

SUPPORT TO GRASSROOTS MEDIA ACTIVISM IN SYRIA
STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENT

BACKGROUND

1. Strategic Communications (StratCom) delivered through a ‘Grassroots’ approach (support to Syrian oppositionist media activism) contributes, in one way or another, to much of the UK’s project work in Syria, less humanitarian relief. HMG has supported Syrian media activists since 2012, through a variety of implementation vehicles. Appropriate media content has been delivered through TV, FM radio, social media and print material (posters, magazines and comics) and the development of delivery platforms (such as FM radio) has been supported. While there is satisfaction with the current delivery arrangements, there is a need to re-compete to ensure HMG continues to achieve the best technical and commercial solution for its needs in this area. This is routine practice and the same process is being applied to other Syria StratCom work.
2. The requirement is for the selection, training, support and mentoring of Syrian oppositionist media activists who share the UK’s vision for a future Syria (see HMG intent and campaigns described below) and who will abide by a set of values that are consistent with UK policy. A partnership is required, between the UK (delivered through a commercial implementing partner) and the selected Syrians. There is to be encouragement, practical support and advice but this process should not be considered as the UK issuing direction. All media content is to be Syrian-developed and Syrian-delivered.

HMG INTENT

3. The UK’s National Strategic Aim is for “a more stable and democratic Syria that better meets the needs and aspirations of its people and presents a significantly reduced threat to regional and international security and stability”. The National Security Council has set out three priorities for the UK Government’s contribution to the international efforts to resolve the situation in Syria: support efforts to find a political solution to the conflict; alleviate humanitarian suffering; and protect UK security by tackling extremism and getting rid of Assad’s chemical weapons (the latter issue has largely been resolved since the priorities were set).

PROJECT PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE

4. The purpose of this project is to support HMG Syrian oppositionist grassroots media activism. This is to be a combination of human capacity-building and assisting with the sustainment of delivery platforms capable of reaching Syrian audiences (many of which have been built by a combination of UK, US and Canadian investment over the past three years).
5. The objective of the project is contribute towards positive attitudinal and behavioural change through:
 - a. Reinforcement of popular rejection of the Assad regime and extremist alternatives.
 - b. Promotion of the moderate values of the revolution.
 - c. Promotion of Syrian national identity.

PROJECT SCOPE

COMMERCIAL – SENSITIVE

6. The focus of the project is to be Syrian audiences, primarily inside Syria, especially those sometimes referred to as ‘the Syrian middle ground’. It will be important to reach those in the (arguably diminishing) undecided community that have yet to take sides, with delivery methods tailored accordingly. Regional audiences will also be important, not least as more than three million Syrian refugees are spread across neighbouring countries.
7. The project office should be based within easy access of the Syrian in-country networks.
8. The project will complement other strands of the HMG-facilitated StratCom programme. On occasions, HMG (through Syria Office Istanbul (SOI)) will request a specific geographic focus or for particular events/stories to be covered. These will always be consistent with the campaigns described below.

REQUIREMENTS

9. Capabilities (Means).

a. **Project Management.** Establish a team to manage the project including a single responsible project lead/director for all matters.

b. **Project Networks.** The project will need to establish and support a network Syrians operating both from outside and inside Syria with the necessary skills and equipment. These Syrians will need to be committed to the delivery of the campaigns described below because they reflect their own vision for a future Syria. The requirement for expatriate staff is accepted, however, the HMG preference is that the preponderance of project staff should be Syrian or, failing that, at least from the region, and that the trend over time should be to further Syrianise wherever possible.

c. **Brand/Charter.** Where one is not already available, the development and use of a credible Syrian brand should be considered. Such a brand should have a ‘charter’ or vision statement that encapsulates its purpose and its values and which its contributors agree to live up to.

10. Tasks (Ways).

a. **Campaigns.** Support the development and delivery of communication campaigns with the following intent:

(1) **Bolster the Values and Reputation of the Syrian Opposition.** Highlight moderate opposition success in order to:

- Strengthen an inclusive opposition.
- Counter sectarian incitement.
- Promote a negotiation process / political resolution with international support.
- Prepare for “Day After” and transition needs inside Syria.

Where appropriate, this should be done in support of the Syrian National Coalition, Syrian Interim Government and the Syrian Moderate Armed Opposition (Revolutionary Forces Syria).

(2) **Undermine the Assad Regime’s Core Narrative and Legitimacy.** Increase pressure on the Assad regime through exposure of its crimes, failings and deceptions.

COMMERCIAL – SENSITIVE

(3) **Contribute to Counter-Violent Extremism (C-VE).** Promotion of the moderate alternatives to the VE proposition through ‘Syrian Identity’ and ‘Free Syria’ campaigns. The former should highlight the foreign nature of the VE ideology and its incompatibility with Syrian ‘Identity’ and seek to unite Syrians through positive affirmation of common cultures and practices. ‘Free Syria’ should seek to build confidence in a future Syria free from extremist rule by amplifying the work of the ‘free’ police, civil defence teams, wider public service provision and broader developments in civil society. A third line of C-VE effort that focuses on the VE narrative is covered by a separate project. HMG will establish coordination mechanisms as required so the three C-VE communications campaign elements are synchronized, where and when required. This may, depending on the outcome of the ITT process, require two separate commercial implementing partners to work together collaboratively at times.

b. **Delivery.** The majority of the project’s effort (funding) will need to be focused towards the development and delivery of media product to Syrian audiences. This process will require access to an extensive and resilient network of media activists inside Syria. TV and social media may have the largest audience reach (possibly it should be the main effort) but FM radio and print should be utilised to enable more targeted delivery. Tenders should outline, in as much detail as possible, the quantity, type, mode and geography of content delivery achievable within the available resources.

11. **Outputs (Ends).** Measurement of performance and effectiveness will be required to enable judgement of the project’s ultimate Output which is its ‘impact’. Performance is relatively easy to measure as the metrics (intent of product, type of product and audience reach) can (and should) be assembled. ‘Impact’, the true ‘Ends’ achieved in terms of attitudinal and behavioural change is substantially more difficult, not least as communications alone will not be decisive and deliver on the HMG Intent (and para 5). Nevertheless, tenders will need to present the methodology that would be applied to determine the ‘impact’ achieved by the project (see below on assessment).

COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS

12. **Timeframe.** The implementer will assume responsibility for the project from 1 Jan 15 for a period of 15 Months to the end of FY 15/16. This will however include a break point on 31 Mar 15, pending confirmation of the available funds for FY 15/16. The reporting requirements will begin the week commencing 5 Jan 15.

13. **Constraints.** The implementer is to remain within the Statement of Requirement and take note of the following:

a. All activity is to be compatible with UK values and standards, notably: sectarian incitement is to be actively discouraged.

b. All activities must be conducted in accordance with UK law. Advice must be sought from HMG through Syria Office Istanbul (SOI) if there is a concern that Syrian partners are about to undertake activity, with HMG financial support or with the complicity of HMG-funded mentors, that HMG might consider illegal.

c. UK audiences are not to be a specified target without the agreement of SOI, although bleed across of material from Syrian/Regional media to English-speaking media is accepted as likely.

14. **Reporting.** The reporting requirement is:

COMMERCIAL – SENSITIVE

- a. **Weekly.** A short situational update of events and sentiment relevant to the Syrian population that has emerged through project activity. To cover, as appropriate: political, military, governance, security and humanitarian issues.
- b. **Fortnightly.** A report on project activity.
- c. **Quarterly.** A formal report of campaign activity against project requirements to the Conflict Pool board. This should detail product delivery and measures of output and impact and details of actual expenditure against forecast expenditure.
- d. **Spot Reports.** Time-sensitive or especially noteworthy information should be delivered as spot reports.

15. **Assessment.** The project is to be externally evaluated by a Defence Science and Technology Laboratories (DSTL) scientist in direct partnership with the contractor, starting Jan 15. This process is to include robust measures of performance – that material is fit for purpose and delivered to target audiences - and assessment of its effect/impact. Positive behavioural changes linked (correlation and/or causation) to campaign activity will be highly valued.

16. **Confidentiality and Publicity.** The UK's general StratCom support to the Syrian opposition has been announced by the Foreign Secretary. However, media coverage of the project will be distinctly unwelcome due to the risks to Syrian employees and to project effectiveness that it would generate. The implementer is not permitted to speak publicly (to the media or at academic conferences) about their work without the explicit permission of HMG. This will be enforced by a Non Disclosure Agreement.

17. **Linkage with Other Projects.** The project will fit into a network of HMG and international support activity which together will have a synergistic effect. SOI will coordinate the projects and ensure that they remain collaborative, exploiting each other's successes to meet HMG intent.

18. **International Partners.** In order to generate mass, international partners will be important. The contractor is to be prepared to play a role in supporting this partnership building process.

19. **Administrative Provisions.** All supporting costs are to be covered by the project budget including (but not limited to): provision of an office, insurance, translation services, transportation and accommodation. Some items are subject to strict caps (flights should be economy) unless specific permission is sought. This and other travel should be billed as actuals (plus administrative costs but less commercial margin).

20. **Duty of Care and Security.** There is a threat to those involved in supporting the Syrian Opposition. Accordingly the implementer will hold the duty of care responsibility for its staff and for the security of the project. It is to ensure that all reasonable security measures (physical, information and communication) are taken to reduce the threat to as low as is reasonably possible. This is to include encouraging security awareness and best practice amongst its forward-based partners (networks).

21. **Budget.** Planning should seek to deliver a solution for not more than **£1.5M** (including VAT where applicable) over 15 Months. Currently, £300k is available for Jan-Mar 15. Despite the solution being envisaged as a 15 month project, the nature of the HMG funding cycle means that, irrespective of performance, funding beyond 31 Mar 15 cannot be guaranteed (although it is a realistic aspiration). Budget presentation should include all projected costs incl. staff rates, office and administration costs, a forecast of production and delivery costs etc. Framework conditions apply to how margins are attributed.