



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council conclusions on Syria

*3222nd FOREIGN AFFAIRS Council meeting
Brussels, 18 february 2013*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

1. " Recalling its previous Council Conclusions, the EU is appalled by the increasingly deteriorating situation in Syria and the unacceptable levels of violence, which continue to cause suffering to millions of Syrians and destruction of infrastructure and cultural heritage. The EU strongly urges the regime to stop targeting civilians, halt airstrikes and artillery attacks, and calls for an immediate end to all violence. The EU further calls on the regime to free political prisoners, in particular peaceful activists, women and children. The EU remains deeply concerned by the spill-over effects of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries and reiterates its attachment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria.
2. The EU welcomes all efforts to bring a peaceful solution to the violence in Syria. The EU continues to believe that the key to the solution of the conflict lies in facilitating the Syrian-led political process. In this context, the EU reiterates its full support to the Joint Special Representative of the UN and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi to promote a credible and effective political solution with those genuinely committed to the transition. The EU urges all countries active in promoting a solution to the crisis to support these efforts. This process should be based on the principles included in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 and on the UNSC resolution 2042. The EU commends the proposals made by Brahimi in his briefing to the UN Security Council on 29 January 2013, and strongly calls on all members of the UNSC to uphold their responsibilities regarding the crisis in Syria.
3. The EU commends the initiative made by the President of the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, Moaz al-Khatib, of a political dialogue, bearing in mind the necessary conditions that would lead to a peaceful transition towards a future without Assad. In the face of the ever deteriorating conflict and growing human suffering, the EU calls on the representatives of the Syrian regime not to miss this opportunity and respond positively to the offer of political dialogue. The EU encourages the Coalition to continue to engage with the UN/LAS Special Representative and confirms its readiness to assist the necessary dialogue process, in any way possible.

P R E S S

4. Following up the Marrakesh meeting of the Group of Friends of the Syrian People and the international conference held in Paris on January 28, the EU will continue its engagement in strengthening its support to the National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces, including its technical structures. The EU underlines the importance of further efforts by the Coalition to include representatives of all sections of the Syrian society regardless of their origin, affiliations, religion, beliefs or gender based on its commitment to the respect of the principles of human rights, inclusivity and democracy.
5. The EU is extremely concerned at the dramatic deterioration in the humanitarian situation. As announced at the Kuwait Donors' Conference on 30 January, the EU significantly increased its humanitarian assistance to the affected population inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. The EU calls on all donors to promptly deliver on their pledges, according to the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence. The EU calls on all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and facilitate humanitarian access for aid workers throughout the country. In order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, the EU will take steps in line with humanitarian principles, towards providing humanitarian assistance to all areas in the country, including those currently not reached by humanitarian aid. In this regard, the EU urges the regime in Damascus to allow delivery of humanitarian assistance by whatever routes are most effective in order to reach all the population in need.

The EU also reiterates its demand for the specific protection provided to medical personnel and facilities. The whole international community must use its influence on all parties to respect their obligations in this regard. The EU reaffirms the leading role of the UN in providing assistance in Syria, which should be intensified in the light of growing needs in all parts of the country and should reach all the population in need through all possible channels. The EU highly commends those countries that keep their borders open in order to host the Syrians who flee the violence. The EU will continue to support all neighbouring countries, including Lebanon and Jordan with financial and in-kind assistance.

6. In accordance with the European Council conclusions of 13-14 December the EU will pursue efforts to reinforce its support and assistance to the civilian population. In this context it welcomes the establishment by the National Coalition of an Assistance Coordination Unit and looks forward to enhancing its coordination with it.
7. The Council agreed to renew the restrictive measures against Syria for a further three months, amending them so as to provide greater non-lethal support and technical assistance for the protection of civilians. The Council will actively continue the work underway to assess and review, if necessary, the sanctions regime against Syria in order to support and help the opposition.

8. The EU remains deeply concerned about the widespread and systematic violation of human rights and international humanitarian law which, according to the Independent International Commission on Inquiry, may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU calls on the UN Security Council to urgently address the situation in Syria in these aspects, including on a possible referral to the International Criminal Court as requested in the Swiss letter to the Security Council of 14 January 2013. The EU recalls that all those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes must be held accountable. The Council supports the work of the Independent Commission of Inquiry on the situation in Syria and welcomes the updated report.
9. The EU remains committed to strengthening its support in building the capacity of civil society to participate in a future Syria. It welcomes the efforts made by the Coalition in setting out its vision for transition and encourages the Coalition to further develop this activity including working closely, when possible, with local structures on the ground. It reiterates its support to these efforts as part of a Syrian-led transition process. The EU welcomes the initiatives being developed within the framework of the Working Group on Economic Recovery and Development of the Friends of the Syrian People.
10. The EU will continue to work closely with international partners on planning to ensure that, as soon as genuine democratic transition begins, the international community is ready to provide rapid support to Syria across all areas of mutual interest, addressing the short term needs and the long-term reconstruction efforts."
