

Optimism of Arab Spring Clouded by Syrian Instability

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- A “ new seriousness ” from the international community is needed to find a Syrian solution
- The Arab region is being reshaped by “ interconnectedness ” and a new regional identity is emerging
- Jobs need to be created across the region
- More information about the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia is available at <http://www.weforum.org/eumena12>

Istanbul, Turkey 5 June 2012 – Arab leaders called on the international community to speak with one voice and to act with a “ new seriousness ” to find a Syrian solution. Speaking at the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia, taking place on 4-6 June in Istanbul, Turkey, Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said the Syrian regime is “ caught in a vicious circle ”, which is the illusion of autocratic regimes. It is time for the international community to speak with “ one coherent voice ” if a solution is to be found, he added.

Fayez A. Tarawneh, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, said there has been “ too much blood ” and a lack of seriousness from the international community. “ The solutions are not there from the international community and I don ’ t see a Syrian solution because there is no dialogue and no trust between the opposition and the institutions and the army. ” He called for the imposition of a solution from the international community, not necessarily using force.

Davutoglu said the Syrian situation is a “ litmus test ” for the international system. “ The situation is threatening our security and the [UN] Security Council was unable to deliver a strong message, ” he said. [The delay at the United Nations] means thousands of people are being killed and we do not know what will happen next. ”

Syria is an “ extremely complex crisis ”, warned Rafik Ben Abdesslem, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tunisia. “ Syria is not completely different from Tunisia – the people have the same demands and aspirations. People have suffered from lack of democracy and political freedom. The only difference is that Tunisia and Egypt are more homogenous societies. ”

The lack of a unified opposition is a “ weak link ” that gives the Syrian regime “ ammunition ” and is one of the reasons the world is not moving, said Tarawneh. Davutoglu disagreed, noting that if the international community sends a strong message of support, the opposition will become better organized. “ Thinking about ‘ what next ’ may become a trap as it creates disbelief or suspicions about change itself. The existing status quo is a source of instability... this should not be turned into a way to [legitimize] the regime.

Dalia Mogahed, Director, Gallup Center for Muslim Studies, USA; Young Global Leader; Global Agenda Council on the Arab World, pointed out that surveys across the region show that sympathies are squarely with the rebels. “ In a region known for conspiracy theories, they believe the Arab Spring is an organic, indigenous movement for change and not something brought in by an external power. ”

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the region is being shaped by “ interconnectedness ” and a new regional identity is emerging. According to Davutoglu, many young people no longer think of themselves as Tunisians, Egyptians or

Syrians. “ They are questioning the situation in the region, including in Palestine. New technological innovations are leading to regional ownership. They are searching for new alternatives, ” he said.

Looking to the future, the Arab region desperately needs an estimated 80-100 million jobs over the next decade if the aspirations of the young generation are to be fulfilled. “ This is all about jobs and about creating a better future for people ’ s children. If we don ’ t [create these jobs] we are all going to crumble under the social harmony that will break. We need to reignite investment in the region, ” said Muhtar A. Kent, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, USA, a Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia

The diversity of the region is reflected in the Co-Chairs of the meeting:

- Frederico Curado, President and Chief Executive Officer, EMBRAER, Brazil
- Ibrahim S. Dabdoub, Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait, Kuwait
- Muhtar A. Kent, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, The Coca-Cola Company, USA
- Andrey L. Kostin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, VTB Bank, Russian Federation
- Giuseppe Recchi, Chairman, Eni, Italy
- Güler Sabanci, Chairman and Managing Director, Hacı Ömer Sabancı Holding, Turkey

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