

Women Lead to Peace Talking Points

After three years of horrendous fighting, a death toll now exceeding 130,000 and more than seven million Syrians forced to leave their homes, Syrian peace talks will finally take place in Switzerland on January 22, 2014. Launched by a coalition of international organizations including CODEPINK, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, MADRE and Nobel Women's Initiative, the **Women Lead to Peace Campaign is calling for the active participation of Syrian women in the Geneva II peace talks.**

The perspectives and priorities of Syrian women must be reflected in any political settlement of the conflict. This is true not only because **women represent half the population**, but because **their contributions to reconciliation and community-based recovery efforts are both substantial and essential to lasting peace.**

The Syrian **women are already contributing to the peacebuilding process and are active in building ceasefire arrangements, humanitarian work, providing education and health care.** Their knowledge of the local situation and conditions is vital to understanding how any agreements can be made to work.

The Syrian women understand the community dynamics within both a local and international context. They possess a **deep understanding of the local situation** both in terms of key players and brokered peace agreements between communities in Syria. **Of the 2.2 million Syrian refugees, more than 80% are women and their children.** On every side of the conflict, violence against women - including detention, rape, torture - continues to be used as a weapon of war.

Since the Syrian civil society must implement any decisions arrived at in the Geneva II peace talks, the **presence of women will better inform and broker a viable, peaceful result** or a "deep peace" in Syria.

UN Resolution 1325 states that the United Nations must recognize the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and promote their equal participation in all efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. Women Lead to Peace is calling on Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN and Arab League Special Envoy to Syria, to ensure that this mandate is implemented at the Syrian peace talk table. International leadership in the negotiating process must also provide the appropriate support Syrian women's groups need to participate effectively and ensure that all delegations involved in the negotiations have senior women mediators and gender experts.

Women have played major roles in lasting peace building in Northern Ireland, Liberia, Bosnia, Guatemala and many other countries; **some of them will share their experience at the Women Lead to Peace Summit on January 21.**