Report on the Workshop on Awareness Raising and Campaigning Strategies for the National Constitution Campaign

Gaziantep, Turkey

10 - 12 August 2016

Supported by:
On 10-12 August 2016, No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) in collaboration with The Day After (TDA) organised a workshop on ‘Awareness Raising and Campaigning Strategies for the National Constitution Campaign’, which was held in Gaziantep, Turkey with the financial support of the European Commission, the Open Society Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. The workshop’s main objectives were to develop a deeper understanding of advocacy and campaigning techniques and to create a framework and action plan to launch the campaign, assigning roles and tasks to the various organisations present. The workshop brought together seventeen individuals, including an international expert on campaigning, key members of civil society organisations, and human rights activists. Eleven different Civil Society Organisations (CSO) that make up the Steering Committee (SC) were represented.

Background

Resolution 2254, unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 18 December 2015, represents the latest attempt by the international community to provide a comprehensive framework for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political transition to end the conflict in Syria. Resolution 2254 states that “The Syrian people will decide the future of Syria”, expressing support for a Syrian-led political process facilitated by the United Nations, which would establish “credible, inclusive and non-sectarian governance” within six months and set a schedule and process for the drafting of a new constitution.

The situation on the ground remains very fragile, and fighting has increased in many areas, but efforts by the international community to support a political solution to the Syrian conflict appear to be stalling. It is therefore all the more crucial to harness the energy of the Syrian civil society community to foster civil society cooperation and support its active engagement in the constitution building process, to ensure that the voice of the Syrian people is heard. It is critical that Syrian civil society focus on the future Constitution; raise awareness and develop a deep understanding of the process for as many Syrians as possible; and ensure that any decisions are taken based on proper consultations.

To help meet these needs, a Steering Committee was formed consisting of eleven Syrian groups who focus on awareness raising, work on the transition process, are committed to human rights and the rights of women and have an ability to reach people inside Syria. NPWJ and TDA are facilitating the work of the Steering Committee and acting as advisors to the group. The SC plans to organise a nationwide awareness campaign about the constitutional process for Syria, aimed for civic education, raising awareness on and steering a discussion around the constitution building process and the role that civil society can play at this time, as well as advocating for key principles to which the constitution process and content should adhere.

As an initial step, three workshops took place in Gaziantep Turkey. The first, held on 8 May, focused on exploring the interest and commitment of Syrian Civil Society organisations to act and prioritise the work on the constitution at this moment of the Syria conflict. The workshop resulted in an agreement among the organisations to form a steering committee that will develop and lead the work on advocacy and awareness raising for the constitution. The second workshop was held in Gaziantep on 9-11 June 2016. It focused on the constitution building processes and building understanding of Steering Committee members on constitutionalism and comprehensive and inclusive constitution building processes. It looked at practical examples from countries that have witnessed political transition and constitutional reform and the role civil society can play. After looking at the work that has already been done in this area by Syrian organisations, the SC discussed the role that they would like to have in the constitutional process for Syria, predominantly in the form of awareness raising on
legitimate mechanisms for a constitutional process such as inclusion, equality, accountability and transparency.¹

The third workshop on Awareness Raising and Campaigning Strategies for the National Constitution Campaign was held on 10-12 August in Gaziantep and looked at effective campaigning tools and tactics, aimed at identifying targets and mapping influences on decision-makers, engaging with strategic allies, changing public perceptions, using the media to gain support, influencing policy makers and those in key roles such as the High Negotiations Committee (HNC).

**Structure of the Workshop**

The three-day workshop was designed to be as practical as possible, using the experience of both the expert and the SC organisations to enrich group activities and put theories into practice, in order for the working groups to come up with strong ideas and concrete outputs. The first day was dedicated to reviewing and discussing work on key principles already developed by the group and identifying targets of advocacy efforts inside and outside of Syria. The second day the group worked on finalising the key principles and message of the campaign. The experts shared his experience in developing media operations and how to deal with opposing messages and competing voices. The third day was spent focusing on developing the action plan, assigning representatives tasks and discussing and agreeing on the way forward.

**Facilitators and Experts**

International expert Christopher Reid, an experienced lawyer, strategist and media advisor with experience in the United States and the MENA region, attended the workshop as an advisor to the group. He provided guidance and suggested frameworks to the group to assist with their planning for the Campaign. He also referenced training material that could be employed by the group when preparing for the campaign as well as provided guidance and input throughout the workshop.

Dareen Khalifa, TDA Deputy Director and Rami Nakhla, NPWJ Syria Project Coordinator, assisted with facilitating the workshop and moderating discussions.

The facilitators were joined and supported by the NPWJ and TDA Syria teams: Diab Serrih, Amer Shannan, Alaa Abed, Muge Erslan, Mustafa Ghashim, Sheyda Semnani and Nicola West.

**Participants**

Participants of the workshop consisted of representatives from eleven key civil society organisations who work on relevant issues inside and outside Syria. These organisations currently make up the Steering Committee: Badael, Dawlaty, the Higher Council of Local Councils, Civil Society Declaration Initiative, Kesh Malek, the Local Coordination Committee (LCC), Human Rights Organization in Syria-Maf, Mwatana, The Day After (TDA), the Transitional Justice Coordination Group (TJCG) and Women Now for Development. Six women and ten men participated in the workshop.

¹ For more information please see the report of the second workshop. You can find the full report here: http://www.npwj.org/sites/default/files/ressources/Report_WorkshoponConsti_June2016.pdf.
Day 1 – 10 August

Mr Nakhla welcomed the participants, explained the background of the workshop and laid out the key objectives of the workshop.

The participants presented themselves and their organisations. Mr Reid was introduced and explained how he would provide the framework and important strategies for campaigning, drawing on his experience of working on various successful campaigns in a number of cultures and contexts.

The morning session

The group began by discussing an initial draft document of suggested key principles for the campaign. The list had been developed by a drafting sub-committee made up of 3 members of the SC and had already been discussed by various members of the group through private and secure communication channels. The aim of this session was to discuss and resolve outstanding issues so that the group could move forward with planning the campaign around these agreed upon key principles. Mr Reid highlighted that the most essential part of any campaign was to have a clear and concise message that would be communicated by all members of the group, despite varying beliefs.

The main areas of discussion centred around the issues of Islamic jurisprudence and whether it was necessary to include this in the principles; how to refer to the right of minorities – whether they should all be listed by name or not at all; and the issue of decentralisation and whether this should be included as a principle. The group came to the conclusion that the original document was too detailed to serve the purpose of representing key principles of the campaign. They agreed that a new, less detailed list should be drawn up with a clear and concise message in order to captivate and maintain a wider audience.

It was highlighted that there needed to be a clear understanding among the group of the role and function of the SC itself and the key principles they were drafting. They agreed that their role was not to attempt to draft constitutional articles but rather to develop the key principles and values of the group and advocate for them to the larger Syrian society.

The Steering Committee agreed that a smaller sub-committee would redraft the shorter, more concise principles that reflected this session’s discussions that evening.

The afternoon session

The afternoon session was focused on identifying the target audience for the campaign. The group agreed that there is an “external” (outside of Syria) and “internal” (inside of Syria) audience. Although the target audience was decided upon as the larger public, each sub-group within the larger community would have to be approached using different methods. Mr Reid mentioned that in order to access such a wide community of people, key players and influencers of these communities need to be identified and contacted. The key players could play the role of influencing their communities as well as providing the Steering Committee with specific knowledge about those communities.

The Steering Committee then split into two groups to produce a list of key individuals, groups and institutions that should be targeted as part of the campaign. Mr Reid highlighted the importance of including every possible connection at this point as part of the brainstorming activity and that the list would be edited and narrowed down later. Even mentioning key players that would be against the Steering Committee’s principles would be helpful, as this could provide the framework for
understanding who would be the “unmovable opponents” as opposed to “allies”. The groups took an hour to discuss and reconvene to present their lists to each other.

For internal players, the suggested target figures included tribal, religious and other influential leaders, other CSOs inside Syria, media outlets, unions (e.g. Free Lawyers Syndicate) and moderate armed factions. Participants identified some organisations and groups that could not be approached in the same way, for example aid organisations, which need to remain neutral and not have political affiliations.

External players included the USA, UK, Russia, Turkey, Arab gulf countries and other key players, big and small, who would be important to engage in the lead up to Geneva talks. The ambassadors of the various countries would be the points of contact. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the Syria Campaign are INGOs who can support the SC in pressuring key countries and actors to uphold democratic, equality and human rights principles, especially in negotiation roles. The HNC and UN special envoys were also identified as targets of the campaign.

Participants then discussed additional strategies and ideas for reaching their audiences. Strategies included developing booklets for younger audiences. SC members mentioned previous activities that could be used/re-worked for this campaign, such as educational videos about human rights, women’s rights and democracy. There was a suggestion to create a website with such videos and to include a Q&A forum where the public could ask questions that would be answered by Constitutional experts. Mr Reid and the group discussed the beneficial use of narratives and stories in campaigning processes. Using previous success stories to tell a tale can be more captivating for the audience than simply using a list of facts or definitions.

The group agreed that the aim and focus for the next few days should be to develop their key message in order to develop a clearer strategic map.

Day 2 – 11 August

The next day was designed to begin with a theoretical approach. The expert discussed some important points about opposing messages and competing voices as well as the importance of developing a media operation with the aim to build strong relationships with major media outlets and becoming a “booking source” for coverage related to the constitution in Syria. The objectives for the following two days were to finalise and agree on the key principles and messages and to complete a schedule of tasks and assignments.

The morning session

The expert began by going over the chart made the previous day. There were still some missing components that needed to be completed collaboratively at a later date, such as writing the specific contacts within each organisation and deciding on who would be the individual responsible within the Steering Committee for remaining in contact with that person throughout the campaign. Key players would be approached differently, some would be contacted to sign on to the campaign principles, others would be made aware of these principles to ensure they are brought to the discussion and some would simply need to be monitored by the SC. The group’s role was discussed in the case that key international players strayed from the principles set forward by the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee would hold these individuals accountable for not adhering to certain ideals and compromising the essential values of the campaign. The role of the Steering Committee would be to remind the international community that they would not back down or compromise on these key
principles. This would be essential in ensuring transparency and credibility of the SC within the broader Syrian population.

The next session looked at some strategies of how to get the message ‘out there’ and have people listen. The “3 Ps” of social influence were discussed - Power, Payment and Persuasion. The group cannot exercise power yet, but concepts of payment and persuasion should be included in the campaigning strategy. Payment was discussed not in monetary form, but rather in the form of building relationships and exchanging support with likeminded groups and the acknowledgement of successful work done by others, the exchange of services and doing favours for each other. This can encourage others to join efforts with the Steering Committee. Persuasion involves having others commit to the cause by demonstrating shared principles and showing them how joining would be beneficial to them. Part of the persuasion strategy includes framing the message. The more information and details included in the message, the more likely it is that others would find points of disagreement. Instead, keeping the message short and simple will give everyone a “minimum” that can be agreed upon.

When trying to persuade others some things need to be kept in mind: Who is the messenger? Why are they a credible source? Why should others listen to them? Finding a competing source that agrees with you on the basic principles can add value to your campaign. Ensuring that commitment and consistency is at the forefront of your campaign will build your trustworthiness. Knowing the audience you are working with will help successfully frame your campaign. Using empathy and listening to concerns of your target audience is also an important tool of persuasion.

The importance of media was discussed. It is important for the SC to have an agreed upon and simple message, which is repeated whenever members engage with the media. It may be useful to have a dedicated person or group to handle the media as part of this campaign. This person would be the media reference point of the campaign as well as someone who would actively seek media opportunities. The Campaign’s media engagement requires a dedicated strategy and plan. As for gaining credibility and confidence from the donor community, unity and group cohesion are key and the importance of the campaign having a strong identity was stressed.

Mr Reid also emphasised how important internal communications are to the group and that it is fundamental for the group to agree on and adhere to a process as well as assigning someone specific to lead in this role.

The afternoon session

The afternoon session was dedicated to finalising the key principles. The sub-group had developed some general guidelines in a meeting the previous evening and these were discussed further. The group revisited each principle, discussing and agreeing on each one before proceeding to the next. By the end of the day, SC members had agreed on the overall principles, highlighting that this was not the final version of the document, but that small changes to wording and language would be made for technical accuracy. Participants also discussed the possibility of approaching an expert to make sure the terms worked legally and in other ways.

The principles were divided into mechanisms and values. Mechanisms will include how the constitutional process should be conducted, such as ensuring the constitution is written by Syrians for Syrians through a transparent and inclusive process and the condition that any constitution developed in the short-term and not by individuals elected by the Syrian people would be interim. Values will include but not be limited to principles such as human rights, protecting the diversity of the Syrian population, ensuring accountability of the government and protecting displaced populations by
Day 3 – 12 August

The aim of the third day was to create a tentative schedule and action plan with a division of labour among the SC member organisations to get the campaign going.

The morning session

The morning session began with the Steering Committee splitting into two groups to discuss actions that can be taken “externally” (meaning with the international community and actors outside Syrian borders) and “internally” (meaning inside Syria). The groups spent about one hour discussing the tasks and then reconvened to present to the entire group.

For external actions, some of the ideas considered were developing a media strategy; staying abreast of international or regional developments; being aware of any political event that undermines the Campaign’s message; and preparing and developing a plan of action as an emergency response to developments made on the Syrian Constitution. It was agreed that direct communications with the UN Special Envoy as well as with the HNC should be established. Also, preparing for side events in Geneva would be important once support for the Campaign has been rallied. Arranging events for special days such as international human rights day, international refugee’s day and other important dates was also mentioned. Once again, the importance of a unified message when SC members meet with key stakeholders was discussed, so as to be perceived as one entity speaking in one voice. The group also discussed how they would ensure devotion to the issues by the international community. They agreed that all forms of advocacy and pressure to adhere to the principles should be applied as well as ongoing monitoring and reporting on the process to ensure its transparency.

The group who worked on internal actions discussed possible obstacles that would be faced inside Syria. These included the notion that many people do not grasp the importance of the Constitution in their daily lives, due to the fact that all Syrians have lived their lives with a suspended constitution where conditions and laws were easily changed according to a dictator’s interest and were rarely upheld to standard. Changing people’s concepts of what a constitution is would therefore likely be difficult. Another problem would be confrontation with armed factions, as many of these groups use Sharia Law as their highest reference. A plan should be developed to demonstrate how the rights and standards advocated for by the Campaign are not necessarily in opposition to those who hold such Islamic principles and that having a Constitution does not mean these values are not important or void. Another issue would be internal displacement and constantly changing developments that occur in Syria. Some Syrians do not have access to basics services such as water or electricity; therefore bringing discussion of the Constitution may not be a priority for them. Convincing all Syrians of the importance the Constitutional Process at this stage is a difficult yet necessary task. Another obstacle to this is that even if work is done on the constitution in certain areas, it could be completely negated by a new siege or some other change in the political climate.

Despite all these obstacles, there is work that can be done, primarily on raising awareness among different communities such as children, refugees and women, to safeguard certain principles and values. A constitutional course could be developed and conducted, with the help of lawyers. Different educational approaches should be developed based on the target demographic (e.g. children, university student, farmer, religious groups). However, prior to this, a survey or poll should be conducted to understand better the current beliefs and misunderstandings among various segments of society so as

securing a safe return to their homes. (The final principles document to be annexed to this report after the final legal language revision).
to address those concerns in the campaign. Cooperating with CSOs that work with refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey can help widen the sphere of influence.

Another essential part of the campaign inside Syria would be reaching out to populations that the Steering Committee cannot contact directly, such as those in regime or ISIS controlled areas. Directly contacting CSOs in those areas could pose significant risk to the group and/or individuals. However, completely alienating these populations is not an option and they should be included in the long term, which must be approached also in light of the security of groups and partners working in ISIS controlled territories, which is a major concern. While it is important not exclude those groups from the campaign, it is equally important not to give incentives that encourage groups to take security risks in their work. At this stage, coverage areas will be prioritised and chosen by taking into consideration security risks, the SC’s current reach and where maximum impact could be achieved. Reaching audiences that are hard to contact could come in the form of indirect contact, such as Facebook.

The afternoon session

The afternoon session was spent putting together the action plan and assigning various tasks to the SC member organisations.

Tasks assigned included conducting a needs assessment inside Syria; developing educational materials/tools; developing a plan for how to reach out to important figures inside Syria; and developing an outreach plan for refugee populations. All SC members were tasked with reaching out to more CSOs that would support the campaign and its principles. Other tasks included preparing for an initial launch of the campaign, developing an emergency response plan in the case of new developments on the international front, preparing for side events in Geneva and holding events for important dates, such as international women’s rights day. Finally, an internal communications plan was discussed and needs further development so as to support information-sharing within the SC, including about the actions of the group.

The meeting ended with the discussion on funding processes as well as follow-up. For funding, the group has yet to decide a clear path: either each organisation could raise funds to do small parts of the campaign, or separate funding for the campaign could be acquired. The development of a funding strategy to resolve the funding issue was added to the action plan. For follow-up, the group discussed the rules that would govern the group, including consequences of not finishing tasks by given deadlines as well as what would be the plan of action if a member did not participate. An individual was assigned to follow up with the different CSOs on ensuring the tasks were done. If any organisation were unable to complete tasks they would need to notify this person and provide justification. If an organisation failed to do this, it would be assumed that they are not able to continue working on that activity and another organisation would be assigned the task.

Conclusion

Overall, the workshop accomplished its main objectives, namely to agree upon the Campaign’s key principles and to develop a plan of action and division of labour to start the campaign. The desire and need for strengthened and improved internal communication within the group was agreed upon. While there is a long road ahead, each member of the group concluded the workshop with concrete tasks and deadlines that will begin shaping the campaign and with stronger commitment from the group members. All SC members hold strong beliefs in the need to be part of supporting and developing an inclusive, transparent, egalitarian, Syrian Constitution that has the support of the people,
as an essential part of Syria’s ability to achieve peace and to ensure real freedom for all. They expressed their belief in the campaign and its value as well as their commitment to make sure it is a success.
Christopher Reid is a lawyer, strategist and media advisor with experience in the United States and the MENA region. Since 2007, Reid has worked on numerous strategic consulting, polling and media projects in Lebanon, primarily with the March 14 political alliance. He has conducted election and media training in Lebanon, Morocco and the West Bank. He worked for two years in Iraq on human rights and transitional justice issues and acted as the United States’ Embassy’s liaison with governments and NGOs working on these issues. Reid is a native of New Hampshire where he has worked on local, gubernatorial, congressional, senatorial and presidential campaigns -- in roles including legal counsel, election-day-operations consultant and senior advisor. He served as Governor’s Legal Counsel and Spokesperson, as an elected member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, as a Senior Assistant Attorney General and as a county prosecutor. He has worked in Washington as Associate United States Independent Counsel and as Deputy Special Counsel to the United States Senate Governmental Affairs Committee. While serving in Iraq, he was a senior executive in the United States Department of Justice. Reid is a graduate of Brown University, has a law degree, cum laude, from the Georgetown University Law Center, and received his M.P.A. from Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Robert Wilmers Public Service Fellow.
### Annex II – Agenda

**Workshop on Awareness Raising and Campaigning Strategies for the National Constitution Campaign**

Gaziantep, Turkey 10-12 August 2016

#### Agenda

**Day One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Welcoming attendees and reviewing results of previous meeting</td>
<td>NPWJ/TDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>Introducing the expert and discussing the agenda and the overall objectives of the workshop</td>
<td>Rami Nakhla, Dareen Khalifa, Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Discussing the draft campaign principles</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00</td>
<td>Identifying targets of our advocacy efforts. Stakeholders, leaders, key audiences for messaging plan, key strategic allies.</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:40</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00</td>
<td>Developing themes and key messages</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day Two**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Follow up on themes and messages. Message discipline.</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30</td>
<td>Opposing messages and competing voices</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Presenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 - 3.30</td>
<td>Coordinating messages and developing a media operation</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30 - 4.00</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 - 5.30</td>
<td>30-second elevator speech.</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day Three**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00-11:30</td>
<td>Planning the campaign, timing, earned media</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30 - 11.45</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 - 1.00</td>
<td>Brain storming on activities to influence our stakeholders</td>
<td>Chris Reid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00 - 2.00</td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00 - 3.30</td>
<td>Developing an action plan and deciding on next steps</td>
<td>Chris Reid and Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.30 - 4.00</td>
<td><strong>Break</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.00 - 5.30</td>
<td>Developing an action plan and deciding on next steps</td>
<td>Chris Reid and Steering Committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>