



Role of the Arab League

,in Warding Off Armed Conflicts

"Syria as a Model"

Prepared by: Aly El-Jammal

Editing: Sherif Abdel Hamid

Executive Summary

Conflicts and Establishing Peace... Syria as a Model

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights has issued a working paper on the role of the Arab League in resolving armed conflicts in the Arab region, with a particular focus on the League's role in the Syrian conflict and the repercussions of suspending Syria's membership in the Arab League including the lack of dialogue between the member states and Syria, which exacerbated the already deteriorating situation for civilians. The paper, entitled "**The Role of the Arab League in Warding off Armed Conflicts in the Arab Region: Syria as a Model**", was divided into four main parts: the first examined the role of the Arab League in resolving Arab conflicts; the second discussed the repercussions of armed conflicts on human rights in the Arab region; the third focused on Syria as a model for the intervention of the Arab League in one of the bloody Arab conflicts; whereas the fourth highlighted the challenges facing the League of Arab States in establishing peace and warding off conflicts, which undermines the achievement of sustainable development goals and threatens to leave millions in the Arab region lagging behind.

In part one, the paper focused on the tasks of the Arab League, which intensified after the popular uprisings in the Arab region. Indeed, despite the role that the League is supposed to play in protecting Arab security and enhancing cooperation with other international bodies to ensure peace and security under Article 3 of its charter, it slowly set out to achieve these tasks along with the successive shocks that Arab security was exposed to after the Arab Spring revolutions and foreign interventions in Arab countries experiencing armed conflict or faltering transitional periods. There were only a few attempts by the Arab League to ensure security and safety in the Arab countries that were in

danger of collapsing their political systems. It has not intervened to prevent the perpetuated conflict in Yemen until the present moment, nor has it presented any initiatives that could bring the conflict parties together at negotiating table. In Syria, despite all the initiatives and decisions issued by the Arab League Council, whether at the ministerial level or the summits of presidents, the League's support for some Security Council resolutions related to Syria, all the initiatives put forward by the Arab League were rejected. The initiative presented by Arab foreign ministers in 2012 to form a national government unity and delegate President Bashar al-Assad's powers to his deputy, was neither accepted nor welcomed. The paper clarified the interventions and decisions initiated by the Arab League in Somalia, Libya, and Sudan, but confirmed the criticism of all experts and locals who believe that the League has no role in resolving Arab crises and that its charter is weak and ineffective, given the item stating that all resolution must be adopted in consensus.

Part two focused on the repercussions of armed conflicts in the Arab region on human rights. The paper highlighted these repercussions that are mainly represented in the violation of the right to life through the indiscriminate killing of civilians, internal displacement, arbitrary practices, and ill-treatment amounting to torture in the Arab region. That violates the obligations of states under international human rights law and international humanitarian law, to which armed groups operating outside the framework of the state, have also not adhered. In Yemen, the armed conflict, which entered its eighth year in a row, led to the deaths of 377,000 people. 40% or 154,000 were killed as a direct result of the conflict. In Syria, more than 350,000 people were killed from March 2011 to March 2021, according to a non-comprehensive estimate by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as these statistics covered victims whose identity,

date, and death place. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and Maat suggested that the number of dead people is much higher.

In Libya, civilians were the most affected group by the non-international armed conflict in the Libyan National Army and the Government of National Accord was involved at the time, which handed over its duties in March 2021 to the Government of National Unity led by Abdel Hamid al-Dababa. Clashes between the two sides from 2017 to 2019 killed nearly 5,000 people. As for Somalia, the paper clarified that many deaths fall daily in the conflict between the Somali government and the Somali Al-Shabab movement, which is affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Although there is no reliable comprehensive source that records the number of casualties and deaths in Somalia since the beginning of the conflict, Maat has documented the killing of about 3,776 from January 2020 to the end of December 2022. More than 50% of these numbers are civilian victims.

Maat collected data on internal displacement resulting from armed conflicts in four Arab countries that have experienced or are experiencing a state of conflict. This data confirmed the presence of 14 million internally displaced people in Yemen, Somalia, Libya, and Syria. They were subjected to arbitrary practices, including economic and social rights loss such as an adequate standard of living, safe housing, and access to clean drinking water rights. In addition to his inability to access medical facilities in light of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic, it threatens to leave these people behind in achieving the sustainable development goals.

In part three, the paper focused on the involvement of the Arab League in seeking to find solutions to the Syrian crisis to protect civilians and establish peace. Maat stressed that although all the initiatives and decisions of the Arab League since the Syrian crisis focused on protecting civilians and conducting a

dialogue between the Syrian government and the opposition, the reason for the difference between the Syrian government and members of the Arab League was the decision to suspend the League from Syria's membership. Some member states considered the Syrian opposition as an alternative to the Syrian government and armed the Syrian opposition when the Syrian government was controlling most of the territory. The paper suggested that Syria's return to the League of Arab States may reduce this dispute. It urges a dialogue between the Syrian government and the active member states of the Arab League to achieve stability and peace in the Syrian territories, which may reduce the violations against civilians and make all parties committed to respecting international human rights law. Maat called on the Secretary-General and the Arab States League member to call for convening a special summit under Article 5 of the League of Arab States Council rules. It aims to discuss the return of Syria to the League of Arab States; since the Algiers summit will not be held until early November 2022.

The last part of the working paper concluded with the main challenges facing the Arab League in resolving Arab armed conflicts; namely, the rigidity of the Arab League Charter and the need to amend it¹; the need for a joint Arab force; diminishing financial resources; ineffective communication with civil society, and presented a set of recommendations, including:

- Inviting the Arab League to convene a special session as soon as possible in accordance with Article 5 of the rules of procedure of the Council of the League of Arab States, in which announcing the return of Syria to the League of Arab States in a way that contributes to achieving peace and stability in the Arab region;

¹ النظام الداخلي لمجلس جامعة الدول العربية، المادة الخامسة، ص ٢، على الرابط التالي: <https://bit.ly/3xKkTqj>

- Amending Article Seven of the Arab League Charter so that it does not require unanimity in all decisions issued by the Arab League;
- Consider raising the status of civil society organizations from observer status to advisory status, similar to the system of the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations, including the participation of these organizations in the university's reform proposals;
- Adopting a participatory approach between the Economic and Social Council of the League, civil society organizations, and the diplomatic missions of member states regarding the development of the League's work mechanisms and proposals for reform.