In Congress and in the White House there has been primarily discussion on violent options to resolve the Syrian conflict. A key root of the crisis is the devastating civil war in Syria, which has been raging now for more than four years. Skepticism surrounding alternative measures, such as diplomacy can be understood with the fighting that has continued under this most recent ceasefire. However, violent attacks have created more attacks and more people willing to continue the terrorism and suffering in the region, e.g. Beirut, Paris, Belgium, etc.

**What could be better ways to transform the conflict?**

A. Economic pressure needs applied on all armed actors fueling the flames of war.

B. The U.S. government must make finding a negotiated solution to the Syria crisis a top diplomatic priority, with all key stake holders such as civil society included.

C. Humanitarian assistance for people suffering from the brutal impacts of the war is vastly underfunded.

D. Humanizing rhetoric and reducing cultural marginalization are essential to defuse the violence and see with clear eyes the path forward to a more just peace.

E. A coordinated strategy for enticing defections from armed groups, such as ISIS, is a key for defusing the violence.

F. Peacebuilding needs increased funding now for trauma-healing, unarmed civilian protection, and nonviolent civilian resistance.

G. Significant reduction in the flow of arms is needed to defuse capacity and will to rely on violent activity.

**RESIST TERRORISM WITH JUST PEACE**

God’s promise that “justice and peace shall embrace” (Psalm 85:10) embodies the holistic vision of God’s Shalom. In order to stop terrorism, solutions consistent with just peace are necessary. Continuing to add weapons and military to the conflict won’t ultimately end the suffering but could exacerbate the bitterness and hostility that will create another similar group or movement like ISIS. Syrian activists have resisted ISIS through demonstrations, business boycotts, alternative media, and interposition. Even within Jordanian refugee camps, Syrian refugees have created organizations to benefit their children and help recreate society away from their homes. Over the past 115 years, nonviolent civilian resistance has proven to be twice as effective as armed struggle, even against opponents willing to use mass violence and against non-state actors. Sustainable, nonviolent solutions are possible and have shown to be effective with much less death and much less harm, hate and terror.

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The Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM) supports and offers resources for U.S. leaders of Catholic men’s religious institutes. CMSM promotes dialogue and collaboration on issues of religious life as well as peace and justice issues with major groups in church and society. There are more than 17,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.
Resources:

Maria J. Stephan, Ph.D., U.S. Institute of Peace
http://resistance-journal.org/product/civil-resistance-vs-isis/

Eli S. McCarthy, Ph.D., CMSM and Georgetown University
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/eli-s-mccarthy/isis-nonviolent-resistanc_b_6804808.html

Phyllis Bennis, Institute of Policy Studies
Understanding ISIS and the New Global War on Terror: A Primer, 2015