Recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the EEAS on the situation in Syria

2023/2052(INI) - 28/02/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 428 to 35, with 43 abstentions, a recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the situation in Syria.

Parliament recommended that, with regard to their policies vis-à-vis Syria, the Council, Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should:

Political process

- reaffirm the EU's strong support for Syria's continued democratic aspirations, despite the regime's total repression since the peaceful protests in 2011, which has been bolstered by decisive military and financial assistance from Iran and Russia to enable Assad and his cronies to retain power;

- stress the regime's personal responsibility, without downplaying the role played by ISIS and other armed and terrorist groups, for the death of half a million civilians, the destruction of the country, the displacement of the majority of the population, the torture and forced disappearance of no fewer than 112 713 people at the hands of the mass arbitrary detention system, the use of chemical weapons against civilians and the systematic crushing of any democratic and peaceful opposition;

- oppose any normalisation of relations with the Assad regime unless there are profound and verifiable developments in the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015), including the release of political prisoners, informing the families of the victims about the fate of missing persons and victims of enforced disappearance, and the cessation of any attacks on or obstacles to humanitarian aid;

- call on EU Member States to refrain from measures weakening or undermining the common EU position on Syria.

Security

- deploring the continued presence on Syrian territory of hundreds of Iranian, Turkish and Russian bases and of Iranian and Russian militias, and expressing concern at the economic exploitation of the country by predatory foreign powers;

- condemn the attacks by Turkish forces and their occupation of Syrian territory in the north, as well as the new brutal military campaign by the Syrian government and Russia in north-western Syria, particularly against civilian targets;

- support the continuation of the international coalition against the Islamic State, which remains active in Syria despite heavy defeats, and call for resolute international action to continue the fight against the Islamic State in Syria until its complete elimination;

- urge Member States to continue to repatriate their nationals from the jihadist prison camps of al-Hol and Roj and to try them, in fair trials, for all the crimes they have committed;

- condemn (i) the firing of rockets by Syrian forces from Syrian territory towards Israel and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, as well as the dispatch of an unarmed drone towards northern Israel; (ii) the repeated and successful attempts by Hezbollah to smuggle Iranian weapons through Syrian territory; (iii) the permissive attitude of Bashar al-Assad's regime towards al-Qa'ida;

- note that the Israeli military continues to launch air strikes and other forms of attacks on Syrian territory in acts of self-defence with the objective of ensuring that the Assad regime remains unable to regain sufficient strength to pose a threat to neighbouring countries.

Fight against impunity

- stress that the fight against impunity in Syria is a prerequisite for any future resolution of the ongoing crisis, as well as a moral and political imperative for Europe and the international community;

- welcome the issuance of international arrest warrants against Bashar Al-Assad, his brother Maher Al-Assad and two generals, by French courts in November 2023, for crimes against humanity in relation to attacks with chemical weapons against civilians;

- welcome the ICJ order directing Syria to take all measures within its power to prevent acts of torture and other abuses after the Netherlands and Canada filed a case regarding Syria’s violation of the international Convention against Torture;

- support attempts to bring the leadership of the Syrian regime to justice;

- urge that information be exchanged automatically between all Member States on war criminals whose asylum applications are rejected under Article 1(F) of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees;

- call on Member States to establish a European fund for victims of serious violations of international law in Syria;

- urge the EU and its Member States to expand the list of those subject to targeted sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (the so-called EU Magnitsky Act).

Humanitarian aid and refugees

- urge the international community, at the 2024 Brussels Conference, to urgently increase its humanitarian assistance to the 15.3 million Syrians who depend on it on a daily basis;

- insist on access to clean water, including drinking water, sanitary water and water for agricultural purposes, formal education, also for girls and women, energy supply, affordable motor fuels, education and long-term budget support tailored to women’s needs;

- commend the work of journalists, bloggers and individuals as well as organisations, such as the White Helmets, who, despite the brutality of the regime, continue to carry out their work in the country, informing the international community, supporting victims on the ground and maintaining their focus on the future of the country;

- recall that Syria cannot be regarded, in whole or in part, as a safe country for the return of Syrian nationals living as refugees and asylum seekers in Europe and around the world, people who have fled the crimes of the regime and risk torture and enforced disappearance if they return to Syria.