Switzerland is working for peace in Syria

Since 2011, the Syrian conflict has claimed the lives of over 500,000 civilians and displaced more than 12 million people from their homes. Switzerland is working to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict on three levels: supporting the political peace process in Geneva, working to establish peaceful coexistence on the ground, and supporting efforts to deal with the past.

1. Switzerland supports the political peace process.

In hosting the Geneva peace process, Switzerland has brought Syria's warring parties to the table, giving them the possibility to resolve their differences peacefully through UN-led negotiations. Switzerland is committed to ensuring that other actors are involved in talks on Syria's future and that ordinary Syrian citizens also have a say.

- Switzerland has deployed experts to advise the UN Special Envoy for Syria on political issues relating to the peace process. Switzerland has also established a Civil Society Support Room in Geneva to facilitate the participation of Syrian citizens in the peace process.

- Switzerland plays a crucial bridge-building role by convening informal meetings between the warring parties and representatives from various political and religious groups. Approximately 25 such meetings are held annually in Switzerland.

As a neutral country and host state of the UN, Switzerland can bring the various parties to the table.

2. Switzerland is working to establish peaceful coexistence in Syria.

After more than eight years of war in Syria, tensions and conflict between different political, religious and ethnic groups are now commonplace. Switzerland is working to defuse these tensions, bolstering Syrian organisations and stakeholders in their peace-building efforts. It is strongly committed to involving as many sections of the population as possible, especially women.

- With Swiss support, Syrian organisations are engaging in dialogue with the various political, religious and ethnic groups.

- Switzerland provides funding for civil society organisations with a view to promoting local democracy and peace efforts.

- Swiss experts are also advising the UN in Syria on peacebuilding issues with the aim of increasing the impact of UN projects and funds dedicated to peace efforts.

As a democratic country with a federal system and different linguistic regions, Switzerland has valuable insights to share on peaceful coexistence.
3. **Switzerland believes in a strong system of international law and supports truth and reconciliation efforts.**

*With Switzerland's backing, Syrian NGOs sign a protocol on cooperation with the UN (April 2018, Lausanne)*

Human rights abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law are obstacles to peaceful coexistence in Syria. Switzerland therefore calls on all warring parties to respect international law. It supports efforts to ascertain the fate of an estimated 100,000 to 200,000 people who have been imprisoned or have gone missing in Syria, and to assist their families. It also supports efforts to come to deal with the violent past and the crimes committed.

- Switzerland funds Syrian organisations that document crimes committed in Syria, helping them work with UN agencies on prosecuting the perpetrators.

- Switzerland is helping the UN in ascertaining the fate of people who have been imprisoned or have gone missing in Syria. The UN is working with the 'Astana guarantors' (Iran, Turkey, Russia) in order to achieve this.

- Switzerland supports the families of imprisoned and missing people, enabling them to organise and act collectively. This helps families raise public awareness and have their voices heard by the parties involved.

> In keeping with its humanitarian tradition, Switzerland is committed to upholding international law. The Geneva Conventions adopted in 1949, which were drafted by the ICRC in Switzerland, still form the core set of rules applicable to armed conflicts.