

# SYRIAN OPPOSITION PRESIDENT PRESSES UK ON CIVILIAN PROTECTION

[en.etilaf.org/press/syrian-opposition-president-presses-uk-on-civilian-protection](http://en.etilaf.org/press/syrian-opposition-president-presses-uk-on-civilian-protection)

November 4, 2015

Press Statement  
Syrian Coalition  
Media Office  
November 04, 2015

On the first day of a two-day visit to the United Kingdom, the President of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, Dr Khaled Khoja, met UK Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, National Security Adviser, Mark Lyall Grant, and Secretary of State for International Development, Justine Greening to discuss options for resolving the crisis in Syria.

President Khoja stressed in all his meetings that civilian protection had to be at the core of any political process aimed at resolving the crisis. A political solution would not be possible while Syrian civilians were being slaughtered by the Assad regime and Russia – predominantly through airstrikes. President Khoja and Foreign Secretary Hammond agreed that Russia’s invasion of Syria was dangerous and counter-productive. Rather than strengthening the fight against ISIS, Russia’s war on civilians and moderate opposition groups was enabling a resurgence of ISIS.

President Khoja was clear that the discussions among western, Arab, Russian and Iranian officials in Vienna were lacking an essential component: the participation of Syrians. The Vienna process would gain legitimacy only if it led to the protection from aerial bombardment demanded by the Syrian people. If the Vienna process was to make progress towards a future Syria free of Assad, it was crucial that the UK, European and Arab allies of the Syrian people set out clear guarantees on civilian protection and a timeframe for the transition that was agreed in the Geneva Communiqué.

President Khoja also discussed the humanitarian and refugee crises. The President thanked his hosts for the UK’s extremely generous £1.1 billion aid contribution, which was saving lives. The President and Secretary of State Greening agreed that more needed to be done to ensure the delivery of aid across borders and conflict lines as authorised by UN Security Council resolutions. The President also stressed the need for Syrian refugees to be treated with respect and dignity. The record across the EU was mixed. He requested that the UK take a leading role in the EU to shape a comprehensive policy that led to greater intake of refugees to the EU, full participation by all Member States, the creation of safe routes to the EU to undercut the murderous illegal traffickers, and greater assistance to Syria’s neighbours who were hosting the vast majority of refugees.

