

*A Statement by the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)
on the Arab Region's Current Dangerous Developments*

Beirut, July 30, 2013 – the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND): The so-called Arab Spring countries are passing through hard conditions, having repeatedly failed in handling the most important causes of the popular revolutions and uprisings, especially the issues of social justice, public freedoms and the establishment of security.

The Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) is aware that political transition periods in all countries where civil conflicts or popular uprisings take place are always difficult and complicated, yet several Arab countries were pushed by many factors into additional dilemmas that could have been avoided under clear visions and honest wills and if the priorities of social mobility and ultimate national goals were sustained.

Egypt is today on the brink of civil war after conflict was renewed between, on one hand, the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies and, on the other, a large part of the Egyptian people, including the army, the police, Al-Azhar's topmost sheikh, the Church and the judiciary. The latter forces gathered on June 30, and after millions of Egyptians took to the streets in unprecedented masses, calling for change, President Mohammad Morsi was unseated. Since then, Egypt has seen a conflict between the two sides, which has left a growing number of people killed, wounded or detained. This has brought Egypt back to the forefront of international events, not as a pioneering experience that needs support to complement the construction of its democratic system but since the stifling crisis has become a menace to civil peace and threatens to make the largest Arab country a state in crisis or facing collapse.

Tunisia, where many vital conditions for complementing the transition period at the least cost are available, faces a political crisis that may push the country into an abyss with undesirable consequences. Terrorism is lurking in the country whose people have long been known for their tolerance. Another leader of the Popular Front, Mohammed Brahmi, was assassinated, six months after the assassination of Chokri Belaid, also a leading leftist figure. Furthermore, Al-Qaeda organization was able to kill eight Tunisian soldiers in Mount Chaambi; two soldiers were slaughtered. Thus, division took root between the ruling Ennahda Movement and most political forces, which raised the ceiling of their grievances by calling for an end to the current transition process, including the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and the creation of a national salvation government.

In **Libya**, the door is still struck wide open to many dangers because of the hefty problems left by the former regime and the failure of successive governments to safeguard national unity and lay down quickly enough a solid basis for constructing a state. The central authorities were further weakened by their failure to impose their policies all over the country and construct quickly enough a strong army supported by all parties, while a lack of security gave various armed groups a suitable environment to boost their hegemony and continue to assassinate anyone they deem a threat.

In **Yemen**, the process lost momentum; the country is trying to restore its weak institutions without making much progress in the construction of a modern and democratic national state.

Bahrain's revolutionary mobility still faces regional containment and interference; it has failed to achieve any of its objectives because of many internal and external causes. The authorities decided recently to put on hold many rights, including the right to demonstration, which allows citizens to express their views peacefully. Parliament has granted the executive authority a freehand without any veneration of the rights and freedoms agreed in the international human rights system or called for in international recommendations.

In this complicated and alarming Arab scene, Syria still flounders in a fragile situation amidst domestic, regional and international interferences by sides with conflicting interests and priorities. Despite a high death toll, instability and a high rate of displacement, many Syrians still show a strong will of resistance vis-à-vis the arrogance of the regime and its allies. Also, the opposition is divided, the economy is collapsing and social and national fabrics are breaking down, while conspiracies and voracities are numerous, freedom is weakest and national unity is faltering. The Syrian crisis is having regional repercussions, especially in Lebanon, which is heading at an accelerating rate towards political and security breakdown.

In light of this overall scene, which is complicated further by many sides with the aim of deepening frustration and pushing Arab citizens to denounce the revolutions and their slogans and just objectives, ANND would like to stress the following:

First, the right to freedom, dignity, independence and stability is not a matter subject to over-bidding or concession in the pretext of difficulties and crises that are natural outcomes in political transitions.

Second, attempts to impose ideological motives, held by many ideological movements, facilitated to a great extent the fall into religious and sectarian division, contributed effectively into shifting the national course's priorities from revising development modes and constructing democratic and just systems to a ferocious conflict about identity and belief, and turned religion into a dangerous weapon held by the state.

Third, transition periods cannot be led by one party at the expense of other social and political forces. Consensus is a national need, duty and tool to protect any country against all sorts of regional and international interference, tutelage and sabotage; it is especially important to isolate radical groups that try to achieve their goals and ideas with all means, including terrorism and the justification of terrorism in religious and political terms.

Fourth, this said, civil society forces in the Arab world are urged to act quickly enough to salvage current political transition experiences in these countries and assist in correcting their courses; they should adhere to peoples' economic, social and political grievances and work seriously and strongly to prevent these experiences from failure. If the current historic chance is aborted, it will be hard to regain for a very long time.

Fifth, international associates enjoying considerable influence global decision-making, especially permanent members of the UN Security Council and member states of the European Union, alongside international financial and trade institutions, are pressingly urged to uphold the principles of democracy and the intactness of human rights. It is not proper to give precedence to political and civil rights over economic, social and cultural rights and vice versa; all these rights are comprehensive and inseparable and should be available to all citizens without discrimination according to gender, race, belief or religion. Thus, when they approach the region's crises, the associates should sustain harmonious policies and only be biased to the construction of states that are sovereign, independent, civil and democratic and that sustain justice, law and impartial institutions.