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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0133/2019**

21.10.2019

## **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 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the Turkish military operation in northeast Syria and its consequences (2019/2886(RSP))

**Anna Fotyga, Adam Bielan, Zdzisław Krasnodębski, Assita Kanko, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Ryszard Czarnecki, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Ruža Tomašić**

on behalf of the ECR Group

**B9-0133/2019**

**European Parliament resolution on the Turkish military operation in northeast Syria and its consequences (2019/2886(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Syria,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 March 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Turkey<sup>1</sup>,
- having regard to the EU strategy on Syria, adopted by the Council on 3 April 2017,
- having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Syria,
- having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on Daesh,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 14 October 2019 on northeast Syria,
- having regard to the statement of 14 October 2019 by the NATO Secretary General,
- having regard to the declaration of 9 October 2019 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on behalf of the EU on recent developments in northeast Syria,
- having regard to the communiqué of 12 October 2019 of the Arab League on Turkey's military operation in northeast Syria,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and the additional protocols thereto,
- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) of 1966,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, and to its Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict of 2000,
- having regard to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief of 1981,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2019)0200.

- having regard to the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of 9 December 1948,
  - having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC),
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 6 October 2019 the United States (US) administration announced that US forces would withdraw from the Syrian areas bordering Turkey to make way for a long-planned operation by the Turkish forces; whereas the cost of US involvement in Syria amounts to over USD 50 billion, far exceeding that of European support; whereas the majority of the 1 000 US troops stationed in Syria are in the northern part of the country;
- B. whereas following the previous ‘Euphrates Shield’ and ‘Olive Branch’ military operations, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced on 9 October 2019 the start of ‘Operation Peace Spring’ by the Turkish military and allied Syrian rebel factions to allegedly ‘prevent the creation of a terror corridor’ across its southern border and to ‘bring peace to the area’; whereas there are reportedly concerns related to Syrian rebel factions containing extremist groups, while the Turkish intervention takes place without a UN mandate;
- C. whereas Turkey had long threatened to launch an operation in territory held by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in order to create a 32 km deep ‘safe zone’ running for 480 km along the Syrian side of its border, and to push back members of the People’s Protection Units (YPG), which Turkey regards as an extension of the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), a terrorist organisation outlawed by Turkey, the EU and the US; whereas the PKK has committed hundreds of attacks and hostile acts against Turkey over the last two years;
- D. whereas, while the SDF were determined to defend their territory at all costs, Turkish-led forces were able to take over sparsely populated, mostly Arab, areas between the towns of Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain; whereas Turkish air and artillery strikes affected a much larger area, including predominantly Kurdish towns and villages to the west and east;
- E. whereas on 13 October US officials decided to begin the withdrawal of all US troops in northern Syria, prompting the SDF to reach an agreement with the Syrian regime for the Syrian army to enter the area, be deployed along the length of the Syrian-Turkish border and repel the Turkish assault;
- F. whereas reports noted that hours after an agreement being reached between the US and Turkey, it was breached by continued Turkish artillery shelling of Ras al-Ain, which has seen heavy violence since the withdrawal of US troops from the area;
- G. whereas on 18 October it was reported that UN chemical weapons inspectors had announced that they would gather information about accusations of white phosphorous use by Turkish forces against civilians, including children; whereas Turkey has denied the allegations;

- H. whereas, in an attempt to avert a Turkish offensive in Syria, the US and Turkish military had agreed in August 2019 to set up a security mechanism on the Syrian side of the border, an area that would be held free of YPG fighters;
- I. whereas Turkey hopes to resettle up to 2 million of the 3.6 million Syrian refugees it has been hosting over the past eight years in the ‘safe zone’ created by the current military operation; whereas Turkey has provided adequate care and safe shelter to the Syrian refugees it is hosting;
- J. whereas over 160 000 people have fled the areas targeted by the recent Turkish military operations, and whereas more than 500 000 may be forced to flee; whereas most of the displaced civilians come from the towns of Ras al Ain and Tal Abyad, which were initial targets of the Turkish intervention;
- K. whereas there are reports that the bloody assault in northeast Syria has seen the execution of Kurdish prisoners and the killing of scores of unarmed civilians, including Hevrin Khalaf, the secretary-general of the Future Syria Party, as well as journalists and members of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); whereas deaths and casualties have also occurred on the Turkish side;
- L. whereas Turkey is one of the leading contributors of troops, equipment and intelligence to NATO; whereas its NATO membership requires compliance with all international laws and treaties and the upholding of its obligations under Article 2 of the NATO Treaty;
- M. whereas several EU Member States have decided to suspend arms exports to Turkey in response to Turkey’s intervention in northeast Syria;
- N. whereas the US Congress was expected to pass a broad package of sanctions on Turkey, including cutting military support, on top of those already imposed by the US administration, including those targeting Turkish officials and its backing down on military cooperation after Turkey’s acquisition of Russian-made S-400 anti-aircraft systems;
- O. whereas Turkey has a legitimate right to fight terrorism and ensure the safety of its borders while respecting the territorial integrity of its neighbouring countries; whereas it does at the same time have the responsibility to ensure that its actions are in accordance with international law and its international commitments;
- P. whereas the international coalition led by the US and involving regional partners, including the Kurds, led to the fall of the so-called Islamic State and the imprisonment of thousands of Daesh fighters, including women and children, in northeast Syria; whereas Turkey remains a committed member of the Global Coalition against Daesh;
- Q. whereas, beyond the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, the Global Coalition against Daesh is committed to tackling Daesh financing and economic infrastructure, preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders, supporting the stabilisation and restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from Daesh, and countering the group’s propaganda;

- R. whereas around 68 000 people linked to Daesh are reportedly detained in the al-Hol camp in northeast Syria, more than 94 % of whom are women and children with 11 000 being foreign nationals; whereas more than 12 000 men suspected of being Daesh members are being held in seven prisons run by the SDF, at least 4 000 of whom are foreign nationals;
- S. whereas a number of Daesh fighters have been able to escape from these prisons, as well as hundreds of women and children from the camps in which they were held, as Kurdish guards were forced to leave their posts and flee the Turkish offensives; whereas the escape of Daesh fighters, women and children poses a grave security concern to the region, Europe and the world; whereas there is a risk that the recent escapes may embolden Daesh and lead to its resurgence in the region;
- T. whereas Russia's involvement in Syria is aimed at keeping the Assad regime in power while exploiting the power vacuum that has been created since the start of the civil war, leading to an increasingly aggressive Russian role in the region;
- U. whereas there can be no military solution to the conflict in Syria, and no meaningful or successful peace agreement that sees President Bashar al-Assad remain in power;
- V. whereas the use of torture and mass arrests and the widespread destruction of populated areas in Syria have escalated dramatically since the beginning of the conflict, with large numbers of Syrians being displaced and forced to move further away from much-needed humanitarian assistance;
- W. whereas the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, signed and ratified by all Member States, affirms that the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole – in particular genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes – must not go unpunished;
- X. whereas international humanitarian and human rights law prohibits the targeting of individuals or groups based on religious or ethnic identity, as well as attacks against civilians not taking part in hostilities and individuals bringing humanitarian aid to those trapped by the conflict; whereas such actions may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity;
1. Welcomes the temporary cessation of operations by Turkish forces and urges all parties to the recent hostilities in Syria to uphold their commitments and refrain from aggressive acts; calls on Turkey to act with restraint and to ensure that its 'Operation Peace Spring' in northeast Syria is measured and proportionate and respects the territorial integrity of Syria;
  2. Urges all parties to the recent hostilities to enter international negotiations with the aim of seeking a permanent solution to the situation along the northeast Syrian border; requests that the autonomy of the Kurdish region within Syria remains guaranteed;
  3. Deplores the execution and murder of innocent civilians by all sides; stands in solidarity with all civilians and journalists caught up in the conflict and stresses that their safety needs to be guaranteed by all parties;

4. Stresses its appreciation for the Kurdish fighters who fought in the war against Daesh and suffered many deaths and casualties on their side, and believes that the autonomy of the Kurdish region within Syria needs to be guaranteed;
5. Stresses the need for an urgent end to the Syrian conflict; deeply regrets the failure of repeated regional and international attempts to end the war in Syria and calls for renewed and intensive global cooperation to achieve a peaceful and sustainable solution to the conflict; remains committed to the unity, sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Syria;
6. Stresses the urgent need for information about the recent reports of white phosphorous use in northeast Syria; unreservedly supports efforts by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to collect information on the matter; strongly condemns, if proven to be true, the use of chemical weapons;
7. Condemns unreservedly the targeting of US troops and calls on all parties to ensure their safety; regrets the US decision to withdraw its troops from northeast Syria, while noting that Member States have not deployed any forces to the area;
8. Stresses that the transatlantic community should remain united in the fight against Daesh and should not jeopardise the gains it has made against this barbaric Islamist terror group;
9. Believes there is a risk that Turkey's actions may further destabilise the region, escalate tensions and cause increased human suffering, including by endangering the lives of innocent civilians and threatening and undermining the international campaign against Daesh;
10. Expresses grave concern about the possibility of Daesh fighters being freed or escaping from the prisons in which they are currently being held, including the escape of Daesh women and children from camps, as this poses a severe security threat to the region, Europe and the wider world;
11. Notes the decision by several Member States to suspend arms exports to Turkey;
12. Understands the need for the millions of refugees currently receiving sanctuary in Turkey to eventually be repatriated, but reminds Turkey that the settlement of mainly Arab refugees in Kurdish areas of the 'safe zone' may cause serious changes to the ethnic makeup of the area and create long-term tensions and consequences;
13. Deplores the threats voiced by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to 'open the gates and send 3.6 million refugees' to Europe;
14. Regrets that, despite announcements, the voluntary return of displaced Syrians to their homes of origin or other places of their choice in Syria have not taken place in line with international law and in coordination with relevant UN agencies;
15. Stresses that no European funds can be directed to strengthening the institutions controlled by the Assad regime or to re-financing the costs of other actors that support this criminal regime;

16. Condemns Russia's vetoing of numerous UN Security Council resolutions aimed at ending the conflict in Syria, and its support of the Assad regime; condemns in this regard Russia's direct involvement in Syria, including via airstrikes, as well as the supply of weapons, including rockets, to the Assad regime;
17. Notes that Russia, without opposition from Turkey, implements a policy of seeking to pull Turkey out of the NATO alliance and weakening Turkey's relations with the EU; stresses the need for Turkey to remain part of the NATO alliance;
18. Expresses deep concern that Turkey, as a NATO ally, has bought Russian anti-missile systems in violation of NATO rules; supports in this regard the US administration's decision to remove Ankara from the F-35 programme;
19. Expresses concern that Russia and Iran will further exploit the crisis by taking advantage of the impact of this instability in the regional energy market, thus permitting Russia and Iran to rapidly increase their market shares and manipulate the means of production in order to further influence regional and global energy markets;
20. Calls for increased sanctions on trade and oil originating from Syria which are sold through Russian- or Iranian-controlled forces and assisted by the Assad regime;
21. Expresses grave concern about Iran's attempts to establish a land corridor running from Tehran through Baghdad and Damascus to Beirut on the Mediterranean, thereby seeking to create a land bridge which would connect Iran to its Hezbollah allies in Lebanon and pose a real and severe security threat to Israel;
22. Cautions that the instability in Syria will lead to an increase in international smuggling and the theft of cultural heritage that could be used to finance terror activity in the region;
23. Warns that Syria, the Kurds, Russia and Iran all conduct extensive propaganda to convince Western societies of their points of view and to support their interests;
24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the European External Action Service, 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 Secretary-General of NATO, the Government and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the Government and the Council of Representatives of Iraq, the Regional Government of Kurdistan and the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.