later amnestied and released) but the declaration from our minister of defense, which hinted that the oppositional forces have one of two options: put down their arms and negotiate or face Russian aviation. More and more fighters of the opposition seem to be making the right choice. Even the leader of the Syrian opposition expressed hope that the Russian side will be the key player in the regulating conversation in Syria, transforming from a direct role in the fighting to the role of a guarantee, that has influence on Syria and Iran. As a confirmation to his words, many more regions are joining the ceasefire, signed by Vladimir Putin last year.

Thanks to the successes of the Russian military in combination to the progress made in the negotiations, Russia has earned recognition from both the Bashar al-Assad's government and the opposition. Certainly, bringing the opposing powers to collaborate is not yet fully possible. However, the first steps towards stability have been taken and the process is now completely in the hands of the Syrian people. Russia will continue to conduct a policy of peaceful regulations.

Key Points

- Since the beginning of the civil war in Syria in 2011, we have supported and will continue to support the Syrian government and President al-Assad.
- We have used our veto on the United Nations Security Council many times against Western efforts to destabilize Syria
- We support a ceasefire. We have shown our commitment to a peaceful political solution, yet we intend to leave the negotiations up to the Syrians
- President's Al-Assad's economic reform initiatives before the Syrian civil war showed immense promise through the effect they had on the Syrian economy. As soon as the conflict is resolved and Syria is ready to begin reconstruction, we will support the continuation of these economic policies to the best of our ability.
- We plan to reacquire Syrian territory taken by rebel groups and terrorist forces. Syria will be safe when the government regains control over its territory and is able to control its borders
- We intend to prevent ISIS from depriving Syria of its resources, including key water points and oil fields
- We will fight against the Islamic terrorists, who abuse human rights
- We believe that the Syrian government should initiate its own justice and accountability process, as well as seek to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations

Background of our country

Russia is a Eurasian country with a population of about 142 million. It occupies most of Eastern Europe and north Asia, stretching from the Baltic Sea in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east, and from the Arctic Ocean in the north to the Black Sea and the Caucasus in the south. It is bordered by Norway and Finland in the northwest; Estonia, Latvia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, and Lithuania in the west; Georgia and Azerbaijan in the southwest; and Kazakhstan, Mongolia, China, and North Korea along the southern border. The population consists of Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and Bashkirs. Religious makeup comprises 15-20% Christian Orthodox, 10-15% Muslim and other religions.

In 1922, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established as a federation. The death of Lenin on Jan. 21, 1924, precipitated an intraparty struggle between Joseph Stalin, general secretary of the party, and Trotsky, who favored swifter socialization at home and fomentation of revolution abroad. Trotsky was dismissed as commissar of war in 1925 and banished from the Soviet Union in 1929. In 1939, Soviet Union signed a nonaggression pact with Nazi Germany. The Soviet-German collaboration ended abruptly with a lightning attack by Hitler on June 22, 1941, which seized 500,000 sq mi of Russian territory before Soviet defenses could halt it. The Soviet resurgence at Stalingrad from Nov. 1942 to Feb. 1943 marked the turning point in a long battle, ending in the final offensive of Jan. 1945. Then, after denouncing a 1941 nonaggression pact with Japan in April 1945, when Allied forces were nearing victory in the Pacific, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan on Aug. 8, 1945, and quickly occupied Manchuria, Karafuto, and the Kuril Islands.

After the war, the Soviet Union, United States, Great Britain, and France divided Berlin and Germany into four zones of occupation, which led to immediate antagonism between the Soviet and Western powers, culminating in the Berlin blockade in 1948. The USSR's tightening control over a cordon of Communist states, running from Poland in the north to Albania in the south, was dubbed the “iron curtain” by Churchill and would later lead to the Warsaw Pact. It marked the beginning of the cold war, the simmering hostility that pitted the world's two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR—and their competing political ideologies—against each other for the next 45 years.

After Stalin died in 1953, the new power emerging in the Kremlin was Nikita S. Khrushchev (1958–1964), first secretary of the party. Khrushchev formalized the eastern European system into a Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) and a Warsaw Pact Treaty Organization as a counterweight to NATO. Khrushchev was forced into retirement on Oct. 15, 1964, and was replaced by Leonid I. Brezhnev as first secretary of the party.

In 1985, chosen to succeed as Soviet leader was Mikhail S. Gorbachev, who led the Soviet Union in its long-awaited shift to a new generation of leadership. He established much warmer relations with the West, ended the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and announced that the Warsaw Pact countries were free to pursue their own political agendas. Gorbachev's revolutionary steps ushered in the end of the cold war.

In 1991, an attempted coup d'état against Gorbachev was orchestrated by a group of hard-liners. Power had effectively shifted from Gorbachev to Yeltsin and away from centralized power to greater power for the individual Soviet republics. In his last months

as the head of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev proposed the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which, when implemented, gave most of the Soviet Socialist Republics their independence, binding them together in a loose, primarily economic federation. Gorbachev resigned on Dec. 25, and Yeltsin, who had been the driving force behind the Soviet dissolution, became president of the newly established Russian Republic.

After a few unsuccessful picks for vice president, Yeltsin chose Vladimir Putin on Aug. 9, 1999, announcing that in addition to serving as prime minister, the former KGB agent was his choice as a successor in the 2000 presidential election. In a decision that took Russia and the world by surprise, Boris Yeltsin resigned on Dec. 31, 1999, and Vladimir Putin became the acting president. A military win in Chechnya greatly contributed to his political popularity. On March 26, 2000, Putin won the presidential election with about 53% of the vote. Although Russia remained economically stagnant, Putin brought his nation a measure of political stability it never had under the mercurial and erratic Yeltsin. Putin was reelected president in March 2004, with 70% of the vote.

In Dec. 2007, Putin endorsed Dmitri Medvedev in the presidential election scheduled for March 2008. Putin was then chosen as chairman of the United Russia party and agreed to become prime minister when Dmitri Medvedev assumed the presidency in May.

In Sept. 2011, Putin announced that he would run for president as the candidate of the United Russia party in March 2012 elections. In Feb. 2012, Russia made international headlines by blocking an effort by the United Nations Security Council to end the violence in Syria. Russia, along with China, vetoed the resolution just hours after the

Syrian military launched an assault on the city of Homs. The Security Council voted 13 to 2 for a resolution backing an Arab League peace plan for Syria. Russia and China voted against the resolution, seeing it as a violation of Syria's sovereignty. Russia also continued to provide weapons to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad as well as diplomatic support. Russian ambassador Vitaly I. Churkin explained the Russian veto to the council, "We simply cannot accept a document which would open the path for pressure of sanctions and further to external military involvement in Syrian domestic affairs."

Committee on Governance

The Bashar al-Assad regime came to power in 2000. Bashar initially made conciliatory moves to his opponents, including allowing the Muslim Brotherhood to resume political activities and withdrawing most of the Syrian troops that had occupied strife-torn Lebanon. But, while he legitimized his position through an election, he never intended, and certainly did not find, a way satisfactory to the public and acceptable to his regime of enlarged political participation. His failure to find any means of bridging the gap between the demands of Islam and the new role of the Alawi community sparked unrest. Lack of public political engagement and Assad's hostility to Israel led to large-scale, if covert, attempts at regime change by outside powers including the United States. These acts of subversion became particularly pronounced during the second Bush administration.

Russia enjoys a historically strong, stable, and friendly relationship with Syria. Not only is there a strategic Mediterranean naval base for its Black Sea Fleet located in the Syrian port of Tartus, but the political ties with Syria has been strong since the days of the Soviet Union. On October 8th 1980, Syria and the Soviet Union signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. The treaty runs for twenty years and has automatic five-year extensions, unless one of the parties terminates the agreement. It provides for regular consultations on bilateral and multilateral issues of interest, coordination of responses in the event of a crisis, and military cooperation. The treaty remains in force to this day. President Putin is not, however, supportive of Assad personally. His disregard toward our role in the organization of negotiations was faced with questions by president Putin. However, since our main priority lies in assuring Syria's peace and stability, it must be in

support of Assad, who won the free elections on June 3rd 2014 with a 88.7% majority vote.

That changed in 2011 when we got involved politically and later, militarily on behalf of the Syrian government. Whereas the West appeared hesitant in its Syria policy, Russia's actions showed that it too can be a global player, and an effective one. The first step was to help Assad through using the veto power in the UN Security Council in 2011 and 2012, to block several resolutions promoted by Western and Arab countries, which proposed possible sanctions or military intervention against the Syrian government. Starting in October 2015, Russia launched a military operation in Syria in support of the Syrian government, mostly operating through air strikes against militant groups and through the supply of arms.

Russia is not the only international factor standing with Assad. Iran, a powerful regional force, is supporting the Syrian Army directly and through its ally, Lebanese-based Hezbollah. Russia and Iran's mutual ambitions to destroy ISIS and other Islamist extremists created a powerful alliance. Iran's military advisers work closely with the Syrian and Russian militaries, which produce tangible results: 450 airstrikes, targeting ISIS militants, infrastructure and training camps were a well coordinated effort against the terrorist organization. The extent of Iran and Russia coordination in Syria reached a new level in August when Iran allowed the Russian Air Force use of its Shahid Nojeh Air Base to conduct operations in Syria.

Russia and Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shi'a militant group, have also begun official military coordination in Syria at the behest of Moscow in 2016. Hezbollah has proven to be a forward-thinking and malleable fighting force, which is now supplied with weapons

by us. There are also at least two joint Russia–Hezbollah operation rooms in Latakia and Damascus. The biggest coup by this combined force came on February 4, when Hezbollah and Iranian-backed militias under the cover of Russian airstrikes broke the siege of Nubl and Zahraa. These victories make it apparent that the combination of regime irregulars, foreign militias, Hezbollah fighters, and crushing Russian bombardment has been a winning one in Syria.

The opposition to the Syrian government consists of mutually hostile, unorganized groups, including Western-backed rebels of the Free Syrian Army, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, al-Nusra front and ISIS. Russia has made continuous efforts to engage in negotiations with the opposition. In an attempt to involve the YPG and PYD, we have pushed to have them open representative offices in Moscow, which is their first step to engaging in talks. Although since the beginning of the conflict Turkey has been supplying the FSA with arms, Russia and Turkey have begun to mend the rift as well. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently visited Moscow and, together with President Putin brokered a deal with Syrian rebels to evacuate civilians from Aleppo, in addition to organizing peace talks in Astana with Iran.

Peace and stability in Syria are of the utmost importance for Russia and the Middle East as a whole. Our main priority is fighting terrorism and it is important for all those participating in the negotiations to have the same priority coming in. Everyone needs to acknowledge that Assad’s regime and opposition’s claims are not as important as terrorism and radical Islamist factions, which turn humans into monsters, who are capable of killing women, children and the elderly, and of destroying everything around them, leaving everything they touch in ruins. In order to fight this, we must collaborate.

Astana's meeting proved to ultimately be successful in seating the Syrian government representatives with opposition at the same negotiations table. Militarily, Iran, Russia and Turkey agreed to create a three-way mechanism of controlling ceasefire.

We have also presented a version for a new Syrian constitution for the future government, in an attempt to speed up the peace process and motivate the beginning of peace talks. The constitution does not create any significant change to the existing political order. The main differences lie in the increase of the number of vice-president posts and the increase in authority of localities. This measure was welcomed by the Kurdish Nationals, since it would grant them greater independence from the Syrian government. It, however, would not grant Kurds sovereignty, which becomes a crucial place of agreement with Turkey, who is nervous of autonomous Kurdistan. It is, however, important for us to not get involved in the negotiations regarding its ratification. We strongly believe that this process should be hosted entirely by the Syrian people.

Committee on Strategic Security

The Syrian conflict has become a matter of national security for the entire world. Besides the armed militants and primary fighters in the civil war – the Syrian government and anti-government FSA – ISIS continues to take over territory, recruit, and profit from the captured Syrian oil fields. Our military focus therefore is on defeating ISIS and regaining Syrian land. We have sent roughly 4000 troops into Syria and we continue to maintain a presence in the country through our naval base in Tartus. We have also supplied advanced weaponry and aircrafts to the Syrian government forces. The Western coalition led by the US has been more focused on airstrikes and drone attacks, than on sending troops into Syria. There are only around 500 American troops in the country, and their objective is to recruit and train local Syrians to fight against ISIS. Meanwhile, the coalition has carried out more than 5000 airstrikes on ISIS since 2014. Domestically, however, the number of troops fighting significantly outweighs the number of foreign troops. ISIS is said to have anywhere from 30,000 to 60,000 soldiers. The Free Syrian Army and other allied groups consist of about 200,000 troops. The total number of troops from the various rebel groups is around the same number.

A stable Syria is very important to us, and securing its borders thus becomes critical. Given the current conflict, it is important to look back at the security of Syria's borders before the war and the country's relationships with its neighbors. Syria has been called "a country of leftovers," indicating the diversity of cultures within its territory, fought over by powers around it throughout the years. This creates a few problems internally, which can threaten security long-term. First, the borders have been constantly redrawn and so, the borders of Syria today and before the civil war are fairly new. This

makes it difficult for the government to control the territory and minimize the possibility of a terrorist group to take over land. Second, few people identify with the nation of Syria, but rather, their religious or ethnical group. The multicultural society has to deal with internal divisions first, accommodating minorities.

Clearly, Russia would like the war to end as soon as possible, but we are committed to defeat ISIS and recapture Syrian land. We support a ceasefire, and we believe that we have shown the greatest commitment to achieving it. Hosting negotiations, we have promoted inclusion of the opposition at the table and facilitated peace talks. In the latest ceasefire, which is already keeping peace better than in the past years, we negotiated the deal without the help of any Western powers. Though it is in everyone's best interest for the fighting to stop, we are certainly prepared for the long haul. We will defeat ISIS and we will hopefully bring stability to Syria as well.

Committee on Local Security

Syria's military forces are part of the Syrian Armed Forces (SAF) and report directly to Assad, who is the Commander-in-Chief. The SAF is responsible for protecting the country and its people through defense mechanisms. It has successfully protected the country since 1941. They go to appropriate extremes in order to protect the government from harmful opposition organizations. Much of Assad's military freedom stems from Syria's declared state of emergency. The state of emergency was established in 1963, when the Ba'ath party came to power through a military coup d'état. It makes the Prime Minister a martial law governor and the Interior Minister his deputy. This allocates tremendous military influence to politicians who act under and report directly to Assad. The government adopts Assad's military decisions because he has proven to make wise strategic decisions to push back ISIS and stop armed rebel forces.

In 2008, Assad implemented a new law, which provides immunity to all security forces; this law makes it possible for troops to enforce more effective security methods. Now, security forces can work efficiently without fearing that their actions will land them with a tough trial or in jail. Three years later in 2011, Assad admirably kept true to his promise of political reform and lifted the state of emergency for the first time in 48 years. The state of emergency had previously prevented any anti-regime movements. With its end, Assad ultimately allowed peaceful anti-regime protests. As a consequence, Syrian rebels have taken their protests too far, forcing Assad's troops to detain and arrest anti-regime activists. To help Syria regain peace, we are helping Assad by supplying troops, weapons, and ordering airstrikes to resist Syrian rebels and ISIS.

We have several thousand troops on the ground with Russian weapons and infrastructure. Our troops are helping the Syrian people and they are grateful for our presence, which will help them live peacefully and restore order. Our efforts to work with the SAF include coordinating with Syrian troops to practice joint drills, teaching them to use Russian military equipment, and assisting with humanitarian aid by setting up mobile hospitals and first aid locations. Due to our efforts, Syrians often chant, “We love Russia!” There is a mutual respect between our troops and the civilians, because of mutual desire to achieve peace in Syria.

The Syrian Civil war involves thousands of people and arms. Before the war, there were plenty of small arms in Syria. The rebellious Free Syrian Army (FSA) has 40,000 fighters. However, Assad’s SAF and other pro-government forces have approximately 215,000 soldiers. For several decades, the majority of Syria’s small arms has been supplied by us. It is estimated that Syria had two million small weapons with 700,000 belonging to citizens before the war. During the war, however, countries such as Lebanon and Turkey began to provide Syrian Rebel Forces with small arms. The rebels also acquire weapons through illegal trade. Their arsenal is meager compared to the SAF’s, who are supplied with top-notch Russian military equipment, such as s-300 missiles.

Another important issue of security is natural resources. Syria’s main water source is the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. ISIS has taken over important dams on the Tigris and Euphrates. This is part of ISIS’s plan to expand militarily and politically. Water infrastructure can be used as political leverage because cutting water supplies threatens those who resist and forces them to support whoever is controlling the water. In

addition to ISIS's acquisition of key water points, Turkey controls much of Syria's water supply and has been decreasing it during the conflict. On top of this, there have been droughts and many of the water sources in the Middle East are drying up, making water truly valuable. This makes it an essential task for Russia to remove ISIS from any key positions so that they are not robbing Syria of its water.

In addition to controlling prime water resources, ISIS has seized major Syrian oil fields. These oil fields are not only valuable Syrian territory, but it significantly decreases financial resources of Syria. To help Syria, we are providing them with oil, while also conducting airstrikes on ISIS-held fields. Because oil is ISIS's largest source of funding, it is essential that we stop the acquisition of money and return the fields to their rightful owner.

Committee on Economic Reconstruction

Prior to the Syrian Civil War, the Syrian Arab Republic was in the midst of a period of economic growth and reform. Unemployment hit its lowest levels of the decade. The GDP was rapidly rising. Life expectancies were high. Russia is committed to a swift resolution of the conflict so our ally President Assad and his government can resume Syria's impressive economic growth and modernization. The correct path to economic reconstruction in Syria is to allow the Syrian Government to continue the initiatives that were successful before the conflict. Syria's approach has an appropriate balance of government sponsorship, foreign direct investment (FDI), and privatization.

President Assad's gradual economic decentralization, enacted through the legalization of private and foreign banks has been an enormous boon for Syria's economy. Following these decisions, FDI skyrocketed, causing unemployment to fall and GNI per capita to rise. Such investment has allowed President Assad to greatly support the Syrian people through Syria's economic transformation, through the opening of 6 specialized state banks. In agriculture—one of Syria's largest economic activities—Damascus has been able to continually invest in irrigation and other agricultural infrastructure. Although most land is privately owned, the government buys agricultural product for a price higher than the commodities' prices in the global market. Under the conflict, FDI has once again dropped, and greatly hindered Syria's ability to support its people through this period of great economic reform.

In addition to FDI, oil has been of critical importance to funding Damascus' effort to modernize the economy. The government's extraction and export of crude oil and other petroleum products accounts for a significant percentage of both Syria's exports

and GDP. Additionally, the discovery of several large hydrocarbon reserves indicates that Syrian energy sector could play a key role in supporting economic reconstruction. The conflict, however, directly impedes the use of petroleum to support economic progress in Syria as rebel groups and terrorist organizations continually seize oil fields and threaten reliable access to those still under the government's control. Although crude oil is an incredibly important part of Syria's economy, its reserves are still small compared to those of the Middle Eastern Gulf States. In order for Syria to use its natural oil reserves to their full potential, the conflict must end, full control of these resources must be restored to President Assad and the Syrian government, and the West's sanctions against the import of Syrian oil must be removed.

The sanctions on Syria must also be halted for Syrian government to regain its ability to invest in the Syrian population. Before the conflict began, almost 33% of Syria's population was between the ages of 10 and 25. Damascus' expenditure in health had risen to almost 7% of government expenditure and education had risen to over 20%, ensuring that this generation would be ready and able to assist in the continued development of the Syrian economy. Since the Civil War began and intense sanctions were enacted, however, the Syrian government has needed to invest heavily in their military—in order to maintain safety—at the cost of government spending in health and education. Furthermore, sanctions against exporting to Syria have prohibited its population from accessing the products they need to conduct business. These sanctions have been greatly ineffective at solving the conflict in Syria and have instead placed a massive burden on the Syrian population. Sanctions are also largely responsible for the

recent drastic rise of inflation in Syria, which has in turn hurt the services sector of the Syrian economy, which employs the majority of Syrians.

Through the restructuring of banking and the Syrian financial sector, the Syrian government has managed to keep the Syrian banks resilient throughout the conflict, but as it stands 80% of Syrians are below the poverty line, and 200 billion USD has been lost from the Syrian economy. In order for economic reconstruction to begin and the Syrian economy to develop to its potential, the Syrian civil war and the sanctions it has brought must first end, and the terrorist organizations operating in Syria must be eliminated. As such, the resolution of this conflict is our priority and we are willing to do what is necessary to accomplish this goal.

Committee on Social Reconstruction

Socially, it is important to acknowledge the many issues that arise in a multicultural society. Human rights, standard of living, rights of the minorities, including linguistic rights and religious freedom, and women's rights all constitute a healthy society, which Syria used to be under the Assad regime. In the future government, those rights should be considered and continued to be improved upon through the methods used by Assad, while also giving them constitutional legality.

Syria independently signed 11 human rights treaties, whereas some Western countries that propagate democracy and liberty have only ratified 9. For example: Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2008, International Convention on the Protection on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families of 2003, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1976 have all been signed by Syria, but not the U.S. This is demonstrative of Syrian ambitions to uphold these rights. Prior to the civil war there was a positive trend in dealing with social issues, and we hope to help Syria keep it that way.

Despite a devastating drought in 2008, which caused a lot of setbacks for Syria, including starvation, desertification and forced urbanization, Assad managed to increase the standard of living. For example, between the years of 2000-2011 there was a 35% decrease of the infant mortality rate. There is also a significant increase between the years 2000-2011 of the school enrollment gender parity index. This demonstrates Assad's commitment to promoting female education. Syria has been one of the most progressive nations in MENA regarding women's rights. Najah Al-Attar, who currently serves as one of the country's vice presidents is just one example of female presence in the Syrian

government. This progress is contrasted by the rebel groups in Syria, who are often violators of women's rights, forcing women in rebel-controlled territory to "dress modestly" completely covering them up, despite intense heat, and restricting education for women.

Syrian rebels are also violating religious freedoms and are infamous for burning religious monuments and sites of minority groups. The Assad regime has always respected religious rights. Assad himself is an Alawi, and he is married to a Sunni Muslim woman. Yet, there is room for legal improvement. The current Syrian constitution stipulates that the president has to be a Muslim. In our drafted constitution we have proposed that this religious restriction be lifted in order for Syria to be a more religiously tolerant and inclusive nation.

We believe that the linguistic rights of the governed should be protected, regardless of linguistic affiliation. The proposed constitution for Syria, modeled off of our own could greatly benefit the Syrian nation, especially its minority groups. Under the proposed draft, every region in the country should be given the right to legalize the use of the language of the region's majority — in addition to the state language and in accordance with the law. As of now, all schools are required to teach in Arabic, a measure which is meant to be a unifying factor, however this language is not representative of the diverse Syrian population. It would be much to the benefit of citizens to feel more linguistically represented by their nation. By enabling minority groups such as the Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, and Armenians to learn their own language within the Syrian education system, the nation will be more inclusive. Secondly, we have proposed that Syria drop "Arab" from its country's name in order to

exemplify a more inclusive, and linguistically tolerant Syria. The propositions we made will allow Assad to continue molding an inclusive nation.

Committee on Justice, Peace, and Reconciliation

Extremist groups in Syria have torn at the fabric of Syrian society. Before the war, Syria, particularly in its vibrant, bustling old cities of Aleppo and Damascus, was regarded for its diverse set of communities bonded by language, region, religion, and ethnicity, which includes Sunni Arabs, Shiites, Kurds, Turkmen, Alawites, Greeks, Jews, and Assyrian and Armenian Christians—to name a few. However, as a result of the civil war, these hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been and continue to be internally displaced, as well as displaced across borders. In Syria's largest city, Aleppo, the pre-war population of over two million people dropped to under 400,000. For Syria's minorities, Assad means security. The Assad regime upholds its redeeming role in protecting minority rights by targeting the oppositional Sunni-Arab majority. Despite allegations of torture and bombing of civilians from the mighty Russian military forces and the Assad government, Syrian minorities remain in support because of the safety we offer against the threat of ISIS and other rebels—a safety crucial to the well being of not only Syria and the Middle East but the world.

Throughout the Syrian conflict, various foreign governments, journalists, and human rights groups have claimed that Syrian government forces have been involved in crimes against humanity. However, we, as one of the world's most influential nations and leading international actors in the Syrian civil war, recognize that the true evil lies within Assad's enemies. Accordingly, President Vladimir Putin ordered the launch of a military operation against the opposition and called for an international coalition against terrorism in Syria. The Syrian conflict is ridden with violence and massacre. According to a 2016 United Nations and Arab League Envoy to Syria estimate, 400,000 civilians have been

killed in the conflict. Violence in Syria is only escalating amid an absence of meaningful efforts to end the war. Russia has stepped up. We are fighting against the extremism and instability that are killing these Syrians.

The armed opposition, namely ISIS and Al-Qaeda's affiliate in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, have targeted civilians, used child soldiers, kidnapped, tortured, and executed. Thousands of civilians across Syria have been forced to endure a life of hardship at the hands of these groups. Although Syria's record on freedom and human rights is not untarnished, human rights abuses have drastically improved from the 1980s and will continue to improve as we rid the nation and the world of the Islamist groups.

Coming out of the civil war, the Syrian government must still confront its history of human rights violations. The government should initiate its own justice and accountability process, as well as seek to arrest and prosecute the perpetrators of these violations. The Syrian government may observe how accountability in other countries coming out of civil war has been addressed. For instance, Chile has pursued a combination of criminal prosecutions, investigative commissions and reparations, and an amnesty law that protects military personnel from being prosecuted. Following WWII, Germany's Nuremberg trials prosecuted military leaders, political officials, industrialists, and financiers for the heinous crimes committed during the Holocaust. In Bosnia's war crime trials, the Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic was found guilty of genocide; similarly, in Rwanda, the genocide trials laid the path for transitional justice committed to prosecuting all who were suspected of war crimes. Today, Rwanda continues its national effort towards peace and forgiveness through its local reconciliation efforts. Lastly, in South Africa, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission served as court-like restorative

justice system where victims of gross human rights violations were invited to give statements or public hearings about their experiences, and perpetrators of violence could give testimonies and request amnesty from both civil and criminal prosecution. However, like the International Criminal Court, these countries still face considerable obstacles on the road to justice, peace, and reconciliation. Syria's future government will have to focus on safety of its citizens, in addition to instituting an accountability process after the civil war ends.

Committee on Cross-Border Issues

Syria lies in the absolute center on the Middle East. In the North, along Syria's northernmost border is Turkey, on the East, Syria's longest border, is Iraq, to the South is Jordan, and to the West are Lebanon and briefly Israel.

Starting with Syria's longest border, the Iraqi-Syrian relationship can be best described as tumultuous. Since the creation of the two states, movements within each to unite the two have persisted, however, the idea, for the most part, has led to rocky and unstable political climates in the region. In the 1970s there was a strong attempt made by Hafez al-Assad, of Syria, and Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr to unify the countries, however, the rise of Saddam Hussein quickly ended the talks of unification. In the late 70s a Syrian plot to overthrow Hussein was discovered, which led to an immediate chilling of the relations of the two, which has persisted until today. Since the 1970s Syria has often joined those opposed to Iraq, including the Kuwaiti's in the Gulf War in the 1990s. Iraq is a majority Shia nation, while Syria is a majority Sunni nation, which leads to continuous fighting across the border.

The Turkish-Syrian relationship is not much better. The relationship has been strained since the 1938 annexation of the Hatay Province by Turkey. Turkey has been increasingly involved in the Syrian conflict today and is an important player in the ongoing fight, fighting against ISIS, providing the FSA with arms and supporting Hezbollah.

In the West, lies Lebanon and Israel. From 1943 to 2008, Syria refused to recognize Lebanon as a state, however, Bashar al-Assad has made a concerted effort to warm the relations of the two, and Lebanon has played a minor role in supporting Assad.

Fighting briefly spilled in Tripoli in 2012, however, Tripoli has a majority of Sunnis and Alawites, which both support the Assad regime. The relationship between Israel and Syria, however, is ice cold. Syria and Israel have fought each other on several occasions, most recently in the 1982 Lebanon War. Syria is still an active participant in the Arab boycott of Israel, and the ongoing activity of Hezbollah in the Syrian conflict makes Israel uncomfortable, to say the least. Lastly, Jordan and Syria's relations throughout history had repeated clashes until the Gulf War, which warmed the relationship. However, the ongoing conflict in Syria has led to clashes between Syrian and Jordanian forces which have again, exacerbating tensions between the two. Seemingly, Syria finds no true allies on any side, which has further complicated matters related to the ongoing Civil War.

Displaced people have poured across the border into all of the surrounding nations except Israel, and less so to Lebanon. Turkey has, likely, been the most overrun with the displaced people, and President Erdogan is actively seeking solutions and compensation from Western Europe. Russia has no stake in this game. The borders seemed to be secure prior to the outbreak of the war, however, at this point, there is no stopping the flow of migrants across borders, and Russia will not seek to stop the movement, presuming the people continue to head West. In this state of war, the responsibility falls on those bordering Syria, understanding that the outbreak of war has made it simply impossible for Syria to secure its own borders, and that external groups, Russia included, are unable to secure the Syrian borders on behalf of others.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria was a threat to Syria and the world prior to the outbreak of the war, however, because this war is truly three sided, it has led more so, to

the rise of ISIS. The ongoing conflict is between the Assad regime, the Syrian Rebels, and ISIS, Russia seeks to aid the Assad regime, and do what it can to eliminate ISIS, ending this war is essential to the containment of ISIS. The threat of ISIS existed prior to the war, however, undoubtedly, the war has led to the exponential growth of the terrorist organization.

On all sides, Syria's borders have been affected by the civil war. Displaced people have poured into Turkey, seeking to enter Western Europe by sea. In Jordan, Israel, and Iraq tensions have risen to a boiling point, leading to talks between Iraq, Turkey, and ourselves in Astana on February the 6th.