

Statement
By Participants at the Conference of the New Policy Forum
On the Middle East and the Mediterranean
Istanbul

December 14, 2012

We begin by welcoming the fact that people in the Middle East and North Africa are making their own history. The revolutionary developments in the region are spreading a wave of democratic change throughout the Arab world. The international community must influence these developments using political, diplomatic and economic tools rather than force. Thus far, however, the UN Security Council has not been able either to resolve or prevent conflicts in the region.

We draw the world's attention to the fact that the most important contribution to democratic change and peace in the region would be an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict. We call on the international community as a whole and the Israelis and Palestinians in particular to renew their efforts to bring the conflict to a just and peaceful conclusion.

We reaffirm the principles on which a peaceful Middle East must be built:

- Rejecting violence or the use of force whether internally or externally.
- Rejecting military action without UN authorization
- Encouraging democratic change, social justice and inclusive economic development in the region.
- Observing international law especially humanitarian law.
- Reaffirming the main parameters of the solution of the Arab Israeli conflict as embodied in the relevant UN resolutions, including withdrawal from occupied territories.

Having focused on the Middle East in general, we turned our attention to the tragedy unfolding in Syria.

We call for an immediate cease-fire, based on a recognition by all parties that a fight to the finish may only result in the destruction of Syria itself.

We call on Turkey to play a constructive and even-handed role in bringing the conflict to a peaceful and democratic conclusion.

We appeal to all the members of the Security Council, particularly Russia and the United States, to overcome their differences and work cooperatively with all parties to facilitate a political solution.

We call on all parties to seek a solution that respects the rights of the entire Syrian population, restores the fabric of mutual tolerance that has been a strength for the whole region and maintains the unity and integrity of the Syrian state.

We appeal to the international community to offer immediate assistance to Syrian refugees and displaced persons. Syrians have assisted refugees generously in previous conflicts. Now it is time for Syrians themselves to receive the help they deserve.

The conference calls on all the actors in this tragedy—internal and external—to seek a political solution in Syria based on democratic inclusion, equality, security and social and economic development for all its peoples. The Syrian people have struggled for too long to achieve freedom, dignity and equal citizenship. They deserve an orderly transition toward democracy.

We are sending this appeal, which has the approval of international personalities from Europe, Iraq, Kurdish regions of Iraq, Syria, China, Canada, Tunisia, Russia, Turkey and the United States, to members of the Security Council and to governments and groups within the region.

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Signatories

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Brok, Elmar	Member of the European Parliament Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
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Helberg, Kristin	Political Scientist Journalist and Expert on Middle Eastern Affairs
Ignatieff, Michael	Writer, Teacher and Former Politician
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Lord Owen, David	Member of the House of Lords
Lüders, Michael	Middle East Consultant Author, Writer
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Matlock, Jack	Former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union
Rühe, Volker	Former German Minister of Defense, International Consultant
Steichen, René	Former Minister in Luxembourg Former Member of the European Commission
Stelzer, Thomas	Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, United Nations
Trémeaud, François	Former Executive Director of the International Labour Office
Zotov, Alexander	Former Russian and S.U. Ambassador