

## CCSD brief addressing the Security Council on December, 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019

As delivered by

Rajaa Altalli, Co-Founder and Co-Director of Center for Civil Society and Democracy

Madam President and distinguished members of the Security Council.

When I was 12 years old, my father Jries Altalli, who is a retired teacher and the sole provider of my family, was abducted by the Security Political Branch in Damascus. He was tortured for one year in this branch and then he was transferred to Adra prison and then after that to the notorious Tadmor prison. After nine years, in November 16, 2000, my father was released through a presidential pardon.

This story is the story of thousands of Syrians from before and during the conflict. It is hard to describe the suffering that Syrians, women, men, girls and boys, have experienced in the last nine years. Shall I talk about bombing? Starving to death under siege? Chemical weapons? Forced demographic change? Indiscriminate shelling of houses, hospitals, schools? More than half of the population of Syria have been displaced either internally or forced to be outside of the country. Tens of thousands have been arrested and tortured.

The Syrian government is a principal party, along with many parties, who is responsible for the situation in Syria. Yet, as the Syrian crisis approaches its ninth year, and on the fourth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 2254, now is the time to end the suffering of Syrians.

**I call upon you, on behalf of the silent majority of Syrians, to work together and work with Syrians to find a sustainable solution.**

Syrian NGOs—such as CCSD, the Center for Civil Society and Democracy and our partners—believe that a political solution is not only urgent and necessary; it is possible. Therefore,

**I put before you today a 6-point road map to end the Syrian tragedy:**

Point 1. Stop all hostilities across all Syrian territory including sexual and gender-based violence.

Point 2. Improve the conditions of IDPs and refugees, support them and facilitate the arrival of humanitarian aid by all parties. Form an independent UN committee with the participation of Syrian civil society to supervise the voluntary and safe return of refugees and IDPs to their places of origin, or the places that they want to choose.

Point 3. Under the auspices of the Security Council, form a specialized gender-sensitive committee in dealing with all matters concerning Syrian detainees to oversee treatment and to overcome the negative effects of detention for all detainees in Syria and to support the release of all detainees and kidnapped people, reveal the fate of the detainees and forcibly disappeared, and provide all necessary support to those who were detained and abducted as well as to their families.

*Those are the three first points to build the confidence of Syrians not only in the political process but also in the Security Council.*

Point 4. We seek the formation of an international working group of permanent members of the Security Council to support the efforts of the UN Special Envoy Mr. Pederson in the comprehensive political process including the constitutional process and providing a safe, neutral, and conducive environment including restructuring security and military agencies in accordance with international human rights principles. All this will pave the way for free and fair elections under UN supervision in 2020-2021

Point 5. Support reaching a political agreement between the different parties with the direct participation of Syrian women and Syrian civil society in accordance with the following criteria:

- Establishment of justice and accountability mechanisms that guarantee the victim's rights.
- Separation of powers and the peaceful reallocation of powers based on the outcome of the negotiations.

- Guarantees of full human rights and women's rights, and safeguarding of all freedoms including religion, expression, and association, enabling formation of political parties and civil society organizations in Syria.
- Building a common Syrian identity based on diversity by ensuring the rights of Syrians from all communities, gender, religions, races and ethnicities.

Point 6. Plan and prepare for sustainable development and reconstruction in Syria including an effective Syrian National Action Plan on women, peace and security based on Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions. Youth must also be involved on the basis of Resolution 2250. The implementations of those plans can start as soon as the agreement on transition is reached.

I implore you to work together as a UNITED Security Council to achieve these measures and to take action to end the suffering of Syrians, millions of Syrians.

We look to you to support the efforts of Syrian civil society and Syrian women peacebuilders by listening to their voices, directly and permanently, at all UN meetings about Syria.

After all that has happened in Syria, I feel fortunate. I was able to see my father and visited him in prison many times when he was in Adra prison, and also he was released after nine years of imprisonment. Today, 19 years after that, I stand before you to ask for your help to release all detainees in Syria.

Give thousands of Syrian children the opportunity, the chance to see their parents.

Give these Syrian children the ability to feel joy in their hearts as we stand on the doorstep of a new year.

I thank you for your attention.