



Statement by the Arab NGO Network for Development on the military intervention in Syria

Beirut, 16 September 2013

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating ever since the start of the Syrian people's uprising and their demands for freedom and democracy. These protests preserved their peaceful nature for almost 8 months, but the people's demands fell on the regime's deaf ears. It violently repressed manifestations and dragged the uprising into a fully-fledged all-out war.

The death toll amounts to more than 110.000, the number of internally displaced people is rising exponentially and floats around 4 million and neighboring countries are sheltering around 2 to 3 million refugees according to most sources. Such figures are the highest in the region.

Whereas the situation has been deteriorating ever since the start of the conflict in 2011, it never prompted serious talks about halting military acts nor did it cause an appropriate political response to the crisis by regional or international community. Even when reports confirmed the presence on Syrian soil, of foreign fighters, of non-Syrian and al-Qaeda linked organizations, an appropriate response has yet to be formulated and presented. It seems as if regional and international actors and states are keen on prolonging the crisis in order to weaken the Syrian state and disintegrate it.

In this regard, the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) would like to condemn the regime's military actions that do not spare civilians, which stretched as far as the use of weapons of mass destruction. Indeed, the latest report of the international investigation group confirmed the use of chemical weapons, targeting civilians including children, with hints about the regimes involvement.



Moreover, a recent Human Rights Watch report should be mentioned here. It shows that chemical weapons were previously used on 19 occasions and in other places than Ghouta. Furthermore, ANND also condemns the practices and violence of all terrorist organizations currently operating in Syria.

On the other hand, ANND believes that any military strike as a response to these alleged attacks, should only be done under UN- Security Council authorization. More broadly, the United Nations Charter forbids the use of force except for two circumstances: “if an armed attack occurs against a Member State” or “to maintain or restore international peace and security”. In both cases, the Security Council authorization is compulsory. At the same time, we remind that the Responsibility to protect (R2P) principle entails gradual responses before resorting to direct military intervention.

Politically, the United States and other countries feel the urgency of drawing up a “red line” when it comes to chemical weapons. However, the Syrians have suffered and are still suffering from far deadlier atrocities caused by “conventional weapons” without causing such reactions and loud calls to intervention. What is all the more revolting is that the debates are turning around the credibility of the evidence the United States have or the cost of this war for the US or on their authority if they do not intervene. The priority should be the welfare of the Syrian people and their entitled freedom and right to live.

We fully realize the impasse the Syrian people are in and the need for someone to stand by their side and rescue them from the ghastly and daily massacre they are living. However, we do not think that the military intervention currently envisaged is the best one. Indeed, it undeniably comes with western political calculations and important human and material costs. ANND’s position remains one that prescribes a political solution to the conflict with particular emphasis on the Syrian people’s right to freedom, peace and life. All the above-mentioned



clearly indicate the international community's negligence and systematic errors in dealing with the Syrian crisis.

Our stance here at ANND, remains one that advocate for a peaceful and political solution to this crisis. We are fully aware of the costs and lives lost in waiting for such a solution to materialize. However, it remains preferable to a widening of the war and its potential impact on Syria's unity and future. We remain convinced that disputes should be resolved by mediation, in a just and sustainable manner and under the framework of international law. We also see that the current calls for a Geneva 2 Convention are positive steps that help in achieving these goals. We would also like to stress on the fact that any solution has to respect the Syrian people's right to freedom, democracy, and peace. We call for prioritizing a political solution that satisfies all warring parties, that brings an end to the conflict and that falls under international law. The conflict's end is also hardly foreseeable without cleansing Syria from foreign armed groups, including Takfirist groups that threaten Syria's identity and unity. Interventions from regional and international actors that fuel the conflict have to stop. Supporting, financing and sending fighters to warring parties must also stop.

We would like to add that a current military intervention in Syria will not lead to an improvement of the situation. On the contrary it will lead to an exponential increase in tensions, human and physical casualties.

With respect to the humanitarian side of the crisis, ANND calls on the international community to exert pressure on all belligerents to stop their military actions that increase the number of refugees. We also call for applying International Humanitarian Law and allowing aid to reach Internally Displaced People but also refugees in neighboring countries. On that matter, we urge these countries to grant Syrians on their territory the title of refugees. In parallel, we call on the international community to support these countries in bearing the



economic burden caused by the constantly increasing number of Syrians fleeing their country's destruction and massacre.