



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



## **Council conclusions on Syria**

*3241st FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting  
Brussels, 27 May 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The EU is appalled by the escalating violence and the continued widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights in Syria, reiterates its condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime, which according to the report of the Independent Commission of Inquiry amount to crimes against humanity, and calls for the end of all violence. The EU is seriously concerned with the ongoing military operations conducted by the regime and its supporters in the city of Qusayr. The EU condemns the recent massacres committed by the Syrian armed forces and its militias in Bayda and Baniyas that claimed the lives of more than 140 people, including women and children.

The EU is deeply concerned with the rise of religiously or ethnically motivated violence. The EU calls for the immediate release of the two recently kidnapped orthodox bishops.

The EU deplors serious abuses, including war crimes that are being committed by anti-Government armed groups documented in the report of the Commission of Inquiry, although such abuses do not reach the intensity and scale of those committed by the regime forces and affiliated militias. The EU calls on all sides to fully respect the freedom of movement and physical integrity of all UNDOF and UNTSO personnel. In this regard the EU condemns all instances of hostage taking of peacekeepers.

2. The EU reiterates the urgent need for a political solution of the conflict and welcomes the joint US-Russian call for a peace conference on Syria to promote a political process based on the principles included in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. The EU will spare no effort in helping to create the appropriate conditions for a successful convening of this conference. The EU calls on both sides of the conflict to respond positively to this call and to engage openly in a genuine Syrian-led process of negotiations, aiming at a democratic and peaceful political solution on the basis of the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012, which foresees inter alia the establishment, on the basis of mutual consent, of a transitional governing body, which would exercise full executive powers. The EU will continue to work with all interested parties, specifically with the UN, the League of Arab States, the Joint Special Representative Brahimi, and all those sincerely committed to the success of this initiative.

# **P R E S S**

3. The EU welcomes the declaration of 20 April 2013 by the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) – which the EU accepts as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people – setting out the principles of a democratic, pluralistic and inclusive Syria respectful of human rights, including the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, and the rule of law, rejecting extremism and committing to guarantee the security of the chemical weapons present in Syria as well as to support non-proliferation international efforts and comply with its international obligations on that matter. The EU welcomes the adoption of the resolution on the situation in Syria by the United Nations General Assembly on May 15th that, inter alia, supported a political process based on the Geneva Communiqué and welcomed the establishment of the SOC as effective representative interlocutors needed for a political transition.

The EU underlines the importance of the ongoing meeting of the SOC General Assembly in Istanbul. The EU calls on the SOC and all opposition groups to continue to work towards a political settlement and to enhance inclusiveness. A stronger and more united opposition that represents a credible alternative for all Syrians remains essential. The EU strongly encourages the Coalition to participate in the planned peace conference and to lead the opposition delegation. The EU stands ready to continue engaging with and to support the Coalition in these endeavours and its relations with the international community at large.

4. The EU urges all parties to the conflict to fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law. All those responsible for atrocities and human rights violations and abuses must be held accountable. The EU reaffirms that there should be no impunity for any such violations and recalls that the UNSC can refer the situation in Syria to the ICC, as requested in the Swiss letter to the SC of 14 January 2013, at any time. The EU calls on Syria to allow the Commission of Inquiry immediate, full and unfettered access throughout the country. The EU calls on the UNSC to urgently address the situation in Syria in all aspects, including these issues. The EU reiterates its condemnation of terrorist attacks of any nature.
5. The EU demands that all parties ensure safe and unimpeded access for aid organisations to those in need in all areas of Syria. It deplores the obstacles to the provision of humanitarian assistance and underlines to all parties, in particular the Government of Syria, the urgent need to remove them. It emphasises the need for all parties in Syria, and in particular the Syrian authorities, to cooperate fully with the United Nations and relevant humanitarian organisations. The provision of emergency assistance must be facilitated through all possible humanitarian channels, including across borders and across conflict lines, in order to reach all those in need. The EU reiterates its call to ensure the safety of all humanitarian workers and its demand for the specific protection provided to medical personnel and facilities.

The EU renews its commitment to respond to humanitarian needs in Syria and its neighbouring countries, notably Lebanon and Jordan as well as countries of the broader region in accordance with the EU Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. The EU commends those countries that keep their borders open in order to provide safe haven for refugees and also expresses concern about the fate of Palestinian refugees.

The EU calls on all donors to fulfil their pledges made at the Kuwait humanitarian conference of 31 January and to commit to provide further support to those in need.

6. The EU remains deeply concerned by the spill-over of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries and supports their efforts to contain it.

The EU is seriously concerned with the involvement of extremist and foreign non-state actors in the fighting in Syria, which is further fuelling the conflict and posing a threat to regional stability.

The EU remains committed to the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of Syria.

7. The EU expresses its great concern regarding the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria. The EU reiterates the importance of the role of the fact-finding mission established by the United Nations Secretary General to investigate the allegations of use of chemical weapons in Syria. The EU calls on the Syrian authorities to co-operate fully with the investigation and allow it full and unfettered access throughout the country without delay. The use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances is completely unacceptable. The EU will increase coordination with international partners on the threat of chemical and biological weapons and explore ways of cooperation, also with partners in the region and relevant international organisations and bodies in particular to prevent and combat the risk of voluntary or accidental spread of such weapons to neighbouring countries.
8. The EU will pursue its efforts to reinforce its assistance and support to the civilian population, in coordination with the Assistant Coordination Unit of the SOC and with local civilian structures in order to maintain or re-establish basic services for the benefit of the civilian population.

The EU remains committed to deliver non-humanitarian assistance through all possible channels in order to reach as many people in need as possible and continues its efforts within the Working Group on Economic Recovery to ensure close coordination with other international actors. In order to ensure effective delivery of help to those most in need inside Syria, the EU welcomes the work to establish the Syrian Recovery Trust Fund being taken forward by the co-chairs of the Working Group on Economic Recovery.

The EU will continue to work closely with international partners on planning to ensure that the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria once transition takes place. The EU will start without delay to work on articulating a comprehensive response to challenges that shall arise in the post-crisis context, including on justice and security."