Research Report

Leiden Model United Nations 2016
~ fresh ideas, new solutions ~

Forum:	*North Atlantic Council*
Issue:	*The situation in Syria*
Position:	*Deputy Chair*

Introduction

According to statistics, more than 18 thousand people have died in Syria since the beginning of the uprising in March 2011. As the conflict starts to gain a character of a civil war, according to experts on the Middle Eastern region, the international community has to be very careful to handle the situation properly because the situation in Syria is starting to get out of hand. It may pose a threat not only to the shaky stability in the Middle East, with extremism involved, it may likely become a serious threat to the international security.

Definition of Key Terms

Jihadists – According to Merriam-Webster, Jihadists are Muslims who advocates or participates in a jihad – a holy war wages on behalf of Islam as a religious duty or a personal struggle in devotion to Islam especially involving spiritual discipline

Al-Qaeda – A jihadist terrorist organization which are fighting the forces of the Syrian government in the Syrian Civil War, with the aim to establish an Islamic state in the country.

General Overview

The past four-and-a-half years has costed the lives of more than 250,000 Syrians in armed conflicts which had begun with anti-government protests before it escalated into a massive civil war. The uprisings faced by the Syrians, have become more violent. The violence has further escalated and further descended into civil war as they battled against the government forces for control of cities, towns and countryside. According to the UN, 90,000 people had been killed in the conflicts in June 2013 and as the years progressed, by August 2015, the figures reached 250,000. With the increase in conflicts, there have been a number of war crimes committed - such as murder, torture, rape and enforced disappearances.

The UN Security Council demanded that all parties to end the multifarious use of weapons in populated areas, however civilians still continue to die due to the constant use of weaponry such as barrel bombs dropped by Government aircrafts. Furthermore, the UN says it will take $3.2billion to help the 13.5 million people who will require some form of humanitarian assistance in Syria due to the various crisis taking place simultaneously. About 70% of the population is currently living without adequate drinking water; one out of three lack basic food needs; more than 2 million children are out of school; and four out of five people live under extreme conditions of poverty. Many of its foreign fighters are involved in a 'war within a war' in Syria – fighting and battling rebels and rival jihadists from the al-Nusra front, a branch of al-Qaeda.

These chaotic crises began in 2011 in the Syrian city of Deraa. It all started because local people decided to protest after 15 students were arrested – and reportedly tortured – for writing anti-government graffiti on a wall. To begin with, these protests were peaceful – calling for the release of these children, democracy and more freedom for the people in the country. However, the government responded with aggression and on 18th March 2011, the army opened fire against the protesters, killing 4 people. Pathetically, the following day, they shot one of the mourners at the victim's funerals. From this, people started to get shocked and angry that soon the unrest spread to the other parts of the country. Therefore, in July 2012, Syria has been in a civil war – as officially declared by the International Red Cross.

Previous Attemps to solve the issue

With neither side able to inflict a decisive defeat on the other, the international community long ago concluded that only a political solution could end the conflict in Syria. The UN Security Council has called for the implementation of the 2012 Geneva Communique, which envisages a transitional governing body with full executive powers "formed on the basis of mutual consent".

Talks in early 2014, known as Geneva II, broke down after only two rounds, with then-UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi blaming the Syrian government's refusal to discuss opposition demands.

Mr Brahimi's successor, Staffan de Mistura, focused on establishing a series of local ceasefires. His plan for a "freeze zone" in Aleppo was rejected, but a three-year siege of the Homs suburb of al-Wair was successfully brought to an end in December 2015.
At the same time, the conflict with IS lent fresh impetus to the search for a political solution in Syria. The US and Russia led efforts to get representatives of the government and the opposition to attend "proximity talks" in Geneva in January 2016 to discuss a Security Council-endorsed road map for peace, including a ceasefire and a transitional period ending with elections.

Useful documents

1. https://lb.boell.org/sites/default/files/downloads/Perspectives_03-01_Syria_The_Current_Situation_and_Possible_Solutions.pdf
2. https://www.amo.cz/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/PSS-Current-Crisis-in-Syria-NATO.pdf
3. http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/RootsoftheSyrianCrisis_VPHaran.pdf
4. http://arkgroupdmcc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ARK-Syria-Conflict-Analysis-Digital-copy.pdf