

# Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Small Group on Syria

1. We, the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, France, Germany, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America made the following statement on the urgent need for a lasting political solution for Syria, on the basis of United Nations Security Council 2254.
2. The Syrian conflict is in its ninth year, hundreds of thousands of people have died and millions been forcibly displaced. The United Nations assess that in recent months in Idlib, more than 1,000 civilians have been killed and more than 600,000 fled their homes, the humanitarian situation worsened by the targeting of schools, hospitals and other civilian buildings. We deeply regret that the Security Council has failed once again to unite in calling for the protection of civilians, adherence to international humanitarian law, and humanitarian access. We remain fully committed to support such vital measures, and call for an immediate and genuine ceasefire in Idlib. The use of any chemical weapons in Syria shall not be tolerated. We also demand that all parties ensure that all measures taken to counter terrorism, including in Idlib Governorate, comply with their obligations under international law.
3. There can be no military solution to the Syria crisis, only a political settlement. Without that, Syria will remain weak, impoverished and destabilising. We therefore strongly support the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for Syria in his efforts towards a political settlement in line with Security Council Resolution 2254. We welcome the UN's announcement that all parties have now agreed to the establishment of a Constitutional Committee tasked with beginning this process. This is a long-awaited positive step, but one that still requires serious engagement and commitment to delivery in order to succeed. We encourage the UN to convene the Constitutional Committee, and to start discussion of the substantial issues of its mandate, as soon as possible. It also remains essential to advance all other dimensions of the political process, as outlined in UNSCR 2254.
4. We strongly support Geir Pedersen's broader efforts to implement all of Resolution 2254, including the meaningful involvement of all Syrians, especially women, in the political process. We fully support efforts towards the mass release of political prisoners and steps to create the safe and neutral environment that would enable Syrians to hold free, fair and credible elections, under UN supervision, in which internally displaced persons, refugees and the diaspora must be able to participate.
5. We stress the importance of accountability in any efforts to bring about a sustainable, inclusive and peaceful solution to the conflict and therefore

continue to support efforts to ensure that all perpetrators of abuses and violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including those who may be responsible for crimes against humanity, are identified and held accountable.

6. As the humanitarian situation across Syria continues to deteriorate, we stress the importance of ensuring safe and unhindered humanitarian access for all those Syrians currently in need of it.
7. We acknowledge the efforts of Syria's neighbours who shoulder the burden of hosting the vast majority of Syrian refugees. We encourage the international community to provide humanitarian assistance as well as financial support to those countries to share the costs of Syria's refugee crisis, until Syrians can voluntarily return home in safety, dignity and security. Any attempts at deliberate demographic change cannot be acceptable. We call on the Regime to cease actions that deter and prevent refugees from returning, and instead to take the necessary positive steps to achieve voluntary, safe and dignified returns.
8. Finally, we express our satisfaction at the liberation earlier this year of all territory once held by Daesh, who have brought such horror to Syria and Iraq, as well as to the rest of the world. However, the threat from Daesh remnants, as well as from other UN designated terrorist groups, remains, and we are resolved to ensure their lasting defeat. A political settlement in Syria remains essential to this outcome.