

President Khoja Meets With German Foreign Minister Steinmeier

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On 17 March, President of the Syrian National Coalition, Khaled Khoja, met German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier. President Khoja thanked Foreign Minister Steinmeier for Germany's ongoing support to the Syrian people, particularly through its leading role in Europe on the resettlement of Syrian refugees, as well as its steadfast support for Syria's moderate political opposition.

President Khoja and Foreign Minister Steinmeier agreed that a comprehensive approach is urgently required to defeat ISIL and address the root cause of the extremism through a political transition to a future Syria without Bashar al Assad. In this regard, President Khoja reaffirmed the Syrian National Coalition's commitments to the Geneva Communiqué. However, the President made clear that shifts towards an 'ISIL first' strategy would only further fuel Assad's culture of impunity. Without more targeted pressure on the regime and its key backers, a viable political track would remain an unachievable goal.

Commenting on his meeting with Foreign Minister Steinmeier, President Khoja said:

“As the Syrian crisis enters its fifth year, it is clear that the Assad regime is only committed to a military solution. The regime has refused initiatives by UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura and his predecessors aimed at making progress on the political track. Instead the regime's military, militia and foreign fighters from Hizballah and Iran continue to kill thousands of Syrians on a weekly basis. And Assad's airforce is intensifying its unlawful daily bombardments across Syria, including the abhorrent use of chemical weapons, most recently against women and children in Idlib province on 16 March.

“Assad's brutality and the terror unleashed by ISIL now pose a clear and present danger to international security. Without a revived approach, our international partners will inevitably need to deploy ground forces to protect western security from the extremist chaos that Assad has created. However, the Syrian Coalition has set out the necessary steps for a comprehensive plan to avoid going past this point of no return, to secure access to urgent humanitarian aid to save lives, and create the conditions needed for political transition – including more effective coordination and increased support to our

moderate forces on the ground (the Free Syrian Army) – to defeat terrorism and tyranny. The first step must be a no-fly zone to protect the lives of the Syrian population.”

President Khoja and Prime Minister Ahmad Tomeh also met senior German government officials and members of the Bundestag. They welcomed commitments of support from the German officials in building the necessary moderate governance structures to stop the return of extremism and for the long term recovery of a post-Assad Syria.