

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
THE "ARAB SPRING": the conflict in Syria,
current status and consequences

Madrid, 6 June 2013

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1. INTRODUCTION



Source: Vidiani

Map 1. Map of Syria

This report presents the discussions and conclusions of the experts who participated in the Seminar on “THE ARAB SPRING”: the conflict in Syria, current events and consequences “on 6 June 2013, at Casa Árabe in Madrid.

This publication also reflects the discussions that took place during this meeting, as a reminder of what happened for those who took part, and to provide a comprehensive report to those who did not.

This document includes the main arguments defended by each of the speakers, the reflections arising from all participants in the question

times ending each section and, finally, the ideas raised during the debate. We have tried to organize the views of the speakers and participants in the debate by subjects.

This is why the structure and form of writing that has been followed in the preparation of this document lacks discursive articulation, more suited to the academic field. The ideas are outlined in points as briefly as possible, as a summary, and grouped according to subjects. Each point represents the opinion of one or more participants, and so they can sometimes seem contradictory, because of the diversity of opinion and analysis.

As is usual in activities organized by the CEMOFPSC, in order to encourage an open and independent discussion at meetings, the CEMOFPSC maintains the confidentiality of the thoughts of its members, speakers and guests during the working sessions it organizes.

This study does not attempt to be exhaustive, mainly because it is a process that is still alive and whose events follow one another very quickly over and above any attempt at reflection. For this reason, we have only provided a summary of the discussions and debates that took place during the meeting. The situation in Syria continues to change and it is not yet known what course events will take.

Some witnesses of the Syrian conflict participated in the seminar organized by the CEMOFPSC in Madrid, as well experts in the area. They all offered evidence and analysis of a rather complex conflict situation which unfortunately seems increasingly removed from a peaceful resolution.

The following participated in the event as speakers: Olivia Orozco, Coordinator of Education, Economics and Governance at Arab House; Javier Goizueta, CEO of Volunteering and Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Social Affairs for the Community of Madrid, Pedro López Aguirrebengoa, Spanish Ambassador and member of the CEMOFPSC Advisory Committee; Nadim Shehadi, Chatham House Researcher, visiting Professor at St Anthony's College (Oxford) and member of the CEMOFPSC Advisory Committee; Pilar Lara, President of the Foundation for the Social Advancement of Culture; Salaam Kawakibi, from Syria, Researcher from

the Centre for Arab Reform initiative (ARI), Youssef El-Khalil, Executive Director of the Financial Operations Department of the Bank of Lebanon, President of the Association for the Development of Rural Capacities (ADR) and member of the CEMOPFSC Advisory Committee for Lebanon; Mr Karim Hauser, Head of Governance at Casa Árabe, Amani Salah , regional head of the Office for the Coordination of United Nations Humanitarian Aid for Syria (OCHA) in Jordan, Ramon Ansoain, Spanish Ambassador and coordinator for the Spanish Presidency of the UNRWA Advisory Committee; Hala Mustafa, a journalist for Al Ahram of Egypt; Jumana Trad, Trustee of the FPSC and Member of the CEMOPFSC Executive Committee and Isaac Martin -Barbero, Director General of Internationalization of the Spanish Institute of Foreign Trade (ICEX), Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Participants in the discussions included ambassadors, professors and teachers, journalists, representatives of think tanks, politicians, economists, military officials, non-governmental development organizations and international organizations.

The first revolts began in Syria two years ago when, in March 2011, crowds of unarmed demonstrators, inspired by the popular uprisings that took place in Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab countries, began to challenge the security forces to peacefully demand jobs, reforms, dignity and freedom: *“No to militarization, no to foreign intervention, no to confessionalism”* were the first slogans of the revolution.

Today, Syria is currently immersed in a deadly and bloody war of unprecedented violence in the country’s history, as well as being immersed in a humanitarian catastrophe described by the UN as the greatest catastrophe ever in the world. More than 130,000 Syrians, the vast majority civilians, have been victims of this conflict, and tens of thousands of people have disappeared. 9.5 million people out of a population of 22 million are displaced, and nearly 2.5 million¹ of them are refugees in neighbouring countries: Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and even Egypt.

The opposition’s ideas of democratic and peaceful reform seem to belong to a distant past, as violence has spread to all cities and towns across the country and beyond its borders to neighbouring countries.

¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

From the outset, the policy of the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad² was aimed intransigently at the use of military force, including the air force and armed para-military militias, the notorious *Shabiha*, to repress protesters with increasing severity. The intransigence of a power that does not hesitate to use its army as an occupying force in its own country has meant that, since the end of July 2011, an armed opposition group, the *Free Syrian Army* (FSA), made up of military army deserters and supported by Western forces, have taken the path of armed struggle. Later, the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis also created the *Islamic Front*.

Since April 2013, the situation has been complicated in the field with the emergence of groups of fighters arriving en masse from abroad, but also from all parts of Syria, considering this country to be a new land of jihad. Prominent among these are Jabhat al-Nusra li-Ahl al-Sham (Front to support the people of Sham), more commonly called Al Nusra Front, and Ad-Dawla al-Islāmiyya fi al-'Irāq wa-sh-Shām (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant), called Daech or EIL or ISIL or ISIS. Both jihadist militias claim to be from Al Qaida. If the Al Nusra Front has emerged directly from Syria, Daech was well established in Iraq from 2003, controlling cities in the centre of this country³. Both militias have settled in northern Syria in different towns and have left their mark on the civil war: creating an Islamic Emirate, control of resources in areas under their control, organization of blind suicide attacks and car bombs, indiscriminate massacres, summary executions, kidnappings of foreigners and locals, especially journalists, persecution of the local Christians, destroying their places of worship and imposition of strict Sharia by force.

Meanwhile, the Lebanese paramilitary militia Hezbollah, an ally of the regime, is supporting the Syrian Army and has already been involved on several fronts.

All these armed groups are imposing the radicalization of the conflict, which is already overflowing beyond the Syrian border into Iraq, Lebanon and even Egypt.

² He succeeded his father Hafez al-Assad who was in power from 1971 to 2000.

³ In the province of Al Anbar. It is mainly established in the cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, 60 km from Baghdad.

Meanwhile, the Syrian political opposition remains deeply divided after more than two years since the start of the uprising, being composed of a variety of armed political groups, secular groups, religious orders, Islamists, intellectuals, exiled dissidents, activists and militants who fail to agree on how to topple President Bashar Al- Assad, or on a common leadership.

To obtain international help and recognition, several of these groups have been grouped into coalitions. The first to be formed was the Syrian National Coalition (CNS), established in late 2011 in Turkey, followed later by the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (CNFROS), established in Doha in late 2012. Both are uncompromising with the ruling power and support the armed insurgency. Meanwhile, the National Coordination Committee, based in Damascus, wants to find a solution to the crisis without violence and does not rule out a deal with the regime. Finally, the Kurdish opposition, mostly grouped within the Kurdish Supreme Committee. Unfortunately the various groups that make up the mosaic of the opposition continue to confront each other, including those in coalitions.

Internationally, observation missions sent by the League of Arab States⁴ or by a decision of the UN Security Council⁵ had to suspend their mandates due to breach of the conditions as the parties have not stopped using heavy weapons and have not sufficiently reduced the level of violence. Subsequently, in a joint decision, the UN Secretary General and his counterpart at the League of Arab States appointed Lakhdar Brahimi, a specialist veteran Algerian diplomat in peacekeeping missions, as the new Joint Special Representative for Syria.

Because of the votes against from Russia and China, the United Nations has for months failed to organize and launch concerted actions to help end the escalating violence in Syria, nor has it achieved the adoption of a resolution that would have threatened Damascus with diplomatic and economic sanctions.

⁴ In late 2011.

⁵ Monitoring mission of the United Nations in Syria (UNSMIS) established pursuant to resolution 2043 UNSM.

But it is worth noting the positive action of the whole international community, which achieved, after a chemical weapons arsenal (including sarin) was used against civilians in neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Damascus, on 21 August, causing hundreds of deaths, something that both the rebels and the regime blamed on each other, the Al-Assad regime having Syria join the Chemical Weapons Convention and accept the destruction of existing arsenals and laboratories where these weapons were produced. Resolution 2118 of the Security Council calling for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons in mid-2014 was adopted unanimously.

Finally, two rounds of negotiations have opened in Geneva, two international conferences in order to find a political solution to the conflict: the first one, commonly called Geneva I, in June 2012, and currently, on 22 January 2014, Geneva II. While the text of the first negotiating table established the creation of a “transitional government with full executive powers”, it did not provide any practical solutions on the ground. The second one has the privilege of being able to bring together for the first time government representatives and representatives of the opposition at the same table. The results are not yet clear.

Meanwhile, UNHCR⁶ reports warn that the number of refugees could reach 4 million, and half of the population could be forcibly displaced, reaching 11 million by the end of 2014. If we consider that the UNHCR forecasts to date have always been below the reality on the ground, it can be considered that if no solution is found quickly to the conflict, the presence of refugees in such an amount could, apart from the human drama, be a cause of instability in the area.

Unfortunately, there still seems no sign of a common position among regional and international powers to find a solution and stop the violence. Most observers seek a negotiated solution and a possible reconciliation between the regime and the opposition. With this war, the Middle East is going through a period of exceptional violence and instability. Some observers believe that beyond a civil war or a revolution, a restructuring is emerging of relations between major

⁶ <http://www.unhcr.org/syriarrp6/>

regional powers which could have very serious consequences. And what seems more serious is the increasingly central role that different organizations are playing under the banner of Al Qaeda in all the countries of the region.

With this new encounter, CEMOFPSC has sought to understand and further study the complexity of the situation on the ground, its influence on the regional and international situation, and especially analyzing the great challenge posed by the prevailing humanitarian catastrophe in Syria and neighbouring countries.

2. CONCLUSIONS OF THE MEETING

This seminar arose in the context of the disturbances that have been taking place in Syria since March 2011, within the framework of the Arab Spring. Two years later, the Syrian conflict has spread across the whole country, turning it into a war and resulting in an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

On the eve of the CEMOFPSC seminar in Madrid on 5 June 2013, the situation on the ground was as follows: the Syrian army supported by the Lebanese Hezbollah had won the battle for control of the city of Al Qussair⁷, and troops were beginning to move towards Aleppo⁸ in the north. Meanwhile, the number of displaced persons exceeded one and a half million refugees in neighbouring countries, and more than 4 million internally displaced. The day after the meeting, Austria announced it would withdraw its force of 380 UN peacekeepers from the Golan Heights between Israel and Syria as soon as possible, due to the bitter clashes between rebels and the army in Quneitra, the only border pass between Syria and Israel.

This meeting brought together experts who offered an analysis of the new situation in Syria. The presentations of the speakers and the discussions between them led to the following conclusions:

An attempt was made to understand the role and position of the various countries involved in the conflict: Russia, Iran, the United States, Israel and Europe. Some participants consider that the situation in Syria is getting worse due to the intervention of regional and international powers, and that we are facing a complex situation with different players who have different agendas and priorities, and that the internationalization of the conflict is only exacerbating and prolonging the conflict. It is recommended, therefore, that the international community lets the Syrians themselves resolve their differences.

⁷ Al Qussair is a town in the South-West of Syria that has for a year been the main stronghold of the militia in the uprising in Syria.

⁸ Aleppo is the second largest city in Syria, the former economic capital of the country. The battle for its control was unleashed by the rebels a year ago.

Meanwhile, other participants coincide in considering the events in Syria to be a conflict, being more appropriate to call it a revolution, whose purpose is to remove the current regime, and they consider that the cost of non-intervention is still higher, in terms of human life, than what the cost of foreign intervention could be.

Some participants think that the conflict in Syria is taking on a sectarian, regional dimension. It has echoed the fear of the international community and also of some Arab countries and Syrian citizens about the radical path that rebel forces are taking. Some believe that Syria is currently an open space where different types of organizations confront one another managed by different countries. The role of Islamist organizations and radicals present within the rebel forces, Jubhat Al Nasr and possibly Al Qaida, was analyzed. Some participants believe that they are taking on an increasingly prominent role in the ranks of the rebels and think it is a dangerous phenomenon, which calls into question the credibility and good faith of the rebels, and which could especially lead to the implosion of the nation-state in Syria.

Some participants recommend stopping the violence and allowing dialogue between all government forces and rebels to find a solution.

Others argue that in Syria there is a civil war, not a sectarian war, and that the violence is due to the regime and the inertia of the international community, which does not intervene to stop the violence. We have discussed the upcoming Geneva II conference, and whether its timing is correct and adequately reflects the situation on the ground.

There has been debate about the composition of rebel forces and their current division. Some participants present this division as positive, while others consider it to be another factor in the lack of credibility of these forces. Some argue that 80% of the rebel forces are composed by civilians who have taken up arms, and the rest is the army that has rebelled against the regime. Other participants consider that the Syrian opposition is formed by armed groups, not political parties, and that the true composition of these groups is not known exactly.

Some have recommended that if the rebels want to gain credibility, then they should, following the Palestinian example, move away from the

path of violence and not allow radicalism to gain ground, by making excuses; on the contrary, they should control it.

We have conducted a complete review of the dramatic humanitarian crisis, stressing that the number of refugees and displaced persons is increasing exponentially and are an increasingly hard and complex burden for the other countries in the area to handle, especially Jordan and Lebanon, but also Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. We have comprehensively analyzed the current situation of Palestinian refugees settled in Syria and who also had to flee the country, and the dramatic way of life for Syrians at home and in neighbouring countries, highlighting the plight of the most vulnerable: children.

We have appealed to an end to the dramatic humanitarian situation by looking for a political solution to the conflict.

3. SUMMARY OF THE SEMINAR CONTENTS

3.1. Timing and context of the seminar

Syria is right now a central issue, not only because the civil war is in progress, which is always dramatic, and much more so taking into account local conditions, but because the Middle East could not be imagined without Syria. Since the time of the Roman Empire, Syria has been established as the centre of power. Not to mention the Caliphate of Damascus, which was the origin of the expansion of the Arab and Muslim world. The Ottomans themselves had their centre in this area, in the wilayat of Damascus, which ran from Saudi Arabia through Palestine, Israel, etc., with Damascus as its capital. This reflects the central geopolitical position of Syria within the so-called Fertile Crescent, and it is therefore a country to be given special consideration.

It has been over two years since the beginning of the Arab Spring and the same winds of change that are affecting the region are also sweeping across Syria. Two days ago, the latest report of the UN commission spoke of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by both the Assad regime and the opposition⁹. The figures disclosed include about seventy thousand deaths. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an independent organization based in London, speaks of ninety-five thousand. All in all it is a great tragedy for many families.

The seminar on Syria comes at a very appropriate time, because now is the time when we need to understand Syria better. There are preparations for an international conference in Geneva, which will be called Geneva II¹⁰. The way the conference is going to be framed will determine whether it will be possible find a solution to the situation in Syria or if it will continue for many more years in the same vein, with the bloodshed we are seeing today. This is the part where we have to understand the problem and consider the issue in a proper way.

⁹ Report by the UN's Committee of Independent Experts on Syria of 4 June, 2013. <http://www.un.org/apps/newsFr/storyF.asp?NewsID=30451#.UuZX4hz2Eb0>

¹⁰ The international conference on Syria took place in January 2014. Geneva II was scheduled for July 2013.

With the new requirements on the use of chemical weapons, the active involvement of foreign elements in the war, the humanitarian crisis with the influx of refugees that affects neighbouring countries, the lack of opposition unity, there is a great need to re-evaluate the situation and act accordingly.

A period of instability is being experienced at the moment, because no-one knows where the situation is going. Right now it's very difficult to understand what is happening, unless we begin to look with a different perspective, changing the view on the known principles, which is causing the confusion that we see around the reports on the Syrian conflict.

The crisis in Syria is part of a global crisis called the Arab Spring, and the Arab Spring is now at the crossroads, facing a lot of challenges, and Syria, of course, is no exception. The problem is: What will happen the day after? We all agree, of course, with the objective of removing the despotic regime of Al-Assad or any other despotic regime in the region, but the problem is what will come next? Because we know that in all other cases, including Egypt, the only alternative ready to replace the dictatorial regime has always been, and still is, Islamic force, regardless of its ability to seize power and win elections. But democracy is not limited to the polls, and if you look at Egypt, for example, clashes and civil opposition to the new regime of the Muslim Brotherhood have been even greater than those against the Mubarak regime. There is therefore a real dilemma. But this weakness of the non-Islamic opposition should not be the cause for a dictatorial regime to remain. But how do we really deal with this new situation? This is the real dilemma.

Describing the events in Syria within the framework of the Arab Spring is perhaps hazardous.

One has to have respect for the Arab Spring, as it is a movement that has its strength within each country and those abroad do not know its full potential, as well as elements related to culture, beliefs, practices, relations, which have many nuances, and which must undoubtedly be left to evolve to create their own reality. You cannot come and, for example, talk about democracy, when even in the West there is a single model of democracy. If the international community, which is non-Arab Muslim, wants to export an idea of democracy, we should ask about the

model of democracy: the United States, or from some other country that has a social or constitutional structure in this or that form? It is necessary to respect the movement of the Arab Spring, therefore, and it is necessary at the same time to be present in this process, offering dialogue and a Western view, because we can never impose a reality from outside that is far removed from the roots of this socio- religious combination, which the Arab- Muslim world is.

We are seeing the collapse of states, a twentieth-century phenomenon that has not only been limited to the Middle East, but which is worldwide. The states of the twentieth century have been the strongest in the entire history of mankind. Never before has there been a period in which an institution controlled the lives of individuals so much and where wealth generation has been so dependent on it. If we consider Turkey for example, which was the model for the region, the Kemalism imposed by Kemal Ataturk built up a strong state in the early twentieth century based on the model of a German figure, Bismarck, and inspired by a country, France. Thus, overnight, it caused the abandoning of the Arabic alphabet, dress, religion, history, literature and even hats. Maybe the events since 2011 are the beginning of the disintegration of the state's role in the world, not just in the Middle East.

The main problem is not the conflict itself or the struggle for democracy, or how to call a dictatorial regime into question, but the future of the nation-states. This seminar should not be dealing with democratization, but the threats facing the concept of the State in this period. This is the key point in the Syria conflict: Syria could be the symbol of what can be learned from the second wave of the Arab Spring in this regard.

We are facing a new paradigm that goes completely against what has been known until now. It has nothing to do with the old order, not only the purpose of the treaty of Versailles, but including the order imposed after the Second World War, or the Hungarian revolt in 1956, etc. It is a completely different situation and could be an absolute nightmare for the West.

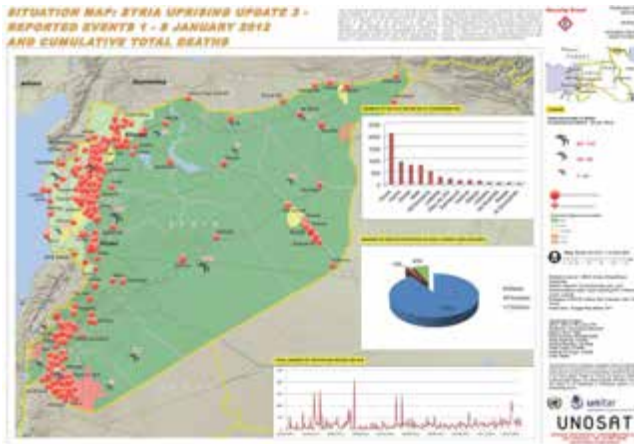
We should remember that the position of the United States and the West regarding the establishment of democracy in the Arab world, which has prevailed in recent years, has only been a priority for a couple of years

ago, and we must ask why. Ten years ago, no one in the Western world uttered the word “democracy” to refer to the Arab world, given that during the last 15 years it has been essential to freeze the political situation in the Arab and Muslim world in order to preserve the security of the world Western. Therefore, any attempt to democratize societies was halted and dictatorships that seemed more reliable were supported.

Western countries in general, and the United States and Russia, are democratic perhaps from the point of view of domestic politics, but from the point of view of foreign policy they do not apply their own principles, they only apply interests; not to mention Israel, which is a democracy from a Hebrew point of view, but not an Arab one.

It is too early to talk about democracy and democratization. More time is needed, perhaps years, before we can speak of a real democratic alternative to despotic regimes.

In studying the processes of revolution and changes more closely, the most radical and best organized groups are those that end up taking control. This has been seen on many occasions in the former Soviet Union, Egypt and other countries, and is what will end up happening in Syria. European countries have an ethical responsibility not to repeat the mistake of Iraq.



Source: UNITAR

Map 2. Conflict situation in Syria, first week of 2012, as shown by UNOSAT (The United Nations' UNITAR Operational Satellite Applications Programme)



Source: Political Geography Now

Map 3. Distribution of the fighting and the forces in the field, 25 June 2013

3.2. The regime and the reasons for the uprising

Libya and Syria have been the two countries that have had the most violent and bloody uprisings, because of their autocratic and oppressive regimes and the lengthy survival of their structures and dictators.

One participant commented on the contents of the working paper circulated prior to the seminar and that dealt with the conflict. This said that the conflict in Syria began on 26 January 2011. It is a matter of definition, of course, but for this participant the revolution in Syria began on 18 March 2011 with the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations that left dozens dead and wounded in Damascus, Daraa and Banias¹¹. The military conflict in Syria began in late September 2011, six months after the beginning of the peaceful uprising. The date of the militarization of the conflict has been set by the regime itself, it being Bashar Al-Assad himself who spoke of September as the start of military confrontations.

There are many elements that may lead to confusion and not all the questions that arise today have an easy answer; they are questions that can be considered from different viewpoints. It is, for example, questioned whether the veto system of the UN Security Council is a legitimate instrument and if the responsibility to protect civilians is still valid, or if it is still applicable, and a series of question marks are therefore raised in relation to the conflict in Syria, which only serve to confuse and make the situation more complex. However, Syria actually has a simple explanation: people are rebelling against an oppressive regime that has remained in power for over 35 years. It is not difficult to understand; the real complication is in Washington, Brussels, or the United Nations. Washington is actually much more complicated than Syria.

After two years and three months of carnage, bloodshed, bombings, etc. with the use of all types of conventional and unconventional weapons, one can speak cynically of the “red line” on chemical weapons, yet ninety-five thousand people have died from non-conventional weapons and not chemical weapons. When Obama speaks of a red line, he was talking about the possibility that the Syrians might use chemical weapons

¹¹ <http://www.rfi.fr/moyen-orient/20110505-le-mouvement-contestation-flechit-pas>

outside their borders. The Syrians believe that nobody cares about their domestic situation. This is the explanation for the uprising and also for the increased radicalization within the revolution.

Our knowledge of Syria is based on myths, the Syrian myth as one participant calls it. In Western countries people talk of an Alawite regime in Syria. This is a big mistake because the Syrian regime never had a religious base. All religions and all minorities have been and are being manipulated. Since the 70s, an effort has been made to try and divide the civil society to transform it into a community society, pushing everyone towards their community, tribe, region or family, with no intention of creating any type of citizenship. The Alawite¹² community, which represents 20% of the population, has been particularly discriminated against by this regimen, and has been pushed towards its involvement in the military sector. In fact, the Alawite region is one of the poorest in Syria. There is no infrastructure, no investment. In addition, a high percentage of Syrian political prisoners are Alawites, as they have belonged to the opposition movement since the 70s.

The second myth is to consider the Syrian regime as secular and protecting all minorities. However, the reality is that they have manipulated the different communities, including the majority, the Sunnis, and the minority groups, the Christians and Alawites, who have been abducted by the regime. As for secularism, from 1960-1970, the date of the coup d'état by Hafez Assad, father of the current president, more mosques have been built in Syria than since the beginning of Islam, supporting the extension of this religion in society.

In fact, the Syrian regime has never been the protector of Christians, as it has never protected civil society. In fact, the percentage of Christians in 1970 was 5%, and before the uprisings it had already fallen to 1.6% of the Syrian population. The abandonment of Syria is not only caused by religious matters of course, but also by economic and family reasons, etc.

¹² Branch of Islam, to which President Bashar Al-Assad belongs. Most Alawites live in Syria, but there are also communities in Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and in the countries of the New World.

Third myth: the Syrian regime acts as resistance against Israel. Since 1974, the border between Syria and Israel has been the most peaceful in the area. If we consider the experience of the civil war in Lebanon, the number of Palestinians killed in the refugee camps in 1976 or ejected from them later in the 80s, something which happened to Yasser Arafat himself from his refuge in Tripoli, all caused by the Syrian army¹³, statistically the battles have caused many more Palestinian casualties than Israeli actions during the 1982 invasion.

The last time, when the Israelis bombed the outskirts of Damascus¹⁴, they immediately sent a message to Al-Assad assuring him that the attack was not against his regime but against weapons destined for Hezbollah. It was a very clear message. Since the beginning of the events, the cousin of Bashar Al-Assad said in an interview in the *Wall Street Journal* that “Israel’s security depends on the stability of our regime”. It was also a very clear message.

The ideology of the Syrian regime has been inspired by European fascism, a utopia that had some explanation: it wanted to promote an Arab nationalism that had never existed before, established on a secular basis, because it was felt that the big problem in the region was, on the one hand, religious fragmentation and, on the other hand, the omnipotence of the religious Muslim factor. The Arab Baath Socialist party was then created, with a secular ideology to transcend the religious subject and overcome divisions. It had two branches, one which ruled Iraq until 2003 (at the time of the removal of Saddam Hussein when the invasion of Iraq by the Americans took place) and the other that continues in power in Syria. Baathism brought certain elements of

¹³ The participant refers to episodes of the civil war that took place in Lebanon from 1975-1990, as well as the war between Israel and Lebanon in 1982. The Syrian army and its government were involved in and took part in these events, as well as various Palestinian militias, including the PLO under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. In fact, there were very important battles between the Syrian army and Palestinian militias in the years after the 1982 war, the result of which was the final expatriation of Yasser Arafat in Lebanon.

¹⁴ Israeli aircraft bombed Damascus in May 2013.
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324266904578461841925341434>

stability between the various factions at some delicate moments, but it did not bring freedom.

The fourth myth is about the socialist regime. Since the 90s, the regime began a process of economic liberalization and privatization. In fact, the economic component has been very important in sparking uprisings, including the urban-rural imbalance, the impoverishment of the middle class, the imbalances caused in part by the liberalization of a formerly socialist economy, and which have largely favoured nepotism: members of the Al-Assad family who have taken advantage of State privatization and contributed to increase the concentration of wealth into a few hands. 60% of the private sector in Syria is owned by the cousin of President al-Assad, including companies in banking, tourism, mobile telephones, gasoline, etc., and this situation, together with the high level of corruption and the extent of poverty in Syrian society, was also one of the reasons why the riots broke out.

Europeans are paying dearly for past mistakes, and this is why most of its relations with the Arab world have failed since at least the First World War. With Syria the error was the creation after World War II of a new independent Syria, which for the next 25 years experienced an era of violence and instability characterized by a succession of coups until the regime of Hafez Al-Assad, who, while not justifiable, has brought some stability to Syria. Syrian inherited the situation that we Europeans created in the region, and this also applies to most countries in the region.

3.3. The opposition

The opposition has on many occasions shown itself to be divided, and internationally this lack of cohesion and inability to find a common platform is much criticized. But critics should qualify their opinions and try to understand the state of Arab society, which has lived under a dictatorship for decades, having no space for expression, with the media controlled and political parties banned, etc. How can we expect, then, that the opposition groups formed will overnight be experts on political issues, able to manage negotiations and give an adequate picture of what is going on?

The differences can be explained by the ideological diversity of each party involved in the opposition; some come from Islamic backgrounds,

others are on the left or liberals, etc. They are all people who are trying to find a way to manage the joint work, with many difficulties. The Provisional Magna Carta adopted at the Cairo meeting in 2012 was signed by all those present, the Muslim Brotherhood, leftists, communists, Arab nationalists and liberals.

There are many projects, developed by Syrian opponents living outside or inside the country, in relation to the day after. We should not doubt their abilities in an area where they are very committed. Searching on the internet you will find hundreds of articles and studies on the future of the country. One such project is called "*The day after for a new Syria*". It is a 130-page document that provides a vision of the future in many issues: economic, social, cultural areas, reform of the security and justice sectors during the transition, even including a description of the management of a constitutional commission to discuss the future constitution.

Their views on the nature of the State, the identity of the State, democracy and the civil status for all Syrian citizens are very clear. Of course, after two years of bloody battles, torture, the use of weapons of mass destruction, there is now a fear on the part of Muslims and non-Muslims, secular and non-secular groups, and even the Muslim Brotherhood, of the radicalization of the movement.

The radicalization of the opposition movement may have been a normal process because opponents have not found any support or help.

As we have heard in the media and read in the press, the Syrian rebels received different types of aid from Turkey, the West and the Arab countries of the Gulf, the Persian Gulf, Qatar, etc.

This information is really exaggerated. The support usually occurs in the media and is expressed during the meetings of the Group of Friends of the Syrian people¹⁵, but after the meetings everything remains as

¹⁵ The Group of Friends of the Syrian People is an international group, promoted by France and formed by countries and bodies that meet regularly on the subject of Syria. This group was created in response to the veto by Russia and China of a Security Council resolution condemning Syria. Its first meeting took place in Tunis in February 2012, then in Istanbul in April 2012, in Paris in July 2012 and in Qatar in July 2013.

empty promises and no one really cares about what is happening on the ground.

Witnesses, journalists and humanitarian workers who have visited northern Syria have been able to see with their own eyes the amount of weapons in the hands of the rebels. They are handmade, and most of them come from the Syrian army itself, from corruption or defections, but they have also received machine guns and rocket launches from foreign powers. However, all this means nothing of importance compared with the 72 tanks, the MIG 23 planes etc, which the official army possess. Only the jihadist movement, Al Nusra, has weapons and resources to meet their own needs and also for distribution in the areas it controls.

Speaking of arming the Free Syrian Army involves a high level of hypocrisy, since it is not receiving any weapons, while jihadist groups do. Where do they come from? You would have to ask the West, because weapons cross borders, from Turkey to be specific, and this country cannot make decisions on this issue without the approval of NATO, of which it forms a part.

A new piece of information announced that the regime received some fighters from Yemen¹⁶ to fight in Syria. Syria has become a place, an open space, for a new regional and international cold war.

The European Union, now, after more than two years of fighting, talks about the possibility of arming the revolution within a few months, starting in August. Why? has it not yet decided? We have to ask ourselves this question, we must admit that there is a problem and find a solution.

Does the opposition represent a credible alternative? This is a rhetorical question actually denoting that there is no credible alternative, because basically this regime has ensured that for 40 years. But this can also be seen from a different perspective: the diversity we see in the opposition is a very healthy sign of how Syria could be in the future: different groups have different views, different opinions, different alliances, different fears, and this is what makes up a healthy national society.

¹⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19780501>

The group that truly represents the real opposition in Syria today is a military faction, not a civil faction. So, the day after the removal of Al-Assad as a political and ideological alternative, what kind of alternative will this opposition present? This is not merely a secondary issue, it is the real problem, and perhaps the international community is not really sure it wants to give direct support to this military opposition, because it is very ambiguous, there is no clear difference between the various factions on the ground, radicals and non-radicals. This is the main problem that the opposition should face to gain credibility.

The problem of the division of the opposition has been mentioned, but there is really no division: all the opposition groups have one single goal: to change the regime. Obviously there are many ideologies within the opposition, as there are here in Spain, between the PSOE and PP. You cannot fully unite the ideologies of all opposition groups to fuse them into one, it's impossible. Proposing this is perhaps an excuse to try to delay the solution of the problem.

Hoping that all the groups that make up the opposition will agree around a table and sign the same thing, and that they will have a strong leader, is actually a misconception of the twentieth century; it is actually wishing that Al-Assad or Mubarak or Kemal Ataturk remain.

The diversity of the opposition is not a good thing, because the parties and the communities in the opposition should be united and have the same goals, if not they will not be able to defeat or face up to the Al-Assad regime. If the opposition is fragmented and does not know where it is going, its position will remain weak, regardless of whether the Assad supporters at the conference in Geneva are not very representative. Furthermore, the various opposition factions have not agreed on the composition of a representation for the next Geneva II conference, which means that different factions have different programmes, different dynamics of power, etc., and this raises the doubt about whether the Syrian people see Assad as the only solution for them.

Speaking of radicalism, who introduced radicalism in the Syrian conflict? 95% of the Syrian population is Muslim and moderate. Where do the radicals come from? If they really have more weapons and more money, what is the source? The problem and the fear is that there are radical

groups outside Syria who send money to the interior. In addition, this support is increasing every day through the inaction of the rest of the world powers, especially the West, to stop the slaughter. Another problem is the powers around Syria: Iraq, Iran, Russia, etc., which are directly involved in Syria.

The problem of Syria and the European Union regarding non-intervention could be due, perhaps, to the fear that exists in the European Union that terrorism could infiltrate the opposition it is supporting and end up taking control? Clearly it now appears that the interior ministers of several countries, including Spain, have warned that the return of nationals currently fighting in Syria might pose a real problem for the West. There are many people from Ceuta who are fighting against the regime of Al-Assad; the same applies with the British, French, Belgians, etc.

It is perhaps this fear that explains why the European Union is not prepared to intervene more seriously in Syria, as in Libya, taking into account also what happened in this country. Solving one problem created another, which has exceeded limits and reached the so-called Sahel belt, where Al-Qaeda and terrorists have established themselves in a far more extensive area than the previous one¹⁷.

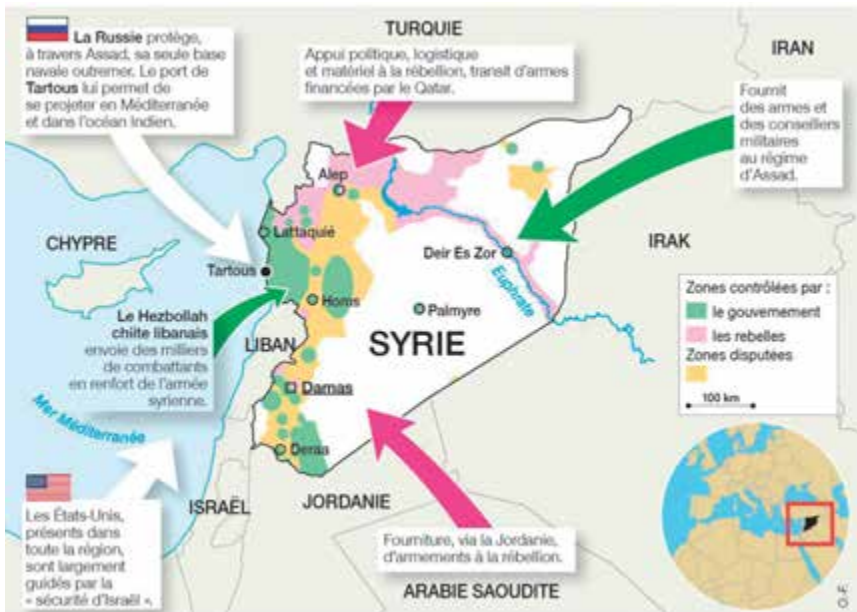
We cannot only talk about Libya as an example of the defeat of the change process that is happening in the Arab world, and as a bad experience. It is necessary to delve much deeper into what is happening now in Libya, especially in relation to the dynamics of civil society and the formation of political parties to put an end to this idea. Libya is not a failure; it is a more positive process than in Egypt or Tunisia.

Secondly, it is useful for Western countries to build a philosophy based on fear of terrorism, but from the beginning they knew very well that there was no terrorism in Syria; it is an imaginary threat.

Brussels and other European capitals already have lists on their security files in their countries of the people going to Syria to support the Jihad

¹⁷ In fact, a few months before the seminar, in January 2013, Western and African armies intervened in Mali, supported by the United Nations to halt the advance of the jihadists in the north of the country.

and their final destination. One participant was in Istanbul and asked the police at the airport: “What are these men doing here?”, and to which they replied: “They are going for the Jihad, to Syria”. This logic is the same as that applied by Bashar al Assad when he sends Mujahideen to Iraq.



Source: Carte Pascal Leseure (Ouest-France).
globserveur.blogspot.fr

Map 5. Geopolitics of the Syrian conflict

3.4. The role of state players

In Syria today the conflict is not only between the regime and the opposition, it has another regional dimension, so that it is not possible to assess or look at the problem only from its local or domestic dimension. We must take into consideration, at present, the new ever-increasing role that non-Arab regional players, such as Turkey and Iran, are playing in all the problems and crises of the Arab world.

The countries involved in the region have many common characteristics shared with Syria. In the first place, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey have borders with that country and its people share many social and religious particularities. The tribes of Syria, from Aleppo to Daraa, are the same as in the rest of the region, especially in Jordan. In Lebanon the ties are even stronger: the families themselves from the interior of Syria are established in both countries.

In 1999, when all the American conservatives urged Bush to invade Iraq, an article was published stating that reducing a hostile Iraq to submission would bring negative consequences for the West. Now we could say the same for Lebanon and Syria. At the moment, the only two stable actors that have not suffered political change in this part of the world are Iran and Israel, while on the other hand new players have emerged such as Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and, of course, Qatar.

The close relationship between Iran and Syria is not like a Catholic marriage, but rather like a pleasure marriage, based only on interest and not ideology; nor is it based on sharing the Shiite confession¹⁸. If you know anything about theology, the difference between the Alawite and Shia faiths is huge. Indeed, the Shiites would rather have a relationship with the Sunnis than with the Alawites, because they consider the latter to be heretics. They are different religious faiths.

Iran considers its alliance with the regime of Bashar Al-Assad as its main regional achievement since the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and it is also its pillar to preserve or maintain its widespread influence in Iraq and Lebanon. So it is hardly conceivable that Iran will abandon Syria or easily give up. However, the Syrian conflict may be a real battle of “*to be or not to be*” for Iran in the region. It involves not losing the support from Syria established in its current regime. The same applies to Russia.

Dealing with the Libyan crisis, especially with respect to Russia, has had a negative impact, and we could even say that Syria is paying the price. In Libya, Russia supported the Security Council in the international

¹⁸ The Shiites are the majority in Iran. The family of Bashar Al-Assad belongs to the Alawite confession.

intervention led by the West, but received nothing in return, so it will do anything to ensure this is not repeated in Syria. We are facing a real problem in Syria. It is not something that can be easily solved by sending troops or aid; it is taking on an increasingly confrontational tone that appears to be increasing.

Russia does not have a military base in Syria, contrary to what all the Western media wrongly broadcast. It has military facilities in the port of Tartous¹⁹, which is not the same. In fact, Russia has many interests other than those in Syria. It knows that the Assad regime is over, and it aims to be paid dearly for abandoning it. They will only negotiate with the opposition if it can be demonstrated that it has a stronger political weight in the balance of power.

The Russians think that Western countries must take responsibility for Syria. In fact, Syria is now paying the price for past mistakes, for the Libyan experience, the Iraq failure, the question of Afghanistan, etc. As for the Russians, they have many other priorities: the energy issue, the subject of Central Asia, the issue of Georgia, etc.

In giving a brief and cold introduction to Russian policy in the area, in the first place one should look at Russia as a great bear, big, but very scared. Those who have never been to Russia might think it's huge, very powerful, immense, but this is not the case when it comes to warm waters: they have very few miles of coastline, which means that just an inch of these waters is important. So from Abkhazia and as far as Tartous, it will not leave any region of this coastline, because it is vital for her. The idea must be accepted that Russia is in the Mediterranean area to stay, and Putin definitely has very clear ideas about this.

Firstly, Russia is against the principle of intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, so it will defend its stance and this is seen in the obligation to continue arming the Syrian regime, as it has always done. Secondly, they are very afraid of terrorism and if the rebels end up gaining an advantage in Syria and then continue towards the Caucasus, Russia could face a very serious situation. It should be remembered that there is a war going on in the Caucasus, with many

¹⁹ Syrian coastal city which has the country's second port after Latakia.

daily casualties, but it is little known. Finally, there is the principle of the protection of Christians; Syria is still probably one of the last places in the Islamic world where Christians live more freely.

The only superpower that really interferes in Syria is Russia, with military officials fighting and weapons coming in every day from this country. Russia is probably the most important external actor involved inside Syria, and is afraid of two things that are emerging from the Arab Spring: Islam and Democracy. In fact, Russia is the last country that can be described as democratic.

Until now there has been a battle of wills within the international community, there is a confrontation between supporters and opponents of Assad, and there is also an intellectual game based on conflicting accounts, which is based on the idea that if someone supports Al-Assad, then they say Assad is bad, of course, but explain that what might come next could be worse; on the contrary, if someone is against Al-Assad, they highlight the contribution of the regime to the confusion. This game prevents us looking beyond Al-Assad, and causes confusion. Against this, the main position in international policy is dominated by the United States, but it really is a non-position. It is a situation in which the leader of one side is not leading and there is no alternative leadership, so that this side is crippled by a lack of leadership. This is the legacy of the war in Iraq and the legacy of the war on terror. In fact, the results of the Gallup survey shows that 60% of Americans are against their country's intervention in Syria.

What is the U.S. policy? What is it doing? It invaded Iraq, overthrew the regime of Saddam Hussein, gave power to another sect so that it could kill itself with the former and they destroyed the country. What is it doing with the problem of nuclear weapons? It has been engaged in dialogue with the Iranian regime for years, and it is uncertain whether it is a policy that aims for Iran to really become a nuclear power, because it is hard to understand. Meanwhile, we know full well that Iran is gaining political points against Western policy.

It does not appear that the United States wishes to be directly involved, but that does not mean it will offer its full support to the side that is fighting against the regime. Do not forget what happened in Iraq, for example, when the United States, even considering Iran as the main

enemy regime against its interests, gave it the green light to obtain influence and space in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Today this could be repeated.

The Syrians are suffering and paying the price of the indifference and immature policy of the West, especially French diplomacy, which makes statements every day contradicting what it said the day before. It is hard to understand what it wants; the politicians don't even know.

It has been two and a half years and still the conflict continues. Many countries have donated a lot of money to support and help the Syrian people. But the political position of the United States and the Western world towards Syria is not understood. They had a different policy towards Egypt, Tunisia and even Libya, and their revolutions consequently had a faster end.

The problem with the case of Syria now, especially in Europe, is that there is no knowledge of Syrian society, its economic situation, etc. Westerners are only knowledgeable about the geopolitical importance of the region because it is a neighbour of Israel. In relation to Syria, Europeans and Americans only take into account that which could pose a threat to the stability and security of Israel. This is why they have allowed the situation to be as it is today.

As for Israel, it takes advantage of every opportunity to continue negotiating with the Palestinians indefinitely without really wishing to find a solution to the problem, and at the same time, with the support and pressure from the United States, to obtain approval from the rest of the Arab world for its Israeli scheme for the region. This is politics. You only have to recall the speech by Condoleezza Rice and later Obama in Cairo. What progress has been made since then in relation to the Middle East? What has been achieved? Anything new regarding the Israeli-Palestinian problem?

An article by the well-known Israeli politician Yossi Beili, written a few days ago, sheds light on the current situation, and which more or less resembles the one existing at the time of the invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein: it is necessary to seize the opportunity offered by the United States to Israel, from the mouth of its minister Kerry, to resume

peace talks and seek a solution to the eternal Palestinian-Israeli problem, offering financial incentives to the Palestinians to renounce setting preconditions for negotiations.

If we study the internal debate in Israel, we find that most decision-makers in Israel want to keep Al-Assad in place. There are three different schools of thought in Israel: the security forces, the military and the politicians. Only the military said that they had no reservation regarding the possible removal of Al-Assad, but added: *“better the devil you know than the devil you don’t”*. In fact, since 1974, the regime in Syria has maintained its northern border with Israel as the most stable and secure in the history of the latter country.

Egypt faces huge internal challenges with its new government, which is considered non-democratic, even though the current government of Mohamed Morsi came to power through the ballot box, and free elections. However, the form of governing the country is creating great internal opposition. This situation has an impact on the regional role of Egypt, and it will therefore only have a moderate interest of being directly involved in Syria.

In fact, from the empty speeches related to Syria by President Morsi, it follows that it has no intention of action. In addition, the new regime in Egypt has recently moved closer to Iran after the fall of Mubarak, and is unwilling to enter into open conflict with this country; on the contrary, what it currently intends is to build a new relationship based on cooperation with Iran, and it will not sacrifice this path now to support the opposition in Syria.

3.5. The role of non-state players

The events in Syria belong to what can be labelled the second wave of the Arab Spring, which does not seem to be happening between the regimes and the opposition, but is characterized by a sectarian and regional conflict par excellence. It is taking place around two axes, the first led by Iran and supported by Russia, the second is represented by the Sunnis who are mainly supported from Turkey and some other Gulf states, and to a lesser extent the United States and the West in general. These two axes, sectarian and regional, will probably make up the future

of the Middle East, and Syria seems to be the beginning of the second wave of the Arab Spring.

This phenomenon of the regionalization of any internal crisis is also synchronized with other phenomena, regardless of the key points in Syria, and it is made special by the growing role of non-state players: conflicts or negotiations today cannot be solely limited to state players. There are currently organizations, movements and armed factions that are playing a very important and growing role. They were originally called “Militias” and this phenomenon was limited to some cases like Lebanon or Afghanistan, but today it is spreading throughout the Middle East: there is Hezbollah in Lebanon, Al Nosra in Syria and the Mujahideen in Egypt, who have appeared on the scene for the first time and are playing a very harmful role in the region. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda is directly involved in some of these armed factions. This phenomenon is very dangerous and may get out of control in the future.

The problem in Syria comes at a sensitive time, insofar as there is a power struggle in the Middle East, by Iran, with the support of Hezbollah and Hamas for the regime in Damascus. So this core region of the Middle East, both ideologically and politically, is fighting both: Israel and the United States.

We have the example of the Battle of Al Qusayr²⁰, in which, for the first time and publicly, Hezbollah fought alongside the Syrian army against a coalition of mainly Syrian Sunni rebels. This is something that had not happened before, it seems to be a kind of doctrinal military coalition that may represent the new sectarian image of the Middle East. We should not neglect or downplay the danger.

The word sectarian is a very negative term. Syria is 70% Sunni and it is a bit absurd to consider Salafists, Jihadis, Sufis, secular Muslims, tribes

²⁰ The Battle of Al Quseir began on 19 May 2013, when Syrian government army troops, supported by the Lebanese organization Hezbollah invaded and attacked the town of Al Quseir, dominated by the rebels. After weeks of fighting, the city fell and the government managed to control Al-Quseir on 5 June 2013, one of the most momentous defeats suffered by the rebels.

and people with regional and ideological differences, even communists, as one single block; it is impossible to simplify what is happening and to reduce it solely to a sectarian struggle.

We should raise the question about the role of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is a major player in the Sunni camp; they are in government in Egypt and have far greater political ambitions regarding the issue of Syria. Will they be able to directly interfere in this conflict?²¹

The Muslim Brotherhood will always be a puzzle as a player. Why? Because, in theory, they are the central power on the Sunni side, but they have their own political interests, and this makes it possible, motivated by reasons such as enmity with the United States, Israel, or anyone else, that they might cooperate with another Shiite faction led by Iran. Their great capacity for political manoeuvre makes it difficult to classify them in the traditional manner, confining them to one field or another. Hamas is a relevant example, it is only a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and has the support of Iran. When it comes to the Muslim Brotherhood, being Sunni or Shiite is not a real political objective.

In fact, the current stance of the Muslim Brotherhood is very similar to the one adopted by the Jordanian government during the second Gulf War against Saddam Al Hussein, but it is at the same time opposed to the international intervention led by the United States and the West, so it is contradictory, halfway between one thing and another.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood also have a problem with the secular opposition parties. The latter accused them of trying to make an alliance with them, but the day after, when the regime changes, they could manipulate power and dominate the political scene, as they did in Egypt.

²¹ President Mohamed Morsi, from the Muslim Brotherhood, was elected president of Egypt on 30 June 2012. A year later, thousands of people and the army questioned his government and managed to dismiss him in July 2013. He is currently under arrest and tried for inciting murder of his detractors during his period of government.

3.6. Prospects for Peace

To be able to speak of the future, we must stop the war, a war that is not a civil one, but against civilians. And to stop the war, a political solution is needed.

This political solution to this conflict is far from being achieved and perhaps the results of the military operations on the ground could reveal a new balance of power and, accordingly, negotiations could be conducted to find a political solution.

Through the UN and the Security Council, with the Geneva document of last year, and the new conference scheduled, there is an attempt to open up a legal path, i.e. a political way to reduce violence and provide a basis for a political transition to end the violence, with the participation of the entire Syrian population.

To achieve any political settlement you must start negotiations, working on the basis that no agreement is ideal; in negotiations, sometimes you give up something and sometimes you are granted more. In the case of Syria, the best way to start negotiations is through the framework of the Geneva conference.

The Geneva negotiations offer the best working framework, and should therefore be supported. The destruction in Syria is not inevitable, it should not be considered as such. The Syrian nation is very old and has the internal resources needed to find a way out of the crisis with the help of the international community, especially Russia, which has a great responsibility in this.

The Arab Spring was triggered by the internal evolution of the different societies, it is not the result of coincidence or a sociological evolution generated by the situation in several countries. Now, faced with the situation in Syria, it is necessary to maintain a positive attitude and be constructive in spite of the fact that everything we see is absolutely devastating and negative.

All societies, governments and other institutions should work in order to support the initiative of the UN Envoy Ibrahim, because it is the last

chance for peace. If a solution to the militarization of the situation is not achieved, it would mean the end of the Syrian state. It is not an abstract idea, it is a reality, and that is why we should do everything possible to avoid reaching this situation.

Negotiation and dialogue to find a political solution are very important, but good words and hope are just not enough. For the Geneva II conference the regime prepared a delegation of irrelevant members, with no real power or authority to change things. The regime only considered a means to buy time and continue with their attacks, with Russian and Iranian support, until the end.

What is happening now internationally is very important. There are fears that the Syrian opposition at the Geneva conference will capitulate, apologize for the revolt and ask Bashar Al-Assad to remain as head of government, but this is impossible. A move in this direction could perhaps cost another 500,000 deaths; it would be a waste of time. We are facing a regime that is a master manipulator, which will play the game very well as long as the opposition is overcome, and democracies do not understand this type of game.

In the case of Syria there will not necessarily be a victorious camp or party that easily defeats the other, but it could lead to some sort of win win situation, even though not 50% -50 %, but with different percentages for each party.

A consensus is always necessary before making important decisions and reaching a consensus on the Syrian issue is very difficult because it is very polarized and has different political readings: one of these presents it as a plot by the CIA; another as a U.S. trap against the resistance; another sees it as an Israeli plot; some see it as a war between Sunnis and Shiites; others are afraid that a war will break out between Christians and Muslims, especially in Lebanon, because most of the refugees in this country are Muslims and the balance between the two religions in Lebanon is very delicate, so it could be threatened again by this situation.

Negotiations might lead to a solution, but it must go hand in hand with a certain balance of power, and the Free Syrian Army has to participate in them, composed of Syrian military officials who have defected, and

many civilians who have been involved in demonstrations at the beginning of the uprising: secular and moderate Islamists who believe in Islam in Syria, which is very open. Syria has been able to live with other communities for two thousand years, it is not necessary, therefore, to teach it to manage its future.

And the downside is Islamization, the resurgence of inter-religious integration movements. That is, after the Arab Spring, with the need for dialogue and the need to understand, the need for different cultures and religions to get to know each other mutually, there has been an increase in religious integration movements, indicating that as a society becomes better known, there are more opportunities for dialogue.

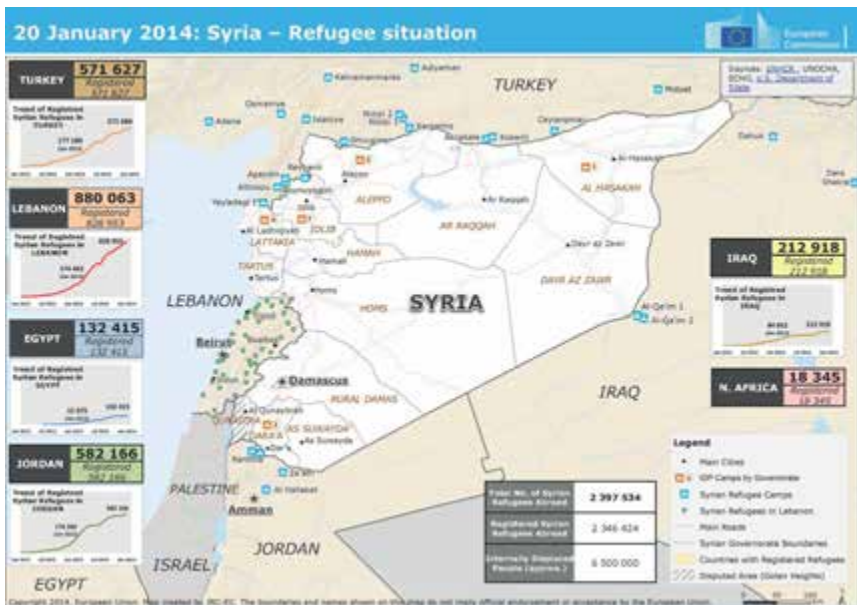
Ethics do not count any longer in politics, what matters now is to compare what is better and what is detestable, and it also seems that the West is now betting on the detestable, that is the worst option; Westerners do not care about the large number of Syrians dead, and so the events are taking this dramatic hue. Stopping the violence is the only way to hope for a better change in the region and in Syria in particular.

If anything had been learned from the last big problems in the Middle East in recent years, such as Afghanistan, Iraq or others, we should have said: "Syria is an internal matter within the Arab Spring; we must support this need for democracy, a new regime, a new opportunity and a new challenge that most of the Arab world is trying to achieve, some on the right track and others on the wrong one. Give us Syrians the chance for once to organize our own affairs, with outside help, but without external intervention, not mixed up with the specific interests of each country, region or global interest". But regional interest has unfortunately taken over in Syria gradually through the influence of the various groups, providing weapons and taking advantage of the situation.

The international community, and especially the United States and Russia, has to intervene, but it has to intervene in the right direction, not by escalating the violence in Syria, allowing new elements not directly related to the internal situation to become involved, and helping to isolate the problem by forbidding Israel from stirring things

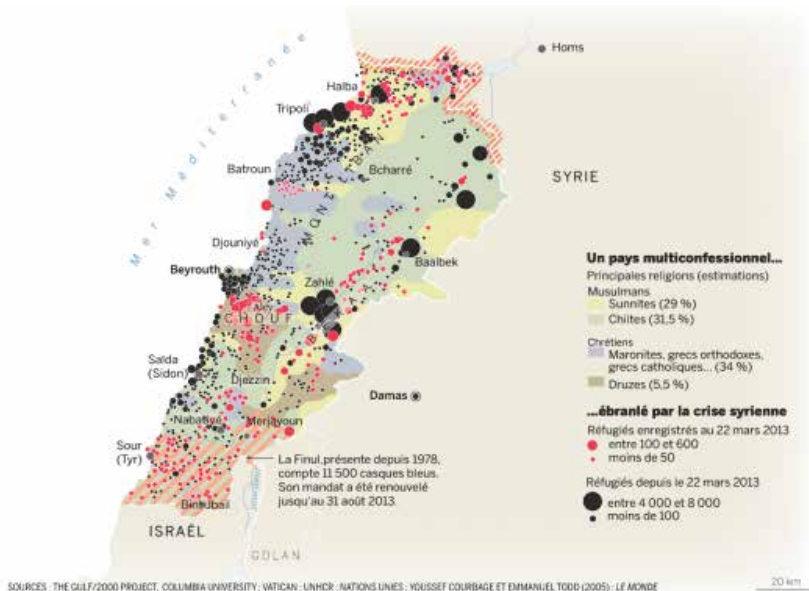
up, or Saudi Arabia from allowing Al-Qaida to get involved in the fighting, or advising calm from Turkey. But the main international players are not acting this way; they are only concerned about their own interests or the agendas of their allies. Thus, United States is following the guidelines of Israeli policy in the Middle East. This is the difficulty: it could have done much more; there are more reasonable ways to help the Syrians.

3.7. The humanitarian crisis



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Map 6. Distribution of Syrian refugees, on 20 January 2014, in neighbouring countries and settlements in countries



Source: Le Monde

Map 7. Distribution of Syrian refugees in Lebanese villages and towns, 2013

The question now concerns the future: the situation not only has a humanitarian component, but also economic and security elements; and, above all, the region in general are being questioned, the possible design of a new map of the region with border changes. It is a problem of existence, above all and especially in Lebanon and Jordan, which are small countries with fragmented populations.

Donor fatigue: there are more and more requests for help, but there does not seem to be any awareness in public opinion in donor countries that the aid to refugees is not only an important and sad humanitarian issue. It is more than charity, it could play a catalytic role in the stabilization of the entire region, in the countries where armed conflicts take place and in the neighbouring ones that receive refugees, and this in turn helps the very stability of the donor countries.

Agencies working with Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries have reported that the lack of security that prevails in their cities and towns is not the only reason people move or leave the country, it is also motivated by the scarce means of livelihood, as their income and access to basic services have been undermined by the conflict.

3.8. The refugee situation in Lebanon

The UNHCR distinguishes between persons registered as refugees and those who are not registered. Thus, a year ago²², there were 70,000 registered refugees, while the Lebanese government and international organizations in this country estimated the true figure at around 200,000. Unfortunately, a year later there were already 500,000 registered refugees. If this figure is added to the unregistered refugees, today there are 1,200,000 displaced Syrians²³. All estimates expect that, by the end of the year, the number of displaced Syrians in Lebanon, registered and unregistered refugees, will be 2,000,000 people. Two million people out of a total population of Lebanon of 4 million people, meaning that very soon more than a third of the inhabitants of Lebanon will come from Syria because of the war.

In an article published by the Journal of the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 120 civil wars since 1945 were studied. They concluded that 25% of civil wars have a duration of less than 2 years; 50% between 2 and 15; and 25 % over 15 years.

What are the trends for the future? It will depend on the intensity and duration of the fighting, as well as their geographical location. If the crisis is prolonged or the fighting grows in intensity, more people will be displaced.

International organizations, the Government or local organizations forecast a disaster for Lebanon, and raise the following: What will happen if the war is more intense in the Damascus²⁴ area? What will happen if what is happening in Aleppo is repeated in Damascus? The

²² June 2012.

²³ June 2013.

²⁴ Geographically, Damascus, capital of Syria, is the major Syrian city nearest Lebanon, 35 km from its border.

number of refugees would then increase dramatically in the neighbouring country, Lebanon.

Another fact that would increase the entrance of displaced persons in Lebanon would be the delay in the reconstruction of Syria. Hundreds of thousands of houses and apartments have been destroyed. The same PRIO study, mentioned above, shows that over 50% of refugees in general tend to stay longer than 5 years in the host countries or regions.

The figures are alarming when it comes to Lebanon, its case being different from other refugee-hosting countries, namely Jordan and Turkey. The governments of these other countries were able to organize refugee camps, while the Lebanese government has not been able to implement any, for various reasons, so that almost 30% of refugees in this country live in collective shelters, especially in schools, which says a lot about the negative impact that this causes on education. More or less 58% stay in private accommodation shared with other families or have rented houses. In fact, many international organizations are helping with cash for families seeking shelter or housing. Finally, 14%, the most vulnerable, live in tents: they just come, set up their tents and stay where they are allowed to, and even where they aren't, generally near the villages. More than 50% of villages in Lebanon currently shelter refugees, and they are spreading across the whole country.

If we observe the displacement map to find out the extent of the problem, it can be seen that in 30% of the hosting towns the Syrian population is already more numerous than the Lebanese. They are also very often housed in the homes of the poorest families: poor Lebanese families are receiving poor Syrian families. And the geographic location of refugees is unfortunately increasing the confessional and political division of Lebanon.

The focus of current polarization in Lebanon is the political stance regarding Syria. There are pro-regime Syrian refugees staying in houses of pro-Syrian regime Lebanese; those who are against the regime, on the other hand, stay in houses and regions with the same ideology. This gives an indication of the growing political divide in Lebanon and the potential for violence and the risk that this situation may cause in the future.

At first, the official position of the Lebanese government was very wise and very positive: they opposed the closure of the border faced with the influx of Syrian refugees and repatriation of refugees, with a firm commitment to helping them. However, it has not been possible to specifically implement this commitment, mainly due to lack of resources. Lebanon has a huge public debt (relative to GDP it is the highest in the region), and international support has also been lacking, having received from the UN to date only \$78 million for refugees. Of those \$78 million, the government has received nothing, as occurred in the Kuwait summit, when the Lebanese government received nothing from the \$600 million raised for refugees. The official position of the summit has not been to support the Lebanese government, for obvious political reasons: Hezbollah is part of the cabinet and the governments meeting there have been unwilling to support those who are in favour of the Al- Assad regime.

The dispersion of refugees in unofficial schools, homes, apartments and shops makes it very difficult for the government to help them. As long as there is no actual concentration that allows aid logistics, such as transport, food distribution, medical services, etc., it will always be very difficult to reach families settled in various towns.

Meanwhile, Lebanese security and political bodies complain that this situation makes the task of collecting information and security difficult. How can you obtain information if the displaced persons live in many different places, unlike Jordan, where the government knows how to gather information, or Turkey, where the government has great power to gather information and can be controlled by a broad consensus among its members?

To overcome these difficulties caused by the dispersion of refugees, some voices have protested and asked to create refugee camps, claiming that this would simplify and cheapen logistics and allow more efficient control of security. Why is it not happening? Firstly, because it could not be done when the refugees first started arriving, as the Lebanese still had the trauma of 1948, when the Palestinians arrived displaced from their country and camps were made for them, and where they still remain today. This situation has created many political and security problems in Lebanon, and continues to do so, so the Lebanese population

as a whole does not want to hear about more refugee camps. In addition, the Lebanese had another trauma: its civil war that lasted 15 years (1975-1990) and its own share of refugees.

It would probably be easier to manage logistics in camps, but knowing the volatility of the region and knowing that the government has a major lack of resources, deciding to open refugee camps is not an easy decision, not least because the responsibility assumed for their future is in doubt if the problem goes on for a long time.

Moreover, living with other families or in inhabited areas could better absorb any shocks regarding security and basic needs. Conversely, if refugees are housed in camps, they will be subject to many threats, including violence. This aspect also makes the decision to set up refugee camps difficult. Perhaps the savings involved for the logistics would not compensate for the level of risk and uncertainty.

The question is: why is there no coordination and interaction between donors, international organizations and municipalities where refugees live? Municipal governments in Lebanon are much more efficient than the central government and have enough privileges in regard to governance and decision-making. So, it would perhaps be desirable to create a framework through which the municipality is responsible for refugees, always with the agreement and participation of the state.

Again, the Lebanese government has been limited by the lack of synchronization with local NGOs and international NGOs, etc. The government has been much marginalized, and has neither the means nor proper organization, despite the goodwill of its officials; people do not go to them. But things are beginning to change. The UN has insisted for the past two or three weeks that efficient aid should always go through the government, and that it would be wise to be proactive instead of reacting after the event, as often happens.

Apart from the risk and the many challenges already mentioned, the displaced population is mostly made up of women and children; some estimates say that about 70% of those displaced are women and children, due to several reasons: the men are busy doing something else or prefer to stay in their homes, etc. UNICEF is calling young Syrians “*a lost*

generation“: there are 30,000 children old enough to enjoy primary education at school who are now in Lebanon, facing the difficulties of their families and with a different curriculum than the one they had in Syria.

Many children have also been born in Lebanon and are undocumented, without any ID, they are stateless. Refugees who are here will stay for a long time, so that soon there will be tens of thousands of undocumented people.

Not to mention the high risk of the spread of infectious diseases in summer, and the lack of medical support that is causing outbreaks of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. In fact, the health ministry estimates that health costs for each refugee are more than \$280 per year, and given that there are 1 million refugees, \$280 million are required for health care alone.

Roughly 40% of Syrians live on less than two dollars a day, of which 20%, i.e. 4 million people live on less than a dollar a day. Knowing the economic implications between Syria and Lebanon, if the war situation persists or if the reconstruction process does not happen quickly, Syrians will probably continue to arrive in Lebanon, this time also looking for employment opportunities. Of course, in the short run, Lebanon will benefit from this financially, but their long-term political and social stability will be greatly threatened. So it is urgent to stop the violence, not only for the good of the Syrians, who are being slaughtered every day, but also for the good of the region in general.

3.9. A short presentation on the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the role of UN and OCHA emergency funds

According to the SHARP (Syria Humanitarian Response Plan) Plan for Syria, which assesses the needs of the Syrian people in all sectors and prepares plans to assist them inside Syrian borders, and which was presented for the first time in 2012, the necessary funding to cover these costs was around \$250 million, but a year later, the June 2013 report assessed needs at more than \$1 billion, which will be officially requested at the Geneva meeting scheduled next week²⁵.

²⁵ It was scheduled for the first week of July 2013, and last occurred in January 2014.

The figures speak for themselves of the worsening humanitarian situation in Syria. Over the past year, the crisis has gradually evolved into a complex humanitarian situation. There has been an increase in internal displacement, a destruction of infrastructure, economic decline, food insecurity, reduced agricultural production and, of course, the risk of the outbreak of infectious disease and those transmitted by contaminated water. According to United Nations estimates, the number of people needing aid will increase from the current figure of one million to 6.8 million. Almost half of this increase had already taken place in the first part of 2013.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain a major problem. Many people have already been displaced more than once between January and April 2013. In fact, during these months, the number of displaced persons more than doubled, from an estimate of about two million people it has increased to 4.2 million. These increases have been observed especially in areas like Aleppo, rural areas of Damascus, Homs, etc.²⁶

Clearly there is a need for humanitarian workers and aid agencies working inside Syria to enhance and strengthen the resilience of the population affected to reduce the number of refugees seeking to leave the country, and this is of course based on the design and implementation of various types of projects and programmes, but implementing them is essential to ensure the safety of workers.

The United Nations and the international community working in Syria have made great efforts to reach people who have left their homes and communities and to help them, especially in Aleppo, Hama, Homs, etc. This has been possible thanks to the partnership with other NGOs and local associations in the field. As a result, the UN workers have been able to reach struggling people in difficult areas. Moreover, the UN has established specific actions plans over these last 2-3 months to cover different geographical areas, with a view to ensuring the predictability and regularity of humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) are being helped and received by their countrymen, who have supportively opened the doors of their houses. Most of them are living in these host families or in unpopulated

²⁶ The fiercest battles are occurring around large cities for their control.

areas, where they have found refuge by occupying abandoned apartments or unfinished buildings, and some families have even rented houses, but unfortunately their savings and resources are running out, and support is needed immediately for those people.

The ability of the host communities regarding coping mechanisms is being exhausted, so it is necessary to see how to support them, as they are doing a very important job by giving shelter and support to internally displaced Syrians.

Primary health care for the sick and wounded is being provided in field tents, but secondary care is very poor: 67% of public hospitals have been damaged (or not in service), and those open have major shortcomings: electricity, fuel, medicine, etc. Many hospitals and clinics have closed because most health workers have left the country, mainly because they were unable to reach their places of work, so that the health situation in Syria in general, and in Damascus in particular, is very critical.

According to reports by UN experts, many schools are being used as shelters for displaced persons; others are still working but providing triple shifts for their students, increasing the limited access to the health service even more: it was observed that a latrine was being used by 300 children, and access to potable water is not available to many. This gives an idea of the alarming health situation.

In fact, an estimated 3,128,000 children in Syria have been affected by the ongoing crisis. This, according to the Syrian Ministry of Education, means that more than one million children have no access to basic education, over 900 schools are being used as shelters for internally displaced persons and more than 3,000 schools are either severely damaged or completely destroyed.

The destruction and damage that a great deal of educational infrastructure has suffered and the insecure situation that hinders access to them have caused many children to lose more than one school year.

The Emergency Response Fund (ERF) for Syria is funded by contributions from different donors. There are currently more than 18 contributing to the fund, the Spanish government being one of them, which is much appreciated.

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was created by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and is one of the instruments launched in 2005 that allows the UN to provide humanitarian assistance in a more timely and reliable manner to those affected by natural disasters and armed conflicts. The Fund serves to assist all potential victims of disasters. It is a vital fund and is providing, in the case of the Syrian conflict, immediate and rapid funding for humanitarian agencies working within and outside the country to respond to contingencies and unforeseen events that may arise. It is a rapid finance fund that an NGO or UN agency can access for a quick reply within two weeks. The CERF is available to Syria and the countries affected by the crisis, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey and Egypt (less involved in the latter country so far, though OCHA has noticed an increase in refugees in recent months).

OCHA has so far²⁷ received \$47 million for the Common Fund for Syria, of which \$28 million have been used for projects inside and outside Syria. Inside Syria, the Fund is open to all humanitarian workers who are able to respond to the needs of the Syrian population: UN agencies and non-governmental and international organizations. Outside Syria it is explicitly available for national and international NGOs. So far, the Fund has financed 42 projects in Syria, 28 in Jordan, 16 in Lebanon and 17 in Iraq.

Work is taking place on some projects to be implemented in Turkey and Egypt. In Iraq, the needs are also great, but unfortunately it is not yet a focus of attention; attention is only being concentrated on Lebanon and Jordan. However, we are seeing an increase in the number of refugees heading for Iraq and their situation is really serious: it is necessary that they be given more funding and more aid²⁸.

²⁷ June 2013.

²⁸ The situation presented during the seminar has done nothing but worsen in the following months. In fact, in December 2013, the United Nations anxiously appealed to the international community to provide funds for humanitarian aid in Syria during 2014. Syria accounts for just over half of the global appeal for assistance that the UN has made for the next 12 months. The conflict that began in March 2011 has caused a humanitarian disaster with unprecedented scope and has been described by the UN as “appalling” and “frightening”. http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/12/16/actualidad/1387196521_285039.html

3.10. Brief description of the situation of Palestinian refugees and the role of UNRWA

Palestinian refugees in the region, which are in fact those that left after the war of independence of 1948 and remained in the area, are the responsibility of UNRWA, while others are refugees from OCHA and UNHCR.

They are located in the four host countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza). The problem of the Palestinian refugees is closely linked and connected with the peace process. That is, it is one of the six problems that constitute the fundamental basis of the dispute.

According to UNRWA, the current crisis caused by the conflict in Syria is one of the most difficult challenges it has faced since its inception. Of the 500,000 Palestinian refugees that lived as refugees in Syria for decades, only half remain in this country. Many have had to flee again and become displaced persons again in other host countries. According to UNRWA, the Palestinian refugee population is among the most vulnerable in the country and, so far, UNRWA estimates that approximately 420,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria are affected by the conflict and need emergency assistance.

There is an urgent need to meet the many requirements of the Palestinian refugees, including temporary shelter, basic household items, kitchen equipment, bed linen, clothing, and especially winter articles. Regarding the education of Palestinian refugees, the children have also been severely affected by the crisis, several schools have been used as centres for internally displaced persons, about 1/3 have become collective centres, which means that many children are not receiving education or the schools are in areas where the conflict is severe, which prevents student access to them.

UNRWA was temporary established in 1949, and its mandate is renewed every three years. Palestinian refugees in the area were forced to leave after the first Palestinian-Israeli war, as described by the previous Israeli ambassador to Madrid, Schlomo Ben Ami, in his book *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: the Israeli - Arab tragedy*. There is sufficient documentation to show that the exit of the Palestine refugees, from

what is now Israel, was forced. When UNRWA was established, it met the needs of 750,000 Palestinian refugees, 5 million refugees currently have the right to access UNRWA services.

UNRWA faces several problems that are constantly deteriorating the services offered to Palestinian refugees. One of its chronic failings is the lack of funding, as it depends on voluntary contributions. In the beginning, there were ten countries that were at the heart of UNRWA, but the number has increased to currently reach 25, and each of them provide, for three years, \$5 million. Besides these contributions, the members of the Advisory Committee seek funding through other means and find them by making emergency requests and in development projects, but despite all this, the amount collected is insufficient to maintain UNRWA.

One of the things being attempted right now is to broaden the base of contributors, seeking new contributions, new members, and the meetings of the UNRWA Advisory Commission, the ADCOM, has indeed invited Russia, which is not a member, but wants to contribute, and Brazil , which is not a member, and is already contributing. Iraq and Qatar also want to be members. Contracts and agreements are also being concluded with the private sector and there are also efforts to increase synergies with other UN agencies.

One of the characteristics of UNRWA is the different perception of it among the host countries, the five countries mentioned above, and the donor countries. Donor countries are feeling a tremendous financial strain at the moment, as in the case of Spain, for example, which has moved from ninth to nineteenth place as a donor due to economic circumstances.

Palestinian refugees are not in the same conditions in all countries, i.e. UNRWA in Lebanon, for example, faces teaching and health expenses; while in Jordan these needs, educational assistance and benefits are covered by the Jordanian government budget; and in Syria their conditions are quite a lot better compared with Lebanon.

This lack of funding from donor countries should be supplied in some other way. In general, the host countries are being asked to provide it, but often donor countries do not realize the sacrifice involved for the

host countries to maintain all these Palestinian refugees, who have also been the cause of instability and conflict in many of them. If the situation worsens, some Palestinian groups in refugee camps, attracted by one group or another, may adopt policy choices that are not appropriate. All of this despite the repeated calls from President Abu Mazen asking Palestinians in host countries to adopt neutral positions, a message that UNRWA also supports. This is the case right now with Syria, where refugees are finding themselves in a kind of scissors crisis, in the sense that it is considered that those in the opposition area support the government; and those in government areas support the rebels. This situation is quite difficult. If in normal conditions the difficulties for the host countries were great, with this new situation they are undoubtedly worsening.

3.11. The case of the Yarmuk refugee camp, reported by the United Nations²⁹

Over 160,000 Palestinian refugees lived in Yarmouk, a Palestinian refugee camp located in a suburb south of Damascus, until December 2012, when the vast majority fled after armed opposition groups entered and government forces started attacking the camp. Since then, the United Nations Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has been unable to offer any assistance, since September of last year, where some 18,000 people remained.

“The civilians, including many women and children, have been caught in a bottleneck between the siege by Syrian government forces and affiliated militias surrounding the Yarmuk camp, as is the case with the armed groups opposed to the Government operating inside,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay.

A press release issued by the office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR) said the reports talk of a number of deaths from starvation by eating spoiled food, and also because of the chronic shortage of medical supplies and services for the sick, young injured people and pregnant women caught in the camp.

²⁹ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp/www.wmo.int/story.asp?NewsID=46938&Cr=palestin&Cr1=#.UvSyXBy3dwc>

The situation has been exacerbated by the lack of electricity and severe water shortages. Civilians also continue to be killed by ongoing fighting, as well as sporadic airstrikes.

International pressure has managed to allow a humanitarian convoy access there, in January 2014, after seven months of blockade.

3.12. Some opinions about the Syrian conflict

“The international community believes that it is possible to improve the situation by supporting an uncertain agenda in order to reach democracy by armed force. The result is a clash between armed opposition and a regime that destroys everything”³⁰.

“The great powers of the international community, especially Western Europe, Russia, the United States and the UN, should isolate the Syria problem, in terms of trying to convince everyone that they are the regional forces that resolve the situation, and the rest should not meddle in the problem. It would be a great achievement for mankind if we could create a framework through which the Syrians really could work out their future freely and without limitations. But personally, from my own experience in relation to the many problems in the Middle East, I do not think the major powers will be able to perform this exercise. However, I hope that people like us who are in this room try to argue in a civilized manner on this issue, a tragedy for everyone, and will be able at least to add voices to really give peace a chance, and not play with it”³¹.

³⁰ Appeal by the current Chaldean Patriarch of Babylon, S.B. Louis Sako, referring to the Syrian crisis, in a statement about the future of Christians in the Middle East, made on 23 January 2013 to the charity Aid to the Church in Need.

³¹ Words of a seminar participant.

ANNEX I

8th CEMOFPSC SEMINAR Programme

THE “ARAB SPRING “:

The conflict in Syria. Current status and consequences

Madrid, 6 June 2013

9.30h. - 9.45h. OPENING CEREMONY

Ms. Olivia Orozco. Head of the Department of Economy and Businesses of Casa Árabe.

Mr. Javier Goizueta. General Director of Volunteer and Development Cooperation, Ministry of Social Affairs, Community of Madrid.

Mr. Pedro López Aguirrebengoa. Ambassador of Spain.

Mr. Nadim Shehadi. Associate Fellow at Chatham House, London; Academic Visitor at St Antony's College, Oxford and member of the CEMOFPSC Advisory Committee. Lebanon.

Ms. Pilar Lara. President of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC).

9.45h. - 11.00h. FIRST SESSION: *CURRENT SITUATION OF WAR IN SYRIA*

Speakers:

Mr. Salam Kawakibi. Researcher of the Center for Arab Reform Initiative (ARI). Syria.

Mr. Pedro López Aguirrebengoa. Ambassador of Spain.

Moderator:

Mr. Karim Hauser. Responsible for Governance of Casa Árabe.

11.00h. - 11.20h. Coffee break

11.20h. - 12.15h. SECOND SESSION: *REGIONAL IMPACT, SECURITY AND REFUGEES*

Speakers:

Mr. Youssef El-Khalil. Executive Director of Financial Operations Department of the Banque du Liban and President of the Association for the Development of Rural Capacities (ADR). Lebanon.

Ms. Amani Salah. Emergency response Fund manager for Syria and the countries affected by the Syrian Crises (Amman, Jordan).

Mr. Ramón Ansoain. Ambassador of Spain. Coordinador for UNRWA Affairs.

Moderator:

Ms. Jumana Trad. Trustee of the FPSC and Member of the Executive Committee of CEMOPFSC. Lebanon.

12.15h. - 14.00h. THIRD SESSION: *THE ROLE OF SPAIN, AND THE ARAB AND EUROPEAN COUNTRIES*

Speakers:

Ms. Hala Mustafa. Journalist of Al Ahram. She has been editor in chief of the journal Democracy Review. Egypt.

Mr. Nadim Shehadi. Associate Fellow at Chatham House, London; Academic Visitor at St Antony's College, Oxford and member of the CEMOPFSC Advisory Committee. Lebanon.

Moderator:

Mr. Isaac Martín-Barbero. General Director de Internationalization of the Spanish Institute for Foreign Trade (ICEX) of the Ministry of Economy.

14.30h. - 15.45h. Lunch

15.45h. - 17.00h. GENERAL DEBATE, READING OF CONCLUSIONS AND CLOSING SESSION

Moderators of the General debate:

Mr. Nadim Shehadi. Associate Fellow at Chatham House, London; Academic Visitor at St Antony's College (Oxford); and member of the CEMOPFSC Advisory Committee. Lebanon.

Ms. Jumana Trad. Trustee of the FPSC and Member of CEMOPFSC Executive Committee. Lebanon.

ANNEX II

Participants in the seminar

1. **Mr. Mohammed Haneche.** Ambassador of the Democratic and Popular Republic of Algeria and Dean of Arab Ambassadors Group.
2. **Mr. Ahmed Fawzi El Cherif.** Consul for Political Affairs of the Embassy of Egypt in Spain.
3. **Mr. Elwaled Ivekou.** Press Officer at United Arab Emirates Embassy.
4. **Mr. Ghassam Majali.** Ambassador of the of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Spain.
5. **Mr. Charbel Aoun.** Lebanese Ambassador to Spain.
6. **Mr. José María Ferré.** He served as Special Ambassador for relations with the Muslim communities and organizations abroad.
7. **Mr. Javier Soria.** Diplomatic Advisor in the Deputy Prime Minister Cabinet.
8. **Mr. José Zorrilla.** Spanish diplomat, member of the Council for Foreign Affairs and International columnist in The Confidencial.com.
9. **Mr. Jesús Díaz Carazo.** Communications Director of the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.
10. **Ms. Dña. Elvira Saint-Gerons.** Managing Director of the Three Cultures Foundation.
11. **Prof. Ignacio Álvarez-Osorio.** Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Department of Philology integrated the University of Alicante.
12. **Prof. Dr. Rafael Palomino.** Professor of Ecclesiastical Law of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

13. **Mr. Álvaro Zamarreño.** Internacional News Department of Cadena SER.
14. **Mr. Samuel Martín-Barbero.** Dean of IE School of Communication.
15. **Mr. Barah Mikael.** Senior researcher of FRIDE.
16. **Mr. Gabriel Reyes.** Project Development Manager CITpax.
17. **Mr. Raouf Almalki.** Cooperation Advisor of the Diplomatic Mission of Palestine to Spain.
18. **Mr. Luis Prados.** Director, Office of the Director of the Instituto Cervantes.
19. **Cor. Manuel Martínez.** Responsible of the languages Cabinet of the Army.
20. **Cap. José Laguarda.** Senior Analyst Middle East Area of Staff of Defense.
21. **Mr. Rafael de Prado.** Head of the Department of Emergency and Post Conflict in the Spanish Agency of International Cooperation for Development (AECID) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation.
22. **Mr. D. Jacobo Israel Garzón.** He has been President of the Federation of Jewish communities in Spain.
23. **Ms. Nahla Soufi.** Head of Communication Department of Medical Platform cooperation with Syria.
24. **Mr. Anas Sharjah.** President of the Medical Platform for Cooperation in Syria.
25. **Prof. Alejandro Lorca.** Honorary Professor of Economic Analysis of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

26. **Prof. Fernando Esteve.** Professor of Economic Analysis of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.
27. **Ms. Soha Abboud Haggar.** Professor of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Philology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
28. **Mr. Isaías Barreñada.** Associate Professor of International Relations, Department of International Law and International Relations at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.
29. **Mr. Javier Gila.** AIDA Association Director.
30. **Mr. Nasser Oumer de Mora.** Representative to Spain of the Union of Syrians Abroad.
31. **Mr. Juan Luis López Frechilla.** He has been Coordinator of UNICEF WASH in Jordan.
32. **Prof. Felipe Santos.** Professor of Political Communication at the Centro Universitario Villanueva.
33. **Ms. Dña. Rosa Meneses.** International Relations Editor of the newspaper “El Mundo”.
34. **Ms. Nazareth Echart.** Deputy Chief of Staff of the Government Department of Finance and Public Administration of the City of Madrid.
35. **Mr. Fernando Moreno.** Partner of the firm More and Calvet and secretary of the Euro-Arab Network for Development and Integration (READI). (Red Euroárabe para el Desarrollo y la Integración).
36. **Mr. Juan Arbulú.** Project Manager ONAY Foundation and member of the Red READI.
37. **Mr. Mark Muller.** General Director of Aqualia New Europe.

38. **Mr. Pedro González.** Counselor on International Relations at Kalmatv.
39. **Ms. Elena González.** Casa Árabe.
40. **Ms. Imane Rachidi.** Journalism student of the Carlos III University of Madrid. Marruecos.

FPSC Team:

1. **Ms. Mónica Bohigues.** Secretary General.
2. **Ms. Macarena Coteló.** Project Director.
3. **Mr. José Luis Zatarain.** Director of Communications.
4. **Mr. Enric Roig.** Head of the Department of Middle East Projects.
5. **Ms. Carmen Seoane.** Technical Project.
6. **Ms. Irene Pérez.** Responsible for costs.
7. **Ms. Lucía García Gilabert.** Responsible for documentation.
8. **Ms. Liza Hakami.** Student of International Business at the University of Amsterdam.
9. **Ms. Silvia Compagno.** ERASMUS student of International Relations at the Universidad de Roma Tre. Italy.
10. **Ms. Blanca de Mesa.** Director of Institutional Relations.

**CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
OF THE FOUNDATION FOR THE SOCIAL PROMOTION OF CULTURE
(CEMOFPSC)**

www.cemofpsc.org

To enlarge the view of the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC), the Centre for Middle East Studies (CEMOFPSC) has been created, a multidisciplinary think tank whose philosophy is to bring together experts of all persuasions, professions, nationalities and religions, to discuss different aspects about the reality of the Middle East.

The CEMOFPSC was founded on 3 February 2007, with an international character and a multidisciplinary approach to facilitate the reflection, study and exchange of views among intellectuals and experts, both national and foreign ones, in various areas: Sociology, History, Economics, Communication, Ethics, Law, Politics, Diplomacy, Development Cooperation, and which together share a vision of society and the individual based on justice, a deep respect for freedom of thought and the desire to contribute to social progress, understanding among peoples, peace and the common good.

To do this, it has an Advisory Committee and an Executive Committee, composed of professionals and institutions who share a vision of society and the individual based on justice, a deep respect for freedom of thought and a strong desire to contribute to social progress, understanding among peoples, peace and the common good of man.

The CEMOFPSC reinforces the fieldwork that the Foundation for the Social Promotion of Culture (FPSC) has done in the region for twenty years, and it has the support of 41 NGOs that make up the Euro Arab NGO Network for Development and integration (READI).

ORGANIZATION

The CEMOFPSC was created and reinforces the work the FPSC has carried out in the Middle East for twenty years in the field of development cooperation. Thus, the Board of the FPSC is the highest governing body of the CEMOFPSC.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Along with members of the Board of the FPSC, the CEMOFPSC has collaborating members constituting its Advisory Committee. This Committee is composed of professionals, researchers, experts and institutions from various professional fields. Its functions include advising the Board and the Executive Committee on the activities and actions undertaken, developing proposals for action and work and supporting the organization of meetings and outreach activities. It meets regularly.

- **Nadim Shehadi.**
Research Associate of the Middle East Programme at Chatham House. UK.
- **Guiseppe Cassini.**
Ambassador of Italy.
- **Mark Singleton.**
Expert in Development Cooperation. Holland.
- **Ana María Menéndez.**
Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations Office and International Organizations in Geneva.
- **Prof. Ibrahim Al-Marashi.**
Assistant Professor of History at California State University. The United States. Iraq.
- **Hala Mustafa.**
Founder and editor of Democracy Review. Egypt.
- **Universidad Católica de América.**
(U.S.A.).
- **Universidad de Belén.**
(Palestinian Territories).

The Ambassador of Israel, **Hon. Mr Samuel Hadas**, was a member of the CEMOFPSC Advisory Board since its inception in 2007 and until his death in January 2010. The Ambassador Hadas performed considerable work of advising the CEMOFPSC, directly coordinating the seminar “Religion: missing dimension of diplomacy and politics in the Middle East” (April 2008) and the seminar “Israel, Palestine, Jerusalem and the Holy Places”. Present, Past and Future “(June 2010), in which a tribute was paid to him.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

It is the executive body of the CEMOFPSC, responsible for compliance with the guidelines of the Board. Its presidency corresponds to the President of the FPSC Board and its members are professional experts working in the Middle East. Its functions include monitoring compliance with the objectives and expected budgets, scheduling actions foreseen in the Action Plan and those not anticipated that are considered appropriate, proposing new members of the Advisory Board and the basic criteria for signing of agreements and protocols. It is also responsible for establishing the distribution and use of available funds for the aims of the CEMOFPSC, within general guidelines established by the Board of the FPSC.

- **Pilar Lara.**
Founding Trustee Emeritus of the FPSC and CEMOFPSC.
- **Jumana Trad.**
President of the FPSC and CEMOFPSC.
- **Pedro López Aguirrebengoa.**
Spanish Ambassador. He was the first Spanish Ambassador in the State of Israel.
- **Youssef El Khalil.**
Economist. Professor at the American University of Beirut. Director of Financial Operations of the Bank of Lebanon. President of the *Association for the Development of Rural Capacities* (ADR).
- **Blanca de Mesa.**
Director of Institutional Relations of the FPSC.

MISSION AND VALUES

The CEMOFPSC has established as its priority objective the task of “educating and informing” experts, academics, the media, politicians, development workers and civil society in general who work with Middle East subjects, and the creation of a multidisciplinary Network of experts on Middle East issues that share the vocation of the CEMOFPSC for “educating and informing”.

This task is based on a commitment to share together a vision of society and the individual based on justice, a deep respect for freedom of thought and the desire to contribute to social progress, understanding between peoples, peace and the common good.

ACTIVITIES

To fulfil its objectives, the CEMOFPSC plans various kinds of activities:

- **Expert meetings**, in the form of dinner - talks, roundtables, working meetings, congresses, seminars and conferences. Specialists from different academic disciplines meet to discuss issues of relevance in the Middle East.
- **Regular meetings of the Advisory Board** with national and international experts that are used to establish future working guidelines, to account for the development of initiatives implemented, meet new members of the Committee, etc.
- **Alliances**, the CEMOFPSC establishes alliances and partnerships with internationally recognized institutions and individuals to achieve common goals. Having special collaboration with the Euro Arab NGO Network for Development and Integration (READI) and the Institute of Business.
- **Publications**, the CEMOFPSC especially encourages the publication and dissemination of work produced in its various areas of operation. The publications are produced in the form of working papers, articles by experts, results of discussions and working sessions. Through these it is possible to monitor, study and analyse the reality of the Middle Eastern scenario, especially related to peace and development cooperation in all its dimensions.

- Dissemination of this work through the **Web portal** (in English and Spanish versions) www.cemofpsc.org , where you can view the contents of research and relevant texts, both our own and other ones, as well as other CEMOFPSC publications.

**CENTRE FOR MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES
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