



[Opposing Sides in the Syrian Conflict Agree to a Future Meeting in Geneva for Negotiations](#)

The United Nations' Special Envoy to Syria, Geir Pedersen, announced that the opposing parties in the Syrian conflict had agreed to meet in Geneva for another round of peace talks. During his statement, Geir Pedersen said that the talks would be held as soon as it was safe to do so amid the coronavirus pandemic. Representatives from both sides will meet in Switzerland, and negotiations over Syria's future constitution will resume. This will mark the ninth round of Syrian peace talks in Geneva, adding to a further twelve rounds of negotiations held in Kazakhstan. Syria's revolution is in a temporary lull as a result of the ongoing health crisis, and Pedersen said he hoped that the current period of "relative calm" would build confidence on both sides ahead of the peace talks.

Pedersen stated that a virtual meeting would not be possible, but that the opposing sides had agreed on an agenda for the peace talks. The constitutional committee was unable to make significant progress during negotiations last year, and Pedersen is hoping that the developments in the Syrian conflict over the past year will lead to more productive discussions. The rebel forces have been pushed back to a singular stronghold, the northwestern province of Idlib, after successful operations by the Syrian regime and its international allies.

Geir Pedersen called on the international community to support the UN-brokered negotiations, specifically the United States and Russia, given their support for the opposing sides in Syria. The United States has supported Syria's rebels through the conflict, providing logistical and tacit military support. Conversely, Russia has backed the Syrian regime, and has come under fire for its role in committing crimes against civilians and other non-combatants. Both Moscow and Washington have previously indicated support for a political solution in Syria, but the two have different motivations. The American Ambassador to the UN, Kelly Craft, has called on the Syrian government and its supporters to agree to a ceasefire to stop the violence against civilians. On the other hand, Russia shares the Syrian regime's viewpoint that the rebels are terrorists, and wants the United States to withdraw its forces from Syria completely.

Other key players in Syria include Turkey and Iran, both of whom have a vested interest in the country. Turkey supports Syria's rebels and has firmed up its military presence in northeastern Syria since the beginning of the year. The Turkish government has stressed that it is unable to take any additional refugees from Syria, and the regime's offensive in Idlib is threatening to create another refugee crisis. Conversely, Iran is a strong supporter of the Syrian government in coordination with its wider foreign policy in the Middle East. Iran needs Syria as an ally to counter the influence of its regional rivals, Israel and Saudi Arabia. To this end, Iran has provided financial, logistical, and military support to the Syrian regime since the conflict began.