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Situation in Syria

P7_TA(2012)0351

European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2012 on Syria (2012/2788(RSP))

(2013/C 353 E/16)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria,

— having regard to the Foreign Affairs Council's conclusions on Syria of 23 July, 25 June, 14 May, 23 April and 23 March 2012; having regard to the European Council's conclusions on Syria of 29 June 2012,

— having regard to the statements by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on Syria of 15 March, 14 and 27 April, 27 May, 3 and 18 June, 6, 8 and 20 July, 3, 4, 8 and 18 August, and 5 September 2012,

— having regard to the statements by the Commissioner responsible for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response on Syria of 17 and 31 July and 29 August 2012,

— having regard to the three-day visit of the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross to Syria from 4 to 6 September 2012,

— having regard to the decision taken on 17 August 2012 by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and League of Arab States Secretary-General Nabil El Araby to appoint Lakhdar Brahimi as the new Joint Special Representative for Syria,

— having regard to Council Regulation (EU) No 509/2012 of 15 June 2012 amending Regulation (EU) No 36/2012 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Syria, and the subsequent Council decisions enforcing these measures,

— having regard to UN General Assembly resolution 66/253 of 3 August 2012 on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic,

— having regard to UN Human Rights Council resolutions 19/1 of 1 March 2012, S-19/1 of 1 June 2012 and 20/L.22 of 6 July 2012 on the human rights situation in Syria,

— having regard to the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria of 15 August 2012,

— having regard to the decision taken by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on 13 August 2012 of to suspend Syria's membership,

— having regard to the National Pact and the Common Political Vision for the Transition in Syria issued following the Syrian opposition conference held under the auspices of the League of Arab States in Cairo on 2-3 July 2012,

— having regard to the outcome of the Action Group meeting in Geneva on 30 June 2012,

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— having regard to the Annan Plan and United Nations Security Council resolutions 2042, 2043 and 2059,

— having regard to the conclusions and recommendations of 'The Day After project: Supporting a Democratic Transition in Syria', published in August 2012,

— 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 thereto on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, to all of which Syria is a party,

— having regard to Rule 110(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas, according to the UN, since the start of the violent crackdown on peaceful protesters in Syria in March 2011, nearly 20 000 people, most of them civilians, have been killed; whereas heavy violence, such as the use of heavy artillery and shelling against populated areas, and horrific killings by the Syrian army, security forces and the Shabiha, as well as by various opposition forces, have continuously increased; whereas there have been several massacres and mass targeted (point-blank) killings of men, women and children; whereas the use of torture, mass arrests and widespread destruction of populated areas has dramatically escalated over the last months; whereas cities and towns throughout Syria are being kept under siege and are being bombarded, *inter alia* by means of helicopters and fighter jets, by government-led forces; whereas through the increased militarisation of the conflict the situation is sliding into civil war;

B. whereas any further militarisation of the situation in Syria would have a serious impact on its civilian population, which is already facing a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, and would also continue to affect the wider region, in particular Jordan and Lebanon, in terms of security and stability, with unpredictable implications and consequences;

C. whereas, according to UN estimates, an estimated 5 000 people were killed in August as a result of the ongoing fighting, which means that over 20 000 people have died since the start of the conflict; whereas, due to the intensification of the violence and the precarious security and humanitarian conditions in Syria, neighbouring countries, especially in the last weeks, are assisting a significantly escalating number of Syrian citizens seeking refuge, particularly in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon; whereas 235 000 refugees from Syria have been registered or are awaiting registration with the UN High Commission for Refugees; whereas over 75 % of theses refugees are women and children; whereas tens of thousands of refugees are not registering; whereas more than 100 000 refugees are believed to have fled Syria across the borders of Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey at an average rate of 500-2000 per day during August; whereas, according to UN estimates, more than 1,2 million people have been internally displaced within Syria and around 3 million are in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; whereas the Syrian regime has deliberately cut off access to food, water, electricity and medical supplies to entire communities, such as in Homs and, more recently, in Aleppo; whereas Turkey has asked the UN Security Council to consider setting up a safe zone for civilians guarded by neighbouring countries;

D. whereas on 2 August 2012 Kofi Annan announced his resignation as UN-LAS Joint Special Envoy for Syria as a result of Syrian regime intransigence, increasing armed violence and the failure of a divided Security Council to rally forcefully behind his efforts to implement the six-point peace plan; whereas former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi has recently been appointed the new Joint Special Representative for Syria of the UN and the League of Arab States;

E. whereas the Syrian regime has lost all credibility and legitimacy as a representative of the Syrian people;

F. whereas vetoes by Russia and China have prevented the UN Security Council from adopting a resolution endorsing the outcome of the efforts of the Action Group for Syria and have prevented the introduction of the proposed measures to enforce compliance with the six-point Annan Plan under Article 41 of the UN Charter; whereas the international community has thus so far failed to unite and give an adequate response to the crisis in Syria;

G. whereas President Bashar al-Assad and his authoritarian regime have no place in the future of Syria; whereas the President must step down to avoid any further escalation of the crisis and to allow a peaceful and democratic transition to take place in the country; whereas several former political and military leaders of the regime as well as ambassadors have defected to neighbouring countries and beyond;

H. whereas a credible alternative is needed to the current regime; whereas this alternative should be inclusive and representative of the diversity of Syrian society and should fully respect the universal values of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms, with special regard for the rights of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and of women; whereas the establishment of an inclusive and representative provisional government by opposition forces may contribute to this alternative;

I. whereas the EU has imposed targeted sanctions on Syria in several rounds, and has further strengthened its arms embargo against Syria; whereas despite an EU embargo in force on weapons, munitions and other military equipments, as well as a ban on the export of monitoring technologies, several reported incidents involving arms shipments through EU waters and leaked details of business transactions between EU companies and various Syrian entities, groups and persons, covered by the EU's sanctions, have indicated the EU's internal incompetence to implement its own decisions and regulations;

J. whereas various external actors and states, either directly or through regional channels and neighbouring countries, continue to actively support all the parties to the conflict, with financial, operational, logistical and tactical support and aid, including the supply of weapons, munitions and all other types of military equipment, the provision of logistical assistance, the provision of communication tools and all kinds of assistance that may be used for military purposes, highlighting the pan-regional nature of the conflict; whereas further militarisation of the conflict can only bring greater suffering to the Syrian people and the region as a whole;

K. whereas the Commission announced on 7 September 2012 that an additional EUR 50 million in humanitarian assistance would be mobilised to support people in need of such assistance within Syria and those crossing the borders; whereas according to ECHO the EU has already provided EUR 142 million and the total EU assistance, including aid from Member States, amounts to about EUR 224 million;

L. whereas Syrian opposition representatives have held several meetings over the past months with the aim of overcoming internal divergences and creating a united front, and issued a 'National Pact' and a 'Common Political Vision for the Transition in Syria', as well as the conclusions and recommendations of 'The Day After project: Supporting a Democratic Transition in Syria'; whereas, despite all efforts, internal divisions and tensions within this opposition persist;

M. whereas, on 1 July 2012, the Action Group for Syria, meeting in Geneva, agreed on principles and guidelines for a Syrian-led transition which includes the establishment of a transitional government body exercising full executive powers;

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1. Reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the ever increasing use of indiscriminate violence by President Assad's regime against the Syrian civilian population, in particular the targeted killing of children and women and mass executions in villages; expresses its deepest concern at the gravity of the human rights violations and possible crimes against humanity authorised and/or perpetrated by the Syrian authorities, the Syrian army, security forces and affiliated militias; condemns the summary extrajudicial executions and all other forms of human rights violations committed by groups and forces opposing the Assad regime;

2. Applauds the efforts of neighbouring countries in hosting and providing humanitarian relief to refugees from Syria and calls for increased international support and assistance in this context; stresses the crucial importance of finding a sustainable response to the humanitarian crisis both within Syria and among refugees from Syria in neighbouring countries; urges neighbouring countries to continue to provide protection to refugees from Syria and displaced persons and to refrain, in line with their international obligations, from expelling and returning any such persons to Syria; calls on the EU to take appropriate responsible measures regarding the possible influx of refugees into its Members States; stresses the need to cooperate with the Red Cross; welcomes the EU's readiness to offer additional support, including financial resources, to help neighbouring countries, including Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, to host the increasing number of refugees from Syria, and urges the EU and its Member States to step up their efforts to find alternative ways to deliver humanitarian assistance to the people of Syria, in spite all the obstacles and difficulties;

3. Calls on the Syrian regime to allow the swift provision of humanitarian assistance and full access to humanitarian organisations and the international media Syria, and to facilitate the implementation of humanitarian pauses in order to allow the safe delivery of humanitarian aid; stresses again that international humanitarian law must be fully respected by all those involved in the crisis; stresses that medical attention should never be withheld from those who are injured and in need of help, and calls on all the parties involved to protect civilians, allow full and unimpeded access to food, water, electricity and refrain from using all forms of intimidation and violence against patients, doctors, medics and aid workers;

4. Extends its condolences to the families of the victims; reiterates its solidarity with the Syrian people's struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy, and applauds their courage and determination, especially with regard to women;

5. Calls on all armed actors to put an immediate end to violence in Syria; calls on the Syrian Government to withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities without delay, to immediately release all detained protesters, political prisoners, human rights defenders, bloggers and journalists;

6. Deplores the fact that the UN Security Council has failed to act and has not agreed on a resolution to add more robust and effective pressure in order to end the violence in Syria; reiterates its call on UN Security Council members, in particular Russia and China, to uphold their responsibility to put an end to the violence and repression against the Syrian people, including by supporting forced compliance with UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043; continues to support the efforts of the EU and its Member States in this regard; calls on the VP/HR to do her utmost to secure the adoption of a UNSC resolution, exerting effective diplomatic pressure on both Russia and China;

7. Stresses that the EU should stand ready to adopt further measures and to continue to explore within the UNSC all options within the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) framework, in close cooperation with the US, Turkey and the League of Arab States in order to assist the Syrian people and to halt the bloodshed;

8. Supports calls by several opposition groups and the Turkish Government to establish safe havens along the Turkish-Syrian border, and possibly within Syria, as well as the creation of humanitarian corridors by the international community; calls on the VP/HR to intensify discussions with Turkey, the Arab League and the Syrian opposition on the establishment of these safe havens to take in Syrian refugees and allow those persecuted by the regime to find refuge and protection;

9. Reiterates its call for President Assad and his regime to step aside immediately, so as to allow a peaceful, inclusive and democratic Syrian-led transition to take place as soon as possible;

10. Calls on all parties to agree on (local) ceasefires as soon as possible, so as to allow a broader negotiated and meaningful ceasefire;

11. Expresses its concern about further militarisation of the conflict and sectarian violence; notes the role of different regional actors, including the delivery of arms, and is concerned about the spill-over effects of the Syrian conflict in neighbouring countries; calls on the Council to consider the adoption of additional restrictive measures against external actors and groups involved in operations on the ground to actively support the Bashar al-Assad regime;

12. Condemns the Syrian regime's expressed intention to use chemical weapons against 'external terrorist threats', reminds President Assad of his government's obligations under the Geneva protocol on the non-use of chemical weapons and calls on the Syrian authorities to rigorously abide by their international obligations;

13. Supports the EU's ongoing efforts to step up the pressure on President Assad's regime through restrictive measures, calls on the EU to consider broadening the scope of its restrictive measures to external entities or groups that undisputedly provide or facilitate crucial financial and operational support to the Syrian authorities;

14. Welcomes the decision of the Islamic Summit Conference of 14-15 August 2012 to suspend the Syrian Arab Republic's membership of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and all its subsidiary organs, specialised and affiliated institutions;

15. Welcomes the efforts made by Syrian opposition representatives to create a united front of opposition forces, as well as the recently issued 'National Pact', 'Common Political Vision for the Transition in Syria', and conclusions and recommendations of 'The Day After project: Supporting a Democratic Transition in Syria'; encourages the Syrian opposition to continue on this path with the aim of creating a credible alternative to the regime and urges the VP/HR and EU Member States to make every effort to unify the Syrian opposition; welcomes the strong support shown by Turkey; Lebanon and Jordan for the Syrian population; urges the VP/HR to make every effort to start discussions with the authorities of Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, the Arab League and the Syrian opposition on preparing the peaceful transition for the post-Assad Syria;

16. Reiterates its strong endorsement of the call by the UN Human Rights Commissioner for a referral by the UNSC of the situation in Syria to the ICC for a formal investigation; strongly commits itself to ensure that all those responsible for human rights violations and violations of international law will be identified and held accountable; strongly supports the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, which is aimed at investigating all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law committed in the country so as to ensure that those responsible are held to account, and calls on EU Member States during the 21st session of the UNHRC to ensure that the Commission can continue its work with adequate reinforcements if necessary;

17. Calls for a peaceful and genuine Syrian-led political transition to democracy which meets the legitimate demands of the Syrian people and is based on an inclusive dialogue involving all democratic forces and components within Syrian society, with a view to launching a process of deep democratic reform, that also takes account of the need to ensure national reconciliation and is committed to ensuring respect for the rights and freedoms of minorities including ethnic, religious, cultural and other minorities;

18. 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 Russian Federation, the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China, the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Turkey, the Government and Consultative Assembly of the State of Qatar, the Government and House of Representatives of the United States of America, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Government and Parliament of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Lebanon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Political use of justice in Russia

P7_TA(2012)0352

European Parliament resolution of 13 September 2012 on the political use of justice in Russia (2012/2789(RSP))

(2013/C 353 E/17)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous reports and resolutions on Russia, in particular its resolutions of 15 March 2012 [1] on the outcome of the presidential elections in Russia, of 16 February 2012 [2] on the upcoming presidential election in Russia, of 14 December 2011 [3] on the State Duma elections and of 7 July 2011 [4] on the preparations for the Russian State Duma elections in December 2011,

— having regard to the ongoing negotiations for a new agreement providing a new comprehensive framework for EU-Russia relations, as well as to the 'Partnership for Modernisation' initiated in 2010,

— having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which states that everyone shall be entitled to a fair and public hearing by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law,

— having regard to the Constitution of Russia, in particular Article 118 thereof, which states that justice in the Russian Federation shall be administered by courts alone, and Article 120 thereof, which provides that judges are independent and are subordinate only to the Russian Constitution and the federal law,

— having regard to the Statement of 17 August 2012 by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the sentencing of 'Pussy Riot' punk band members in Russia,

— having regard to the request by the Russian Prosecutor-General to vote on early dismissal of the Just Russia Member of the Duma Gennady Gutkov on 12 September 2012,

[1] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0088.
[2] Text adopted, P7_TA(2012)0054
[3] Text adopted, P7_TA(2011)0575.
[4] Text adopted, P7_TA(2011)0335.