

End Killing to Stop Extremists Flowing into Syria, Says Saudi Prince

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- Extremists are flowing into Syria, and the only way to stop them is to stop the killing by the regime
- Jordan calls for more international assistance for refugees
- Bashar Al-Assad 's regime could hang on for much longer and will only be toppled if one side prevails militarily or a political solution is imposed from outside
- The theme of the 43rd World Economic Forum Annual Meeting is Resilient Dynamism. For more information, visit <http://wef.ch/Davos>

Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, 25 January 2013 – Extremists are flowing into Syria from North Africa, Europe and other regions to fight with opposition forces, H.R.H. Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, Prince of Saudi Royal Family; Chairman, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, Saudi Arabia, said in a televised debate at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting moderated by the Al-Arabiya satellite channel.

“ Stop the killing and you won ' t have these terrorists, they won ' t have any place to go in Syria, ” he said. Their presence was predicted from day one in the event of a prolonged crisis, he said. The answer is to channel funds to “ the good guys ” among the opposition to help them to regain their credibility among the people, he said.

Pressed on the thorny issue whether the opposition ' s allies are sending weapons into Syria, Ahmet Davutoglu, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, said: “ The Turkish people have helped the refugees with their humanitarian needs and also the Syrian people to defend themselves by the best means...The Syrian people know what we are doing, how we are helping. ”

Asked the same question, Prince Turki Al Faisal told the audience that he could not speak for a Saudi government he was not part of. “ [But] I assume we are sending weapons, if we are not, it would be a terrible mistake on our part, ” he said. The prince added that third-party-transfer agreements imposed by weapons manufacturers made it difficult to send opposition fighters the more heavy-duty weapons needed to bring down planes or shoot at tanks from a distance.

Two years into the conflict, the humanitarian situation for both the Syrian people inside the country and at least 650,000 refugees who have mostly fled to neighbouring countries must become a priority, panellists agreed.

Nasser Sami Judeh, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, answered criticisms of conditions in the Zaatari camp in northern Jordan, particularly during a recent storm, with a plea for more assistance. “ The presence of so many Syrians costs Jordan US\$ 500 million last year alone, ” he said. “ I think there is a lot more that can be done by the international community to help us. ”

Over the past 10 days, 22,000 Syrian refugees have entered Jordan, Judeh said, adding to some 79,000 in the camps. Davutoglu said that if needed, Turkey is ready to help Jordan and Lebanon financially and with expertise.

In Syria, conditions are even more desperate. Hospitals, ambulances, doctors and nurses have come into the line of fire, said Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva. Asked which side was shooting, he said: “ It ' s all over the place that international humanitarian law is disrespected. ”

Negotiations between the parties to allow relief convoys to reach civilians have become “ extremely difficult ”, the

ICRC head said, often taking days or weeks to get just one into a Syrian city. That was also making it hard to understand the full picture. “ We don ’ t know the depth and breadth of the suffering, ” he said.

Davutoglu called on the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution calling for humanitarian access to Syria. It should also agree on the “ norms of war crimes ” , to prevent further such crimes from happening. Disagreement over Syria between the United States and its allies on one side and Russia and China on the other has so far deadlocked the Council.

For most pundits and news organizations, the big question is if and when the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad will fall. Many have long been saying Syria has reached the “ end game ” . Judeh said it was “ not a question of if, but how ” it fell, while the Saudi prince urged the audience to focus not on the number of days left for the regime, but instead on the number of Syrians likely to be killed before that happens.

Panellists agreed that there must be a political solution in Syria. Syria has become a “ proxy war ” with different countries trying to defend or impose their own interests, said Ghassan Salamé, Dean, The Paris School of International Affairs, Institut d'Etudes Politiques, France. Any solution could take many years unless one of two things happens, he said. Either one side must prevail militarily, or a political solution must be imposed on the various players from outside. “ I don ’ t see another way out of this, ” he said.

Davutoglu said Turkey maintains good relations with Russia, despite their opposition to each other on the conflict, but differed on how to interpret the Geneva Agreement from last June, which was agreed on by all key sides and outlined a political transition. Russia refuses to rule out current regime figures being part of a political solution. “ Our position is there should not be anyone in government with bloody hands, ” the Turkish foreign minister said.

Whether the current government leaves at the beginning of a political transition or stays until the end is the main cause for division, said Salamé. They also differ over whether a transitional body should only oversee elections or be invested with executive powers. “ But neither side is any longer saying a political solution is anathema, so there has been slow progress, ” he said.

Salamé warned that the worst was yet to come if the battle for the capital Damascus begins in earnest. That is likely to be devastating and send many thousands more refugees into Lebanon and Jordan.

Asked about the likelihood of further “ spill-over ” into Lebanon, Salamé said the country must be given the means to prepare for such an influx. “ Lebanon also needs to hold its elections on time [in June], otherwise the legitimacy of its institutions will be called into question ” , leading to further instability, he said.

Judeh said Jordan was most afraid of a political vacuum in its northern neighbour. “ When we talk about Syria, we have to start talking about avoiding a situation where you have lawlessness and uncertainty and anarchy, ” he said.

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