European Commission -
Speech
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Speech by Commissioner Šuica at the European Parliament roundtable on Syria

Brussels, 24 June 2025

Dear Massimilano Salini and Željana Zovko,

Dear civil society representatives,

Dear participants and guests,

Thank you very much for inviting me to your event today.

"Don't forget Syrians!" – I couldn't agree more with the title of this roundtable event.

Syria may not be at the centre of attention this very moment because of a raging war between Israel and Iran.

However, Syria's stability is of crucial importance - for the wider region and the European Union.

The recent bombing of the Mar Elias church - which I condemned strongly - was a stark reminder of the volatility of the situation in Syria and the possible future risks.

We have a strong interest in a smooth and succesful transition, after the fall of the Assad regime.

We want it to be Syrian-led, Syrian-owned, peaceful, and inclusive.

There is a clear window of opportunity for a unified, prosperous, and democratic Syria.

And we need to remain fully engaged to achieve this

- for the sake of Syrians and
- for stability and prosperity in the entire region.

I am firmly convinced, that the European Union, alongside the International Community, bears a responsibility to support this process.

I am very grateful to all international donors for their pledges at our latest Syria Conference in March.

It was the first time we could hold it together with Syrians.

We managed to raise 5.8 billion Euro for this and next year, with the Team Europe remaining the leading donor.

I was in Syria three weeks ago.

It was the first visit of a College Member after the formation of the new transitional government in March and the full lifting of the EU sanctions in May.

I wanted to send a strong message of support. And I expressed our openness to begin a new chapter, one of partnership.

It was an opportunity to meet with transitional President Al-Sharaa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and

Expatriates Al-Shaibani, and other members of the transitional government.

I also discussed with representatives of the Syrian civil society from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The statements by representatives of the transitional government were about success stories and good progress with regard to the inclusiveness of the transition process.

The road ahead is still long.

We are all aware of the many challenges for society and state-building that lie ahead of Syria.

However, there is an undisputable tiredness of war and a strong will by all to turn the page and rebuild the country.

This common hope for a fresh start should be the starting point and baseline of our approach.

I announced the 175 million Euro socio-economic recovery package and sent a clear signal of Syria's re-integration into the EU's Southern Neighbourhood policy.

I offered the possibility of a Strategic and Comprehensive Partnership once conditions would allow.

I was also happy to bring the good news that we are working on reintegrating Syria into EU programmes. The program we started with is Erasmus+.

At the same time, I stressed the fact that our expectations for concrete deliverables from the transitional authorities are high - given the steps already taken by the EU.

All Syrians need to be included and protected - regardless of their gender and ethnic or religious background.

In the meetings with the transitional government, I was impressed by their eagerness to move from the humanitarian assistance to the recovery and reconstruction phase and to cooperation among partners.

The President, the Minister of Finance, and the Central Bank Governor highlighted the importance of investments by European companies and of support in institutional and capacity building.

And this is what we are focusing on.

Capacity-building is one of the pillars of our 175 million Euro package.

A functioning public administration is the pre-requisite for rebuilding the country - and for revitalising economic activity both in urban and rural areas, which is our second pillar.

Our third pillar of support is justice and accountability. This is strongly needed to fully restore confidence of both the Syrian people and international donors and investors in the efficiency and integrity of governance in Syria.

In the same vein, Syrians keen to return to their country will only do so when they feel confident about the path to stability and prosperity, and also about the protection of human rights and inclusivity.

My encounter with the representatives of Syria's vibrant civil society was truly inspiring. I was impressed by how motivated they are to finally rebuild a unified, democratic and prosperous country.

They spoke vividly about the importance of dialogue, the role of culture in the reconciliation process, and the importance of justice, accountability and tolerance in unifying a deeply divided country.

It was also very motivating to hear how much they appreciated the European Union's support over the last 14 years.

Civil society has been and remains a key pillar of the European Union's support to Syria.

It was in this very House that we have been organising the Day of Dialogue in the margins of the Syria Conferences, the biggest civil society event gathering Syrians.

This year, for the first time, we intend to organise this major civil society event in Syria.

My hope is that conditions will allow for this to be organised not only in Damascus, but to include also events in other parts of the country.

We need this process to be rooted in and reach every corner of Syria.

But before that, I am grateful for the organisation of this roundtable on the "voices from the field".

You, members of the Civil society in Syria, play a key role in the peaceful and inclusive transition of the country.

Thank you for your indispensable contribution to a vibrant and more democratic society.

At this critical juncture for you and your country, we wish to remain a trusted partner and friend.

Thank you.

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