



# THE EU AND THE SYRIA CRISIS

Ten years into the conflict, the situation in Syria is still critical, with millions of Syrians displaced and in need of humanitarian protection and assistance. The level of violence remains high and there is little progress in sight towards a sustainable resolution of the conflict. On the contrary, Syria today finds itself on a trajectory of protracted instability, further compounded by the socio-economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey have shown extraordinary solidarity towards the refugees, as well as other host countries in the region such as Egypt and Iraq. They continue to require assistance to meet the growing needs of the refugees and the communities hosting them.

**Only a credible political solution** in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254<sup>1</sup> and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué<sup>2</sup> **will ensure a peaceful future and sustainable stability**

**for Syria and the region.** For this reason, the EU continues to work in support of a UN-mediated, inclusive, credible, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned dialogue in Geneva as the only way forward towards a genuine political solution and a peaceful, prosperous future for the Syrian people. The EU remains actively engaged with all regional and international partners and with Syrian civil society to support the UN-led Geneva process. The EU also continues to support the Syrian population, as well as refugees and the communities that host them in neighbouring countries, with humanitarian, stabilisation, development and economic assistance.

The European Union firmly believes that sustainable peace goes hand in hand with the restoration of Syria's social fabric. This will only be achieved when all Syrians will feel safe, free and able to live in dignity in their own country.

**“ Our immediate concern is to address the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, to work towards a lasting nation-wide ceasefire and to bring about a comprehensive political solution. The Brussels Conference is an effective tool for the EU to engage with all relevant actors in support of the UN's political and humanitarian efforts.”**

**Josep Borrell**

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy  
Vice-President of the Commission

<sup>1</sup> - United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 was unanimously adopted on 18 December 2015. It calls for a nation-wide ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access and a political settlement in Syria.

<sup>2</sup> - The Geneva Communiqué was issued on 30 June 2012 after a meeting of the UN-backed Action Group for Syria. It laid out a six-point plan intended to stop the violence and move the two sides towards a political settlement. It was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2118/2013.



The right to **safe, voluntary and dignified** return is an individual right of refugees and internally displaced persons. The EU supports the Syrian refugees and their aspiration of living safely at home but, **for them to be able to return to their country, the necessary conditions need to be in place.** The EU works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the conditions that are needed for organised returns to be safe. Access to the entire territory is needed for UNHCR and other mandated humanitarian organisations to monitor the situation. **These requirements are currently not yet in place.**

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 continues to show solidarity with and support for refugee-hosting countries.**

The EU's assistance in response to the Syrian crisis does not only benefit Syrian refugees

but also the Jordanian, Lebanese, 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 underway,** negotiated by the Syrian parties on the basis of UNSC Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

The EU's reconstruction funds cannot be invested in a context that would exacerbate pre-war inequalities and deepen long-standing grievances. The rule of law and basic human rights must be guaranteed to ensure that reconstruction efforts will benefit all Syrians. Only then can reconstruction lead to genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

## EU SANCTIONS



**Since 2011, the EU has put in place targeted sanctions against the Assad regime and its supporters to halt repression and increase pressure in support of a lasting political settlement of the Syrian crisis in line with UNSC Resolution 2254.**

**EU sanctions on Syria mostly target specific individuals and entities. They are designed to avoid impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including additional global efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Exports of food, medicines or medical equipment such as respirators and ventilators are not subject to EU sanctions. Even for potentially dangerous goods banned from entering Syria, exceptions are allowed for humanitarian purposes.**

## HOW IS THE EU HELPING?



**Saving lives**  
by addressing the **humanitarian needs** of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country and in the region



**Supporting the UN-mediated intra-Syrian negotiations** towards a genuine political transition



**Strengthening Syrian civil society** organisations to provide community support to the population and promote democracy, human rights and freedom of expression



**Promoting national reconciliation, transitional justice, justice for detainees, missing persons and their families, and accountability** for war crimes



Supporting the **resilience of Syria's population** and society, **refugees** in neighbouring countries, the **communities and countries that host them**

**over  
€20  
billion**

Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, the EU and its Member States have mobilised **over €20 billion** to help those affected by the Syrian war. This makes the EU collectively the **largest provider of international aid in response to the Syria crisis**, delivering humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

### **BRUSSELS IV CONFERENCE ON "SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA AND THE REGION", 22 TO 30 JUNE 2020**

The overarching objective of the Brussels Conferences is to support the Syrian people and mobilise the international community in support of a lasting political solution to the Syria crisis, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

As with the three previous editions, Brussels IV 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 renew the international community's political and financial support for Syria's neighbours, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, as well as Egypt and Iraq. Brussels IV will be the main pledging event for Syria and the region in 2020. As in previous years, the Conference will provide an interactive platform for dialogue with **civil society and NGOs active in Syria and the region** through an online survey and targeted discussions with EU and UN local partners in Syria and the region.



## Rasha Rifaai Syrian refugee, Lebanon

*"My ambitions are to learn more, and establish my own school. I want to impact society, and not just be a regular person."*

Rasha, 25, left Syria in 2014 and now lives in Zeitooneh, Lebanon. It was important for her to pursue her studies that she had to interrupt because of the war. In Lebanon, Rasha benefitted from an EU-funded scholarship, and after graduating, she was offered a job as a teaching assistant at the institute she graduated from.

*"Women have to be educated, because education is a weapon for them, and everyone else. Women have to make an impact in society just like anyone else, and not be a passer-by that came, lived, and died without leaving an impact. If they are not educated how would they educate future generations?"*

## Nesreen el Nasser Syrian refugee, Jordan

*"I am more valued because I'm the one working hard and providing for my family, and I'm buying my daughter's treatment so it changed a lot of things at home."*

Nesreen, 35, moved to Jordan with her family from Deraa, Syria in 2013. She took up a sewing training provided by an EU-funded project with other Jordanian and Syrian women. With this new skill, she is now able to provide for her family.

*"I wish to be able to put my girls through school so they can learn. I do not want them to stay at home like me because I didn't get my right to an education and I want my girls to learn and become successful."*

*"Not everyone knew each other here, Syrians or Jordanians, and we have formed beautiful friendships."*



## Gufran El Hamed Syrian refugee, Turkey

*"My childhood dream is to be like my father."*

Gufran, 19, took refuge in Turkey in 2012. Her school in Idlib was destroyed and therefore her education disrupted. Gufran was in eighth grade when she escaped from Idlib.

She successfully completed secondary school and high school in the Temporary Housing Center. She also attended a language course there. Gufran's dream was to become a lawyer like her father. These dreams went a step further thanks to the schools built by the Ministry of Education with EU support.

