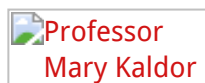


Mary Kaldor, Hungry for Peace: Positives and Pitfalls of Local Truces and Ceasefires in Syria



Professor Mary Kaldor

Mary Kaldor, Professor of Global Governance and Director of the **Civil Society and Human Security Research Centre** has co-authored a new report, 'Hungry for Peace', which documents local negotiations and agreements in Syria which have helped to bring respite, aid, services and hope to thousands of civilians caught up in the brutal war.

The report concludes that local ceasefires could hold the key to easing humanitarian suffering in Syria and build momentum towards ending the bloody conflict, if backed by the international community in the context of a wider peace plan.

The report also finds that with trust between parties at rock bottom, deals are often manipulated and there is a lack of neutral go-betweens. The report argues that these truces have the potential to protect and provide for Syria's war-devastated people but only if international support is expanded. The international community needs to provide dedicated mediation and monitoring services and relate local truces to efforts at finding an overall political solution.

"After three and a half painful years, Syrians are yearning for peace," said Dr Rim Turkmani an LSE research fellow, Syrian activist and lead author of the report. *"While global efforts to pursue a political solution are rapidly being de-prioritised, Syrians are pushing for periods of calm by brokering local deals. In some case these have stopped the fighting and opened up the flow of aid, other deals succeeded in restoring water and electricity services to a large area. Even when negotiations fail, they reflect strong local potential and desire for stability that remains untapped. There must be a combined bottom-up and top-down effort to achieve peace in Syria, neither alone will do."*

Although there are many formidable drivers of the Syria conflict – from the interests of regional and global powers, to a burgeoning war economy – the report reveals civilian pressure and involvement can be key to the possibility and durability of ceasefires, and have been proven to reduce death tolls and open up humanitarian access. For example, a truce brokered locally in Barzeh in Northeast Damascus in early January enabled the UN World Food Programme to provide people with food assistance for the first time in over a year, and allowed thousands of people to return.

The report concludes that deals are struck for a variety of different reasons, including pressure from civilians, the provision of services, access to strategic resources and the military stalemate. In some cases deals are sought as a military tactic to free up resources to fight elsewhere. This was the case in Madaya where a truce was used by the Syrian army to secure road access for an attack on a neighbouring rebel-held area, which is why the report emphasises the need for a wider peace-plan supported by relevant world leaders.

The international community, the report argues, can help local deals stick and create larger areas of stability. It cites the example of a nationwide ceasefire brokered in April 2012 that was monitored by the UN for several weeks, during which time the number of people killed fell by 25 per cent. However international support has been woefully lacking since the withdrawal of UN monitoring mission in June 2012, but a new action plan by the UN Envoy Staffan de Mistura to support "freezes" in fighting offers some hope.

"Everything else has failed to make a tangible difference to the lives of Syrians," said Professor Mary Kaldor, co-author of the report, *"but deals in Ras al-Ein and Barzeh do show the potential to*

bring warring parties to the negotiating table and reach agreements that help alleviate the humanitarian suffering. However local truces will only be sustainable and a step towards a political solution if they are properly monitored and mediated by the international community and include the vital force for peace that is Syrian civil society.”

A copy of the full report is available here: [Hungry for Peace: positives and pitfalls of local truces and ceasefires in Syria](#)

An executive summary of the report is also available: [Hungry for Peace Executive Summary](#)

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