

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Position for the Security Council

I. Reassessing the Response to the Syrian Civil War, an International Dilemma.

For over five years, the global community has been witness to the Syrian Civil War. This ongoing conflict has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths and a mass exodus of the Syrian people from their homeland spurring an internationally felt refugee crisis. As of April of this year, the UN Special Envoy to Syria estimates over 400,000 deaths to have resulted thus far. The United Nations High Council on Refugees (UNHCR) estimates 4.8 million Syrians have fled the country with another 8.7 million to be internally displaced by the end of 2016.¹ The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela firmly believes that after 5 years of conflict and regional destabilization, this Council must reassess past responsive measures and undertake actions that bolster the sovereignty of the Syrian government while promoting peaceful resolution to conflict within the region. This war has compromised the peace and security of the international community for far too long.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is committed to a political resolution of conflict and humanitarian crises as shown through the ratification of S/Res/2254 which reaffirms “its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic”, and S/Res/2268 which “Calls on all states to use their influence with the government of Syria and the Syrian opposition to advance the peace process”. It must be stressed that Member States not interpret influence as a synonym for intervention. As stated by Venezuela’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Mr. Rafael Ramirez, “It is important always to recall that distinction, as the protection of civilians must never be used as an excuse for military intervention violating a country’s sovereignty against its will, fomenting regime change, destroying its infrastructure, dismantling its institutions and leaving its citizens in chaos.”² Chaos and crisis presently characterize the lives of far too many Syrians. Venezuela is fully aware of the scope of the humanitarian crisis in Syria and intends to welcome 20,000 Syrian refugees and strongly recommends other Member States to do so.³ The weight this refugee crisis has placed on European member states must be alleviated. The international community should stand with the Syrian government by not only welcoming refugees but by spearheading relief efforts and aid to be sent to the embattled region. Venezuela, along with members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), will be flying much needed supplies and medicine to help stem the suffering of the Syrian people.⁴

This Council should condemn any further intervention by fellow Member States in this conflict. Syria, a sovereign Member State, must determine a course that addresses bringing an end to this civil war and its accompanying humanitarian crises. Most importantly, this course must be self-determined by the Syrian government. Venezuela is of the staunch belief that foreign intervention, especially when bifurcated, only exacerbates and complicates resolution of conflict. This civil war has developed into a serious international dilemma with many actors that, while in the hopes of bringing about peace to the region, have only added new layers of complexity and chaos to this ongoing conflict. Intervention, especially in regard to this Council, must be thoroughly deliberated, collective, and should seek out the most efficient path towards peace rather than the most politically convenient. Threats arising from terrorism and regional instability cannot be used as justifications for an individual Member State’s interference into another State’s internal affairs. Since the escalation of foreign intervention in 2013, death tolls have risen steadily, if not dramatically.⁵ Venezuela challenges this Council to reassess past action in regard to the Syrian Civil War and undertake future actions that not only fulfill this Body’s commitment to the preservation of international security and peace, but that also respect a cornerstone of international politics and diplomacy- state sovereignty.

¹ UNHCR. <http://www.unhcr.org/sy/>

² International Coalition for The Responsibility to Protect. <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/component/content/article/35-r2pcs-topics/5695-statement-by-venezuela-at-the-security-council-open-debate-on-the-protection-of-civilians>

³ W. Frej. Venezuela Plans To Take In 20,000 Syrian Refugees http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/venezuela-maduro-syrian-refugees_us_55ef279ce4b03784e276bc8b

⁴ T. Pearson. Venezuela and ALBA to Send Humanitarian Aid to Syrian Refugees. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/news/10011>

⁵ The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights <http://www.syriaahr.com/en/>

II. Examining the Rise and Spread of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

"We will take with us to the UN a voice that repudiates terrorism and speaks out in favour of world peace; that respects the sovereignty of peoples and has the credit of the 181 countries who voted for us, not as an imperialist power that conquers peoples, but with our Bolivarian vision of peace and the right to exist."

- Nicolás Maduro

International security and peace has been seriously compromised by the the rise and spread of ISIL throughout areas of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Since ISIL's rise to prominence in regions of Iraq, Libya, and Syria, this jihadist militant group has become heavily involved in the Syrian and Libyan Civil War, and has gradually fought for control of Iraqi territory. As of October of 2016, ISIL has control of 65,500 sq. km of territory in Syria and Iraq. Additionally, ISIL is responsible for committing genocide, war crimes, and numerous human rights violations since its rise to power in 2011.⁷ ISIL has not only compromised the security and peace of the Middle East, but has also encouraged the spread of terror and ISIL branches across the globe resulting in terror attacks across Europe and the United States. As of August of 2016, ISIL has established fully operational branches in 18 nations across the globe.⁸ The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela believes that in order to effectively combat ISIL this Council must understand the causes underlying the rise and spread of ISIL and ISIL inspired acts of terrorism.

While seeking out courses of action to combat ISIL remains a central issue to this Council, seeking out an understanding as to why ISIL has risen and spread on a global scale provides a different perspective from which to address this threat to international security. This approach does not seek to shift focus away from the serious threat that ISIL and terrorism as a whole pose to the international community. Venezuela, while not directly affected by ISIL, has dealt with acts of terrorism from domestic opposition groups in recent years. The year 2014 was marked with the assassinations of former government officials, national guardsmen, and police. The city of Caracas has had to endure massive opposition protest resulting in the large-scale destruction of valuable public infrastructure in the capital city.⁹ Venezuela does not tolerate such acts of domestic terrorism and, therefore, firmly denounces the widespread international terrorism that has been inflamed by groups such as ISIL as displayed through the unanimously passed S/RES/2299 which recognizes "that terrorism poses a threat to international peace and security and that countering this threat requires collective efforts on national, regional and international levels on the basis of respect for international law...". Unfortunately, respect for international law on the part of some Member States can be difficult to muster as it is seen as an affront to state sovereignty. Conversely, Venezuela views international law as a bulwark that shields smaller and less influential Member States from foreign infringements upon their sovereignty. Any action taken by this Council and the evaluation of the rise and spread of ISIL must be framed within established international laws.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela advances that prevention and understanding are crucial elements in addressing ISIL's alarming threat to security the world over. In each region where ISIL has established a foothold there has been significant foreign involvement into the affairs of sovereign Member States. Venezuela chooses to view ISIL as a threat to peace and security, but also as a symptom of an international system that has historically been dominated by a handful of hegemonic Member States that seek out global influence at the expense of global peace. This Council and all UN Member States must first and foremost keep this Body's purpose as clearly established in Article I of the UN Charter, "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace..." in mind when undertaking any action in regard to ISIL. Venezuela strongly emphasizes this fundamental notion of the United Nations and advances that future threats similar to the one posed by ISIL can be prevented through bolstering collective actions and denouncing foreign, independent interventions in sovereign Member States even if with the purpose of maintaining international security and peace. It is only collective action in strict adherence to established international laws, such as the actions made by this Council that will prove to be effective in combating ISIL and preventing the rise of such terrorist groups in the future.

⁶ Islamic State and the crisis in Iraq and Syria in maps. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034>

⁷ ISIL may have committed genocide, war crimes in Iraq, says UN human rights report. http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=50369#.V_ZAOgrLIU

⁸ W. Arkin, R. Windrem, C. McFadden. New Counterterrorism 'Heat Map' Shows ISIS Branches Spreading Worldwide <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/new-counterterrorism-heat-map-shows-isis-branches-spreading-worldwide-n621866>

⁹ S. Ellner. Terrorism in Venezuela and Its Accomplices. <https://venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/10684>