

THEWORLDPOST

A PARTNERSHIP OF THE HUFFINGTON POST AND BERGGRUEN INSTITUTE

Edition: US ▾

Like 6.6M

Follow


US EDITION INDIA BRASIL U.K. MAGHREB JAPAN DEUTSCHLAND CANADA KOREA FRANCE ESPANA ALL SECTIONS

How to Resolve the Syrian Crisis and Alleviate the ISIS Threat

🕒 03/29/2016 12:30 pm ET | Updated 1 day ago



Like 49

 **Seyed Hossein Mousavian**
Head of Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's National Security Council (1997-2005)







H

YASIN AKGUL VIA GETTY IMAGES

On March 27, the Syrian army [liberated](#) Palmyra from the barbarians. No doubt it was a very important day for Syria. Moreover, after nearly two weeks, representatives of the Syrian government and opposition have [paused](#) peace talks in Geneva. The negotiations wrapped up at the end of a tumultuous week, revealing how far-reaching the consequences of the Syrian conflict are and the urgent need to find political resolution. The terrorist attack in Brussels, which [left](#) over 30 dead and more than 300 injured, demonstrates the need for a unified Syrian front against the so-called Islamic State. While the group has [lost](#) a significant amount of its territory and leadership, including its [second-in-command](#), the Brussels bombing shows that it will become even more aggressive in its foreign operations as it loses ground, with some stating the attack in Brussels is an [indication of panic](#) in the group.

While no breakthrough agreement was reached in the peace negotiations in Geneva, the mere fact that the two sides stayed at the table for so long, all while a "cessation of hostilities" generally continues to hold in Syria, is a significant

FOLLOW HUFFPOST

HuffPost Like 6.6M



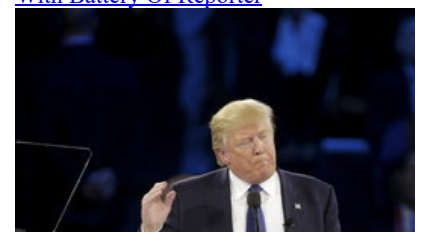
HUFFPOST NEWSLETTERS

Get top stories and blog posts emailed to me each day. Newsletters may offer personalized content or advertisements. [Learn More.](#)

SUGGESTED FOR YOU

?

- 1. [Trump Campaign Manager Charged With Battery Of Reporter](#)



a day ago [huffingtonpost.com](#)
[Wow.com](#) [Christina Wilkie](#) Christina

achievement by itself. The warring parties also came out of the talks with encouraging statements. [According to Reuters](#), chief Syrian government negotiator Bashar Ja'afari was "positive" and believed the round of talks had "broken a diplomatic impasse." The coalition of opposition groups known as the High Negotiations Committee, a grouping that was [formed](#) in Riyadh in December and represented the opposition at the negotiations, has also [reportedly stated](#) that the talks have "laid the basis for substantive talks" for when the two sides meet again in April.

The tragedy that is the Syrian civil war, which by some reports has led to the deaths of at least [470,000](#) people and spawned an unprecedented refugee crisis, has torn asunder a society once renowned for being a mosaic of different religious and ethnic groups. Before the unrest in Syria started in 2011, Syria maintained a delicate ethno-religious [balance](#) through institutionalized tolerance and respect for minority rights. It also had a [health care system](#) that was "the envy" of many regional countries, a "[healthy record](#)" on public education and [significant economic growth](#) in the decade leading up to the civil war despite international embargoes imposed on it by the United States. Syria was also a critical factor in there being a stable regional balance of power. It [strongly opposed](#) Saddam Hussein's invasions of Iran and Kuwait and was a supporter of the Palestinian cause. Simultaneously, though, it maintained strong partnerships with the Sunni power centers, especially [Turkey](#), [Qatar](#) and [Saudi Arabia](#).



Belgian Army soldiers patrol at Zaventem Airport in Brussels on Wednesday, March 23, 2016. (AP/Geert Vanden Wijngaert)

Of course, it goes without saying that Syria's political system was in need of serious reforms. These reforms, however, should have been pursued through diligent peaceful means, such as regional and international incentives, to avoid a total breakdown of political institutions. Unfortunately, this was not done, leading to the massive disaster we are witnessing.

Since Iran was [first invited](#) as a participant in the Syria peace talks last November, there has been substantial progress towards a final settlement, though major steps still need to be taken. "We adopted the notion of a transition for Syria. Russia and the United States and all of the other countries ... And I might add, one of the

Wilkie Donald Trump

- 2. [15-Year-Old Allegedly Groped, Pepper-Sprayed At Trump Rally](#)



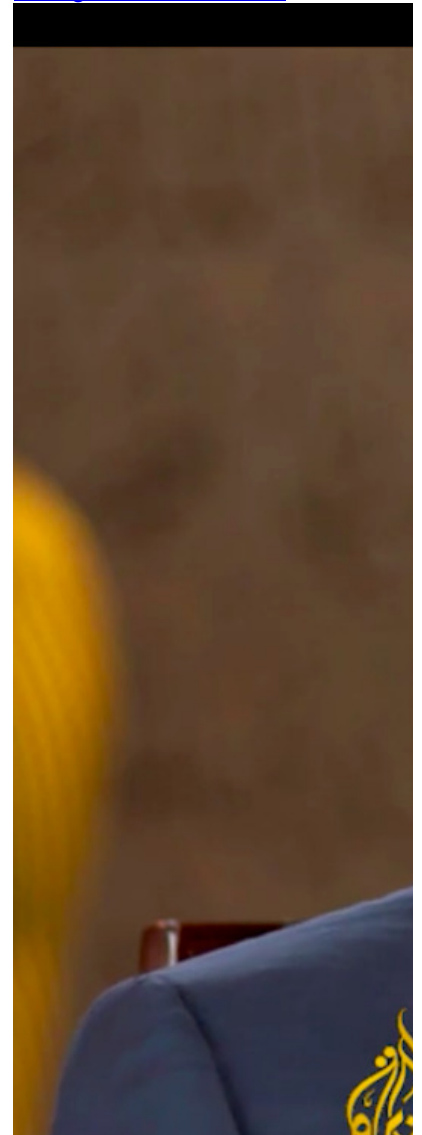
a day ago [huffingtonpost.com](#)
[TheOrbit.com](#) [Dominique Mosbergen](#)
Dominique Mosbergen trump

- 3. [Donald Trump Can't Even Keep Up With His Own Lies](#)



a day ago [huffingtonpost.com](#)
[NationalJournal.com](#) [Sam Levine](#) [Sam Levine](#) [donald trump](#) [michelle fields](#)

- 4. [Watch A Saudi Ambassador Squirm Through A Brutal Interview](#)



supporters of that particular approach both times in Vienna and subsequently in the meeting in New York and then in Munich is Iran, which also signed onto that," [said](#) John Kerry.

Here are seven suggestions that may help resolve the civil war in Syria, end the refugee crisis and alleviate the terrorist threat posed by ISIS to Europe and the rest of the world:



Palmyra was liberated from ISIS by the Syrian government army on March 27, 2016. (Valery Sharifulin/TASS via Getty Images)

1. Full cooperation between the two coalitions fighting ISIS — i.e. the coalition spearheaded by Iran, Syria, Iraq and Russia and the one by the United States and its regional and international allies. This will assure cooperation among the key regional and international powers in the ISIS fight and is the only effective way to destroy the group.
2. In Syria, the ground offensive against ISIS led by the Syrian army and Kurdish forces should immediately be supported internationally and be intricately connected to Iraqi military and paramilitary efforts against ISIS. For that to happen, the Saudis, Qataris and Turks must command their proxy rebel forces to adhere to a complete ceasefire and allow them to cooperate with government and Kurdish forces fighting ISIS if possible.
3. In line with that, the Syrian government, opposition, as well as regional and international powers, should move beyond the current “cessation of hostilities” towards a formal and durable ceasefire. Parallel to this, prisoners should be released by both sides and humanitarian assistance should be administered to all areas.
4. International peacekeeping forces, numbering in the thousands, should be sent to guarantee the ceasefire and reopen the contested cities and towns to resettle as many displaced refugees as possible. Investing in the creation of such a force will be far cheaper to do than the billions spent to destroy the country and the cost of settling refugees outside of the country. In light of the proxy nature of the conflict, no Arab or Iranian forces should be a part of this peacekeeping force. A huge reservoir of forces exists in Asian, Latin American, European and African countries that could



5 days ago [huffingtonpost.com Traffic Exchange Test Jesselyn Cook](#) Jesselyn Cook election

- 5. [House Conservatives Are Trying To Kill The Lame-Duck Session](#)



a day ago [huffingtonpost.com Traffic Exchange Test Matt Fuller](#) Matt Fuller conservatives

- 6. [Syrian Army Claims To Retake Ancient City Of Palmyra From ISIS](#)



be used in this regard.



Hundreds of used life vests lie on a makeshift rubbish dump hidden in the hills above the town on March 10, 2016 in Mithymna, Greece. (Alexander Koerner/Getty Images)

5. "We will not talk to anyone who talks about the position of the presidency. Bashar [al-Assad] is a red line," the Syrian foreign minister, [Walid Muallem has said](#). However, the fate of Assad and the Syrian presidency should be left to the people of Syria through an election supervised by United Nations. In parallel, the opposition forces must precisely define who would negotiate for a national unity transitional government that would have full executive powers. This process will lead to a new constitution and ultimately to an internationally sponsored election. Terrorist and radical religious groups should be excluded.
6. There is a major need for a strong post-war rebuilding plan; a type of mini-Marshall plan that would foster stability during the fragile recovery period with economic support, enabling the re-inhabiting of destroyed cities and towns and preventing a chaotic and prolonged recovery.
7. The refugee centers in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon should be gradually dismantled to prevent them from becoming a long-term security threat to the region, as refugee camps unfortunately tend to become. Every effort should be made to return refugees to their towns and assist them in reconstruction and participation in the political process.

For all these elements to succeed, there must be unity among the international community, specifically the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. They need to control their regional allies and direct them towards these goals. Moreover, the Security Council should implement plans to stifle the deadly sectarianism spreading in West Asia. If not checked, it will have serious consequences for the entire world.

Ambassador [Seyed Hossein Mousavian](#) is a research scholar at Princeton University and a former spokesman for Iran's nuclear negotiators. His nuclear book, "The Iranian Nuclear Crisis: A Memoir," was published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. His latest book, "Iran and the United States: An Insider's View on the Failed Past and the Road to Peace" was released in May 2014.

Earlier on WorldPost:

 **Turkey's Border Crisis**

More: [Syria](#) [Islamic State](#) [Brussels Attacks](#) [SYRIA](#) [Palmyra](#)

FOLLOW WORLDPOST



GET THE NEWSLETTER

Subscribe!

YOU MAY LIKE

Sponsored Links by Taboola

RealtyShares Now Lets Investors Put Money Into Individual Real Estate Markets

TechCrunch | Realtyshares

20 Unforgettable Photos Of Environmental Pollution

GeekVIP

Homeowners Who Have Not Missed A Payment in 3 Years Are In For A Big Surprise

Comparisons.org Quotes

Surprising Changes Coming To Social Security On April 29th

Stansberry Research

Pay Off Your Credit Card Balance Faster Using This One Trick

LendingTree

The World's First And Only Water Gradient Contact Lenses

Alcon

CONVERSATIONS

2 Comments

Sort by Top

Add a comment...

**Susan Lee**

Sounds like an excellent plan.

But I do think Turkey is the wildcard in the deck. And a bad actor in general.

They clearly fear Kurds more than ISIS. And without some sort of compromise on Erdogans part I fear nothing is going to get resolved.

Like · Reply · 3 · Mar 29, 2016 4:40pm

**Jerry Wechsler** · Works at Retired

The EU is tempting Turkey ... Will they comply with its rules for civil society, press freedom, etc. ? As you say, the question is still open.

Like · Reply · Mar 29, 2016 6:05pm

**Jerry Wechsler** · Works at Retired

Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for your cogent suggestions. This will be hard to accomplish, but at least it seems that Kerry, Zarif, Obama and Rouhani - and perhaps even Putin - would be on board. I wonder if Erdogan sees Da'esh as his main terrorist threat, or if he would rather just concentrate on the PKK.

A negotiated solution is the only one with any chance at success. I like the idea of trying to find some way the refugees can return to their homes safely and protected, but getting troops from around the world to participate would be, I think, quite difficult; and moreover, would all the myriad factions really trust them ?

That said, I thank you again for your suggestions; we must remain optimistic.

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 29, 2016 4:22pm

**Susan Lee**

The international troops would be excellent targets for lunatics like ISIS.

Like · Reply · 1 · Mar 29, 2016 4:41pm

Facebook Comments Plugin

[Advertise](#) | [User Agreement](#) | [Privacy](#) | [Comment Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [About Our Ads](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [FAQ](#) |

Copyright © 2016 TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. | "The Huffington Post" is a registered trademark of TheHuffingtonPost.com, Inc. All rights reserved.

Part of HuffPost on HPMG News