



---

*Plenary sitting*

---

**B9-0177/2021**

8.3.2021

## **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 Syrian conflict – 10 years after the uprising  
(2021/2576(RSP))

**Marek Belka, Tonino Picula, Isabel Santos**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the Syrian conflict – 10 years after the uprising (2021/2576(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, in particular the most recent ones of 24 October 2019 on the Turkish military operation in northeast Syria and its consequences<sup>1</sup>, of 15 March 2018 on the situation in Syria<sup>2</sup> and of 18 May 2017 on the EU strategy on Syria<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2019 on children's rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>4</sup>,
- having regard to the UN Security Council resolutions on the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic, in particular 2533 (2020), 2504 (2020), 2449 (2018), 2401 (2018), 2336 (2016), 2332 (2016), 2328 (2016), 2268 (2016), 2258 (2015), 2254 (2015), 2199 (2015), 2191 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2139 (2014) and 2118 (2013),
- having regard to the joint statement of 13 July 2020 by Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič on the UN vote on cross-border assistance,
- having regard to the statement by the VP/HR of 1 March 2020 on Syria and the declarations by the VP/HR of 10 November 2020 on the refugee conference in Damascus and of 9 October 2019 on recent developments in north-east Syria,
- having regard to the statements by the European External Action Service (EEAS) spokesperson, in particular the recent ones of 29 March 2020 on the calls for nationwide ceasefire, of 23 January 2020 on military attacks on civilians in Idlib and of 29 December 2019 on the latest developments in Syria,
- having regard to the declaration of 30 June 2020 by the co-chairs of the fourth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region,
- having regard to the joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 14 March 2017 entitled 'Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria' (JOIN(2017)0011) and to the Council conclusions of 14 October 2019, 16 April 2018 and 3 April 2017,
- having regard to the statement of 2 March 2021 by Silvio Gonzato, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the EU to the United Nations, at the 75th session of the UN General

---

<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2019)0049.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 162, 10.5.2019, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 307, 30.8.2018, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2019)0066.

Assembly high-level panel discussion on the situation of human rights in Syria,

- having regard to the Council decisions on EU restrictive measures against those responsible for violent repression in Syria, including the most recent one of 28 May 2020,
  - having regard to the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, established by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and to the UNHRC resolutions on the Syrian Arab Republic,
  - having regard to the statement by Unicef of 28 February 2021 on the safe reintegration and repatriation of all children in Al-Hol camp and across the north-east of Syria and to Unicef Whole of Syria Humanitarian Situation Report 2020 of 2 February 2021,
  - having regard to the Charter of the United Nations and to all the UN conventions to which Syria is a State Party,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN human rights treaties and instruments, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
  - having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 71/248 of 21 December 2016 establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Syria's 10-year civil conflict remains unresolved, despite several international efforts to achieve a ceasefire and lay the basis for a negotiated solution; whereas Syria remains one of the world's largest humanitarian and refugee crises;
- B. whereas the official position of the EU is to remain committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state; whereas these objectives can only be guaranteed through a genuine political transition in line with UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2254 (2015) and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, which was negotiated by the Syrian parties within the UN-led Geneva process;
- C. whereas the EU remains committed to the success of the Geneva negotiations process conducted under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria; whereas the EU continues to support this process, including through the organisation of the fifth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, due to take place on 29 and 30 March 2021;
- D. whereas the situation in Syria and the lack of a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition continues to impede the full implementation of the EU strategy on Syria and, in particular, the substantial assistance that the EU can provide for the reconstruction of the country;
- E. whereas the Syrian Constitutional Committee (SCC) was established in October 2019 with the mandate to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict, under the auspices of

the UN Special Envoy for Syria and in line with UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015); whereas the composition of the SCC remains hampered by the underrepresentation of Kurdish representatives and the influence of external parties to the conflict over the selection of its opposition and civil society representatives; whereas the fifth round of the SCC, which took place from 25 to 29 January 2021, was brought to a close again without an agreement on the basic principles for drafting a new constitution for Syria; whereas, in spite of its structural deficiencies and Assad's continuing resistance to constructive cooperation within the SCC, the SCC remains a crucial tool for achieving a peaceful political resolution to the conflict;

- F. whereas the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published in January 2021 highlights as an overarching recommendation an immediate and permanent ceasefire, endorsed by the UN Security Council and all States supporting the government and armed groups in Syria; whereas such a ceasefire must be genuine, and safeguards should be put into place to ensure that it is not simply used as a means to prepare for fresh offensives but instead provides the space for Syrian-led negotiations and for the restoration of the Syrian population's fundamental human rights, which they have been denied for so long;
- G. whereas over the past 10 years, parties to the conflict, including government forces, supported by Russia and Iran, anti-government armed groups and UN-listed terrorist organisations Hay'at Tahrir Al-Sham and ISIL, have perpetrated the most heinous violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law, including targeted, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, use of chemical weapons, extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, mass and arbitrary arrests, rape and other forms of sexual violence, collective punishment, attacks against medical personnel and the denial of food, water and medical aid; whereas such violations and abuses include acts that are likely to constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and other international crimes; whereas all those responsible for these crimes must be held accountable;
- H. whereas Turkey has repeatedly and systematically violated the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria, in contravention of international law, including by launching in October 2019 a military invasion of the territories of Syria controlled by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF); whereas this resulted in a high number of civilian and military casualties and other grave human rights violations; whereas Turkey was aided in this invasion by the Ahrar al-Sharqiya armed group; whereas, in response to these actions by Turkey, a number of EU Member States have formally suspended arms sales to Turkey, in compliance with the provisions of Council Common Position 2008/944/CFSP of 8 December 2008 defining common rules governing control of exports of military technology and equipment<sup>5</sup>;
- I. whereas since the beginning of the conflict an estimated 500 000 people have been killed, around 7 million internally displaced people have been uprooted from their homes and more than 5.6 million have been forced to flee their country seeking safety in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and beyond;

---

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 335, 13.12.2008, p. 99.

- J. whereas the recent report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic on arbitrary imprisonment and detention is of particular concern; whereas, according to the report, over the past decade, warring parties in Syria have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in the context of detention and no warring party has respected the rights of detained persons in line with international legal obligations; whereas the use of arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, involuntary or enforced disappearance and summary executions have been hallmarks of this conflict; whereas rape and invasive and humiliating searches of detainees have been reported; whereas families of missing persons remain without information on the fate and whereabouts of tens of thousands of civilians, including women and children, being held in Syria's prisons or detention centres;
- K. whereas the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic has been deeply gendered; whereas women and girls have been disproportionately affected and victimised on multiple grounds, irrespective of the perpetrator or geographical area;
- L. whereas the scale, severity and complexity of humanitarian needs worsened in 2020 due to the economic downturn, the rising cost of commodities and the devaluation of local currency, all compounded by the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and ongoing hostilities; whereas 60 % of the population, namely 12.4 million people, do not have regular access to enough nutritious food and more than 500 000 children under the age of five are suffering from the effects of stunting;
- M. whereas in February 2021 Unicef reported that in the north-west of the country ongoing hostilities in populated areas have led to higher civilian casualties; whereas of the 4 million people living in the north-west, 2.8 million need urgent humanitarian assistance; whereas since December 2019, more than 940 000 people have been displaced, including 19 000 women and 566 000 children; whereas in the north-east approximately 64 000 people remain in Al-Hol camp, 94 % of whom are women and children; whereas these figures include 10 000 third country nationals, including citizens of EU countries; whereas the situation in Al-Hol camp remains dire, with more than 30 killings since January 2021; whereas the inability of the international community to address this untenable situation, including the failure of certain Member States to repatriate and, where appropriate, sentence their citizens, is likely to have long-term security implications for the European Union;
- N. whereas in January 2021 tens of thousands of people in north-west Syria, primarily internally displaced persons, were affected by severe rain and flooding; whereas UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that at least 196 sites housing internally displaced persons in Idlib and Aleppo sustained damage, with many roads leading to the camps cut off by heavy rain; whereas at least 67 600 people have reportedly been affected; whereas the floods in the camps destroyed more than 3 760 tents and damaged over 7 720;
- O. whereas the UN Security Council adopted on 11 July 2020 the much-needed UNSC Resolution 2533 (2020) on cross-border aid, which is crucial for helping people suffering from the conflict in Syria; whereas the resolution renewed only the Bab al-Hawa border crossing for a one-year period until 10 July 2021 and not the Bab al-

Salam, Al Yarubiyah and Al-Ramtha border crossings previously available to the UN; whereas the Syrian regime, with the assistance of Russia, continues to impose administrative and security restrictions on humanitarian access, while the continued harassment and enforced disappearance of current and former humanitarian workers, activists and other civilians is deeply concerning;

- P. whereas the politicisation of humanitarian aid by depriving civilians of essential food and medicine is prohibited by international humanitarian law; whereas obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid and medical care is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and of several UNSC resolutions;
  - Q. whereas the EU and its Member States are the leading donors of international aid to those affected by war in Syria; whereas since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, more than EUR 24 billion have been mobilised to support the most vulnerable Syrians inside the country and across the region; whereas in 2020 the Commission alone mobilised EUR 197 million in humanitarian aid, enabling partners to reach millions of people with vital assistance inside Syria, including close to EUR 76 million to respond to the needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic;
  - R. whereas, despite the March 2020 ceasefire between Russia and Turkey, a number of international actors still have military or proxy forces within Syria and the risk of escalation remains high; whereas the situation in the north-west remains fragile, with ongoing artillery bombardments and reported civilian casualties;
  - S. whereas the war has shattered Syria's physical and social infrastructure, including housing, schools, hospitals and water systems; whereas ongoing hostilities, explosive hazards, food insecurity and gender-based violence continue to exist in the country; whereas the current conditions inside Syria, therefore, do not lend themselves to the promotion of large-scale voluntary return in conditions of safety and dignity in line with international law;
1. Considers it deeply regrettable that a durable political agreement has not been achieved after 10 years of civil war; reaffirms that a sustainable solution to the Syrian conflict cannot be achieved militarily; deplores the fact that hostilities, violence and instability in Syria continue to cause enormous suffering, with long-term consequences for the Syrian people;
  2. Remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state and urges full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué and UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015) of 18 December 2015, which laid the foundations for a future peaceful resolution of the conflict; strongly defends the Geneva process as an internationally agreed and inclusive forum to discuss the main political aspects of the Syrian crisis and achieve sustainable peace, based on a new constitution and the holding of democratic elections under UN supervision; expresses its full support for the crucial mediating role of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen; reiterates the importance of including women and young people in the conflict resolution process in line with UNSC Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015);
  3. Strongly supports the call of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic for a permanent, genuine ceasefire endorsed by the

Security Council and enforced by all States supporting the government and armed groups in Syria, and emphasises in this regard the need for a UN-led ceasefire monitoring, verification and reporting mechanism;

4. Condemns the persistent, widespread, systematic and serious violations and abuses of human rights and all violations of international humanitarian law by parties to the conflict; reiterates its call for the EU and its Member States to explore, in close cooperation with like-minded countries, the possibility of creating a Syrian war crimes tribunal, pending a successful referral to the International Criminal Court; urges the EU and its Member States to continue supporting the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria and the Commission of Inquiry;
5. Urges the EU and its Member States to support the Commission of Inquiry's recommendation of March 2021 to facilitate the creation of an independent mechanism with an international mandate and a victim-led approach to locate the missing or their remains, including those found in mass graves;
6. Urges Member States, in the absence of avenues for international justice, to prosecute individuals allegedly responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity under national jurisdiction where possible; welcomes, in this regard, the successful efforts in Germany and Sweden to seek justice through the principle of universal jurisdiction; calls, furthermore, for support for civil society organisations and NGOs which are collecting and helping to preserve evidence of human rights abuses and violations of humanitarian law; calls for measures to ensure a victim-led approach and the meaningful participation of victims in the accountability and transitional justice processes, as well as in the political process;
7. Is deeply alarmed by the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria, which has been aggravated by COVID-19 and ongoing hostilities; stresses that more than 80 % of the population live in poverty, that more than 11.1 million people remain in need of humanitarian assistance, including almost 8 million suffering from food insecurity, and that 70 % of Syrians have taken on new debt and have been forced to sell assets and livestock; calls for UN bodies to focus continuous and full attention on the dire humanitarian situation in Syria; calls for the EU and its Member States to include measures to guarantee livelihoods and cash modalities within donor strategic priorities to enable self-reliance and to ensure that humanitarian funding in Syria addresses resilience and recovery needs;
8. Reiterates the need for safe, full, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access throughout the whole territory of Syria, including to places of confinement or detention, in line with humanitarian principles; welcomes UNSC Resolution 2533 (2020), which renewed the authorisation for cross-border and cross-conflict-line humanitarian access through Bab al-Hawa to Syria for a further 12 months (until 10 July 2021); condemns the repeated vetoes by Russia and China, which have led to the authorisation of only one crossing point out of the four previously available to the UN; regrets the fact that Russia and China abstained from the vote instead of voting in favour of the resolution; calls on the UN Security Council to extend authorisation for the Bab al-Hawa border crossing beyond 10 July 2021, and to reauthorise all border crossings currently closed for humanitarian access; encourages the UN and its implementing partners to continue



to take steps to scale up humanitarian deliveries to hard-to-reach and besieged areas, including by using border crossings under UNSC Resolution 2165 (2014) as effectively as possible; urges the Commission and the Member States to identify new pathways for facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid;

9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to engage in high-level humanitarian diplomacy with relevant authorities across the country and with concerned neighbouring countries to minimise bureaucratic barriers to effective and efficient aid delivery, in alignment with the EU Guidelines on promoting compliance with international humanitarian law;
10. Welcomes the fact that the fifth Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region will stress, among other matters, the importance of progress on other parts of UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015), such as detainees and missing persons, and will highlight the demand for safe and unhindered humanitarian access and the crucial need to renew and broaden the cross-border resolution in the UNSC in July, which preserves a vital lifeline into northern Syria;
11. Welcomes the emphasis on supporting the resilience of the Syrian population in the EU strategy for Syria; stresses that Syrian civil society will be vitally important to rebuild social cohesion and social capital, promote reconciliation and provide basic services in Syria; calls for the EU and the Member States to step up their support for capacity-building for the Syrian people and civil society, including with and through actors that promote human rights, equality, including gender equality and minority rights, democracy and empowerment, as well as those of Syrian refugees living in exile in the region or in Europe; calls on the VP/HR, as part of the long-term planning for the response in Syria, to develop a robust human rights due diligence policy for future rebuilding interventions in close cooperation with Syrian civil society, including a monitoring framework with dedicated indicators for human rights standards;
12. Calls on all parties to put an end to all grave violations against children, including killing, maiming and recruitment; stresses the importance of protecting children inside Syria and in the refugee camps in neighbouring countries; recalls the need to provide for an inclusive return to learning for Syrian children and adolescents throughout Syria and neighbouring countries;
13. Is committed to the adoption of effective EU corporate due diligence legislation imposing human rights due diligence obligations on EU companies and companies operating in the single market, ensuring that companies that contribute or have links to violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in Syria are held accountable, and that products and services produced by these companies cannot be purchased in the single market;
14. Calls on the EU and its Member States to offer their full support to the most vulnerable in Syria and its neighbouring countries, in particular women, children, persons with disabilities, the elderly, minorities and LGBTIQ people; stresses that the EU should ensure that Syrian children and young people are guaranteed good-quality education and professional training, to allow for their smooth reintegration into society; emphasises the need to identify a humane solution for all those detained in the Al-Hol and Al-Roj



camps, and similar camps across Syria, including women and children; urges all Member States to assume full responsibility for the repatriation and, where appropriate, domestic sentencing of their citizens;

15. Strongly condemns the repeated and sustained violations of international law perpetrated by the Syrian Government, Russia and other parties to the conflict; calls on all parties to the conflict to respect in full their obligations under international humanitarian law and to permanently cease indiscriminate airstrikes against and shelling of civilians and civilian objects, and critical infrastructures such as health facilities and schools, and to protect those most vulnerable, including health and humanitarian workers;
16. Continues to voice its strong concern about reports of social and demographic engineering in areas throughout Syria and mass waves of displacement, *inter alia* in parts of north-west and north-east Syria; insists that the return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their places of origin can only be encouraged if it can take place in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner, in line with the parameters defined by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and in accordance with international law; reiterates that the underlying causes of the refugee and displacement crisis must be addressed through the implementation of UNSC Resolution 2254 (2015);
17. Stresses that Syria is not safe for refugee returns and that the EU and its Member States must not support such returns; reiterates its call on the Member States to honour their own commitments and ensure responsibility-sharing, allowing refugees fleeing Syrian war zones to find protection beyond the immediate neighbouring region, including through resettlement and humanitarian admission schemes;
18. Urges all Member States with nationals in north-east Syria to urgently repatriate their citizens, giving priority to children, persons requiring urgent medical assistance and other particularly vulnerable detainees, and to ensure that parents or other adult guardians are repatriated along with their children, unless there is compelling evidence that separation is in the best interests of the child, in line with international legal obligations; urges the Member States to provide detainees, upon return, with adequate rehabilitation and reintegration services and to investigate and prosecute those suspected of serious crimes in line with international fair trial standards;
19. Calls on Turkey to definitively end all of its military operations in Syria and to withdraw all of its forces from Syrian territory; urges the Turkish authorities to refrain from transferring Syrian nationals from occupied areas in north-eastern Syria and detaining and prosecuting them in Turkey, and to immediately allow all detainees in their custody to contact their families, be they in Turkey or abroad; urges that all Syrian detainees who have been transferred to Turkey be immediately repatriated to the occupied territories in Syria; calls on the United States, Israel and other external actors to end military strikes against Syria and respect international human rights and humanitarian law;
20. Stresses the importance of supporting the work of the UN-facilitated SCC to ensure a lasting Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition; calls for the EU and its Member States to put pressure on all sides to show commitment to the SCC; regrets that

in the 15 months since its inception and after five meetings, the drafting body of the SCC has not yet agreed on basic procedural matters; supports the call of UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen on the co-chairs of the two main groups in the SCC to establish 'more effective and operational working methods' and more 'co-operative diplomacy' so that the meetings can be better organised; highlights the need for the SCC to adequately reflect Syria's diversity, including by strengthening the Committee's Kurdish representation; urges all delegates to the SCC to proceed urgently with the initiation of compromise-based drafting efforts after agreement on the body's modes of operation has been reached;

21. Calls on Russia and Iran, as guarantors, alongside Turkey, of the de-escalation agreements (Astana Process), to use their influence on the Syrian regime to persuade it to accept and actively pursue a reasonable compromise that will put an end to the civil war and pave the way for an inclusive and genuine transition; notes the decision by Russia, Iran and Turkey to hold the 16th meeting of the Astana format in Nur-Sultan in mid-2021; stresses that these steps should in no way contradict or undermine the UN-sponsored talks (Geneva process);
22. Urges the members of the Global Coalition against Daesh to prioritise efforts to ascertain the fate of those kidnapped by Daesh, including by supporting the creation of a centralised civilian body or focal point with a team across the area of control of each authority in order to register cases of those missing at the hands of Daesh and to coordinate the collection of information on the missing with other authorities in Syria;
23. Urges all Member States to ensure full compliance with Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP on restrictive measures against Syria<sup>6</sup>, in particular the freezing of assets of individuals listed therein and restrictions on the admission of persons benefiting from or supporting the regime in Syria; calls for the EU and its Member States to renew and expand the list of those subject to targeted sanctions and to adopt new sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanction Regime, including against those civilian and military commanders credibly implicated in war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations committed in northwest Syria, including those falling within command responsibility; reiterates the importance of ensuring that EU restrictive measures against Syria consistently include humanitarian exemptions or clearly exclude humanitarian activities from their scope in order to ensure their compatibility with States' obligations under international humanitarian law;
24. 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, ensuring translation of this text into Arabic.

---

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 147, 1.6.2013, p. 14.