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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-1252/2016**

21.11.2016

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Syria  
(2016/2933(RSP))

**Marietje Schaake, Petras Auštrevičius, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Dita Charanzová, Marielle de Sarnez, Gérard Deprez, Martina Dlabajová, José Inácio Faria, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Marian Harkin, Ivan Jakovčić, Petr Ježek, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Louis Michel, Urmas Paet, Maite Pagazaurtundúa Ruiz, Frédérique Ries, Jasenko Selimovic, Hannu Takkula, Pavel Telička, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Hilde Vautmans, Cecilia Wikström**  
on behalf of the ALDE Group

**European Parliament resolution on the situation in Syria  
(2016/2933(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions, in particular those of 6 October 2016 on the situation in Syria<sup>1</sup>, 12 April 2016 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration<sup>2</sup>, 4 February 2016 on the systematic mass murder of religious minorities by the so-called ‘ISIS/Daesh’<sup>3</sup>, and 21 January 2016 on the EU’s priorities for the UNHRC sessions in 2016<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, of 12 August 2016 on the latest terrorist atrocities in Syria and of 16 September 2016 on the situation in Aleppo,
  - having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, Christos Stylianidis, of 16 September 2016 on Syria, of 20 September 2016 on the air strikes against the UN/Syrian Red Crescent humanitarian aid convoy, of 24 September 2016 on the situation in Aleppo, of 2 October 2016 on an emergency humanitarian initiative for Aleppo and of 25 October 2016 on the urgency for humanitarian aid to reach Aleppo,
  - having regard to the Council conclusions of 17 October 2016 and the European Council conclusions of 18 and 19 February 2016 and of 20 and 21 October 2016,
  - having regard to UN Security Council resolutions 2118, 2139, 2165, 2209, 2235, 2268, 2254 and 2258,
  - having regard to the remarks by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, of 21 September 2016 on the situation in Syria to the Security Council and of 24 September 2016 on the situation in Aleppo, and to the statement by his spokesperson of 30 September 2016 on the Syria Board of Inquiry,
  - having regard to the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, established by the UN Human Rights Council,
  - having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in spite of the unilateral humanitarian pauses declared by the Government of President Putin, in cooperation with the Assad regime, in Aleppo, and the ongoing diplomatic talks in Geneva, the human suffering of the Syrian people has not yet come

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0382.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0102.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0051.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2016)0020.

to an end; whereas more than four million people are living in besieged cities and hard-to-reach areas where essential water and electrical infrastructure has been destroyed; whereas a permanent health crisis exists in Aleppo and throughout Syria; whereas according to UNICEF more than two-thirds of Syrians in the region do not have regular access to water and nearly 6 million children are in need of urgent life-saving assistance;

- B. whereas UN plans to evacuate critically injured civilians out of Aleppo during the unilateral humanitarian pauses declared by Putin and Assad did not succeed and no humanitarian assistance has been able to reach the besieged parts of Eastern Aleppo since July 2016; whereas these pauses cannot serve as a substitute for unrestrained and impartial humanitarian access and ensuring the protection of civilians in the longer term; whereas civilians wishing to evacuate must be allowed to do so without any restrictions, by all parties to the conflict;
- C. whereas all countries and parties involved in the conflict must be reminded of their commitments in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2254, in particular the obligation to cease any attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure and the obligation to ensure humanitarian access throughout the country; whereas the European Union must use all its instruments, including the imposition of sanctions, to ensure full compliance by all parties with this resolution;
- D. whereas over 400 000 people, mostly civilians, have lost their lives since the beginning of the conflict in Syria in 2011; whereas massive and recurrent violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have been committed by all sides in the conflict, including unlawful killing, torture and ill-treatment, mass and arbitrary arrest, targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilians, collective punishment, attacks against medical personnel and the denial of food and water; whereas the regimes of Assad and Putin use starvation as a weapon of war, including through blocking access to those in need and blocking the delivery of emergency goods;
- E. whereas the UN-mandated Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and human rights groups have collected evidence that at least 200 000 people have been detained by the Syrian Government in inhuman detention conditions; whereas thousands of Syrians have died in Syrian Government custody in recent years from torture and disease; whereas forced disappearances and horrific prisoner abuse are widespread; whereas the Syrian authorities have attempted to keep information about their detention facilities secret, refusing access to recognised international detention monitors; whereas the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has, since 2011, been allowed to visit only a few prisons;
- F. whereas the Syrian regime uses prolonged sieges, blockades, forced evacuations and the humanitarian pauses imposed by President Putin and the Assad regime to change the demography of Syrian cities; whereas such sieges and evacuations in themselves constitute violations of international humanitarian law; whereas the Syrian regime has forced residents of Damascus and Homs suburbs, previously controlled by opposition forces, to relocate to Idlib Province; whereas the Syrian regime uses blockades of aid, food and essential products as well as bombardments on civilian targets, including hospitals, to forcefully displace the inhabitants of Eastern Aleppo; whereas the resulting

involuntary transfer of people will lead to further partitioning of the country;

- G. whereas violence and crimes against civilians, lack of access to food, water, medical support and emergency goods, the deplorable treatment of those in prison and detention facilities and the rise of extremism and jihadism are reasons for Syrian civilians to flee their homes; whereas 50 % of the Syrian population has become displaced; whereas there are currently over 6.5 million internally displaced people within Syria; whereas 4.5 million Syrian refugees have fled to Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq; whereas approximately 1 million Syrian refugees have fled to the EU;
- H. whereas the independent and neutral expert panel of the UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) released a third report on 28 October 2016, which found that Syrian Government forces used helicopters to drop barrel bombs filled with toxic chemicals in a third incident, after evidence of the use of toxic chemicals had already been found in two earlier incidents;
- I. whereas the Syrian Government acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention on 14 October 2013; whereas the Syrian regime claimed to have provided a full list of its chemical weapons stockpile in September 2013; whereas these chemical weapons were subsequently destroyed under a mission led by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW); whereas in April 2015 and August 2016 hospitals reported the use of chlorine gas by the Assad regime, including in Aleppo; whereas the OPCW has repeatedly found traces of chemical weapons and agents in laboratories and military facilities that were not reported to the OPCW by the Assad regime; whereas the OPCW has evidence of the use of sulphur mustard gas by the so-called Islamic State during an attack on Marea in August 2015;
- J. whereas the so-called Islamic State still controls large parts of Syria, including its so-called capital Raqqa; whereas militants of the so-called Islamic State are committing serious war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide against ethnic and religious minorities, extreme acts of torture, eradication of cultural heritage, enslavement, extreme forms of sexual violence against girls and women, forced marriage, recruitment of child soldiers and trafficking of human beings; whereas the transnational character of the so-called Islamic State poses a threat to the wider region and international security;
- K. whereas all these crimes have so far gone unpunished; whereas all those responsible for violations of international law must be held to account; whereas accountability, justice, the rule of law and the fight against impunity constitute essential elements underpinning peace and conflict resolution, reconciliation and reconstruction efforts;
- L. whereas on 16 November 2016 Russia decided to withdraw its signature from the Rome Statute;
- M. whereas new military actions by the Syrian Democratic Forces, supported by the US-led coalition, are preparing the liberation of northern Syria, and in particular Raqqa, from the so-called Islamic State; whereas the long-term success of these actions is dependent on enhanced coordination between all partners combating the so-called Islamic State, respect for the basic human rights of civilians living in this region and a focus on the re-establishment of local governance and post-conflict reconciliation;

- N. whereas regional actors continue to play an unconstructive role in the Syrian conflict by politically and logistically supporting and arming armed groups, militia and militants and terrorist organisations; whereas Iranian support, both direct and through proxy groups, allows the Assad regime to continue its brutal assaults on the Syrian population; whereas militants and terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, supported by Iran continue to fight against opposition groups supported by the international coalition;
- O. whereas the EU is the main contributor to humanitarian aid in Syria; whereas the lack of a common position prevents stronger EU leadership towards a negotiated solution to the war in Syria; whereas the EU should intensify its role and leverage in this regard and should come forward with new strategies to facilitate the ongoing peace talks; whereas the VP/HR and the Commission have committed to implementing an EU strategy for Syria in the first quarter of 2017; whereas following the European Council meeting the VP/HR, under this strategy, visited Iran and Saudi Arabia as part of the outreach to key actors in the region on the future of Syria;
- P. whereas all parties must be reminded again of the necessity to resolve the conflict in Syria through peaceful dialogue and of the need for a Syrian-led political process leading to a transition that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people;
1. Is extremely concerned about the humanitarian disaster in Syria and the impasse of the peace negotiations; reiterates that all parties to the conflict have the moral obligation to fully ensure the protection of humanitarian workers and civilians at all times; calls on all parties to allow unhindered and continuous humanitarian access and the delivery of emergency goods, in particular to the besieged and hard-to-reach areas; calls for a no-fly zone to be declared over Aleppo, to enable deliveries of humanitarian aid and the evacuation of wounded civilians;
  2. Urges all parties involved in the conflict to resume and intensify political negotiations as soon as possible in anticipation of a new and stable truce to be established, which should include provisions ensuring transitional justice in post-conflict Syria; stresses that these peace talks should lead to a cessation of hostilities and a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition; fully supports the peace talks and the efforts made by UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura;
  3. Calls on the Assad regime and on President Putin to immediately end all attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and to put an end to all sieges and to the lack of humanitarian access to the Syrian people in need; calls on President Putin to specifically refrain from any military actions and indiscriminate attacks by Russia's warships in the Mediterranean Sea targeting civilians in Syria; recalls that military offensives cannot bring victory or impose peace, but only prolong the bloodshed;
  4. Calls for sanctions to be imposed on Putin's regime in Russia if it continues violating UN Security Council resolutions and if it continues committing war crimes in Syria; seriously regrets the failure of the European Council on 20 October 2016 to reach an agreement on sanctions against Putin's regime in Russia as a result of its attacks on the Syrian population;
  5. Calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to provide full support to the UN and the OPCW in order to continue investigating the use and the destruction of

chemical weapons by all sides in Syria;

6. Urgently calls on the VP/HR, the Commission and the European Council to explicitly use all means of leverage at their disposal to ensure Iran refrains from its destructive role in the Syrian conflict;
7. Calls on all parties in Syria in control of prisons and detention facilities to give international organisations, including the ICRC, unfettered access to these facilities and to the people held or detained therein;
8. Recalls its strong condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Assad regime, the so-called Islamic State, Al-Nusra and other terrorist organisations, which can be considered as serious war crimes and crimes against humanity; calls for the evidence, digital and otherwise, of these war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by all sides to be preserved as a fundamental priority in order to ensure accountability and bring perpetrators to justice; emphasises the urgent need for the collection of evidence to start immediately;
9. Calls on all parties involved in military actions to abide by international humanitarian and human rights law and to respect the principles of proportionality and distinction, in order to minimise casualties;
10. Expresses its deepest sympathies for the Syrian people living in the besieged areas of Aleppo and throughout Syria, including many children, who do not have access to essential humanitarian goods and desperately need food, clean water and medical supplies; underlines that the Syrian regime has the primary responsibility for the protection of the Syrian population;
11. Strongly deplores the climate of impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes during the war in Syria; considers that the lack of accountability breeds further atrocities and compounds the suffering of the victims; deplores in this regard the veto by Russia and China as Permanent Members of the UN Security Council against the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court; calls on the EU and its Member States to take new steps to address this impunity gap, if necessary by setting up a war crimes tribunal;
12. Remains convinced that there can be no effective conflict resolution, reconciliation and sustainable peace in Syria without accountability on all sides for the crimes committed during the conflict; urges the Member States to take all necessary measures to hold alleged perpetrators to account, notably through the application of the principle of universal jurisdiction and by investigating and prosecuting EU nationals responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria;
13. Urges the EU and its Member States to pressure all parties to the conflict in Syria to adhere to the human rights and humanitarian provisions of UN Security Council resolution 2139, including by ending the practice of torture and other ill-treatment, and calls for immediate and unhindered access for recognised international detention monitors to all persons deprived of their liberty in Syria;
14. Welcomes the adding of 17 ministers and the governor of the Central Bank of Syria to

the list of those targeted by EU restrictive measures, owing to their share of responsibility for the repression of the civilian population in the country;

15. Welcomes and underlines the critical importance of the work of local and international civil society organisations in documenting evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other violations; calls on the EU and its Member States to provide further and complete assistance to these actors;
16. Welcomes the partnership priorities and compacts with Lebanon for the period 2016-2020 and the still-to-be-concluded partnership priorities and compact with Jordan for the period 2016-2018; notes that the compacts are the framework through which the mutual commitments made at the conference in London on 'Supporting Syria and the Region' of 4 February 2016 are translated into actions;
17. Insists on the importance for the EU and its Member States to plan for the long-term recovery and the reconstruction of Syria, including through financial means and measures designed to promote reconciliation, foster trust and strengthen the rule of law; reiterates its full support for the EU's ongoing humanitarian initiative for Aleppo and urges all parties to facilitate its implementation;
18. Calls on the EU and its Member States to support capacity and civil society building in Syria, including with and through actors that promote human rights, equality, democracy and empowerment, and, where possible, to already start this process in liberated territories in Syria and with Syrian refugees living in exile in the region or in Europe; stresses that such capacity building should support Syrians in steering the transition;
19. Urges the European Council to take new steps to ensure an effective European Defence Union to address the challenges in the EU's neighbouring regions;
20. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the United Nations, the members of the International Syria Support Group and all the parties involved in the conflict in Syria.