



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

**Luxembourg, 14 April 2014**

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Subject: Council conclusions on Syria

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Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Syria, as adopted by the Council on 14 April 2014.

**COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON SYRIA****Foreign Affairs Council, 14 April 2014**

1. The EU reiterates that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in Syria that has now lasted for more than three years and underscores the importance of reinvigorating the Geneva process. The regime's constant obstruction of the talks, its decision to list members of the opposition negotiating team as terrorists, and its rejection of the Geneva Communiqué led to the failure of the two first rounds of the negotiations. The EU urges those with influence on the Syrian regime to put pressure on it to engage much more constructively in the talks. The EU commends the attitude of the opposition delegation led by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) throughout the negotiations and welcomes their continued commitment to the political process.

The EU reiterates its support to the UN and the Joint Special Representative Brahimi and calls on the Syrian regime to show a clear commitment to the negotiation agenda and the method of work, in particular treating in parallel the issues of terrorism and transition, as outlined in Brahimi's report to the UNSC and the UNGA on 13 and 14 March. The EU calls upon the Syrian regime to respect all elements of the Geneva Communiqué, which was enshrined in the UNSC resolutions 2118 and 2139.

The EU reiterates the position that any elections in Syria should only take place within the framework of the Geneva Communiqué and through a genuine political process where also women and civil society should have an active and a meaningful role. Any elections, presidential or other, organised by the regime outside this framework, conducted in the midst of conflict, only in regime-controlled areas and with millions of Syrians displaced from their homes would be a parody of democracy, have no credibility whatsoever, and undermine efforts to reach a political solution. The EU calls on other countries and organisations, particularly those which had taken part in the Montreux conference, to adopt the same position.

2. The EU notes with great concern the attempts of the regime to circumvent EU restrictive measures in order to secure new resources and continue financing its policy of violence. The EU will act swiftly against persons and entities which are facilitating the circumvention of EU sanctions and will take appropriate steps to keep existing sanctions effective. The EU will continue its sanctions policy targeting the regime as long as repression continues and will explore what more can be done to address those responsible for human rights violations or international humanitarian law violations.
3. The EU welcomes the 7<sup>th</sup> report of the independent international Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic published on 5 March and its recommendations. The EU strongly condemns the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by government forces, pro-government militias, terrorist and other non-state armed groups, and notes that the report makes clear that the Syrian regime and its affiliates are responsible for a large number of violations and abuses. In that context, the EU is outraged by the continued barrel bombings of civilian areas by the regime and its use of starvation sieges as a tactic of war. The EU recalls that all responsible for such acts must be held accountable and that there can be no impunity for any such violations and abuses. The EU calls on the Security Council to urgently address the prevailing culture of impunity and refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.
4. The EU deplores the grave abuses committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other terrorist groups with links to al-Qaeda such as the Al-Nusra Front. The EU condemns the regime's decision to enlist the military support of foreign groups, including the military wing of Hezbollah, al-Quds Force and Liwa Abu al-Fadhal al-Abbas. The EU welcomes the SOC's rejection of terrorism and their consistent condemnation of terrorist acts and notes that the Syrian opposition is leading the fight against ISIL. The EU calls on all relevant parties to halt their support to these groups and is determined to engage with third countries to deal effectively with terrorism and the financing of the flows of foreign fighters.

5. The EU deplors the lack of progress on the implementation of the UNSC resolution 2139 as reported in the first 30-day review presented to the UNSC by the UNSG on 28 March. The EU strongly condemns the continuing artillery shelling and aerial bombardment by the regime, including the use of barrel bombs. It calls on all parties to immediately and without further delay comply with the resolution, especially on the issue of humanitarian access, which should be unfettered rather than granted occasionally on a case by case basis. All parties have, in particular, an obligation to protect schools and hospitals and respect their civilian character, as well as to ensure safe passage for medical personnel, hospitals and ambulances. In this respect, the EU recognises the primary responsibility of the regime for maintaining excessive administrative and other obstacles to effective aid delivery, especially to non-regime held areas. Continued withholding of consent to basic relief operations, across borders and across the lines of conflict, is arbitrary and unjustified. The EU urges UN agencies and humanitarian organisations to be allowed to bring humanitarian assistance to those who need it most in all areas of the country, including hard-to-reach and besieged areas, in line with the humanitarian imperative. To facilitate this the UN and their implementing partners should be allowed to deliver relief items through the most direct routes and most efficient means across conflict lines and across all relevant border crossing points. The EU calls for future reports by the UNSG to contain robust and specific demands for access in response to blockages identified on the ground, and calls upon the UNSC to take further measures if non-compliance continues.

The EU supports the work of the High Level Group on humanitarian challenges and the overall humanitarian aid coordination by OCHA.

6. The EU is concerned with cases of forced surrender, labelled as local ceasefires, imposed by the regime through starvation sieges. The EU calls on the regime to allow effective third-party monitoring of ceasefires to sustain them, to allow safe and unhindered evacuations of civilians on a voluntary basis and the passage of humanitarian convoys and personnel.

7. The EU is increasingly concerned about the worsening plight of all vulnerable groups, and ethnic and religious minorities, noting that Christians are increasingly targeted by extremist groups.

The EU calls on all parties, in particular the Syrian regime, to ensure the protection of the civilian population and calls on all parties to the conflict to adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law.

The EU welcomes the strong commitment of the SOC to a democratic and pluralist Syria, where all minorities and vulnerable groups have a place.

8. The EU continues to commend those neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon and Jordan, which continue to keep their borders open and provide safe haven for refugees from Syria, including Palestinians. The EU pledges to continue its support to the governments and host communities of Syria's neighbours so they can deal effectively with the increasing flow of refugees and build up their resilience. The EU is supporting comprehensive integrated response plans to preserve stability in these countries. Further to the Kuwait 2 conference in January 2014 the EU continues to mobilise humanitarian and development aid in response to the crisis and encourages partners to provide sustained financing for Syrian refugees and host communities.

The EU notes the UN appeals for Syria remain seriously underfunded and calls for the international community to consider what more it can do to meet the remaining funding gap. With increasing needs and limited resources, effective donor coordination is ever more important to ensure maximum impact of assistance. In this context, the Commission will continue to convene and strengthen the international core donor group on coordination of the response to the Syrian crisis. The EU welcomes the continuing efforts and preparations for early recovery activities of the working group on economic recovery and development of the Friends of the Syrian people. Where feasible the EU is committed to increase its support to areas that are not under regime's control by all possible channels on the basis of a coordinated approach.

9. The Council reiterates its call for a swift completion of chemical weapons transfers, which have suffered delays, and reiterates the call to the Syrian regime to fulfil its obligations stemming from the UNSC Resolution 2118 and further OPCW decisions to have its chemical weapons arsenal, including the production facilities, destroyed by the end of June 2014. All outstanding questions surrounding Syria's declaration must be addressed. The chemical weapons program must be completely eliminated and Syria must demonstrate to the international community that it is complying with all its obligations, both under UNSC resolution 2118 and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

The EU stresses once again that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the Rif Damascus on August 21, 2013 must be held accountable.

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