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Plenary sitting

<NoDocSe>B8‑0337/2017</NoDocSe>

<Date>{15/05/2017}15.5.2017</Date>

<TitreType>MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION</TitreType>

<TitreSuite>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</TitreSuite>

<TitreRecueil>pursuant to Rule 123(2) of the Rules of Procedure</TitreRecueil>

<Titre>on Syria</Titre>

<DocRef>(2017/2654(RSP))</DocRef>

<RepeatBlock-By><Depute>Javier Couso Permuy, Eleonora Forenza, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Neoklis Sylikiotis, Marisa Matias, Paloma López Bermejo, Ángela Vallina</Depute>

<Commission>{GUE}on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group</Commission>

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B8‑0337/2017

European Parliament resolution on Syria

(2017/2654(RSP))

*The European Parliament*,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Syria and the ISIS/Da’esh offensive, and in particular those of 11 June 2015 on Syria: situation in Palmyra and the case of Mazen Darwish[[1]](#footnote-1), 30 April 2015 on the situation of the Yamouk refugee camp in Syria[[2]](#footnote-2) and 12 February 2015 on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq and Syria, in particular in the IS context[[3]](#footnote-3),

– having regard to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions,

– having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,

– having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

– having regard to the Geneva Conventions on refugees,

– having regard to the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on Elements for an EU Strategy for Syria[[4]](#footnote-4),

– having regard to the report prepared for the UN Economic and Social commission on the Humanitarian Impact of Syria-related Unilateral Restrictive Measures of 16 May, 2016,

– having regard to Rule 123(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the conflict in Syria is now in its sixth year and has created the world’s worst humanitarian crisis since World War II; whereas civilians continue to be the primary victims of the conflict; whereas over 13.5 millions of people in Syria, almost three quarters of the remaining population, are in urgent need of emergency assistance such as medical and food assistance, water and shelter; whereas 6.3 million people are internally displaced and 4.7 million live in hard-to-reach and besieged areas; whereas this bloody war is the result of the instrumentalisation of the conflict by foreign regional and international powers;

B. whereas over 11 million people have fled their homes from inside Syria to the neighbouring countries;

C. whereas ISIS/Da’esh and other jihadist groups have committed cruel atrocities, including the use of brutal executions and unspoken sexual violence, abductions, torture, forced conversions and slavery of women and girls; whereas children have been recruited and used in terrorist attacks; whereas there are serious concerns about the welfare of the population currently under ISIS/Da’esh control and their possible use as human shields during the liberation campaign; whereas these crimes may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity;

D. whereas serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law have been committed by all sides; whereas terrorists groups have no respect for the principles of precaution and proportionality; whereas civilian areas, schools, hospitals, humanitarian workers and refugee camps have deliberately been targeted, actions which as war crimes and crimes against humanity should not go unpunished;

E. whereas, in accordance with the Geneva Communiqué and UN Security Council resolutions, all parties must be reminded again of the necessity of resolving the conflict in Syria through a Syrian-led political process leading to a peace agreement that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people;

F. whereas any political process aimed at putting an end to the Syrian crisis and achieving sustainable peace must be conducted within the framework of a truth commission that guarantees knowledge, non-impunity, justice and forgiveness, as has been done, with favourable results, in the resolution of conflicts elsewhere;

G. whereas on 11 April 2017 the Turkish Ministry of National Defence announced the completion of the first phase of a 911-km wall sealing off the Syrian border which, when completed, will include 67 ‘defensive towers’; whereas shootings by Turkish border guards at Syrians attempting to cross the Turkish-Syrian border have been documented, and resulted by the end of 2016 in the death of at least 165 Syrian citizens according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights;

H. whereas the three countries hosting the largest number of Syrian refugees are Turkey (2 973 980), Lebanon (1 011 366) and Jordan (659 246);

I. whereas 884 461 applications for international protection have been made by Syrians in Europe between April 2011 and October 2016; whereas several Member States still deny the right of asylum to Syrian and other refugees and violate basic policies and values of the European Union;

J. whereas the Syrian people was suffering from increasing poverty even before the outbreak of war owing to the implementation of measures imposed by the IMF and the World Bank on the Syrian Government as conditions for credits needed to fight an economic crisis generated by, among other things, a series of droughts that had ravaged the Syrian agricultural sector;

K. whereas the EU and its Member States contribute to nurturing the criminal and dangerous business of human smuggling by building fences and increasingly sealing off the Union’s external borders against migrants and refugees without providing possibilities for safe and legal access to the EU; whereas the EU and its Member States are therefore failing to deliver an adequate response to the refugee crisis in their neighbourhood; whereas the EU-Turkey migration agreement violates the Geneva Convention, given Turkey’s systematic violation of human rights;

L. whereas the ‘economic sanctions’ against Syria imposed unilaterally by the US and the EU are the most complicated and far-reaching sanction regimes ever imposed; whereas these sanctions have disastrous consequences for the civilian population and impede humanitarian aid; whereas the 2016 report ‘Humanitarian Impact of Syria-related Unilateral Restrictive Measure’, prepared by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC for the UN Economic & Social Commission for Western Asia, calls for a review of these sanction policies;

M. whereas the conflict in Syria continues to deteriorate as result of the interference of regional and international foreign power interests; whereas the war is creating a patchwork of segregated and competing regions run by different armed groups, enabling terrorist groups such as ISIS/Da’esh to thrive; whereas the US, Turkey and other countries have bombarded Syria in violation of international law;

1. Rejects without reservation the idea that a long-term solution to the Syrian conflict can be found on the basis of military actions; calls on the parties urgently to renew their commitment to finding a political solution and making progress in the Geneva talks hosted by the United Nations; strongly supports the peaceful political dialogue and stresses the need for a Syrian-led process that meets the legitimate aspirations and will of all sections of the Syrian people;

2. Strongly supports Syria’s territorial integrity and the right of the Syrian people to determine their future without foreign interference; deeply deplores the new stalemate in the political process following the chemical weapons attack and the unilateral US military strike undertaken in violation of international law; demands, therefore, an independent and impartial investigation of what has happened; insists on the end of all illegal foreign interventions in Syria; rejects any unilateral military intervention made without a UN mandate and in violation of international law;

3. Urgently calls for an end of fighting; welcomes the results of the Astana conference on Syria; welcomes the ceasefire agreement reached between the Government of Syria and the armed opposition, but expresses concern over the fact that the ceasefire agreement remains fragile and that fighting is ongoing; appeals to the guarantors of the Astana ceasefire – Russia, Turkey and Iran – to exercise their influence over the parties to the conflict in order to restore the credibility of the ceasefire;

4. Notes the memorandum on setting up ‘de-escalation zones’ in four regions of Syria, signed on 4 May 2017, which bans military operations and allows for humanitarian aid, the restoration of infrastructure and essential services, and the return of refugees; deeply deplores the fact that some participants of the Astana conference questioned the results shortly after the agreements were signed; calls on all parties to implement the Astana agreements, and recalls that any effort that can genuinely de-escalate the violence, ensure unhindered humanitarian access and create conditions for a credible political resolution of the conflict should be given strong supported;

5. Expresses concern at the fact that successive UN-led peace talks have not led to an agreement to put an end to the war; supports the efforts of the participants of the Astana conference to jumpstart the political process; calls on Russia and the US, as permanent members of the UN Security Council, to cooperate in efforts to stabilise the situation;

6. Stresses the fact that the conflict has been exacerbated by the arms trade and the supply of weapons; strongly condemns the role that various Western interventions in recent years have played in fostering the radicalisation of individuals, especially in the Middle East and in Southern Neighbourhood countries; stresses that such policies are promoting, not countering, terrorism and should therefore be abandoned; calls for an arms embargo to be established in the EU regional framework in order to prevent further European weapons from falling into the hands of terrorists;

7. Strongly condemns the direct or indirect support (in the form of financing, arms, training, etc.) that the US, the EU, Turkey and the monarchies of the Gulf region have been providing to terrorist groups; calls in particular on the US, the EU Member States and the regional players, in particular Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to stop financing militia groups and, in particular, to stop buying oil transported through Turkey from oilfields controlled by ISIS/Da’esh, an activity that has been documented in reports submitted to the Security Council; believes that mechanisms are needed to stop the financing of terrorism through offshore entities involving states and financial institutions, as well as to stop arms trafficking and the buying and selling of energy resources and raw materials benefiting terrorist groups;

8. Condemns the constant violations of Syrian sovereignty – in particular those by the Israeli regime, which have become permanent with the occupation of the Golan Heights – and condemns unilateral bombardment of Syrian territory in violation of international law;

9. Notes the progress made in 2016 in taking back areas of Syria from ISIS/Da’esh and the Al-Nusrah Front (ANF), but expresses its grave concern over the fact that areas remain under their control and over the negative impact of their presence, their violent extremist ideology and their actions affecting stability in Syria and the region, including the devastating humanitarian implications for the civilian populations;

10. Expresses deep concern over the military strikes of Turkey against areas in Syria controlled by Kurdish forces; strongly calls on Turkey to stop transferring the illegal violent attacks against the Kurdish population in Turkey to areas inhabited by Kurdish people in Syria and Iraq; condemns Turkey’s repression of the Kurdish population and its interference in the Syrian war, as well as the support it provides to terrorist groups by not taking action to close its permeable borders;

11. Stresses that the violation of international humanitarian law – such as attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, and the hampering by extremist groups of humanitarian access to Syrian people in need – is unacceptable; reiterates that terrorism can only be eradicated by addressing its roots, i.e. poverty, exploitation and society’s inability to answer peoples’ needs; believes that full respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states such as Syria, as well as respect for the multicultural nature of their societies, constitute the sole means of avoiding the spread of terrorist ideology;

12. Is shocked by and strongly condemns the use of chemical weapons in the war in Syria; welcomes the launch of investigations by the Organisation for the Prohibition of chemical weapons (OPCW) of the incident in Southern Idlib on 4 April 2017;

13. Expresses its strong opposition to the US air strikes on Syria; strongly deplores the support expressed by the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and by some Member States for this unilateral military action on the part of a permanent member of the UN Security Council; calls on all actors to refrain from any action contributing to an escalation in violence;

14. Strongly condemns all crimes committed against the civilian population of Syria. which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity; express concern about ISIS/Da’esh’s use of human shields in urban areas;

15. Demands that all parties to the conflict take all appropriate steps to protect civilians, in compliance with international law, including by ceasing attacks directed against civilian facilities such as medical centres, schools and water stations, by immediately demilitarising such facilities, by seeking to avoid establishing military positions in densely populated areas and by enabling the evacuation of the wounded and of all civilians who wish to leave besieged areas; underlines the fact that throughout the years of conflict, terrorist attacks have mainly been targeted at the civilian population and at civilian facilities, and that terrorist actions to cut water supplies constitute war crimes;

16. Notes with grave concern that impunity in Syria contributes to widespread violations and abuses of human rights, and violations of international humanitarian law; stresses the need to end impunity for these violations and abuses, and emphasises, in this regard, the need to address this issue within the framework of a truth forum involving all parties in conflict with the exception of terrorist groups condemned by the UN;

17. Condemns the obstacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance; urges all parties to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all people in need throughout Syria, without exception; reiterates its call on all parties to the conflict to coordinate humanitarian aid under the auspices of the UN and the Syrian Government;

18. Expresses deep concern over the politicisation of humanitarian aid, and urges all donors and parties to the conflict to respect the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in the provision of humanitarian assistance;

19. Expresses deep concern at the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing the violence in Syria; welcomes the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees, and acknowledges the socioeconomic consequences of the presence of large-scale refugee populations in those countries; notes the growing financial needs and the persistent funding gap in respect of humanitarian aid provided to countries in Syria’s neighbourhood; calls on the Member States to fulfil their pledges, and to provide much-needed support to the UN, in providing humanitarian assistance to the millions of Syrians displaced both internally and in host countries and communities;

20. Encourages other states outside the region, in particular the Member States, to consider implementing similar measures and policies, with a view to providing Syrian refugees with protection and humanitarian assistance;

21. Condemns the de-facto denial of international protection of Syrians entering the European Union through the entry into force of an EU-Turkey agreement whereby ‘all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey into Greek islands as from 20 March 2016 will be returned to Turkey’ on the principle that Turkey is a ‘safe third country’, a premise that Parliament rejects; recalls that the EU and its Members States have a responsibility to refugees and immigrants escaping war, chaos, economic misery, hunger and death, and who are suffering because of global neoliberal economic policies;

22. Condemns the pressure put on Greece by the Commission and the European Council to recognise Turkey as a safe third country, including through Matthias Ruete’s letter of 5 May 2016 to the Greek Government;

23. Calls for EU embassies and consular offices immediately to issue humanitarian visas for asylum seekers from Syria, and calls for enforcement of the EU’s and its Member States’ international commitments with regard to migration, in particular through resettlement programmes at EU level; calls for full cooperation by all Member States participating in such programmes; stresses that, in the context of an inclusive and credible dialogue, the Syrian people should determine the appropriate process and mechanisms to achieve justice, reconciliation, truth and accountability for gross violations and abuses of international law, as well as reparations and effective remedies for victims;

24. Deplores, in view of the disastrous consequences for the civilian population of the unilateral restrictive measures, and their role in impeding humanitarian aid, the fact that the new Syria strategy promises to lift these sanctions only once a political transition is underway; urges the Council to put an immediate end to all ‘economic sanctions’ against Syria, which have been shown to affect mainly the civilian population;

25. Urges the EU to dialogue with all parties to the conflict, excluding only terrorist groups: expresses concern at the EU’s one-sided assessment of the conflict; underlines that ending the war and finding a political solution to the conflict requires dialogue with all parts of Syrian society without excluding anyone; reminds the EU institutions that to refuse to enter into dialogue with one party to a conflict is incompatible with the task of mediating in it;

26. Welcomes the readiness of the EU to contribute actively to the reconstruction of Syria; also welcomes the focus of the Syria strategy on preparations for post-conflict planning, and the intention to focus assistance on reconstruction, the creation of jobs and business opportunities, education, psycho-social support for Syrian children and youth, and the promotion of equal access to education for girls; calls on the Commission to involve Parliament closely in the strategic planning of these actions;

27. Rejects the latest proposal from the EEAS and the Commission that the IMF and the World Bank take the lead in a macroeconomic stabilisation effort in Syria in a post-conflict scenario; rejects any form of IMF or WB involvement in Syria’s rebuilding and economic recovery process; underlines that it is up to the Syrian people to decide about how to reconstruct and with whom to cooperate;

28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the presidents of the parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Syrian Arab Republic, the UN Secretary-General, the Secretary-General of the Union for the Mediterranean, and the League of Arab States.

1. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0229. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0187. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0040. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. JOIN(2017)11 final [↑](#footnote-ref-4)