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20.5.2013

B7-0227/2013

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

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

pursuant to Rule 110(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries  
(2013/2611(RSP))

**Judith Sargentini, H el ene Flautre, Ra ul Romeva i Rueda, Isabelle Durant,  
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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

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*United in diversity*

**EN**

**B7-0227/2013**

**European Parliament resolution on the situation of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries  
(2013/2611(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Syria, in particular those of 16 February<sup>1</sup> and 13 September<sup>2</sup> 2012,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2013 on the Recommendations of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference regarding the establishment of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction<sup>3</sup>,
- having regard to the conclusions on Syria issued by the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council, respectively, since the beginning of the crisis in early 2011,
- having regard to the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of 10 December 2012, at which the EU accepted the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people,
- having regard to the Council decision of 23 July 2012 to take steps to prevent arms deliveries to 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 to the subsequent Council decisions of 18 February and 22 April 2013 easing these measures in order to support the opposition and civilians,
- having regard to the declaration of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces of 20 April 2013,
- having regard to the statements on Syria made by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), including her statement of 8 May 2013 on the joint agreement between US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to work towards convening an international conference to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria,
- having regard to the statements made by Commissioner Georgieva on Syria, in particular her statement of 12 May 2013 on the worsening humanitarian crisis,
- having regard to the latest Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan and the latest Syria Regional Response Plan,

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0057.

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0351.

<sup>3</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2013)0028.

- having regard to UN Security Council resolutions 2059 of 20 July 2012, 2043 of 21 April 2012 and 2042 of 14 April 2012,
  - having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 67/183 on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic,
  - having regard to the UN Human Rights Council resolutions on Syria, including that of 22 March 2013,
  - having regard to the report of the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria of 5 February 2013 and to its oral update of 11 March 2013,
  - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the international human rights and humanitarian law instruments to which Syria is a party,
  - having regard to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols thereto, including the protocol for the prohibition of chemical weapons, and to the Chemical Weapons Convention,
  - having regard to Rule 110(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas in recent months the dramatic human rights, humanitarian and security situation in Syria has further deteriorated, with armed violence increasing in intensity and further spreading throughout the country; whereas Syrian Government troops have continued to use force against densely populated neighbourhoods; whereas, albeit to a lesser extent, violations of human rights and of humanitarian law by opposition forces are also being reported;
  - B. whereas in May 2013 the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights estimated that 94 000 people had been killed since the start of the conflict; whereas the majority of these were non-combatants;
  - C. whereas an estimated 6.8 million people are affected by the ongoing violence, with 4.25 million people having been internally displaced within Syria, according to UN figures; whereas the number of people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance continues to rise sharply in all parts of the country, be they under government or opposition control;
  - D. whereas the Syrian authorities continue to impose severe restrictions on the delivery of humanitarian aid; whereas the Syrian regime continues deliberately to cut off access to food, water, electricity and medical supplies for entire communities;
  - E. whereas Russia and China continue to oppose the setting-up of a safe zone for civilians, guarded by neighbouring countries;
  - F. whereas the continuous violence has had a direct impact on neighbouring countries, as a dramatically rising number of refugees from Syria have continued to cross the borders to Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey and to travel to other countries in the region, at a current average rate of 7 000 per day; whereas the number of refugees has increased by almost 850 000 since the beginning of 2013 and the total number now stands at more than

1.4 million (registered or awaiting registration), according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); whereas the UNHCR is projecting a total of 3.5 million refugees by the end of 2013; whereas UNHCR figures of 6 May 2013 indicate that there are 455 665 Syrian refugees in Lebanon, 448 370 in Jordan, 322 407 in Turkey and 141 702 in Iraq;

- G. whereas the plight of these refugees remains a source of utmost concern; whereas over 50 % of the refugees are children and 39 % are under the age of 11;
- H. whereas populations groups which had previously remained neutral, such as the Kurds and the Palestinians, have now been dragged into the conflict;
- I. whereas the 525 000 Palestinian refugees in Syria constitute a particularly vulnerable group affected by the conflict; whereas 400 000 of them are in need of additional humanitarian assistance and half of them have been internally displaced, according to the UN; whereas this group has very limited options for finding a safe haven outside Syria; whereas Iraqi, Afghan, Somali and Sudanese refugees in Syria are also facing renewed displacement;
- J. whereas the refugee-receiving countries are facing tremendous domestic challenges of their own, including economic instability, inflation and unemployment, with Lebanon and Jordan being particularly vulnerable;
- K. whereas the neighbouring host countries and communities are close to reaching saturation point as regards their capacity to absorb and shelter the steadily increasing flow of refugees from Syria;
- L. whereas the risk of tensions between local and refugee populations is growing, as witnessed recently in the Turkish border town of Reyhanli, where residents protested against and attacked Syrian refugees following twin car bomb attacks which killed at least 46 people on 11 May 2013; whereas the Turkish authorities have accused Syrian intelligence services of being involved in this terrorist attack in the border town, which serves as a hub for Syrian refugees and rebel forces; whereas Syrian authorities have denied any responsibility for the incident;
- M. whereas there is an urgent need to increase international aid to support these countries in providing assistance to the refugees;
- N. whereas through ECHO (Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection) the EU has provided over EUR 200 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring countries, and whereas it was announced on 12 May 2013 that an additional EUR 65 million would serve to support people in need of assistance; whereas the Member States have also provided an additional EUR 400 million; whereas the UN will launch a new appeal for funding on 28 May 2013;
- O. whereas in July 2012 the Commission was mandated by the Council to prepare a regional protection programme;
- P. whereas the UNHCR has not called for large-scale resettlement of Syrian nationals, but

has appealed for emergency resettlement of certain specific categories of refugees displaced by the conflict, namely those who are in a particularly vulnerable situation and do not have a realistic prospect of returning to their homes in the short or medium term;

- Q. whereas the latest report of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria, presented during the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, again painted a dramatic picture of the human rights situation, including the continuation of unlawful attacks, practices such as torture and sexual violence, child recruitment and massacres of civilians;
- R. whereas the Syrian conflict is affecting the stability of the entire region and whereas external actors are increasingly involved in support of either side in the conflict;
- S. whereas allegations of the use of chemical weapons by parties to the Syrian conflict heightens the importance of holding the Helsinki Conference on the establishment of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction, which was postponed in November 2012;
1. Condemns, once again, the continued violent and indiscriminate attacks by the Syrian regime against civilian populations, which constitute a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law;
  2. Expresses its gravest concern with regard to the harrowing humanitarian crisis which is continuing to unfold in Syria and the surrounding region;
  3. Warmly praises the efforts and generosity of neighbouring host countries in assisting the continuous flow of refugees from Syria; encourages these countries to maintain an open-border policy so as to allow refugees to continue seeking protection within their borders;
  4. Stresses that authorities in certain countries, such as Jordan, have indicated that they have reached their maximum absorption capacity and will not be in a position to continue delivering adequate assistance without further international assistance; calls on all governments of the region, notwithstanding these tremendous difficulties, to uphold the principles of non-refoulement and equal treatment of refugees;
  5. Calls for the EU and its Member States to remove any barriers preventing refugees from seeking protection in the EU; expresses concern about reports of excessive detention periods for Syrian refugees in the EU; condemns those Member States, notably Greece, which return refugees in violation of international and EU law; asks the Commission to monitor closely the practices of Member States and of Frontex, in particular at the EU-Turkish border;
  6. Is greatly concerned that the continued and growing presence of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries is placing serious pressure on local infrastructure and basic social service delivery, as well as affecting the economic and environmental situation; expresses concern that tensions in some refugee camps are reported to have been rising since early 2013 and that the living and security conditions in certain camps, in particular the Zaatari camp in Jordan, are deteriorating;

7. Calls for particular attention to be paid to the plight of Palestinian refugees who have again sought refuge abroad; calls on donors generously to support ongoing efforts by the UN Relief and Works Agency to minimise the suffering and displacement of this particularly vulnerable group; calls for attention also to be paid to the recent waves of internally displaced persons of Kurdish origin following bombings in new areas of Syria;
8. Deplores the fact that the Syrian authorities systematically obstruct the provision of humanitarian assistance and have reduced the number of authorised humanitarian organisations, and calls on Damascus immediately to allow full and unimpeded access for the provision of humanitarian assistance and medical care to all those in urgent need of aid; deplores regular attacks on humanitarian workers;
9. Welcomes the financial efforts made by the Commission and the Member States to help address the numerous challenges faced by host countries in running refugee camps and meeting the basic needs of the population;
10. Considers regrettable the lack of transparency and information as regards the Commission's preparation and implementation of a regional protection programme;
11. Underlines the importance of all actors involved in the refugee crisis, including the host countries' authorities, international organisations, NGOs and donors, stepping up the coordination of their efforts and making the most efficient and transparent possible use of the available funding and humanitarian assistance, including for northern Syria;
12. Calls on the Commission, as a matter of urgency, to propose a voluntary permanent relocation scheme in order to allow for greater sharing of responsibility and solidarity among the Member States;
13. Calls on the Member States to activate Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons;
14. Welcomes the Commission's diversification of humanitarian partners in Syria in order to provide more efficient and widespread aid, particularly in regions outside government control; calls on EU actors and the Member States to coordinate in an improved manner their actions and assistance inside and outside Syria;
15. Supports calls by several opposition groups and the Turkish Government for the establishment of safe havens along the Turkish-Syrian border, and possibly within Syria, and 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 such safe havens to take in Syrian refugees and allow those persecuted by the regime to find refuge and protection;

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16. Forcefully denounces the widespread or systematic use by government forces, including pro-government militias and Shabbiha, of practices such as extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and sexual violence, directed against

civilians as state policy; condemns all violations of humanitarian and human rights law committed by armed rebel forces;

17. Is alarmed by allegations of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict; denounces the Syrian regime's refusal to give access to a UN mission mandated to verify these allegations;
18. Calls on Damascus to adhere strictly to its international obligations under the Geneva Protocol and the Chemical Weapons Convention; calls on the sponsors of the Conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to ensure that this event takes place as soon as possible;
19. Extends its condolences to the families of the victims of this conflict; reiterates its solidarity with the Syrian people's struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy and applauds their courage and determination, with special regard to women and human rights defenders;
20. Takes the view that military action alone cannot resolve the armed conflict, but that every political and diplomatic effort must be made in order to achieve, within a reasonable timeframe, a ceasefire that paves the way for a democratic and peaceful transition;
21. Takes note of recent reports of possible openings with a view to an international peace conference on Syria, which would involve representatives of both the government and the opposition; supports all efforts towards the holding of such a conference and the formation of a fully empowered transitional government;
22. Calls on the EU to secure the inclusion of women in any political process of dialogue and reconciliation, to take measures in conjunction with the international community to promote women's capacity to organise themselves and participate in any such political process, and to ensure that post-Assad Syria respects women's rights and their free choice of lifestyle;
23. Encourages the EU to adopt a more united and consistent approach in support of the Syrian opposition and the Syrian population as a whole; welcomes and supports, in this connection, the Council's commitment to increase direct support for the opposition and for the protection of civilians from Syria; calls on the Council to provide further assistance to the opposition, in particular by ensuring reconstruction and the continuity of basic state services in the liberated areas; calls on the Council to consider adopting additional restrictive measures against local and external actors supporting Bashar al-Assad's regime;
24. Calls on the VP/HR to issue a strong and unambiguous statement underlining the EU's position that in post-civil-war Syria Bashar al-Assad must have stepped down from power;
25. Calls on Syrian opposition forces within and outside the country to overcome their internal divisions and unite in order to form a provisional, inclusive and representative government that would represent them at the international level; welcomes the cooperation between Syrian Kurds and Syrian Arab opposition forces in Aleppo as an

important step towards building an inclusive opposition and preparing the future of Syrian democracy; welcomes the ongoing peace process in Turkey (the 'Imranli process') and its potential positive effects in reinforcing the Syrian opposition and stabilising Syria;

26. Strongly deplores the continued failure of the UN Security Council to give an adequate response to the increasing use of indiscriminate violence, owing to opposition from the Russian Federation and China, and urges both countries to fulfil their responsibilities under international law;
27. Endorses once again the Swiss initiative, and the calls of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court; deplores the lack of EU action in support of this initiative and calls on the Council to take demonstrable action in this direction;
28. Expresses its gravest concern at the growing impact of the Syrian crisis on the security of neighbouring countries and on peace and stability in the wider region; condemns instances of shelling and shooting by Syrian armed forces into neighbouring countries, including Turkey;
29. Expresses concern at reported Israeli airstrikes on Syrian territory in early May 2013 and requests full clarification of the motives and legal basis for such attacks; recalls the importance of all countries strictly abiding by international humanitarian law and exercising restraint in order to avoid a catastrophic regional conflagration of the conflict;
30. Strongly supports the continued work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and calls on the EU Member States to ensure that this Commission can continue its work, with adequate reinforcement if needed; calls on all the actors involved to monitor human rights violations carefully and to collect all types of testimony in order to allow for full accountability and justice in post-Assad Syria;
31. 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 Iraq, the Government and Parliament of Jordan, the Government and Parliament of Lebanon, the Government and Parliament of Russia, the Government and Parliament of Turkey, the President and Congress of the United States, the Secretary-General of the UN, the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, and the Government and Parliament of Syria.