Situation in Syria

P7_TA(2011)0582

European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2011 on the situation in Syria

(2013/C 168 E/08)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, in particular those of 27 October 2011 ([1]) on the situation in Egypt and Syria, in particular of Christian communities, of 15 September 2011 ([2]) on the situation in Syria, of 27 October 2011 ([3]) on the case of Rafah Nashed, and of 7 July 2011 ([4]) on the situation in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain in the context of the situation in the Arab world and North Africa,

— having regard to the conclusions on Syria of the Foreign Affairs Council of 10 October 2011, 14 November 2011, and 1 December 2011 and the European Council conclusions of 23 October 2011 and 9 December 2011,

— having regard to Council Decision 2011/782/CFSP of 1 December 2011 concerning restrictive measures against Syria and repealing Decision 2011/273/CFSP ([5]),

— having regard to the statements of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on Syria of 8 October 2011, 3 and 28 November 2011 and 2 December 2011, and of her spokesperson of 23 November 2011,

— having regard to the UNGA Resolution on Human Rights in Syria of 22 November 2011,

— having regard to the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic of 2 December 2011,

— having regard to the Statement of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay at the UN Human Rights Council's 18th Special Session to examine the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic of 2 December 2011,

— having regard to the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic of 23 November 2011,

— having regard to the resolution of the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic of 22 November 2011,

— having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to which Syria is a party,

([1]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0471.
([2]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0387.
([3]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0476.
([4]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0333.
([5]) OJ L 319, 2.12.2011, p. 56.

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— having regard to the statements of the Arab League on the situation in Syria of 27 August 2011, 16 October 2011 and 12, 16 and 24 November 2011, its Action Plan of 2 November 2011, and the Arab League's sanctions against Syria adopted on 27 November 2011,

— having regard to the decision of 30 November 2011 by the Government of the Republic of Turkey to impose economic sanctions on Syria,

— having regard to the statement of 30 November 2011 by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation calling on the Syrian Government to immediately stop using excessive force against citizens and to respect human rights,

— having regard to the Joint Communication on 'A new response to a changing neighbourhood' from the Commission and the VP/HR to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 25 May 2011,

— having regard to the Final Declaration of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Conference of 27 and 28 November 1995 (Barcelona Declaration) and the Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of 13 July 2008, to which Syria is a signatory,

— having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas, according to UN estimates, more than 5 000 people, including over 300 children, have been killed, many more have been injured, more than 14 000 are reported to be detained, and tens of thousands have sought refuge in neighbouring countries or have been internally displaced since March 2011 in Syria as a result of the brutal repression by the regime against its population; whereas, despite widespread international condemnation, violent crackdowns and grave human rights violations by the Syrian authorities and military and security forces against non-violent civilians continue and are further intensifying; whereas it is reported that cities and towns throughout Syria are being kept under siege by government-led forces, without access to food, medical supplies or communications; whereas many Syrians are facing a deteriorating humanitarian situation as a result of the violence and displacements;

B. whereas the reforms and amnesties announced and promised by President Bashar al-Assad have never been put into practice and the regime has lost all credibility; whereas the Syrian Government uses the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC), a special court that remains outside the ordinary criminal justice system, to try political activists and human rights defenders; whereas the violence is accompanied by actions by the regime and its supporters aimed at increasing sectarian tensions and inciting inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict in the country;

C. whereas on 20 November 2011 in an interview published by the Sunday Times and on 7 December 2011 in an interview with the US network ABC, President Bashar al-Assad denied that his government had a policy of treating the population harshly and said that he felt no guilt about his crackdown on a 10-month uprising, despite reports of brutality by security forces;

D. whereas the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council of 2 December 2011 strongly condemned the widespread, systematic and gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms – such as the killing, arbitrary execution, persecution, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, and torture and ill-treatment of, and rape and other acts of sexual violence against civilians, including children, as well as the denial and obstruction of medical assistance to the injured – by the Syrian authorities and military and security forces, and proposed to establish the mandate of a special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the country;

E. whereas, in the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, widespread, systematic and gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian military, security forces and pro-government militias are documented; whereas the Commission of Inquiry is gravely concerned that crimes against humanity have been committed at different locations in Syria; whereas the Syrian Government refused to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry; whereas according to the UN report of the Commission of Inquiry numerous defections from military and security forces have occurred since the beginning of the crackdown and they have increased in recent months;

F. whereas, in her statement of 2 December 2011, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay warned that the continued ruthless repression by the Syrian regime of its country's population might drive the country into a civil war, and encouraged the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court;

G. whereas the Syrian authorities continue to deny access to international journalists and observers; whereas reports from Syrian refugees and human rights activists and images uploaded from mobile telephones are the main source of information and documentation of the systematic and widespread human rights violations by the Syrian army and security forces against civilians and the situation in Syria in general;

H. whereas on 1 December 2011 the European Union strengthened its restrictive measures against Syria, including additional trade prohibitions for EU-based companies and financial institutions regarding the Syrian oil and finance sector, new asset freezes and travel bans for 11 individuals and 12 entities, a weapons embargo, and most notably a ban on export from within the EU to Syria of information and communication technologies (ICTs) which the government can use to violate citizens' human rights;

I. whereas to date the Council/EEAS has failed to agree on and publish required details of the announced ban on ICT exports; whereas it has been widely reported that EU (based) companies have equipped the Syrian Government with (custom-made) technologies to intercept, monitor and catalogue all internet traffic and mobile communication in Syria, capturing both domestic and international traffic; whereas EU (based) companies have built and operated monitoring centres on the ground in Syria and have provided related technical assistance to the Syrian Government;

J. whereas both the French Ambassador to Syria, Eric Chevallier, and the US Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, have returned to Damascus, as a gesture intended to show full support for the struggle and demands of the Syrian population; whereas both Ambassadors had been withdrawn in October because of security concerns and violent attacks against French interests;

K. whereas, in its conclusions of 1 December 2011, the Council again encouraged the Syrian opposition to establish a united platform, confirmed that the EU would continue to engage with representative members of the Syrian opposition which adhere to non-violence, and welcomed the Syrian National Council's commitment in this regard;

L. whereas on 22 November 2011 VP/HR Catherine Ashton met representatives of the Syrian National Council and highlighted the importance of an inclusive opposition political platform;

M. whereas Members of the European Parliament have established a dialogue and exchanged views with various representatives of the Syrian opposition in exile and in the country over the past months;

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N. whereas the crisis in Syria constitutes a threat to the stability and security of the entire Middle East region;

O. whereas on 16 November 2011 the Arab League suspended Syria's membership of the regional organisation after it failed to honour the terms of an Arab League peace plan that involved Syria withdrawing tanks from restive cities, stopping attacks on protesters, engaging in dialogue with the opposition and allowing 500 Arab League monitors into the country to assess the situation on the ground; whereas on 27 November 2011, after numerous ultimatums, the Arab League approved sanctions against Syria, including an asset freeze and an embargo on investments;

P. whereas on 30 November 2011 the Turkish Government imposed economic sanctions on Syria, as well as a weapons embargo, including an embargo on the delivery of weapons and military equipment and the suspension of a cooperation agreement with Syria until a new government is in place; whereas on 22 November 2011 the Turkish Prime Minister had called upon President al-Assad to 'finally step down'; whereas tens of thousands of Syrian refugees have sought refuge in Turkey since March 2011;

Q. concerned at the news reported by many sources that the Syrian authorities have ordered the expulsion of Father Paolo dall'Oglio, the Abbot of the Mar Musa Monastery in Syria and winner of the first Anna Lindh EuroMed Award 2006 for Dialogue between Cultures, widely known for his work for inter-faith harmony in the country for the last three decades and for his engagement in efforts for internal reconciliation, based on negotiation, and freedom of expression; calls on the Syrian authorities to refrain from this act that could weaken the ongoing dialogue between Christians and Muslims;

R. whereas on 4 December 2011 the Syrian authorities arrested the blogger Razan Gazzawi at the Syrian-Jordanian border as she was allegedly heading to the Jordanian capital Amman to take part in a workshop on press freedom organised by her employer, the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression;

1. Condemns again in the strongest terms the brutal repression by the Syrian regime against its population, including children; extends its condolences to the families of the victims; reiterates its solidarity with the Syrian people's non-violent struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy and applauds their courage and determination, with special regard to women, who play a crucial role in this struggle;

2. Notes the failure of the Syrian regime – and of President Bashar al-Assad, who bears the ultimate responsibility as the constitutional head of the Syrian state, in particular – to comply with its obligations under international human rights law and calls again for an immediate end to violent crackdowns against peaceful demonstrators and harassment of their families, the release of all detained protesters, political prisoners, human rights defenders and journalists, and full access to the country for international humanitarian and human rights organisations as well as the international media;

3. Reiterates its call for President Bashar al-Assad and his regime to step aside immediately to allow a democratic transition to take place in the country;

4. Calls for prompt, independent and transparent investigations into the widespread, systematic and gross violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and military and security forces with the aim of ensuring that all those responsible for these acts, which may amount to crimes against humanity, are held to account by the international community;

5. Underlines the appeal by the Syrian opposition and demonstrators for the sending of international observers to deter attacks against civilians and for full access to the country for international humanitarian and human rights organisations as well as the international media;

6. Calls for a peaceful and genuine transition to democracy which meets the legitimate demands of the Syrian people and is based on an inclusive process of national political dialogue with the participation of all democratic forces and civil society in the country; urges the opposition forces to avoid the trap of the further escalation of violence and militarisation of the situation when defending the population; expresses serious concern that intimidation by the Syrian authorities may be extending to exiled opposition activists and calls on EU Member States to consider the possibility of expelling or taking other appropriate measures against EU-based Syrian diplomats involved in such cases;

7. Welcomes and encourages the ongoing efforts by the Syrian opposition both within and outside the country to establish a united platform, to continue to engage with the international community, in particular the Arab League, and to work on a shared vision for the future of Syria and the transition to a democratic system; continues to support the Syrian National Council and stresses the importance of the Syrian opposition and the Free Syrian Army committing themselves to human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, maintaining a clear commitment to a peaceful and inclusive approach; supports the Council's conclusions of 1 December 2011 and urges the EU and its Member States to swiftly implement them as well as to find new ways of strengthening their non-military assistance to these opposition forces;

8. Stresses once again that the Syrian Government has failed to meet its responsibility to protect its population, to immediately put an end to all human rights violations and to stop any attacks against civilians; considers that in light of this failure, the international community needs to take urgent and appropriate measures;

9. Welcomes the commitment of the EU to continue to press for increased international pressure on the Syrian regime; strongly supports the decisions of the Council of 14 November and 1 December 2011 to impose new restrictive measures on the regime and calls for the extension of asset freezes and travel bans to the families and businesses that are its main funders; underlines the necessity for the EU to stand ready to adopt further measures in order to assist the Syrian people, who are striving for a democratic future through peaceful means; calls, in this context, for further EU sanctions which target the Syrian regime but minimise the negative impacts on the population, as long as the repression continues, as well as for the setting-up of appropriate mechanisms to tackle the current and future humanitarian emergencies in the country; welcomes and supports the Council conclusions on Syria of 1 December 2011, which also declare that the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilising assistance and strengthening trade and economic links, as soon as President Bashar al-Assad steps aside and a genuine democratic transition begins;

10. Welcomes and supports the resolutions on the human rights situation in Syria adopted by the UN General Assembly on 22 November 2011, the UN Human Rights Council on 2 December 2011 and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly on 22 November 2011 as well as the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria of 23 November 2011; calls for the immediate suspension of Syria's membership of the UNESCO Human Rights Committee;

11. Deplores the fact that the UN Security Council has not been able to respond adequately to the ongoing brutal events in Syria so far; reiterates its call on the UNSC members, and on Russia and China in particular, to uphold their responsibilities to ensure that international human rights standards are respected in Syria; continues to support the efforts of the EU and its Member States in this field; at the same time encourages the UNSC to refer the crimes committed by the Syrian regime against its population to the International Criminal Court;

12. Strongly supports the efforts of the League of Arab States to end the violence and to promote a political solution in Syria; welcomes the League's proposal to send an observer mission to provide protection to civilians; is concerned about the lack of commitment by the Syrian authorities to implement the Plan of Action; welcomes the decision of the League of Arab States to impose sanctions against the Syrian regime; calls on the Syrian regime to refrain from any direct or indirect attempt to destabilise neighbouring countries;

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13. Calls for increased cooperation between the EU and Turkey regarding the situation in Syria; welcomes Turkey's condemnation of the Syrian regime, its economic sanctions on that regime and its policy of keeping the borders open for refugees;

14. Urges the VP/HR to make every effort to start discussions with Turkey, the Arab League and the Syrian opposition about arrangements for setting up humanitarian corridors at the Syrian-Turkish borders with a view to protecting Syrian refugees and all civilians trying to flee the country in order to escape the ongoing military repression;

15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, 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 Parliament of the People's Republic of China, the Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic and the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey.

Draft scoreboard for the surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances

P7_TA(2011)0583

European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2011 on the Scoreboard for the surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances: envisaged initial design

(2013/C 168 E/09)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the legislative package on economic governance adopted on 16 November 2011 and, in particular, to Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011 of the European Parliament and of the Council [1] on the prevention and correction of macroeconomic imbalances,

— having regard to the Commission staff working document of 27 October 2011 entitled 'Scoreboard for the surveillance of macroeconomic imbalances: envisaged initial design' (SEC(2011)1361),

— having regard to Rules 115(5) and 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

1. Recalls that the main objective of the newly established surveillance mechanism is the prevention and correction of excessive macroeconomic imbalances in the European Union and, in particular, in the eurozone; recalls that, in accordance with Regulation (EU) No 1176/2011, further objectives of the new mechanism include sustained convergence of economic performances of the Member States and closer coordination of economic policies;

2. Stresses that, in the light of the current economic situation, it is essential for the macroeconomic surveillance framework to be up and running as soon as possible;

3. Believes that potential spillover effects of Member State and Union policies should be identified and discussed at an early stage (e.g. as part of the Annual Growth Survey), and in any case before as well as after the adoption of convergence/stability programmes; asks the Commission to make explicit how it intends to deal with these spillover effects in its latest version of the scoreboard;

[1] OJ L 306, 23.11.2011, p. 25.