The EU and the crisis in Syria

Eight years after the outbreak of the conflict, the situation in Syria is still critical, with millions of Syrians displaced and in need of protection and humanitarian assistance. The potential for violence remains high, and there is little progress in sight towards a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey, as well as other host countries in the region such as Egypt and Iraq, have shown extraordinary solidarity towards the refugees, and they continue to need assistance to meet the growing needs of both the refugees and their own communities.

“As long as the fear and suffering continue, we have the duty to protect and support the Syrian people. The EU has been helping Syrians since the beginning of the conflict and will continue to do so until peace, security and the rule of law are guaranteed”
Only a credible political solution in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué will ensure a peaceful future and stability for Syria and the region. For this reason, the EU continues to work in support of the UN-led Geneva intra-Syrian dialogue, which is the only one that can ensure international support and legitimacy to the peace process. Furthermore, the EU will maintain its engagement with all regional and international partners and with Syrian civil society to support the UN-led process. It also continues to support the Syrian population, as well as refugees and the communities that host them in neighbouring countries, with humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation assistance.

The European Union believes that sustainable peace goes hand in hand with the restoration of Syrian social cohesion and dignity, based on justice and equal citizenship. This can only be achieved when all Syrians will feel safe, free and able to live in dignity in their own country.
The EU believes that the right to safe, voluntary and dignified return is an individual right of refugees and internally displaced persons, and supports their dream of living safely at home. But for Syrian refugees to be able to return to their country, the necessary conditions need to be in place. The EU works closely with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) on the conditions that are needed for these returns to be safe, however these protection requirements are not currently met.

Until there is clear evidence that the necessary protection conditions are met, it will be essential to maintain asylum space and to continue strengthening the resilience of refugees and the communities that host them. This is why the EU will continue to show solidarity with and support to refugee hosting countries. The EU’s assistance in response to the Syrian crisis does not only benefit Syrian refugees, but also Lebanese, Jordanians and Turkish people, helping to create job opportunities, infrastructure including schools, as well as better health and water services.

Once a political solution is reached, the EU will help Syrians “win the peace”. However, there can be no shortcuts in the way towards a truly sustainable peace. The EU will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only once a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition is firmly under way, negotiated by the Syrian parties on the basis of UNSC Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué. A guarantee of the rule of law is needed to ensure that reconstruction efforts will benefit all Syrians. The EU’s reconstruction support cannot be invested in a context that would exacerbate pre-war inequalities and grievances. It will only do so if it can lead to genuine reconciliation and peace building.

The focus of reconstruction is not simply on rebuilding infrastructure but the aim is to create conditions that will mitigate or prevent the recurrence of violence and to respond to the grievances that sparked the conflict in the first place.
BRUSSELS III CONFERENCE ON “SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA AND THE REGION” – 12-14 MARCH 2019

The overarching objective of the three Syria Conferences has always been to support the Syrian people and further mobilise the international community behind the work to achieve a lasting political solution to the Syria crisis, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

As with the two previous editions, Brussels III will also address the most critical humanitarian and resilience issues affecting Syrians and communities hosting Syrian refugees, both inside the country and in the region. It will also reaffirm the international community’s political and financial support for Syria’s neighbours, notably Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, as well as Egypt and Iraq. Brussels III will be the main pledging event for Syria and the region in 2019.

The Conference will provide even greater space than previous editions for Syrian, regional and international NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as women’s networks.

Asmaa
Syrian refugee in Jordan

“I chose law because I don’t like injustice. I’ve seen many unpleasant things and couldn’t do anything about it. Maybe law would help me help people.”

Asmaa, 27, crossed the border into Jordan when she was pregnant with her second child. Her husband had just been killed in the war. When her father heard in the news that his missing son was also killed, he had a heart attack and died.

Despite everything she went through Asmaa keeps smiling. She wants to look towards the future. She followed lessons by WhatsApp and passed her high school exam. She received a scholarship to study law.
Hudaifa
13-year-old Palestinian born in Syria

“I want to become a doctor when I grow up. I want to help people; it's a good thing and shows humanity.”

Hudaifa came with his family to Lebanon aged nine, when the bombing reached Al-Yarmouk camp. Hudaifa is a chess champion. When he and his family arrived in Lebanon, their father taught them chess so they wouldn't play in the streets.

“Chess teaches us how to go by in life.”

Amsha
Lebanese living in East Beirut

“We pay for water to be brought in a water tank and then we fill up our own tank. In winter, when there's snow and ice, we really struggle.”

With EU funding, local residents like Amsha and Syrian refugees enjoy access to reliable water services in Lebanon. People can now save 70% of the costs and have clean drinking water.

“Now we can relax, at least. We can even grow some plants on our doorstep.”

See also
Delegation of the European Union to Syria
Supporting the future of Syria and the region - Brussels III conference
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