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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0178/2021**

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))

**Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Anna Fotyga, Jadwiga Wiśniewska, Assita Kanko, Adam Bielan, Veronika Vrecionová, Elżbieta Kruk, Ryszard Czarnecki, Elżbieta Rafalska, Bogdan Rzońca, Eugen Jurzyca, Hermann Tertsch**

on behalf of the ECR 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 the situation in Syria,
  - 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 statements by the VP/HR of 13 July 2020 and 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 Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
  - having regard to the Geneva Conventions 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 Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction,
  - 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 in January 2011 nationwide pro-democracy rallies took place in Syria in protest against the four-decade-old vicious rule of the Assad clan; whereas Assad's government responded with deadly force to peaceful anti-government protests, paving the way for the cruellest and deadliest civil war of the 21st century with numerous global implications and consequences;
- B. whereas the Syrian conflict, which is now in its 10th year, has led to more than 500 000 deaths and displaced an estimated 13 million people, approximately half of Syria's pre-war population; whereas over 6.2 million Syrians are internally displaced and 5.6 million are refugees, predominantly in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey;

- C. whereas the chaos that followed the outbreak of the conflict in Syria led to the establishment of the most violent group in modern jihad – the so-called Islamic State which proclaimed a ‘caliphate’ straddling Syria and Iraq that reshaped global terrorism, terrorised the region and targeted people on all continents, including on European soil;
- D. whereas the tactics deployed by both the brutal regime and the barbaric jihadists were directed at the annihilation of moderate and pro-democratic forces; whereas minorities, including Yezidis and Christians, were among the most vulnerable groups to suffer from the violence;
- E. whereas the arbitrary detention of political opponents, journalists, human rights activists and demonstrators by government forces were both a root cause and a trigger of the conflict; whereas radical groups started depriving people of their liberty, committing heinous crimes against them, often with sectarian undertones;
- F. whereas tens of thousands of individuals have been killed while in government custody, and tens of thousands more have been tortured; whereas tens of thousands of civilians are still missing after being arbitrarily detained;
- G. 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; whereas there can also be no reconciliation for the Syrian people for as long as he is in power;
- H. whereas, despite many warnings and ‘red lines’, including the 2012 call by President Obama, Assad’s regime decided to use chemical weapons against civilians, with more than 300 attacks having been documented by experts;
- I. whereas, in September 2015 Russia, encouraged by Iran, intervened directly in support of the Damascus regime, thus turning the tide in Assad’s favour; whereas it remains committed to keeping Assad in power, despite the lack of international legitimacy for his rule and the war crimes against his own population, including the use of chemical weapons and crude barrel bombs on civilian areas, as well as siege and starvation tactics, tortures, mass executions and ethnic cleansing;
- J. whereas Assad’s decision to use force to impose a return to the pre-2011 situation resulted in all rebel areas being exposed, bombed into submission and turned into fields of rubble, most notably in the bloody sieges of Aleppo and eastern Ghouta;
- K. 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 for much-needed humanitarian assistance;
- L. 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;
- M. 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;

- N. whereas in 2019, the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, in conjunction with local partners, liberated ISIS's last remaining stronghold in Baghouz, Syria, resulting in nearly eight million people being freed from ISIS's control in Iraq and Syria;
- O. whereas the Global Coalition is continuing its efforts in Iraq, Syria and globally to thwart ISIS's ambitions and the activities of its branches and networks;
- P. 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;
- Q. whereas the role of Russia and Iran is continuing to grow, as demonstrated by Iran's recent air defence pact in Damascus and by Russia's continued air-strike campaign and the fact that it is now in full control of the M4 and M5 motorways, the most critical transit routes in the country;
- 1. Deplores the execution and murder of innocent civilians; 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;
- 2. Notes that during 10 years of civil war none of the main drivers of the conflict have been resolved, with no democratisation reforms, continued human rights abuses and high regional tensions, as well as spiralling economic crises and a desperate humanitarian situation, which are sowing the seeds of future instability;
- 3. Underlines that 13 million Syrians are in dire need of humanitarian assistance, as they are living in crowded camps or cramped and dangerous urban dwellings, both inside the country and in the wider region; emphasises that EU efforts should focus on children who have suffered serious harm, who know nothing but war and who have been denied access to education, raising substantial doubts about the future for the country;
- 4. Rejects any role for President Bashar al-Assad in post conflict Syria with reference to UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2254 (2015); in this regard, welcomes and supports criminal inquiries that target al-Assad and his associates over the use of chemical weapons and hold them accountable for numerous other war crimes; recommends that the Member States expand the list of those subject to targeted sanctions, including civilian and military officials within the Assad regime who are credibly implicated in war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations;
- 5. Regrets Damascus's staunch refusal to accept any proposal and engage in any negotiated process, which led to the failure of the United Nations-led talks between the Syrian regime and the opposition in Geneva and to the collapse of the process, raising the risk that Syria will remain a failed state in the years to come; calls on the

international community to step up the pressure on the Assad regime and his sponsors to modify their behaviour and accept the political transition in the country and meaningful changes in Damascus as a precondition for national reconciliation and broader Western engagement, including targeted reconstruction assistance and sanctions easing or relief; is of the opinion that a change of leadership in Damascus is necessary to begin the process of reconciliation and of drafting a new constitution, taking into account the aspirations of the Syrian people and inclusiveness;

6. Reiterates its support for UNSCR 2254; calls for an inclusive, Syrian-led political process to include intra-Syrian negotiations, the drafting of a new constitution and the organisation of free and fair elections supervised by the UN;
7. Regrets that some players further divided a fragmented Syrian opposition via the Geneva and Astana Processes;
8. Calls for deeper diplomatic cooperation with key allies, such as the USA, NATO members and regional partners, in order to adopt a more active policy on Syria;
9. Suggests supporting the facilitation and creation of an independent mechanism with a clear mandate to coordinate and consolidate claims regarding missing persons, especially those subjected to enforced disappearance;
10. Calls for families to be provided with additional information on the identities of Syrian prisoners held in government facilities, for family visits, for independent access by the International Committee of the Red Cross and, especially, for the release of foreign nationals held in Syria and the honouring of requests made by their national authorities;
11. Encourages the pursuit of accountability via support given to national and international investigations into serious violations of international law and suspected war crimes committed in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime;
12. Condemns efforts by Russia and China to block the road to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for any prosecution of Syrian atrocities, through use of their veto in the United Nations Security Council which could grant the ICC jurisdiction;
13. 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;
14. Regrets that, despite announcements, the voluntary return of displaced Syrians to their homes of origin or other places of their choice in Syria has not taken place in line with international law and in coordination with relevant UN agencies; notes that while the Syrian Government has publicly encouraged refugees to return home, many have been discouraged from doing so by reports that offers of amnesty or the provisions of reconciliation agreements have not been honoured, and that returnees have been subjected to arbitrary detention, extortion and indefinite conscription into military service;
15. Calls for UNHCR personnel and NGOs to be given unimpeded access inside Syria to

visit and assess conditions for returnees;

16. Condemns Russia's vetoing of numerous UN Security Council resolutions aimed at ending the conflict in Syria, its support for the Assad regime and its blocking of attempts at the United Nations to hold the Assad regime accountable for its use of chemical weapons; 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. 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 proxy in Lebanon and posing a real and severe security threat to Israel; calls for the removal of all Iranian and Iranian-backed forces to an agreed distance from the Israeli border;
18. Strongly condemns the increased presence and engagement of Iranian militias in the Deir ez-Zor province in eastern Syria, including through the intensification of their religious, military and cultural activities in the area and the recruitment of Syrians to join their ranks;
19. 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;
20. Strongly condemns Daesh's criminal activities in the refugee camps, including its continued indoctrination, radicalisation, human smuggling, document fraud, forgery and terrorist financing activities; notes with grave concern reports stating the smuggling of its fighters, facilitators and families out of the conflict zone is an important strategy for Daesh's future ambitions;
21. 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;
22. Condemns the irreparable damage inflicted on cultural sites by both the Assad regime's scorched-earth tactics and the barbaric actions of jihadists; cautions that the instability will lead to an increase in international smuggling and the theft of cultural heritage that could be used to finance enhanced activity by terror organisations in the region;
23. 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 Government and the Council of Representatives of Iraq, the Regional Government of Kurdistan and the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.