



Statement on Syria by the Mayors for Peace network of Catalonia

It was 8 years ago that Syria lived, in the framework of the Arab springs, the beginning of a peaceful popular revolt against the regime of Bashar al-Assad. Soon enough, the nationwide revolt was brutally crushed. Faced with this repression, the progressive militarization of a part of the opposition, the involvement of regional and international powers that supported - and armed - different factions of the conflict, and the neglect of the international community, would end in one of the bloodiest conflicts the world has experienced in the last years.

As municipalities committed to peace, we cannot close our eyes to the horror suffered in Syria: Hundreds of thousands of dead, millions of refugees and displaced persons, tens of thousands of disappeared, cities and towns destroyed by bombs, sanitary facilities attacked, besieged communities with a blocked access to food or medicines.

Sadly, many people in Europe would only become aware of the Syrian conflict in the wake of the growth in refugees trying to cross the Mediterranean. In fact, Syria is the country that has generated the most refugees and displaced people in recent years. And, indeed, the reception of refugees is one of the issues that, as municipalities, involves us and where we want to remain active: Because welcoming in dignity people fleeing from horror is a gesture of minimal justice.

However, we believe that it is necessary to do much more. Taking a humble but determined stance, we, as Mayors for Peace, call on states and international organizations to truly engage in solidarity and action for peace in Syria: Seeking measures to defend civilian population that has suffered violence and persecution for many years; facilitating safe routes for refugees; stopping arms sales and transfers; favoring frameworks for negotiation to attain a peaceful resolution to the conflict; establishing mechanisms for support and reconstruction; fighting against impunity in the face of atrocities committed and prosecuting those held responsible; and, obviously, giving the voice to the people so that it is the citizens who decide the future of their own country.

And we, on the basis of our concrete reality as local governments, commit ourselves to explore collaboration mechanisms with municipalities in Syria, aimed at promoting peace, human rights and justice.

Barcelona, March 15th 2019