**Arms trade and superpower interests lead to the escalation of the Syrian crisis**

The civil war began in Syria in 2011 in the aftermath of a wave of protests against the government of President Bashar al-Asad and the single ruling Baath party, which erupted in a follow-up to the Arab spring. Since then, the protests have evolved into long-running violence and fighting between armed anti-government forces and the military. This, in essence, is the classic case of destabilisation of a regime aimed at opening up the new space for legal and illegal trade in arms. We are witnessing not only the intervention of other states in the Syrian territory without a UN mandate but also the clear agreement on the provision of military aid to the official regime by Russia.

A few facts and figures: the number of the dead – 470 thousand. The number of the injured – 1.9 million. Economic losses – 255 billion dollars. Life expectancy – dropped from 70.5 to 55.4 years. These hard facts and figures demonstrate the destruction caused to Syria by the five-year war. They were published by the Syrian Political Research Centre. In addition to causing this enormous damage, the war has significantly destabilised the entire region. Some Western countries still consider even direct military intervention in Syria, which could engender a conflict of much greater proportions, should Syria’s ally Iran take its side.

The war has thus far been going on as a media-fencing match the stakes in which, however, are life or death. Besides slandering each other in the media, the USA and Russia seem to be gradually heading towards outright military confrontation. The recent bombing by the U.S. of Syrian government forces in the town of Deir al Zour, which made 62 victims and was allegedly due to a mistake that was repeated four times, can hardly be considered to demonstrate peaceful interests. In turn, Russia carried out an attack on Wednesday, 21 September, launching a “Kaliber” cruise missile from a Russian warship in the Mediterranean and hitting the American coordination centre located in Dar Ezza near Aleppo. About 20 officers, both of U.S. and other nationalities, died in the attack.

The International Peace Committee, therefore, expresses its serious concern about this course of events that could lead to further escalation of the conflict up to the global level. It urges all the countries involved in the conflict to stop supplying weapons to Syrian rebels and ISIL and thus force them to take a seat at the negotiating table.

The International Peace Committee

This declaration has been endorsed by the following available members:

Anton Barcík, Ing., CEO, Považská cementáreň, Ladce

Anton Blaha, JUDr., CSc., advocate, writer

Ján Blcháč, Ing., PhD, mayor of the town of Liptovský Mikuláš

Jan Campbell, Ing. PhDr., biocybernetist, analyst, FRG

Peter Čatloš, Ing., PhD, entrepreneur, Malta

Zoltán Černák, Ing., agribusinessman

Ján Gabriel, Ing., Association’s Committee Chairman

Tibor Gašpar, PaedDr. Gen.

Ján Miškovský, Ing., entrepreneur, janom, s.r.o.

Peter Kasalovský, Dr., co–initiator of the IPC and representative of the Association IEF – Economic Club

Jan Keller, Prof. PhDr. PhD, sociologist, pedagogue, member of the European Parliament, Czech Republic

Jozef Masarik, Prof. RNDr. DrSc., Dean, Mathematics, Physics and Information Science Faculty, Comenius University

Peter Mihók, Assoc. Prof., Ing., CSc., President, Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President, World Chambers Federation

Mikuláš Milko, Ing., CEO, CK Hydrotour, a.s.

Rudolf Y. Mosny, PhD, entrepreneur, S QUARED, New York City, Ltd. U.S.A.

Nancy Mosny, entrepreneur, S QUARED, New York City, Ltd. U.S.A.

Svetozár Naďovič, Ing., Major General

Rudolf Schuster, President of the Slovak Republic in 1999-2004 (by the May 31, 2016)

Heidy Schwarczová, Ing., PhD, Rector, University of Central Europe

Vojtech Tkáč, Prof. JUDr. PhD., pedagogue and international expert

In Bratislava, on 6 October 2016