



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Plenary sitting

20.5.2013

B7-0200/2013

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 of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries
(2013/2611(RSP))

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United in diversity

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B7-0200/2013

**European Parliament resolution on the situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries
(2013/2611(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
 - having regard to the Geneva Conventions on refugees,
 - having regard to international humanitarian law,
 - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas for the past two years Syria has been mired in a violent conflict that has reached the level of a civil war involving an enormous human cost and immense suffering, and in which more than 70 000 people are estimated to have lost their lives;
- B. whereas violence involving government military and security forces and many armed groups with varying dubious allegiances has had an overwhelming effect on the civilian population, which has been terrorised by heavy fighting in residential areas, sectarian violence and atrocities that are tantamount to war crimes;
- C. whereas various countries have been interfering in Syria with a view to serving their own interests in the region, including by providing direct financial aid and illegally supplying arms and military equipment, thus directly promoting the escalation of violence;
- D. whereas, as a result of the escalating violence, civilians have fled their homes, towns and villages, with about three million internally displaced people taking refuge in schools, public buildings and makeshift accommodation; whereas they are extremely vulnerable to being caught in crossfire and have little or no access to services, hospitals or schools;
- E. whereas reports suggest that the distribution of humanitarian assistance has been impeded regardless of who controls a given area, thereby turning such assistance into an instrument of war, and whereas this constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law; whereas humanitarian workers have faced violence which has also resulted in the loss of life;
- F. whereas according to UNHCR data of 8 May 2013, 1 446 857 refugees fleeing Syria have sought protection in neighbouring countries, with half of them having fled in the past four months, putting an enormous strain on the host countries; whereas 457 186 refugees have sought refuge in Lebanon, 448 370 in Jordan, 324 731 in Turkey, 144 016 in Iraq, 62 502 in Egypt, 10 052 in North African countries and 10 158 in Greece; whereas 75 % of the refugees are women, accompanied by approximately 600 000 children needing urgent attention, including schooling and psycho-social assistance;
- G. whereas refugees from Syria amount to approximately 10 % of Lebanon's population, and whereas they are spread across more than 1 200 villages, making it a complex task to

register and provide what is necessary for the people concerned;

- H. whereas the majority of refugees who flee to Jordan are in the Zaatari camp in the border area; whereas conditions in this desert area are extremely difficult and, with summer approaching, pressure is mounting for the provision of adequate water, sanitation and hygiene conditions to prevent related epidemics from affecting the refugees; whereas, with Syrian refugees making up approximately 5 % of Jordan's population, and increased levels of unemployment, the strain on the country is mounting;
- I. whereas there are reports that women and girls are being subjected to violence and rape in the camps in which they are supposed to be protected; whereas there are also reports of young refugee girls being bought for marriage by older and elderly men from the Gulf states who are taking advantage of vulnerable families in dire situations;
- J. whereas a large proportion of the 400 000 Palestinian refugees in Syria have become refugees for a second time, as they had previously been forced to flee the Yarmouk and other camps in the Damascus and Dera'a areas after military groups moved into them, thus violating the neutrality of the refugee camps;
- K. whereas 42 000 Palestinian refugees have fled to Lebanon to join those who have been living in refugee camps there since 1948 or 1967, and whereas the capacities of those camps are being stretched to the limit, as conditions were already overcrowded; whereas only around 6 000 Palestinian refugees from Syria have reached Jordan, given the Jordanian Government's policy of stemming the flow of Palestinians into its territory;
- L. whereas refugees from the Syrian conflict are risking their lives in trying to reach safety across the Turkish-Greek border; whereas a six-year-old girl who had escaped the war was tragically drowned off the Greek island of Leros on 15 May 2013; whereas Syrian refugees crossing the Turkish-Greek border face arrest and unacceptable conditions, and are not afforded the rights and assistance that should be granted to refugees;
- M. whereas USD 1.56 billion in aid was pledged at the Kuwait donors' meeting in January 2013, of which only USD 400 million has been committed so far, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); whereas, according to the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan, USD 519 million in funding is needed to cover the humanitarian needs of Syrian refugees during the period between January and June 2013;
- N. whereas the dire situation in Syria is having a spill-over effect and an adverse impact on the situation in neighbouring countries, thereby threatening the region as whole, with unpredictable implications;
 - 1. Expresses its grief at the enormous loss of human life and the suffering of the civilian population; calls for an immediate end to all attacks against civilians and for international humanitarian law to be upheld by all sides;
 - 2. Calls for an end to all external intervention, including the supply of arms and military equipment; demands that the EU rule out lifting its embargo on arms exports to Syria; supports a negotiated end to the civil war and a political solution to the conflict, and

insists that Syria's future destiny must firmly rest in the hands of the Syrian people, without any external interference;

3. Expresses the hope that the Russia-USA agreement to hold a follow-up to the Geneva conference on Syria will pave the way for a political solution to the conflict;
4. Urges the parties engaged in the conflict to allow sufficient, unobstructed humanitarian aid to reach the internally displaced population, as well as all those in need in Syria, in order to help them survive the critical situation;
5. Emphasises how important it is that neighbouring countries keep international borders open to provide a safe haven for refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria, and that they uphold the principles of non-refoulement and equal treatment of refugees;
6. Urges the international community, and particularly the EU, to support the receiving countries, particularly Lebanon and Jordan, in managing the growing influx of refugees and providing the necessary humanitarian aid, health services and schooling;
7. Draws attention to the particularly vulnerable situation of Palestinian refugees, who have become refugees for a second time;
8. Calls on all EU Member States to respect the rights of refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict and grant them the necessary protection and humanitarian conditions;
9. Urges all those responsible for protecting women and girls threatened by violence in the camps to protect them and take action to stop the exploitation of girls from vulnerable families who are bought for marriage;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, the Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the Arab League.