



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Syria

*3149th FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 27 February 2012*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The European Union is increasingly appalled by the unfolding situation in Syria, where the regime continues its ruthless campaign of repression against the civilian population and its systematic and widespread violation of human rights. The EU is particularly concerned by the reports of the brutal attacks by the Syrian armed forces in Homs and deplors the numerous civilian fatalities. The EU underlines that those responsible for the violence across Syria will be held accountable for their actions. The EU reiterates once more its call for an immediate end to violence. We call on President Assad to end immediately the killing of civilians, withdraw the Syrian army from besieged towns and cities and step aside in order to make room for a peaceful transition for the sake of the country.
2. The EU condemns all killings of unarmed civilians, including three journalists in the city of Homs. It reiterates that the Syrian authorities have a responsibility to guarantee the safety of journalists in their country. The press must be allowed unimpeded access to carry out its vital role of providing independent information on the events in Syria without fear of violence or repression.

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3. The EU reiterates its strong concerns for the deteriorating living conditions of the civilian Syrian people in the areas affected by the unrest. The Syrian authorities must immediately alleviate the suffering of the population, respect and protect the wounded and sick, guarantee unhindered access to the medical care without any discrimination or reprisal and refrain from intimidation of those providing medical assistance. The EU calls on the Syrian Government and all parties to fully respect the impartiality and independence of humanitarian organisations and workers. The EU strongly condemns the illegal attacks against medical staff and installations carrying the symbols of the Red Crescent. The Syrian authorities must immediately cease all violence. They must also allow full and unimpeded access of relief personnel from humanitarian organisations for the timely delivery of humanitarian aid to people in need of assistance. The EU welcomes the efforts made by neighbouring countries to host Syrian refugees who fled violence in Syria. The European Union will continue to assist in providing them with dignified living conditions. The EU welcomes the intention of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Valerie Amos, to visit Syria to engage with all parties to allow impartial access for humanitarian assistance and the creation of the Syrian Humanitarian Forum.
4. The EU welcomes the holding of the first meeting of the Group of Friends of the Syrian people which took place in Tunis on 24 February and the outcome as reflected in the Chair's conclusions, which aimed at reinforcing an international consensus on Syria and putting forward urgent proposals to stop the violence, alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population, seek a peaceful outcome to the current crisis and promote a new era of democratic change in Syria and affirmed its goal of a political solution to the crisis that meets the aspirations of the Syrian people for dignity, freedom, peace, reform, democracy, prosperity and stability.

The EU will remain in close contact with the League of Arab States, the United Nations, the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation, the Gulf Cooperation Council and other regional organisations with the aim of providing a forum for coordinating their action on Syria in support of the League of Arab States' initiatives with regard to the Syrian crisis. The EU welcomes the appointment of former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, as the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and League of Arab States on the Syrian crisis. The EU will support his efforts to bring an end to all violence and human rights violations and promoting a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis.

5. The EU supports the Syrian opposition in its struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy. The EU stands ready to step up its engagement with all representative members of Syrian opposition which adhere to non violence, inclusiveness and democratic values as they make progress to form a broad and inclusive platform. The EU recognises the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of Syrians seeking peaceful democratic change. The EU urges the Syrian opposition to set up a representative coordination mechanism under the auspices of the Arab League and to agree on a set of shared principles for working towards an orderly and peaceful transition to a Syria that is democratic, stable and guarantees minority rights, and where all citizens enjoy equal rights regardless of their affiliations, ethnicities or beliefs.

6. The European Union deeply regrets that the United Nations Security Council was unable to support the call of the League of Arab States for an inclusive, Syrian-led political process conducted in an environment free from fear and violence. The EU calls once more on all members of the UNSC to assume their responsibilities. The time has come for the international community to speak with one voice and demand an end to the bloodshed and speak out for a democratic future for Syria.
7. The European Union welcomes the resolution on Syria adopted by an overwhelming majority in the UN General Assembly on 16 February and co-sponsored by all EU Member States, which condemns the Syrian regime's activities and violations of human rights and calls for an immediate end of violence. The EU looks forward to the next debate of the UN Human Rights Council on Syria on 12 March 2012 as well as to discussions in the high level segment of the UNHRC session on the week of the 27 February. The EU is appalled by the main findings of the report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria which states that crimes against humanity and other gross violations of human rights have been committed in the country. The EU reaffirms that there should be no impunity for the perpetrators of such alleged crimes.
8. The EU welcomes the important decisions taken by the League of Arab States on 12 February to increase the international pressure on the Syrian regime as well as the strong commitment and leadership that the League of Arab States is taking to resolve the crisis in Syria. The EU recalls its support to the League of Arab States' efforts to end the cycle of violence in Syria and is ready to provide further support.
9. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU approved today further sanctions against the Syrian regime, imposing an asset freeze on the Syrian Central Bank, banning transactions of gold and other precious metals, banning cargo flights operated by Syrian carriers and designating seven Ministers of the Syrian government to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional measures targeting the regime, not the civilian population, as long as repression continues. The EU calls on the international community to join its efforts to target those responsible for or associated with the violent repression and those who support or benefit from the regime. The EU welcomes the decision of the League of Arab States to increase economic pressure on the Syrian regime and stands ready to support the League of Arab States in the area of sanctions and restrictive measures. The EU welcomes the commitment of the participants of the Friends of Syria Group to take steps to apply and enforce restrictive measures and sanctions on the Syrian regime and its supporters.
10. The EU reaffirms its support to the Syrian people and their aspirations for a democratic Syria which is open, pluralistic and respectful of the rights of all its communities. As soon as a genuine democratic transition begins, the EU is ready to develop a new and ambitious partnership with Syria across all areas of mutual interest, including by mobilizing assistance, strengthening trade and economic relations and supporting transitional justice and the political transition."