



## **Study Guide**

IsarMUN 2012

## **Syria Conference**

## Word from the Chairs

Dear delegates,

a warm welcome to the 2012 edition of IsarMUN and especially to one of the most important and interesting associated groups of the UN and the Syria Crisis: the Group of Friends of the Syrian People.

We hope we are going to spend an amazing conference, fruitful debates and wonderful hours of joy with you. We hope that you are going to get as addicted to Model United Nations as we became after our first one, this was also the reason why we chose a rather untypical committee. Of course the Syrian Conflict is a quite prominent one nowadays, but normally this topic is discussed in the Security Council, where Russia and China have quite strong positions and the ability to veto its resolutions. Though they are official not taking part in the meetings of the Group, we included the two countries in order to give you the possibility to struggle for solutions without the eventuality of veto powers. This in our opinion will make the committee and discussions even more interesting and challenging. We hope that we are able to work on great and realistic papers and solutions for the Syrian Conflict. Our work will be achieved through earnest and purposeful discussions in a constructive atmosphere and diplomatic manner within the committee.

If you have any questions or thoughts do not hesitate to contact us anytime via [syriaconf@isarmun.org](mailto:syriaconf@isarmun.org). We are committed to providing an intense, high-quality committee experience and hope to challenge and motivate you during our weekend together. Further, we are also going to create a Facebook group for all kind of questions, therefore please join this group or contact us as soon as you have received this Study Guide. Further we invite you to send us your Position Papers the latest until December 10th. Position Papers should give a statement about your countries position on the topic and present proposals on how to deal with the situation. Position Papers should be at least one page long, we will also upload some examples in the Facebook group.

Looking very much forward to welcoming you in December,

Yours sincerely,

Mathias Leopold Hörlesberger and Valerie Sanders

## Historical background

The Group of Friends of the Syrian People is an international diplomatic collective of countries and bodies convening on the topic of Syria outside the U.N. Security Council.

According to American president Barack Obama the group was organized by the United States.

### First conference

The first meeting ever took place on February 24, 2012 in Tunisia. In its first meeting the Group of Friends of the Syrian People attracted 60 nations to participate and its member countries called for the UN to start planning a civilian peacekeeping force and urged the Syrian regime to lay down its arms to allow aid to reach civilians.

The United States, European and Arab nations were demanding that Syrian President Bashar Assad immediately halt all violence and allow humanitarian aid into areas hardest hit by his regime's brutal crackdown on opponents, or face a tightening noose of international isolation and sanctions and an increasingly emboldened and powerful armed resistance. The conference opened with senior Mideast officials condemning the Syrian government and demanding implementations of an Arab League plan that would see Assad step down in a peaceful transition to democracy. Language in a draft final statement from the conference would allow U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to begin recruiting nations to join the peacekeeping force and start identifying its mandate. The plan was designed to signal Russia and China that their continued support of Assad could leave them out of business and diplomatic opportunities in what the group hopes will be a new Syria. A draft of the Tunis conference's final document obtained by The Associated Press calls on "the Syrian

government to implement an immediate cease-fire and to allow free and unimpeded access by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to carry out a full assessment of needs in Homs and other areas."

### Second conference

The second meeting took place on April 1, 2012 in Istanbul, where 70 nations participated and tried to increase pressure on the Syrian government.



In their second meeting the Group of Friends of the Syrian People decided to recognize the Syrian National Council, the largest opposition body, as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people and the opposition as a whole. However, the group did not recognize the National Council as the only organization that could serve as a temporary government, much to the chagrin of National Council head Burhan Ghalioun.

Among the 27 resolutions contained in the Friends of Syria declaration are clauses stating that the member nations will provide financial support for opposition activities. Member nations in the gulf have already pledged tens of millions of dollars in support, to assist the opposition in paying salaries for soldiers and officers that defected from the Syrian Army, as well as to create a stable economic foundation for continuing opposition efforts.

However the nations that attended the conference stopped short of supplying the opposition with arms, with a general declaration claiming that every member nation

should do everything in its power to support the political activities of the opposition and to help bring about a regime change in Syria. The council also called for putting a halt to all support for the Syrian government, with an emphasis on weapons and ammunitions. The nations attending the conference also decided to create a fund for the rehabilitation of Syria, to act if and when a regime-change in Syria was to take place. Germany and the United Arab Emirates will lead these efforts. However, the declaration by the Friends of Syria, which excludes Russia, China, and Iran, did not include any calls for Assad to step down, nor any kind of timeframe for future activity.

### Third conference



Friends of Syrian People group in Paris (Source: <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/tag/62715--s>)

The third and so far last meeting was held in Paris on July 6, 2012, where Clinton called on Russia and China to “get off the sidelines” and accused them of “standing up for” the Assad regime. She called on other countries to “make it clear that Russia and China will pay a price” for that support and on the UN Security Council to step up sanctions against Syria. French president Hollande called on the UN to take tougher action against Syria and strengthening five commitments to achieve: an end to impunity for regime members, real and effective sanctions, increasing the support for the opposition, including providing means of

communication, humanitarian aid and aid for reconstruction once the conflict is over. Although Hollande boasted that this third conference is the biggest yet with about 100 countries represented, Russia and China have refused to attend, meaning that its decisions are unlikely to win the support of the UN Security Council.

The leader of one of Syria’s opposition factions, Abdel Basset Sayda of the Syrinya National Council, called on the conference to provide an aerial exclusion zone and humanitarian corridors, as was done for Libya.

Concluding the number of conferences, we can see that the number of countries constantly increased, according to the second conference the following countries can be counted as member states or at least as countries favoring the aims of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People:

*Albania, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, East Timor, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Moldova, Morocco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay*

The Holy See is considered to be an observer and the Syrian National Council is representing the Syrian Opposition Groups. Further the following International organizations are involved: African Union, Arab League, Arab Maghreb Union, European Union, Gulf Cooperation Council, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, United Nations.

## Timetable of Events



Mar. 16, 2011: The Syrian uprising begins as 35 people are arrested in a “Day of Dignity” protest in Damascus. The demonstrators were demanding the release of political prisoners. In the southern city of Deraa, security forces shot and killed several protesters at a “Day of Rage” rally. The killings sparked several days of violent protests.

Mar. 29, 2011: President Bashar al-Assad accepts the resignation of his government. The move is largely symbolic as the Syrian cabinet wields very little actual power. Demonstrators had been demanding an end to almost 50 years of emergency rule.

April 19, 2011: Assad announces that Syria is ending emergency rule. However, the move does little to quell a growing protest movement. Defiant crowds accuse Assad of simply trying to buy time while he clings to power in one of the most repressive regimes in the Middle East. The protesters now demand that Assad step down.

April 22, 2011: At least 75 people are killed on the bloodiest day of the uprising as Syrian security forces fire bullets and tear gas at tens of thousands of protesters across the country. The attacks sent a signal that the authoritarian regime was prepared to turn more ruthless to put down the revolt.

Aug. 18, 2011: U.S. President Barack Obama calls for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to

resign, saying the brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters makes the heir to a long Middle East family dictatorship unfit to lead. The call was accompanied by an executive order freezing all Syrian government assets in the U.S. and targeting the country's lucrative energy sector. Just before Obama made his demand, UN rights investigators said Syria's crackdown "may amount to crimes against humanity" and should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Nov. 7, 2011: Syrian troops storm a defiant neighbourhood of the embattled city of Homs. They kick in doors and arrest people after nearly a week of violence pitting soldiers against army defectors and protesters demanding the downfall of President Bashar al-Assad, according to activists.

Dec. 22, 2011: Arab League delegates arrive in Syria in the midst of a new international uproar over activist reports that government troops killed more than 200 people in two days. The United Nations says more than 5,000 people have been killed as Syria has sought to put down the uprising.

Feb. 4, 2012: Russia and China veto a UN resolution that backed calls for Assad's resignation as president of Syria. The vote came hours after the regime's bloodiest crackdown in the 10-month old conflict, which the UN had already characterized as a civil war. At least 200 people were reported killed in heavy shelling in Homs. There was international outrage at the veto by Russia and China.

Feb 6, 2012: The U.S. closes its embassy in Syria.

Feb. 22, 2012: Two western journalists are killed as Syrian gunners shelled an opposition stronghold in Homs. Marie Colvin was working for Britain's Sunday Times and Remi Ochlik was a French photojournalist.

Feb. 24, 2012: North American, European and Arab officials meet in a major international "Friends of Syria" conference in Tunisia to work out the details for their 72-hour ultimatum to end the violence and allow in aid, which will be backed by as yet unspecified punishments. A draft of the conference's final declaration also states that the Syrian National Council, an umbrella group of opposition organizations, will be recognized as "a legitimate representative of Syrians" and promised additional "practical" support for opposition groups. Saudi Arabia's foreign minister says arming Syrian rebels "is an excellent idea."

March 27, 2012: U.N. envoy Kofi Annan said Tuesday he has received the backing of both Syria and China for his plan for a negotiated end to the bloody Syrian conflict.

April 2, 2012: Syrian government troops clash with rebel forces across the country as international envoy Kofi Annan prepares to brief the U.N. Security Council on the progress of his mission to ease the nation's crisis.

April 16, 2012: U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said Monday it is the Syrian government's responsibility to guarantee freedom of movement within the country for U.N. observers monitoring the nation's 5-day cease-fire, which appeared to be rapidly unraveling as regime forces pounded the opposition stronghold of Homs with artillery shells and mortars, activists said.

May 4, 2012: Opposition groups plan mass rallies in Syria to protest yesterday's raid by security forces against a state-run school which left four students dead.

May 29, 2012: Canada joins international condemnation of the recent massacre in Syria, announcing Tuesday morning that Ottawa is expelling all Syrian diplomats. France's President Francois Hollande announces similar

measures, saying France says it is expelling the Syrian ambassador to increase pressure on Damascus.

May 30, 2012: Syria's state-run media denounces Tuesday's diplomatic expulsions by the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Bulgaria, as "unprecedented hysteria."

June 5, 2012: UN officials say Assad's government has agreed to ease humanitarian access to Syria's hardest-hit provinces, after Syria labelled a string of U.S. and European diplomats unwelcome.

June 6, 2012: Syrian President Assad appoints a new prime minister.

July 2, 2012: The head of the Arab League called Monday for the fragmented Syrian opposition to unite and said a U.N.-brokered plan for a transitional government in Syria fell short of expectations. Arab League Secretary General Nabil Elaraby addressed nearly 250 members of the Syrian opposition at a meeting in Cairo in an effort to coax the disparate groups to pull together. The gathering marked the first time the Arab League had hosted a gathering of the Syrian opposition.

July 3, 2012: Syrian President Bashar Assad said that he regrets the shooting down of a Turkish jet by his forces, and that he will not allow tensions between the two neighbours to deteriorate into an "armed conflict," a Turkish newspaper reported Tuesday. Commenting for the first time on a UN-brokered plan for a political transition in Syria that was adopted by world powers at a conference in Geneva on Saturday, Assad said he was "pleased" that the decision about Syria's future was left to its people.

August 2, 2012: Kofi Annan announced his resignation Thursday as Syria's peace envoy and issued a blistering critique of world

powers, bringing to a dramatic end a frustrating six-month effort that failed to achieve even a temporary cease-fire as the country plunged into civil war. Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Annan blamed the Syrian government's intransigence, the growing militancy of Syrian rebels and a divided Security Council that failed to forcefully back his effort.

September 4, 2012: Assad tells the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross that the group is welcome to operate on the ground in the country as long as it remains "neutral and independent."

October 4, 2012: Turkey's Parliament authorized military operations against Syria and its military fired on targets there for a second day after deadly shelling from Syria killed five civilians in a Turkish border town. For its part, Syria admitted it was responsible for the shelling that killed five people in Turkey and formally apologized for the deaths, a top Turkish official said.

October 13, 2012: Turkey's prime minister sharply criticizes the U.N. Security Council for its failure to agree on decisive steps to end Syria's civil war, as NATO ally Germany backed the Turkish interception of a Damascus-bound passenger jet earlier in the week.

November 8, 2012: Syrian President Bashar Assad vowed to "live and die" in Syria, saying in an interview broadcast Thursday that he will never flee his country despite the bloody, 19-month-old uprising against him. The broadcast comes two days after British Prime Minister David Cameron suggested that Assad could be

allowed safe passage out of the country if that would guarantee an end to the nation's civil war, which activists estimate has killed more than 36,000 people.

November 12, 2012: Israeli tanks strike a Syrian artillery launcher after a stray mortar shell flew into Israel-held territory, the first direct clash between the neighbours since the Syrian uprising began nearly two years ago.

November 14, 2012: An Associated Press journalist in the Turkish town of Ceylanpinar witnessed Syrian airstrikes in the adjacent Syrian town of Ras al-Ayn, where rebels say they have ousted troops loyal to President Bashar Assad.

November 17, 2012: Activists say Syrian rebels have taken control of an airport in the country's east along the border with Iraq after days of heavy fighting with the forces of President Bashar Assad.

November 19, 2012: A group of extremist Islamist factions in Syria rejects the country's new opposition coalition, saying in a video statement they have formed an "Islamic state" in the embattled city of Aleppo to underline that they want nothing to do with the Western-backed bloc.

November 20, 2012: Britain formally recognizes the newly formed Syrian opposition as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

---

#### Links that might be helpful

- The Middle East Section of The Guardian:  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/middleeast/roundup>
- The Middle East Section of Al Jazeera:  
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/>
- United Nations News Center, Syria:  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocusRel.asp?infocusID=146&Body=Syria&Body1>