

## 8-point plan for a free and democratic Syria

The toppling of the Assad regime is good news for Syria and for the world. While presenting opportunities, recent events also pose a range of security and migration policy risks, particularly in the fields of terrorism and proliferation, and with respect to the protection of minorities and regional stability. We therefore want to gear our policy on Syria towards the following points:

### 1. Facilitating a peaceful handover of power

Our objective is a peaceful and orderly handover of power from the armed militias and the remnants of the Assad regime to a civilian government enjoying broad-based legitimacy, involving all relevant societal forces and excluding terrorist groups still active in Syria. A Syrian-led, Syrian-owned inclusive dialogue process that ensures protection and political participation for all – including ethnic and religious minorities – is required here without delay.

The following steps are necessary to this end:

- (a) a ceasefire between all armed forces,
- (b) the commitment of all actors to a power-sharing agreement that upholds Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity,
- (c) the integration of the militias into a national army,
- (d) the preservation and/or establishment of unified national state institutions and administrative structures, and
- (e) free and democratic elections (at local, regional and national level).

This process should be embedded within an international framework set by the further development of Security Council Resolution 2254, under the auspices of the United Nations.

As a result of its decades-long mediation and dialogue activities behind the scenes with Syrian stakeholders from all societal, ethnic, religious and political fields, Germany has built up a substantial network and has established a high level of credibility. We want to bring this political capital to bear with respect to the dialogue process, e.g. in the form of mediation or moderation. We will continue to work together with like-minded partners to prevent the potential resurgence of ISIS.

### 2. Establishing international consensus on Syria

In the delicate phase of the handover of power, it is important to shield Syrian actors against foreign interference, especially on the part of spoilers. A new consensus must be established to this end, which – taking UN Security Council Resolution 2254 forwards – guarantees international support and non-intervention. A new Friends of Syria group comprising Syria's neighbouring countries and the most important Arab nations, as well as Western donor countries, is conceivable. The approach to Iran and Russia remains to be seen.

### 3. Defining a pragmatic approach to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and a HTS government

HTS is de facto the new strong power in Syria. It is not the only but a decisive actor to which contact is currently restricted on account of its terrorist past and subsequent listing (UN, EU, US). Whether and how HTS and its – non-sanctioned – political arm (the Salvation Government) will be involved and made to commit to the principles of the political process will be the decisive factor for success. There must be clear criteria in this regard on the basis of a continuation of the responsible approach to minorities to date, as well as the release of prisoners and refraining from acts of vengeance. We want to actively engage in determining the future approach to HTS and the Salvation Government in close consultation with our closest partners (E3, EU, G7).

#### 4. Reconstruction

Reconstruction should commence as soon as the political preconditions are in place. This should, where necessary, be accompanied by the swift lifting of relevant sanctions (e.g. in the financial, energy and construction sectors). Furthermore, we must quickly be in a position to implement humanitarian assistance and early-recovery measures (e.g. cash contribution programmes) in Syria itself, instead of in refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan.

#### 5. Supporting transitional justice and reckoning with the past

Addressing the injustice committed by Assad and other actors will play an important role in terms of the intra-Syrian process of reconciliation, also with a view to ensuring that seeds of a future conflict are not sown. Germany has taken the lead in the field of accountability and has adopted a clear stance with regard to the fight against impunity, including through the application of universal jurisdiction. We should make our experiences and our technical expertise available to a free Syria within the framework of its own process of reconciliation and reckoning with the past.

#### 6. Securing Syrian chemical weapons

There is now, for the first time, the opportunity to achieve the complete destruction of the Assad regime's chemical weapons. At the same time, the current situation poses risks in the event that these chemical weapons get into the wrong hands. We will work to ensure a swift investigation and the internationally monitored termination of Syria's chemical weapons programme. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) should enter into talks with the new authorities in Syria as quickly as possible. The objective is to secure and verify the relevant installations and stockpiles and to ensure their subsequent destruction.

#### 7. Presence in Damascus

There has been no German diplomatic presence in Syria since 2012. Swiftly establishing contact with new actors, perhaps already with a new Syrian transitional government, should be the focus of a first fact finding trip conducted by the Federal Government (in addition to talks with representatives of religious and ethnic minorities).

#### 8. International coordination of voluntary returns

Assad's ouster has created a new reality that will have an impact on the situation of refugees. The first Syrians are making their way home from neighbouring countries. Voluntary, secure and dignified returns – which we have always called for – now appear, for the first time in years, to be within the bounds of the possible. We must work to put in place the conditions for this in the long term – at the humanitarian, political and socio-economic level, and with respect to security. At the same time, it is important to ensure that prolonged uncertainty and newly erupting conflicts do not trigger fresh refugee flows.

Table Briefing