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Plenary sitting

13.12.2011

B7-0724/2011

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 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in Syria (2011/2880(RSP))

Marietje Schaake, Kristiina Ojula, Marielle De Sarnez, Louis Michel, Alexandra Thein, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Robert Rochefort, Edward McMillan-Scott, Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, Sonia Alfano, Frédérique Ries, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Johannes Cornelis van Baalen, Graham Watson
on behalf of the ALDE Group

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Syria (2011/2880(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, in particular of 27 October 2011 on the situation in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian communities, and on the case of Rafah Nached, of 15 September 2011 and of 7 July 2011,
- having regard to the statements of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Syria of 8 October 2011, 3, 22 and 28 November 2011 and 2 December 2011,
- having regard to the conclusions on Syria of the Foreign Affairs Council of 10 October 2011, of 14 November 2011 and of 1 December 2011 and the European Council conclusions of 23 October 2011,
- having regard to Council Decision 2011/522/CFSP amending Decision 2011/273/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against Syria, Council Decision 2011/523/EU partially suspending the application of the Cooperation Agreement between the European Economic Community and the Syrian Arab Republic, Council Regulation (EU) No 878/2011 of 2 September 2011 amending Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria, Council Regulation (EU) No 1011/2011 of 13 October 2011 amending Regulation (EU) No 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria, and in particular Council Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1244/2011 of 1 December 2011 implementing Regulation (EU) no 442/2011 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria,
- having regard to the statements of the Arab League on the situation in Syria of 27 August 2011, 16 October 2011 and 12, 16 and 24 November 2011, its Action Plan of 2 November 2011 and the Arab League's sanctions against Syria adopted on 27 November 2011,
- having regard to the resolution of 22 November 2011 of the UN General Assembly Third Committee on Human Rights on the situation in Syria,
- having regard to the resolution of 23 August 2011 of the UN Human Rights Council adopted at its 17th special session, establishing the independent international Commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, and its Report of 23 November 2011,
- having regard to the statement of 30 November 2011 by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation calling the Syrian government to immediately stop using excessive force against citizens and to respect human rights,
- having regard to the resolution of the 2 December 2011 of the UN Human Rights Council adopted at its 18th special session, establishing the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on

the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Statement of 2 December 2011 by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights,

- having regard to the decision of 30 November 2011 by the government of the Republic of Turkey to impose economic sanctions on Syria,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 and to the Rome Statute to which Syria is party,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas since the start in March 2011 of the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters in Syria, according to the United Nations over 4000 people have been killed, many more have been tortured, injured and tens of thousands being detained; whereas many Syrians are facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation as a result of the violence and displacements;
- B. whereas despite international condemnation and targeted sanctions the Syrian government, army and security forces continue to respond to the peaceful protests with targeted killings, torture and mass arrests;
- C. whereas the Syrian authorities continue denying access to international journalists and observers; whereas reports from Syrian refugees, human rights activists and images uploaded from mobile telephones are the main source of information and documentation of the systematic and widespread human rights violations by the Syrian army and security forces against civilians and the situation in Syria in general;
- D. whereas in November 2011 dozens of civilians are reportedly killed every day, therefore being the deadliest month so far with almost 1000 people killed in gun battles, raids and other forms of violence;
- E. whereas in the Report of the independent international Commission of inquiry patterns of summary execution, arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, including sexual violence, as well as violations of children's rights are documented; whereas the Commission is gravely concerned that crimes against humanity have been committed in different locations in Syria;
- F. whereas on 12 November 2011 the Arab League decided to suspend Syria's membership after the Syrian government defied its agreement to halt the violent suppression of protestors and to allow Arab League monitors into the country; whereas on 16 November 2011 the suspension took effect;
- G. whereas on 22 November 2011 Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton met with representatives of the Syrian National Council and highlighted the importance of an inclusive opposition political platform taking in all religious and ethnic communities;

- H. whereas after the expiry of several ultimatums on 27 November 2011 the Arab League approved sanctions against Syria, including cutting of transactions with the Syrian National Bank, halting funding by Arab governments of projects in Syria, a travel ban to Arab countries for senior Syrian officials and a freeze on assets related to the al-Assad government, whereas the exact date of a ban on commercial flights between Syria and Arab countries is to be announced;
- I. whereas on 30 November 2011 the Turkish government followed the Arab League and imposed economic sanctions on Syria, as well as a weapon embargo including the delivery of weapons and military equipment and the suspension of a cooperation agreement with Syria until a new government is in place; whereas on 22 November 2011 the Turkish Prime Minister had called upon President al-Assad to ‘finally step down’;
- J. whereas on 1 December 2011 the European Union enforced its restrictive measures against Syria including additional trade prohibitions for EU based companies and financial institutions regarding the Syrian oil and finance sector, new asset freezes and travel bans for 11 individuals and 12 entities, a weapon embargo, and most notably a ban of export from within the EU of information and communication technologies (ICTs) which the government can use to violate citizen’s human rights in Syria; whereas to date the Council/EEAS has failed to agree on and publish required details of the announced ban on ICT exports;
- K. whereas on 2 December 2011 the UN High Commission for Human Rights called for the referral of allegations of crimes against humanity by the Syrian army and security forces to the International Criminal Court; the “Free Syrian Army” characterised the situation in Syria as a ‘civil war’;
- L. whereas on 2 December 2011 the UN Human Rights Council during a special session adopted a Resolution strongly condemning the widespread, systematic and flagrant breach of fundamental human rights in Syria, asking the government to immediately stop the brutality against its own people;
- M. whereas on Sunday 4 December 2011 Syrian authorities arrested the blogger Razan Gazzawi at the Syrian-Jordanian border as she allegedly was heading to the Jordanian capital Amman to take part in a workshop on press freedom organised by her employer the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression;
- N. whereas it has been widely reported that EU (based) companies have equipped the Syrian government with (custom made) technologies to intercept, monitor and catalogue all internet traffic and mobile communication in Syria, capturing both domestic and international traffic; whereas EU (based) companies have built and operated monitoring centres on the ground in Syria and have provided related technical assistance to the Syrian government;
- O. whereas both the French ambassador to Syria Eric Chevallier and U.S. ambassador to Syria Robert Ford have returned to Damascus, as a gesture of showing full support for the struggle and demands of the Syrian population; MS whereas both Ambassadors were withdrawn in October because of security concerns and violent attacks against French interests;

- P. whereas according to human rights organizations thousands of Syrians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, in particular Turkey; whereas an estimated ten thousand Syrians are living in refugee camps in Turkey;
1. Firmly reiterates its condemnation of the disproportionate and brutal use of force against peaceful protesters and the systematic persecution of pro-democracy activists, human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers, doctors and medical personnel; expresses its deepest concern at the widespread, systematic and gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms perpetrated by the Syrian authorities, including mass arrests, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, sexual violence against civilians, disappearances and torture, including of children, which may amount to crimes against humanity; expresses its sincere condolences to the families of the victims;
 2. Reiterates its call on President Bashar al-Assad and his regime to relinquish power immediately to allow a democratic transition to take place in Syria; commends the courage and determination of the Syrian people and fully supports their quest for dignity and freedom, to decide the future of their country through peaceful and democratic means;
 3. Strongly commends and supports the efforts of the Arab League to bring about an end to the repression in Syria and provide protection to civilians by deploying an observer mission on the ground; welcomes the significant decision of the Arab League to impose economic sanctions against the Syrian regime due to its repeated failure to deliver on its promises concerning the implementation of the Arab Plan of Action and calls on the Syrian authorities to implement this Plan without further delay putting an immediate end to the violence and launching a process of deep democratic reforms demanded by Syrian people;
 4. Strongly supports the EU decision of 1 December 2011 to adopt additional sanctions against the Syrian regime, including the ban on export of ICTs, stresses the urgent need for a clear implementing regulation for the ban to take immediate effect; underlines the need for the EU and Member States to ensure the immediate and effective implementation of all restrictive measures and to stand ready to swiftly strengthen the restrictive measures, calls upon the EU as Syria's main trade partner to extend the asset freezes and travel bans to the 200 families and businesses that are the main funders of the al-Assad government, underlining the targeted character of sanctions which aim at impacting the Syrian leadership and not the population;
 5. Strongly supports the call by the Turkish Prime Minister for President al-Assad to step down immediately; welcomes the condemnation by the Turkish government of the systematic violence by the Syrian government, and welcomes the imposition by Turkey of sanctions on the Syrian regime; commends Turkey's strong support for the Syrian population, including by accepting refugees along the Turkish-Syrian border; supports calls for the establishment of buffer zones along the Turkish-Syrian border to take in Syrian refugees and to allow those persecuted by the regime to find refuge and protection and allowing the Syrian opposition to organise and strategise, as well as the creation of humanitarian corridors by the international community, including the Arab League, linking Homs to Turkey and to the Mediterranean, and Daraa to Jordan to enable an escape route for people seeking to flee the violence targeting citizens;

6. Notes that with regard to the city of Homs, which is currently surrounded by the army of Bashar al Assad's regime, blankets, medicines and milk for babies must be provided;
7. Welcomes the decision of the UN Human Rights Council to establish a mandate for a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic; reiterates its call for an independent, transparent and effective investigation, preferably by the International Criminal Court into the killings, arrests, arbitrary detention, and alleged forced disappearances, sexual violations and instances of torture by the Syrian security forces in order to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are held to account by the international community; calls on the Syrian authorities to immediately grant access to humanitarian agencies and workers and to fact-finding missions and to allow independent and international media to operate in Syria without restrictions;
8. Strongly supports the call by the Syrian National Council to establish a no-fly zone along the Turkish-Syrian border, creating a safe zone;
9. Welcomes and encourages the ongoing efforts by the Syrian opposition both within and outside the country to establish a united platform, to continue to engage with the International Community, in particular the Arab League and to work on a shared vision for the future of Syria and the transition to a democratic system; continues to support the Syrian National Council and stresses the importance of the Syrian opposition and the Free Syrian Army committing to human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law maintaining a clear commitment to a peaceful and inclusive approach;
10. Deeply regrets and, condemns the continuous blocking by Russia and China of a UN Security Council resolution condemning the violence in Syria and referring an investigation into the situation in Syria by the International Criminal Court, even after months of ongoing brutal abuses by President Assad, commends the ongoing efforts by EU member states to press for strong UN action to increase international pressure on Syria; calls on the EU Member States to be ready to act alone in close cooperation and coordination with Turkey and the Arab League adopting tougher sanctions against Bashar El Assad's regime should the UNSC fail to act ;
11. Calls on European Union Member States to consider the possibility to expel or take other appropriate measures concerning EU based Syrian diplomats in case of harassment or threatening against people in the European Union;
12. Calls on the HR/VP to continuously explore possibilities of closer cooperation with Turkey and the Arab League in order to protect and improve the situation of the Syrian population, including humanitarian support and access to information and communication services;
13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China, the US Administration and the US Congress, the Secretary-General of the Arab League, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic.