

الاتحاد الوطني لقوى
الثورة و المعارضة السورية



National Coalition of Syrian
Revolution and Opposition Forces

US Mission of the National Coalition of Revolution and Opposition Forces
New York Office

The Honourable Ban Ki-Moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
760 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

3 June 2014

Mr. Secretary-General,

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (Syrian Coalition), it is my solemn responsibility to write to you regarding the anti-democratic elections currently underway in Syria, and the obstacle they pose to the realization of a political solution to the world's most deadly crisis.

Today, as the Syrian people mourn the deaths of over 160,000 of their compatriots, the displacement of over 9 million Syrians, and the forcible starvation of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, the Syrian regime chooses to hold a rigged and unrepresentative presidential election. Rather than concentrate its efforts on relieving the suffering of millions of men, women and children, the Assad dictatorship forcibly re-anoints itself instead with yet another seven-year term.

The unilateral decision by the Syrian regime to hold presidential elections amidst the current destruction of Syria violates the will of the Syrian people, and undermines the vision for peaceful political transition that has been laid out time and again by the international community. Three years ago, Syrians came to the streets with simple, peaceful demands: democracy, dignity, rule of law and freedom for all Syrians, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or sect. The Syrian regime chose to answer these calls with brutal violence. Peaceful demonstrators were fired upon, protestors were arrested and tortured and critics silenced. Today, the Syrian regime has delivered the ultimate rejection of our people's demands and has made a mockery of their calls for a free and fair electoral process.

First, the Syrian elections have been conducted in the midst of violence and devastation. The Syrian regime continues to drop highly destructive and indiscriminate weapons on civilian areas. It has besieged hundreds of thousands of civilians and has denied them lifesaving humanitarian assistance. As a result, just under half of the Syrian population is currently displaced. Millions are living in refugee camps, and over six million more are internally displaced and in urgent need of care. In the absence of peace, the bitter struggle to find food, safety and security makes the balloting process practically impossible for most Syrians.

Second, today's elections take place on a grossly un-level electoral playing field. Earlier this year, Syria's unelected parliament adopted new electoral rules that disqualified Assad's most competent opponents from standing for office. The rules explicitly stipulate that only those who have maintained continuous, permanent

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residence in Syria for ten years can compete in presidential elections. In addition, anyone who holds dual citizenship, lacks two parents who are not Syrian citizens, is not married to a Syrian citizen, or has a criminal record cannot stand for presidential office. Non-Muslims, too, have also been excluded from competing for the presidency—which means that representatives of all religious minority communities in Syria have been denied the opportunity to lead their country. We have every reason to believe that any true democratic opposition that would even try to be openly present in Syria, let alone participate in campaigning, would be targeted, arrested or killed by regime forces. As a result, members of Syria’s most steadfast opposition, who have had to flee Syria for fear of life or operate local councils without any support from the Syrian government, could not compete in this sham electoral process.

Third, today’s elections have been designed to maximize the disenfranchisement of ordinary Syrians. Balloting within Syria was held almost exclusively in regime-controlled areas. All Syrians located outside government control are precluded from voting. So too are the one million Syrians who lost their identifying documents during the course of this three-year conflict and the hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees who the Assad regime accuses of exiting Syrian territory “illegally” in a desperate attempt to find peace and security in neighbouring states. The Syrian government suspended consular services at several embassies in advance of the elections. The calculated efforts by the Syrian regime to deny nearly half of the Syrian population their vote, is another clear attempt to render the prospects of a non-Assad victory impossible.

Fourth, today’s elections were held in a context of widespread voter intimidation. Numerous voters in Lebanon have reported allegations of voter intimidation by regime loyalists. Refugees, including those in Jordan, have reported active threats by regime supporters, who have warned that those who do not cast a ballot in favour of Assad will be banned from returning to Syria.

Finally, despite Syria’s long history of electoral manipulation, today’s elections were conducted in the absence of neutral, objective electoral monitors. United Nations election observers were not present in Syria, meaning that the world will never know the full scale of Assad’s electoral thievery.

The un-free, un-fair and un-inclusive nature of today’s electoral process offers only further indication of Assad’s disinterest in peace, his preference for polarization, and his total disregard for the will of the Syrian people. As the UN Secretary-General stated previously, today’s elections are blatantly “incompatible” with the political process envisioned by the Geneva Communiqué. The so-called elections violate the Communiqué’s call for the establishment of a transitional governing body to oversee constitutional reforms leading to free and fair elections in a neutral environment. Today’s elections are thus not merely “sham” elections—they are a calculated diversion, designed to throw a wrench in the peace process and prolong the suffering of the Syrian people.

Mr. Secretary-General, the Syrian people have once again been denied the free and fair elections they desire, and the open, democratic process they deserve. Despite this, however, our united hope for a free, democratic Syria at peace with itself and the world remains strong. Today the world received yet another reminder that there is only one way to achieve that goal: by applying meaningful pressure on the Syrian regime and altering

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the dynamics on the ground, so that the Syrian regime finally understands that a military victory is not possible. Having witnessed the Syrian regime repeatedly violate UN Security Council resolutions and defy its demands, the UN Security Council has a special obligation to uphold international law and bring peace and security to Syria.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary-General, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Dr. Najib Ghabbian
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition to the United Nations