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International conference

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| Syria at a dead end?  |
| Four years after the beginning of the uprising – approaches and prospects for a political resolution to the conflict |

**Date and location**

Thursday, 28 May 2015, 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. - Conference

Thursday, 28 May 2015, 7.30 p.m. – 9.30 p.m. - Book presentation

Heinrich Böll Foundation, Schumannstr. 8, 10117 Berlin-Mitte

**Conference languages are German, English and Arabic**

There will be simultaneous interpretation of all conference presentations.

**Background**

The uprising in Syria is now entering its fifth year and there is still no end to the conflict in sight. The war is continuing to escalate, at the same time, more and more regional and international actors are getting involved. Syria itself is now divided into a number of different domains which are controlled by the Assad regime, ISIS, the PKK-affiliated Kurdish party of the Democratic Union PFD as well as various rebel groups. The situation of refugees is becoming increasingly critical: more than eleven million Syrians have fled their homes, most within the country itself. Meanwhile, Europe and the USA are at a complete loss about how to find a political solution that goes beyond taking military action against ISIS. At the same time, international humanitarian aid for the people affected in the region is stagnating.

Against this background, the conference will explore the following issues, among others: What are possible solutions to this dilemma? What approaches does the international community as well as Germany and the EU need to develop for a political solution? How can Syria come together again as a nation? What role can Assad play in a future Syria? What influence do the neighbouring countries have in the conflict and how can they play a role in a solution? What prospects are there for refugees in the host countries? And how can Europe contribute by accepting more refugees and liberalising its refugee policy?

**Programme**

8:30 a.m. Registration

9 a.m. Welcome and opening address

**Barbara Unmüßig**, President of Heinrich Böll Foundation, Berlin

9:20 a.m. Keynote

**Four years of war and no end in sight**

**Frederic C. Hof,** Senior FellowRafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council, Washington, DC

9:40 a.m. Panel discussion

 **Syria – which Syria?**

The authoritarian regime of Bashar Hafez al-Assad that ruled Syria for years has failed. In fact, Syria has now disintegrated into different domains and zones of influence, into areas that are controlled by ISIS, the regime, the Kurdish PFD or various rebel groups. Against this background, how can Syria come together again as a nation? Who still actually represents the Syrian people and who only claims to do so? And how do the Syrians see the future? What role can Assad play in a future Syria?

* **Frederic C. Hof,** Senior FellowRafik Hariri Center for the Middle East , Atlantic Council, Washington DC
* **Jihad Yazigi,** Editor in Chief, Syria Report, Beirut
* **Oula Ramadan,** Head of the organisation Badael, Istanbul

Moderated by: **Elias Perabo,** Adopt a revolution, Berlin

11 a.m. Coffee break

11:30 a.m. Panel discussion

**The influence of regional actors**

Many countries in the region have had an intense and active policy towards Syria for a long time – usually not a constructive policy, but one that effectively contributes to the conflict's momentum. Both Iran as well as the Gulf States are pursuing dedicated objectives in Syria by systematically backing particular groups. Russia and Turkey also have their own interests when it comes to Syria. What role does the conflict in Syria play for these countries? What are their interests and goals? What is at stake for the regional powers? And what implications does it have for a German and European Syrian policy?

* **Prof. Jubin Goodarzi**, Professor of International Relations, Webster University, Geneva
* **Hanin Ghaddar,** Editor-in-Chief of NOW News, Beirut
* **Sebastian Sons,** Program Officer, Middle East and North Africa, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin
* **Oytun Orhan**, ORSAM, Ankara

Moderated by: **Kristian Brakel,** Head of the Istanbul office, Heinrich Böll Foundation

1 p.m. Lunch break

2 p.m. Panel discussion

**The situation of refugees and the West's responsibility**

Most Syrian refugees are still in their own country. But millions are also seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. What is the situation of the refugees in Syria itself and in the neighbouring countries? What challenges do host countries like Lebanon face and what support do they need from the outside? How can Europe contribute by accepting more refugees and liberalising its refugee policy? What do Brussels and Berlin need to do to tackle these challenges?

* **Hans ten Feld**, Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Germany (UNHCR), Berlin
* **Dr. Christian Klos,** Head of Unit Immigration Law, Federal Ministry of the Interior, Berlin
* **Georges Ghali**, Monitoring and Advocacy Program Officer, ALEF - act for human rights, Beirut
* **Gabriele del Grande**, Journalist, Italy

Moderated by: **Kristin Helberg,** Publicist and freelance Journalist, Berlin

4 p.m. Coffee break

4:30 Closing panel

**Call it off? Germany, Europe, the international community and what kind of policy toward Syria is even still possible?**

The UN is helpless and divided, the EU is non-committal to apolitical, the democratic forces in Syria are marginalised. There is a complete absence of political solutions in Syria policy. At the same time, calls are growing louder for Assad to now be included in some sort of solution to the conflict. What are possible solutions to this dilemma? Where would the international community as well as Germany and the EU need to start in concrete terms?

* **Miguel Berger**, Director for the Middle East and Maghreb in the German Foreign Office, Berlin
* **Dr. Franziska Brantner,** Member of the German Bundestag, Bündnis 90/Green Party, Berlin

Moderated by: **Dr.** **Bente Scheller**, Head of the Beirut office, Heinrich Böll Foundation

5:30 p.m. End of the conference

**Starting at 7:30 p.m.**

 Book presentation and discussion

**The sinister force – The "Islamic State" and the strategists of terror**

SPIEGEL correspondent Christoph Reuter traces the precisely planned rise of the "Islamic State" and ventures into the roots of terror – in disintegrating Iraq, in the Syrian civil war and in the many conflicts in the region that the strategists of terror know how to intelligently exploit for their own purposes. Christoph Reuter's book is based on as yet unseen documents, many contacts and years of research in the region. It offers unusual insights into the emergence and development of the "Islamic State" and uncovers background information, sponsors and covert aides of the IS.

The author **Christoph Reuter,** Correspondent, Der Spiegel

in a discussion with **Petra Stienen,** Publicist, Den Haag