



# Amsterdam Dialogue 2022

*High-level conference  
on peace & justice*

# Amsterdam Dialogue 2022

## CONFERENCE REPORT

*High-level conference  
on peace & justice*

23 & 24 MAY 2022



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# A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Colombo, 04 August 2022

Dear friends,

*I am writing you from my home country, Sri Lanka, which is in the middle of an island-wide civil uprising against the government, triggered by interlinked economic, political and social crises. In the past months, the sustained pressure of many ordinary Sri Lankans, diverse at first sight but united in their frustration against existing institutions, resulted in the resignation of the then President and Prime Minister. Meanwhile, the economic crisis is intensifying: Sri Lanka has run out of money to pay for food, fuel and medicines. The combined effects of the economic crisis can either lead to a petering out of the protests – as day-to-day hardships take over people's lives – or to the rallying of protesters and more pressure on the government. The country is currently at a crossroads as President Ranil Wickremesinghe, newly elected by the Parliament, attempts to come up with a political and economic programme to end the economic crisis, implement political reforms and bring back stability.*

*While witnessing our struggles, I am reminded of the value of the Amsterdam Dialogue as a space where sensitive issues of social justice and political stability can be discussed openly by peace mediators and human rights practitioners. Since 2010, once a year, we bring together diplomats, political leaders, activists, scholars and lawyers to discuss how to find common ground between pursuing peace and protecting rights in ongoing conflicts. These conversations help participants learn from each other's unique backgrounds and experiences to better deal with challenges in their own countries. Thinking about my own country, this year's panel on Sri Lanka offered valuable fresh perspectives and constructive recommendations in the face of an otherwise bleak situation.*

*Thank you to the participants who carved out space in their busy schedules, to the panellists who generate thought-provoking discussions, to our donors who continue to support the Dialogue Advisory Group and the Amsterdam Dialogue, and to my colleagues who put in an incredible effort to make this an exciting and fun event. Special thanks also go to our partner the International Crisis Group, as well as to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and his Office, whose continued presence and input have advanced the conversations on peace and justice.*

Yours sincerely,



Ram Manikkalingam

Director, Dialogue Advisory Group

# OVERVIEW



The twelfth edition of the Amsterdam Dialogue took place on 23 and 24 May 2022. After two years of holding the Amsterdam Dialogue virtually, we were delighted to welcome participants from across the globe to Amsterdam for two days of thought-provoking discussions on peace and justice. With thirteen panels varying from Ukraine to Sri Lanka, including a Q&A session with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Karim Khan, this year's event was the largest Amsterdam Dialogue to date.

The Amsterdam Dialogue 2022 opened with a keynote address by **Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Pekka Haavisto**, followed by some interaction with the audience. Amidst discussions on Finland joining NATO, the session focused on how the multifaceted crisis unleashed by the war in Ukraine is altering the foreign and security landscape in Europe and beyond. This was followed by the **annual Q&A session with the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Karim Khan**, moderated by **the Director of the Dialogue Advisory Group (DAG), Ram Manikkalingam**. The panel provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on the first year of the Prosecutor's tenure and discussed opportunities and challenges for the ICC in situations where it works to advance accountability in parallel to peace efforts. In the following session, participants discussed the impact of ICC proceedings in Colombia and Venezuela, with an emphasis on the principle of complementarity. The situation between **Russia and Ukraine** was discussed, hereafter, with **Director General of the Russian International Affairs Council, Andrey Kortunov**, moderated by **Richard Atwood, Executive Vice-President of the International Crisis Group**. Participants discussed possible ways in which the conflict could evolve, as well as the potential for reaching a negotiated solution. The last panel of the first day discussed

the situation in **Darfur and Sudan** with **Governor of Darfur Mini Arko Minawi**. Participants reflected on the root causes of the conflict, the main factors fueling violence in Sudan and expressed regret at the climate of impunity that persists in the country. The first day of the Amsterdam Dialogue concluded with a reception and live musical performance by Dyar Band.

The second day began with a keynote by **Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney**, which focused on peace and justice and United Nations (UN) Security Council reform. The keynote led into the first panel of the day on the **UN Security Council veto reform initiative** with **Christian Wenaweser, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the UN**, moderated by **Angela Kane, former UN Under-Secretary-General**. Despite the lack of traction on past reform attempts, participants welcomed the adoption in April 2022 by the UN General Assembly of a landmark resolution on veto reform to enhance accountability within the Security Council and expressed hope it would lead to improved effectiveness. This was followed by a session discussing external perspectives on the **Horn of Africa** with **former US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman** and **Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General to the Horn**



**of Africa Hanna Serwaa Tetteh.** The panel discussed how international actors could constructively support efforts in the region. The next panel on **Sri Lanka** featured a **member of the Sri Lankan Parliament, Abraham Sumanthiran,** and **former Sri Lankan Human Rights Commissioner Ramani Muttettuwagama.** Drawing parallelisms between Sri Lanka's current crisis and the situation in Lebanon and Iraq, participants reflected on the opportunities of channelling the energy and ideas on the streets into lasting, structural reforms.

Two breakout panels followed, addressing the situation in **Libya** and the **transnational links between armed groups in Central and Southern Africa** with a focus on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique. In a candid exchange, participants discussed the causes behind the failure of past political processes in **Libya**, the lack of a longer-term strategy, both at a national and international level, and the pervasive climate of impunity that is impacting the country. In parallel, experts on the **DRC** and **Mozambique** discussed the nature and evolution of two armed groups in the region, the Allied Democratic Forces

(ADF) in eastern DRC and the *Ablu Sunna wa Jama* (ASWJ) in northern Mozambique. Topics that came up in this session were the impact of foreign elements, the influence of transnational links and the consequences of the recent international military operations against both groups.

Participants gathered hereafter again for a plenary session on **Ukraine** in which they discussed the implications of a protracted conflict, the role of the international justice system in Ukraine, and the influence of historical narratives on Russian and Ukrainian positions in the conduct of international affairs. The Amsterdam Dialogue concluded with two breakout panels on **Sudan** and **Syria**. The discussion on Sudan centred on the current dilemmas civilian political actors in **Sudan** are facing regarding their engagement with the military and how to agree on a common roadmap to come out of the current impasse. In the session on **Syria**, participants noted that, while justice remains elusive, there have been some small steps taken in the fight against impunity by citizens and researchers, as well as through legal proceedings in national courts outside of Syria on the basis of universal jurisdiction.



# Amsterdam Dialogue 2022

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## Agenda

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### *Monday, 23 May 2022*

- 12:15 – 12:45     Registration  
Tea, coffee & light lunch
- 12:45 – 13:00     *Opening Remarks*  
Richard Atwood, Executive Vice-President, International Crisis Group  
Fleur Ravensbergen, Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 13:00 – 13:30     *Keynote Address*  
\*Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland
- 13:30 – 13:45     Break
- 13:45 – 14:45     *Q&A with the International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan*  
\*Karim Khan, Prosecutor, International Criminal Court  
Moderator: Ram Manikkalingam, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 14:45 – 15:45     *Colombia and Venezuela: ICC and Complementarity*  
Mariano de Alba, Senior Advisor, International Crisis Group  
Juanita Goebertus Estrada, Congresswoman, Colombian Congress  
Moderator: Priscilla Hayner, Senior Mediation Adviser, UN Standby Team of Mediation Advisers
- 15:45 – 16:00     Break
- 16:00 – 16:45     *Russia and Ukraine: A Conversation with Director General Andrey Kortunov*  
\*Andrey Kortunov, Director General, Russian International Affairs Council  
Moderator: Richard Atwood, Executive Vice-President, International Crisis Group
- 16:45 – 17:00     Break
- 17:00 – 17:45     *A Conversation with Governor of Darfur Mini Arko Minawi*  
Mini Arko Minawi, Governor of the Darfur Regional Government & Chair of the Sudan Liberation Movement – Mini Minawi  
Moderator: Ram Manikkalingam, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group
- 17:45 – 18:30     Reception with live music by Dyar Band
- 18:40 – 19:30     Boat ride to dinner venue
- 19:30               Dinner at the Hemelse Modder

\*Panelists with an asterisk before their name attended the conference virtually.

# Amsterdam Dialogue 2022

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## *Agenda*

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*Tuesday, 24 May 2022*

- 8:30 – 9:00      Arrival at venue  
Tea & coffee
- 9:00 – 10:00    *Keynote Address and Panel Discussion on the Reform of the Veto Power in the UN Security Council*  
**Simon Coveney**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ireland (recorded message)  
**Christian Wenaweser**, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the United Nations in New York  
Moderator: **Angela Kane**, Former UN Under-Secretary-General; Vice President, International Institute for Peace; Chairperson of DAG's Board of Directors
- 10:00 – 11:00    *The Horn of Africa: External Perspectives*  
**Frederic Ngoga Gateretse**, Head of the African Union Border Programme and Focal Point for Partnerships at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission (recorded message)  
**Jeffrey Feltman**, Former US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa  
\***Hanna Serwaa Tetteh**, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Horn of Africa, United Nations  
Moderator: **Murithi Mutiga**, Program Director for Africa, International Crisis Group
- 11:00 – 11:30    Break
- 11:30 – 12:30    *Sri Lanka*  
**Ramani Muttettuwagama**, Former Human Rights Commissioner  
**Abraham Sumanthiran**, Member of the Sri Lankan Parliament  
Moderator: **Jayanthi Kuru Utumpala**, Women's Rights Activist and Independent Consultant  
First comment: **Robert Fadel**, Former Member of the Lebanese Parliament
- 12:30 – 13:30    Lunch

\*Panelists with an asterisk before their name attended the conference virtually.



# Amsterdam Dialogue 2022

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## Agenda

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*Tuesday, 24 May 2022*

13:30 – 14:30 *Parallel Break-out Panels*

*Democratic Republic of the Congo & Mozambique: Transnational Links between Armed Groups in Central and Southern Africa*

Salvador Forquilha, Senior Researcher, Institute for Social and Economic Studies

\*Maïa Trujillo, DRC Consultant

Moderator: Dino Mahtani, Independent Expert

*Libya*

Tarek Megerisi, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

Misbah Omar, Researcher, Peacemaker Libya

Elham Saudi, Director, Lawyers for Justice in Libya

Moderator: Raphaëlle Guillon, Special Advisor, Dialogue Advisory Group

14:30 – 16:00 *Ukraine*

Ida Sawyer, Crisis and Conflict Director, Human Rights Watch

Olena Snigyr, Head of the Department of Informational and Analytical Support, Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance

Moderator: Fleur Ravensbergen, Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group

16:00 – 16:30 Break

16:30 – 17:30 *Parallel Break-out Panels*

*Sudan*

Kholood Khair, Managing Partner, Insight Strategy Partners

\*Nureldin Satti, Ambassador of Sudan to the US

Moderator: Luvy Rocha Rappaccioli, Senior Programme Manager, Dialogue Advisory Group

First comment: \*Suliman Baldo, Founding Director, Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker

*Syria*

Rahaf Aldoughli, Lecturer, Lancaster University

Uğur Ümit Üngör, Professor of Genocide Studies, NIOD Institute Amsterdam

Moderator: Ali Aljaseem, PhD Candidate, Utrecht University

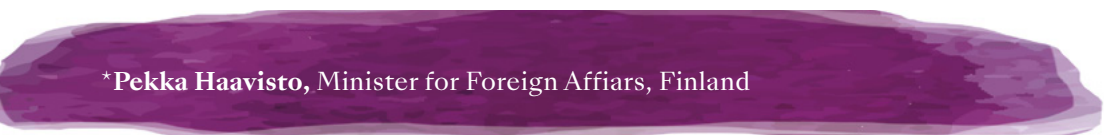
17:30 – 18:00 *Closing Remarks*

\*Panelists with an asterisk before their name attended the conference virtually.





# KEYNOTE ADDRESS: FINLAND AND THE FUTURE OF EUROPEAN SECURITY



\*Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland

The keynote focused on how the war is impacting the geopolitical and security landscape in Europe and beyond. Within this context, Finland's approach to a changing security environment, its cooperation with close partners, including NATO and the European Union (EU), and its recent application for NATO membership were important themes. Finland's history with Russia was highlighted, as was its active role in international peace efforts, particularly through the EU.

During the discussion that followed the keynote by Minister Haavisto, participants expressed deep concern about the war in Ukraine. Some participants highlighted that the war has demonstrated Moscow's increased willingness to put pressure on its neighbours through rapid force deployment, higher-risk campaigns and prolonged military engagement,

even when that entails sanctions, a higher number of casualties and looming domestic economic consequences. Beyond the crisis in Ukraine itself, the negative impact of this war is reverberating not just across Europe but across the world. The food security of numerous fragile countries in the Middle East and Africa depends to a significant degree on imports from Ukraine and Russia. If relations between Russia and various international actors further deteriorate, essential cooperation in areas such as climate change, sanitary crises or border security will suffer the consequences. Participants argued that the war in Ukraine shows the need for serious European and global conversations on the future security architecture of the continent, engagement with Russia on critical global challenges and the reform of multilateral organisations such as the UN.

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.



*Pekka Haavisto and Fleur Ravensbergen*





# Q&A WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT PROSECUTOR KARIM KHAN

\*Karim Khan, Prosecutor, International Criminal Court

Moderator: Ram Manikkalingam, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group

This year's Amsterdam Dialogue included a Q&A session with Prosecutor Karim Khan – a tradition that started in 2010 during the mandate of the first Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and a key part of the Amsterdam Dialogue ever since. The Q&A was moderated by the Director of DAG, Ram Manikkalingam and provided a unique and valuable opportunity to reflect on the Prosecutor's first year in office and his aspirations for the years to come. The Prosecutor also discussed with participants the specific challenges and opportunities the ICC is facing in a rapidly changing international context.

Almost two decades into the existence of the ICC, participants reflected on the different approaches and strategies the ICC could adopt to further its mission in the coming, likely turbulent, period. The continued struggle to find adequate resources was discussed during the session. Participants highlighted that the experience of other tribunals with resource and time allocation, both positive and negative, could yield useful lessons and inspiration. While effectivity is important, initially lengthy and slow to deliver court proceedings such as those in Colombia have also provided opportunities to advance both peace and justice in the medium to long term, and therefore, some argued, have its place in furthering accountability for the worst crimes.

With information technology rapidly changing what is possible in the justice field, participants suggested that the use of technological tools such as machine learning, transcription services or voice identification could increase prospects for greater impact and accelerating justice. Additionally, participants expressed the hope that the influx of financial support to the ICC following the opening of an investigation into the situation in Ukraine by the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) will have a positive effect across all cases. Elements of the ICC's approach highlighted by participants as positive included: a continued presence on the ground in the contexts in which the ICC is active, as well as building and maintaining partnerships with civil society, other justice and law-enforcement organisations, and governments – particularly with states with open cases. In relation to the latter, the principle of complementarity offers valuable opportunities to achieve justice while promoting independent and effective national justice systems through technical assistance. The ICC will always have to navigate difficult, often volatile political realities as it has done – and continues to do – in countries such as Venezuela or Sudan. This requires keeping open channels and fostering frank dialogues with interested parties while maintaining its integrity and impartiality.

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.



*Karim Khan and Ram Manikkalingam*

# COLOMBIA AND VENEZUELA: ICC AND COMPLEMENTARITY

Mariano de Alba, Senior Advisor, International Crisis Group

Juanita Goebertus Estrada, Congresswoman, Colombian Congress

Moderator: Priscilla Hayner, Senior Mediation Adviser, UN Standby Team of Mediation Advisers

In November 2021, ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan announced the opening of a formal investigation into crimes against humanity in Venezuela, just days after closing its long-running preliminary examination in Colombia with a cooperation agreement. The two carefully timed decisions exemplified different ways in which the ICC's core principle of complementarity can play out. The complementarity principle holds that national courts have priority to investigate and prosecute crimes committed within their jurisdiction, but that the ICC will activate when national courts are 'unable or unwilling' to do so. By deciding to close its preliminary investigation in Colombia, the Court recognised the significance of the efforts and progress made by the Colombian government in relation to justice reform, while importantly leaving space for the Prosecutor to reconsider his assessment should circumstances change. In Venezuela, the decision fell the other way. There, the Prosecutor opened a formal investigation, formalised by way of a Memorandum of Understanding with the government. While the memorandum recognised Venezuela's disagreement with the opening of the investigation, it also included commitments to improve the country's legal system with the support and active engagement of the OTP.

During this panel, participants discussed the impact of ICC proceedings in both Colombia and Venezuela, with an emphasis on the implementation of the complementarity principle. In Colombia, the role of the 17-year-long preliminary examination was seen as having played a crucial role in producing tangible justice reform, as

well as in achieving a peace deal that included national accountability mechanisms with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC). Despite prevailing challenges regarding the implementation of these justice mechanisms, the Colombian experience was identified as an example of positive complementarity playing out in practice. Drawing comparisons, participants examined the potential of the ICC to have a similar impact in Venezuela, including its ability to catalyse political will for genuine investigations and prosecutions. The negotiation process between the government of Maduro and the opposition – suspended since end-2021 yet subject to reactivation in the short to medium term – was identified as an area where the prospect of an ICC investigation could have a significant degree of impact. However, participants highlighted that other elements, such as the unilateral US sanctions, could bear more weight for the Maduro government.

While notably different, participants also agreed that the Colombian experience could be relevant for Venezuela. The fact that Colombia's domestic criminal proceedings took place in parallel to the ICC's investigation, was a significant factor in achieving broad inclusion of accountability in the peace process. Similarly, the way high-ranking officials were included in legal proceedings in Colombia, could serve as inspiration in Venezuela. Finally, developments in Colombia highlight the need to differentiate complementarity from cooperation, and beg the question what is needed in preliminary examinations to achieve this.





*Mariano de Alba, Priscilla Hayner and Juanita Goebertus Estrada*

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# RUSSIA AND UKRAINE: A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR GENERAL ANDREY KORTUNOV

\***Andrey Kortunov**, Director General, Russian International Affairs Council

Moderator: **Richard Atwood**, Executive Vice-President, International Crisis Group

On 24 February 2022, following months of military build-up at the border and escalating tensions, Russia launched military operations in Ukraine. Several months into the war and assisted with arms, material and intelligence by the West, Ukraine is showing significant resistance. Meanwhile the war has resulted in a widespread humanitarian, geopolitical and security crisis, in Ukraine itself and beyond. Faced with war on the European continent, the EU has responded relatively firmly, with the European Council levying the strongest sanctions in its history. Nonetheless, Russia has continued its military operations and fierce fighting is currently underway, predominantly in the east and south of Ukraine.

Against this backdrop, participants engaged with Director General Andrey Kortunov in a lively and frank exchange on the prospects and implications of the war in Ukraine. At the time of the session, Moscow and Kiev were making growing demands and a hardening of positions on both sides was evident. They appeared to be moving away from a diplomatic solution to the war. Participants noted that the bulk of the Russian public had not yet felt the effects of sanctions and that the government's popularity was still relatively stable, although some expected this to change in the fall. Beyond sanctions, participants expressed concern that the ramping up of Western involvement

in the war – particularly the delivery of increasingly sophisticated weapons and intelligence to Ukraine – could lead to Russia retaliating against western interests and assets in third countries, particularly through proxies or private contractors.

Reflecting on how the conflict could evolve, three main scenarios were identified. First, with increased international isolation and military support to Kiev, Russia could be defeated in Ukraine. This was seen as highly unlikely, as well as dangerous should things move in that direction because it would likely trigger a strong and unpredictable response from the Kremlin. Second, an imperfect compromise could be found, putting at least a temporary halt to hostilities, but potentially setting a worrisome precedent for future conflicts with a serious power imbalance. Finally, if no deal is reached, protracted conflict could result, bringing with it the potential for a renewed arms race and the proliferation of related proxy conflicts elsewhere. Between the three, some participants argued that the second – reaching a diplomatic solution – while no doubt imperfect, would be the lesser evil. But, they recognised that reaching any such compromise requires willingness and direct engagement between Presidents Zelensky and Putin, supported by credible international guarantees for any outcome, which, as things stand, seems a long way off.

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.

# A CONVERSATION WITH GOVERNOR OF DARFUR MINI ARKO MINAWI



**Mini Arko Minawi**, Governor of the Darfur Regional Government & Chair of the Sudan Liberation Movement – Mini Minawi

**Moderator: Ram Manikkalingam**, Director, Dialogue Advisory Group

Amid severe security, political, economic and humanitarian crises, a new wave of violence erupted this April in West Darfur, leading to the killing of more than 200 civilians. Clashes first broke out when Arab militiamen attacked majority Massalit towns, a non-Arab ethnic group, in retaliation for the killing of two of their tribesmen. The ensuing escalation saw the killing of health workers, whose hospitals had been attacked, a market burned to the ground and the displacement of thousands of civilians, prompting condemnations from the World Health Organisation and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, among others.

This violence in West Darfur cannot be understood in isolation from the broader conflict affecting the whole of Darfur (and other regions of Sudan) in which inter-communal violence has, for decades, been exacerbated by multiple factors at the local, national and regional levels. Reflecting on the root causes of these conflicts, some participants emphasized the tribal component, while others added that the main factors fuelling violence in Sudan are political in nature. Some held that this is rooted in an unwillingness of the political elites to share power in a manner that would accommodate the diversity of the country.

Participants regretted the ongoing lack of accountability in Darfur, including for mass atrocities amounting to genocide. Different views emerged during the panel

regarding the potential for the ICC to accelerate justice and support accountability in Sudan. Some felt that more could have been done to compel the Sudanese authorities to hand over the indictees that are not in the ICC's custody, former President Omar al-Bashir among them. Others highlighted the efforts made by ICC officials to maintain their presence on the ground and secure the cooperation of the government, in part by achieving the signing of two memoranda of understanding in 2021. Participants recognised that since the October 2021 military coup, dialogue and cooperation with the Sudanese authorities have stalled, hindering the ability of the ICC to continue with its investigations.

Many participants felt that an inclusive dialogue process is the only way to try to get the transition back on track. Some participants, however, were sceptical about the tripartite mechanism (consisting of the UN Mission in Sudan, the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) as the means to do so, arguing that the three organisations seem to follow different scripts. Nonetheless, most participants advocated for a continuation of the political dialogue along with full implementation of the Juba Peace Agreement, as necessary steps towards democratic and civilian rule, as well as eventually sustainable peace and accountability for victims of past crimes. As things stand though, this is still a long way off.

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE REFORM OF THE VETO POWER IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL

**Simon Coveney**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ireland (recorded message)

**Christian Wenaweser**, Ambassador of Liechtenstein to the United Nations in New York

Moderator: **Angela Kane**, Former UN Under-Secretary-General; Vice President, International Institute for Peace; Chairperson of DAG's Board of Directors

In the aftermath of World War II, the Charter of the newly established UN granted the five permanent members (P5) of its Security Council the capacity to cast a veto on any substantive decision of the body – a reflection of the then balance of power. With the emergence of new geopolitical realities in the decades following the inception of the UN, as well as habitual political use of the veto power and resulting paralysis of the Security Council, the veto power has come under criticism. Among the most active states calling for the reform of the UN Security Council are the so-called G4 (Germany, Japan, India and Brazil) and the African Group. Several attempts at reform, such as the “Political Declaration on Suspension of Veto Powers in Cases of Mass Atrocity” presented in 2015 by France, have not resulted in change so far, because the required amendment of the UN Charter would have to be done in agreement with the P5 themselves – who are unwilling to give up their veto power.

The panel was kicked off with a keynote by Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Simon Coveney, with unique insight into the conversation as Ireland is half-way into its two-year term on the Security Council. Despite the lack of traction of past proposals, it is widely accepted that something must be done if the UN system is to stay relevant. With this in mind, participants welcomed a recent step forward in the initiative by Liechtenstein for reform of the Security Council known as ‘the veto initiative’. In

April 2022, the UN General Assembly passed a landmark resolution. The text of the resolution was submitted by Liechtenstein and co-sponsored by 83 Member States, including France, the UK, the US, and Ireland, and aims to hold the P5 more accountable for their use of veto. As participants highlighted during the session, any member state casting a veto will now be forced to explain its reasons before the UN General Assembly in a debate session held within a period of no longer than 10 working days. The Assembly will also invite the UN Security Council to submit a special report on the use of the veto in question.

This initiative by Liechtenstein is the result of years of collective work. After a hiatus due to the global pandemic during parts of 2020 and 2021, participants involved in the process recounted how Russia's obstruction in December 2021 of a climate change proposal in the UN Security Council created renewed momentum for putting forward the draft resolution. The sponsors of the veto initiative received even stronger backing from member states following the war in Ukraine and the adoption by the UN General Assembly of a resolution demanding Russia to withdraw its military forces from Ukraine.

Participants held that the approval of ‘the veto initiative’ is a positive step in the direction of enhancing accountability within the UN Security Council. With this change, the veto ceases to be the last word, by giving member states an



*Christian Wenaweser and Angela Kane*



*Simon Coveney*

opportunity to publicly challenge the motives of the state casting it. Participants also pointed out that the recently adopted resolution provides a way for the UN General Assembly to take on a more innovative and prominent role in international peace, justice and security efforts. Supporters of the resolution also intended for the veto

initiative to provide some discreet empowerment of the non-permanent members of the UN Security Council vis-à-vis the P5. While challenges and limitations remain, participants agreed that the adoption of ‘the veto initiative’ was a step towards much-needed increased effectiveness of and a measure of accountability in the UN Security Council.



# THE HORN OF AFRICA: EXTERNAL PERSPECTIVES

**Frederic Ngoga Gateretse**, Head of the African Union Border Programme and Focal Point for Partnerships at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the African Union Commission (recorded message)

**Jeffrey Feltman**, Former US Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa

\***Hanna Serwaa Tetteh**, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Horn of Africa, United Nations

Moderator: **Murithi Mutiga**, Program Director for Africa, International Crisis Group

Following the tentative optimism of 2018 and 2019 brought about by seemingly peaceful political transitions and modest signs of economic growth, the Horn of Africa is currently experiencing another period of great turbulence. In Sudan, the 25 October 2021 *coup d'état* threatens to consolidate the military's grip over the transition and is deepening the country's many crises. In Ethiopia, while both the prospective peace talks between its federal and Tigrayan regional authorities as well as the humanitarian truce in Tigray are widely seen as positive steps towards peace, the country continues to face a deepening economic and political crisis. In Somalia, the political impasse seems to have been overcome following the elections, but al-Shabab continues to threaten the country and broader region. South Sudan, a country whose independence in 2011 was hailed as a success of international diplomacy, is now entering its tenth year of protracted conflict.

Participants described the current context of the Horn as troubled and in flux. Swinging between episodes of hope and despair over the years, participants agreed that the Horn currently finds itself at a critical crossroads, where it could either move towards progress or fall deeper into instability. Participants highlighted the critical role that the international community can play in encouraging key

leaders and actors to move towards positive outcomes. Three elements were identified as necessary for this: better coordination between key global and regional players to create a unified position towards local leaders; addressing the issue of regional spoilers and a better understanding of the different countries' various internal dynamics. The influence of social media on political dialogues across the region was mentioned as playing a significant role in the region. Despite low levels of internet access, social media functions as a key driver for popular opinion in the Horn, with traditional media tending to merely echo social media narratives.

The challenge of ongoing food insecurity and threat of famine following one of the worst droughts in decades in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, as well as rising fuel prices also surfaced in the discussion. Participants described how devastating climate stress – which at times is causing more displacement than conflict – is a leading driver for tensions between communities. Participants regretted that increased tension among world powers was not only shifting attention away from the Horn but making it harder to engage in constructive discussions in the UN Security Council and other key global fora. Participants also discussed the role of Gulf countries, which were seen as having a significant

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.



influence on the future trajectory of countries in the Horn. Consensus was also found in the need to move away from thinking about the Horn through the prism of individual states and move towards a cohesive approach for the interconnected region, with shared potential but also interlinked challenges. In this light, coordination between the different ongoing dialogue processes in the region is a necessary step in the effort to move beyond the current deadlock and take a step towards hopefully achieving more peace and justice in the Horn in the future.



# SRI LANKA

**Ramani Muttettuwagama**, Former Human Rights Commissioner

**Abraham Sumanthiran**, Member of the Sri Lankan Parliament

Moderator: **Jayanthi Kuru Utumpala**, Women's Rights Activist and Independent Consultant

First comment: **Robert Fadel**, Former Member of the Lebanese Parliament

With foreign currency reserves dangerously low and widespread shortages of essential imports, Sri Lanka is immersed in a deep crisis. Island-wide protests by ordinary Sri Lankans led to the entire Rajapaksa cabinet resigning in April. While the Rajapaksa brothers – then President Gotabaya and then Prime Minister Mahinda – initially refused to resign, continued people's protests resulted in the Prime Minister resigning on 9 May, after unleashing a wave of attacks against peaceful protestors. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa appointed a new Prime Minister – Ranil Wickremasinghe – an unlikely candidate to quell the current unrest due to his perceived ties to the Rajapaksa family, making him unacceptable to many protesters. Wickremasinghe currently faces a monumental uphill battle as the country's political and economic future remains highly unstable.<sup>1</sup>

Participants reflected on both the challenges and opportunities that have arisen as a consequence of what was described as the country's worst political, economic and social crises since Independence in 1948. Participants reflected on the parallels and differences between the situation in Sri Lanka and that in Lebanon. There was broad agreement that, although both countries are undergoing deep crises, several factors – such as the existence of a powerful non-state actor and entrenched regional dynamics

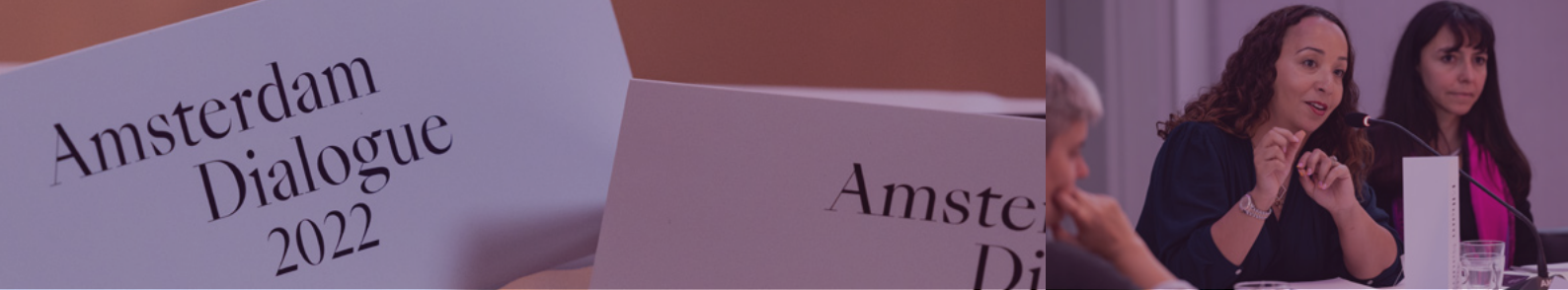
in the Lebanese case – made drawing direct inferences difficult. Still some lessons learned in Lebanon hold relevance to the situation in Sri Lanka. For example, the importance of a well-organised opposition and the need to avoid the (re-)ignition of identity-based politics, which was recognised as particularly relevant given Sri Lanka's past experience with ethnic-based violence during the country's civil war. Lebanon's experience was also a forewarning of how much worse Sri Lanka's economic crisis could become, if IMF negotiations are delayed or stalled, due to continued political and social instability.

With this comparison in mind, participants emphasised the need for Sri Lankans to channel the energy and ideas on the streets into lasting, political and economic reforms. However, given the trust deficit between protestors and the country's political elite who enabled the current crisis through corruption and mismanagement, only some protestors have engaged directly with some opposition MPs. Participants also expressed their hope that the current potential for lasting change will not be sacrificed for a desire to create a superficial level of stability to address Sri Lanka's immediate financial crisis. In this sense, participants agreed that the political cannot be separated from the economic and that an overhaul of Sri Lanka's political framework is necessary to overcome the current crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> By early July, a worsening economic crisis intensified the people's protests, resulting in President Gotabaya Rajapaksa fleeing the country and resigning on 13 July, mid-way into his term. Abiding by constitutional provisions, parliament held an internal election to vote in a new President to complete the rest of the 2.5-year term. However, given that the Rajapaksas' party – the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) – continues to enjoy a 2/3rds majority in parliament, Ranil Wickremasinghe secured a majority of the votes, and was sworn in as the new Executive President of Sri Lanka on 22 July. Wickremasinghe appointed SLPP parliamentarian Dinesh Gunawardene as his Prime Minister and also reappointed the previous cabinet almost in its entirety. Street protests continue but have been dampened by the recent spate of brutal attacks on protestors by the military (under orders of then Acting President Ranil Wickremasinghe) a day before Wickremasinghe was sworn in as the new President. The recent attacks on peaceful protestors has curried no favour with many including the diplomatic community, yet no alternative route is readily available.





*Juan Garrigues, Ramani Muttetturwegama, Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala and Abraham Sumanthiran*





# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO & MOZAMBIQUE: TRANSNATIONAL LINKS BETWEEN ARMED GROUPS IN CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

Salvador Forquilha, Senior Researcher, Institute for Social and Economic Studies

\*Maïa Trujillo, DRC Consultant

Moderator: Dino Mahtani, Independent Expert

In recent years, the existence of transnational links between armed groups operating in Central and Southern Africa has received increasing attention. These links – which exist in parallel to strong networks within local communities – are suspected to serve financial, recruitment and training purposes and allow for the sharing of material and expertise among various groups. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), periodic attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed group with Ugandan roots, have plagued the country's eastern provinces for decades. In Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, an insurgency called *Ablu Sunna wa Jama* (ASWJ) but known locally as al-Shabab, made international headlines when it launched an assault on the coastal town of Palma in March 2021.

In a session devoted to examining on-the-ground developments in the eastern DRC and northern Mozambique, as well as interlinkages between two conflicts, participants commenced by analysing the nature and evolution of the ADF and the ASWJ. Participants described how the ADF rapidly established a local network within Congolese communities by tapping into existing local grievances upon arrival in the DRC from Uganda. This

local network helped the ADF survive multiple offensives. In 2015, following a change in leadership, the ADF's strategy shifted towards increased external outreach and regional recruitment, which included pledging allegiance to the so-called Islamic State. While the ADF has maintained a localised agenda, the latter decision provided the group with an opportunistic allegiance that has allowed for a significant transnational reach, including to actors in Mozambique.

In comparison, participants discussed the origins of the ASWJ, a religious movement responsible for a more recent insurgency in northern Mozambique. The ASWJ built on strongly rooted feelings of discontent and exclusion among the northern population towards national authorities. The impact of foreign elements on the evolution of the ASWJ's ideological position, as well as the lack of a coherent policy from the state to address the growing movement, were highlighted as factors that led to the group turning increasingly violent. The network of insurgents throughout the region, including in the DRC, provided the ASWJ with opportunities for training and an exchange in technical and strategic military expertise. This strengthened the

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.



ASWJ's capabilities on the ground and likely contributed to the increase of the number, virulence, and impact of their attacks.

Participants also looked at the limited results of recent military operations against both the ADF in the east of the DRC and against ASWJ in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique. In the DRC, offensives by the Congolese and Ugandan armies have been largely ineffective, only managing to disperse insurgents and push them deeper into Congolese territory while leaving the leadership unaffected. This lack of success was attributed in part to the ADF's close links to both the local population, as well as with parts of the Congolese army. In Mozambique, military efforts – which have involved deployments by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Rwanda as well as an EU training mission – have managed to reclaim territory but were also a source of concern for participants,

who underlined the question of capacity transfer to national forces and stressed that interventions had not translated into self-sustainable security.

Finally, the discussion brought to the fore two crucial issues. First, participants highlighted the limitations of a military approach if drivers of the conflicts, such as a lack of governance, inter-communal resource competition and racketeering, were left unaddressed. Second, particularly considering the transnational dimension of the situation, participants stressed the need to overcome existing tensions between regional states and thereby reinforce cooperation in the Great Lakes region and Southern Africa. In short, a sustainable solution for such conflicts involving transnational links, requires looking beyond using only force to also include regional collaboration and tackle drivers of the conflict.

# LIBYA

**Tarek Megerisi**, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations

**Misbah Omar**, Researcher, Peacemaker Libya

**Elham Saudi**, Director, Lawyers for Justice in Libya

Moderator: **Raphaëlle Guillon**, Special Advisor, Dialogue Advisory Group

Following the October 2020 ceasefire agreement, intra-Libyan political talks in Tunis and Geneva reached consensus on a transitional roadmap as well as an interim executive, the latter tasked with organising presidential and parliamentary elections by 24 December 2021. The much-anticipated electoral process was, however, indefinitely postponed after months of political manoeuvring by rival security and political actors within the context of shifting national and international alliances. Institutional fragmentation has since deepened with two competing governments vying to stay in power through alliances with security actors and international sponsors, risking a violent escalation. The Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General, Stephanie Williams, had been working to get the political process back on track since the postponement of elections. Yet international polarization and regional realignments, as well as the prevalence of status-quo minded political stakeholders, are undermining attempts at finding a sustainable solution.

Much like in previous political processes in Libya, participants identified the absence of a longer-term strategy, both nationally and internationally, aimed at counteracting the zero-sum-game mentality driving Libyan politics as a cause for the current political stalemate. This short-term perspective on the political process has been constantly exploited by Libyan political and security actors, who rely on clientelist networks and ties to international actors to maintain their positions and economic interests.

In this context, international meddling and competition between states have not only fueled the conflict but have also complicated mediation efforts. Attempts by UN Special Advisor Stephanie Williams to task an expert committee, consisting of members of the rival House of Representatives and High State Council, to advance elections were rendered useless since regional and international players continued backing their preferred parties irrespectively. Panelists anticipated that those efforts were unlikely to break the stalemate, given the absence of genuine political will by international and national powerbrokers. A sound political process, participants felt, would entail a UN-facilitated mediation effort in a neutral territory more transparent and inclusive transitional arrangements coupled with strict selection criteria to ensure that participants are representative, accountable and have the public interest at heart. Participants also regretted the absence of mechanisms to secure the implementation of past agreements, noting how the failure by Libyan elites to abide by their commitments has contributed to the current legitimacy crisis.

The quest for justice and human rights in Libya continues to be fraught. Participants noted the difficulties faced by the ICC in the implementation of its mandate, while the Libyan national judicial system remains paralysed. Moreover, General Khalifa Haftar and other Libyan actors, who some participants pointed out are alleged war criminals, continue to be regarded by some internationals as acceptable





interlocutors with a role in Libya's future. In this climate of impunity, human rights abuses are widespread and space for civil society activism has become virtually non-existent.

Looking ahead, some positive suggestions made by participants included an increased focus on the protection of and capacity building for civil society actors, specifically aimed at contributing to a debate on the political developments of their polity and the identification of a new political framework. Some also mentioned that, if properly channelled, the frustration expressed over the past months in popular demonstrations in the east and the west could be the seed of a broader movement for change in Libya.

# UKRAINE

**Ida Sawyer**, Crisis and Conflict Director, Human Rights Watch

**Olena Snigyr**, Head of the Department of Informational and Analytical Support, Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance

Moderator: **Fleur Ravensbergen**, Deputy Director, Dialogue Advisory Group

The session opened by reflecting on the three scenarios for outcomes of the war discussed in previous sessions – Russia losing the war, a troubled diplomatic compromise or a protracted war. Considering the complete absence of trust between the parties, the disproportionate use of force, the severity of the alleged violations of international law committed since the onset of the war and the strong Ukrainian opposition to any territorial concessions, participants expressed doubts that a diplomatic solution could be reached in the short-term.

The increased commitment of the international community to pursue international justice in Ukraine is a positive element in an otherwise dire situation. The decision of ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan to launch an investigation in Ukraine was noted as an important part of these efforts. Participants expressed the hope that the heightened interest in advancing justice in Ukraine will translate into greater levels of support for human rights and fight against impunity in other parts of the world.

While the desire to ensure accountability for crimes committed in Ukraine is shared by many, it has been a challenge to translate this into an effective and coordinated framework on the ground. The limited domestic capacity and lack of joint legal standards between internationals

and Ukrainians are key challenges for delivering effective justice in Ukraine. Given the fluidity on the ground, there is a risk that evidence would inadvertently be destroyed. In addition, the degree of competition between various national and international offices coupled with the pressure to quickly deliver results could compromise the quality of the investigation. To address these challenges, participants underlined the need for a comprehensive coordination framework, capacity-building and a commitment to impartiality through the documentation of allegations of crimes by all actors involved.

Finally, the discussion reflected on the role of historical narratives in the motivation and lead-up to the war. Participants argued that Russia's perspective on the war in Ukraine could partially be explained by the perceived historic value and golden-age symbolism represented by parts of Ukraine, particularly Crimea. Similarly, Ukrainian resolve, solidarity and national cohesion in the face of the war – which has exceeded most expectations – could also find its roots in a shared sense of national memory, progressively restored since the collapse of the Soviet Union. These historical narratives affect both parties' willingness to accept a compromise on the outcome they are fighting for.





*Olena Snigyr, Ida Sawyer and Fleur Ravensbergen*



# SUDAN

**Kholood Khair**, Managing Partner, Insight Strategy Partners

\***Nureldin Satti**, Ambassador of Sudan to the US

Moderator: **Luvy Rocha Rappaccioli**, Senior Programme Manager, Dialogue Advisory Group

First comment: \***Suliman Baldo**, Founding Director, Sudan Transparency and Policy Tracker

The already fragile Sudanese transition was brought to a halt in October 2021 when the chairman of the Sovereignty Council and commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, General Abdel Fatah al-Burhan, led a military takeover disbanding the then ruling civil-military coalition. The coup put the Juba Peace Agreement in jeopardy, the implementation of which is increasingly uncertain. It also saw the return of a large number of former regime elements to Sudanese institutions, reversing much of the political gains of the 2019 revolution. Coordinated protests against the coup leaders and their allies are ongoing and have been met with violence by the security forces, resulting in the death of dozens of protestors. The coup has also forced national and international justice efforts to slow down significantly.

Discussions zoomed in on the dilemmas faced by civilian and political forces regarding their engagement with the military. Many participants recognised that including the security sector in the negotiations is necessary for a sustainable agreement, even if the civilian forces find it a bitter pill to swallow. Participation of both civilian and military in the talks facilitated by the tripartite mechanism (consisting of the UN Mission in Sudan, the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development) could serve as an opportunity to mend civil-military relations and secure an agreement on accountability mechanisms beforehand.

Several priorities for potential future negotiations were discussed during the session. First, participants highlighted the need to address the risk that the military would exploit the negotiation process to buy time and consolidate its

grip on power. Second, it is important that the civilian forces work towards unified representation and agree on a common roadmap and implementation programme. Third, the inclusion of women in formal negotiations and decision-making mechanisms remains an outstanding issue that must not be ignored by either Sudanese political actors or the international community.

The resolute stance of the grassroots movements, commonly known as the Resistance Committees, not to engage with the military may be complicated in terms of finding a negotiated solution but has also been a source of internal strength for them. Participants also felt that the commitment of the Resistance Committees to peaceful opposition and their refusal to turn into a 'regular political party' provides them with legitimacy. Some participants highlighted that several of the armed movements made political concessions to the coup leaders in return for national positions and power-sharing arrangements, which has cost them popular support.

Looking at the broader geopolitical context, participants agreed that international support is required to counteract the influence of authoritarian regimes, and to achieve a transition to democracy in Sudan that has a chance of resulting in long-lasting peace and justice for the victims. Furthermore, participants suggested that to break the cycle of military coups, the Sudanese political class should steer away from traditional ways of doing politics and imagine new innovative approaches to advance towards a peaceful, democratic Sudanese state.

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\*Participant joined the conference virtually.





# SYRIA

Rahaf Aldoughli, Lecturer, Lancaster University

Uğur Ümit Üngör, Professor of Genocide Studies, NIOD Institute Amsterdam

Moderator: Ali Aljaseem, PhD Candidate, Utrecht University

For years, the war in Syria has been winding down. While the fighting is much reduced, certain areas remain volatile and outside of government control. When the war really does come to an end, President Bashar al-Assad will be looking at the reconstruction of a country laid in ruin. Estimated by the UN at 250 to 400 billion US dollars, it is a reconstruction Assad cannot afford. Nor can he find support for the monumental task elsewhere, in no small part due to his own role in getting to this point in the first place.

Eleven years into the Syrian conflict, a negotiated political settlement seems far off. Renewed attempts at reviving Syria's peace process have been complicated by deteriorating relations between the west and Russia, since the beginning of the Ukraine war. Meanwhile, an unprecedented humanitarian crisis is underway. An estimated 90% of Syrians are living in poverty and 11.1 million require humanitarian aid, but the continuation of that assistance will depend to a great extent to cross-border aid authorisations. In July 2022, the UN Security Council renewed the resolution authorising cross-border humanitarian aid, although only for a duration of 6 months, because of Russian threat of veto, instead of for the recommended 12 months needed to help people survive the difficult winter months. With the Syrian population entangled in an array of frozen overlapping crises, participants to the panel discussed what options may exist to advance at least some of the aspects of the conflict.

Participants highlighted that the situation in Syria is often reduced to terrorism and migration in the West, but that in reality it is much more complex. Widespread

state-violence against the Syrian population and the militarisation of society both precede the war and are one of its main causes. Any political agreement between the regime and the opposition within the UN-facilitated process will be unlikely to permeate the deeper layers of the conflict. Because of this, participants stressed, it is even more important to instate encompassing mechanisms to repair Syria's social fabric, foster reconciliation and avoid future military escalation. Some participants also warned against the perpetuation of a regime-opposition binary narrative and suggested that small-scale dialogues at the communal level could be a first step towards building a common vision for the future of Syria.

Considering the international dimension to the Syrian war, participants explored options to leverage the influence of foreign actors to advance peace. For example, the option to facilitate negotiations between regional and international powers involved to encourage them to reach a peace agreement. Such a top-down approach could then provide space for bottom-up initiatives such as community-level dialogue to take root and shape the future political process. While some participants saw merit in this proposal, others felt there was a risk that various Syrian parties could try to instrumentalise such international involvement to strengthen their stance. Participants also questioned the effectiveness of sanctions and whether they had weakened or empowered the regime.

According to participants, despite limited hope for reaching broad accountability in Syria, the notion of 'no peace without justice' remains of great importance to many





*Ali Aljasem, Rabaf Aldoughli and Uğur Ümit Üngör*

Syrians. In this context, Syrian researchers, in cooperation with other fellow citizens, are spearheading the fight against impunity, sometimes risking their lives to compile evidence of the crimes committed by the Syrian regime and other conflict parties. Several participants indicated that none of the regional actors have made it a priority to prosecute suspected war criminals on their territory. In Europe, the quest for accountability has also been limited. Despite using universal jurisdiction clauses to bring cases forward, results have been modest. Nevertheless, some cases have progressed further, for instance in Germany, where members of the Syrian regime have recently been convicted for their crimes against humanity. With neither peace nor justice in sight in Syria, these European cases provide a glimmer of hope for those pursuing them.

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\*Participants with an asterisk behind their name attended the conference virtually.

# THE ORGANISERS



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Group

The Dialogue Advisory Group is an independent organisation that facilitates political dialogue to reduce violence. DAG creates or advances political dialogues between armed groups, governments and international organisations in conflict situations.



Crisis Group provides independent analysis and advice on how to prevent, resolve or better manage deadly conflict. Crisis Group combines expert field research, analysis and engagement with policymakers across the world in order to effect change in crisis situations.

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