

# THE EU AND THE CRISIS IN SYRIA

## EU response to the Syrian crisis

The war in Syria, one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has faced since World War II, continues to have devastating and tragic consequences for its people. It is also having an increasingly destabilising impact on the wider region, through the displacement of people, the spread of terrorism, the exacerbation of political and sectarian differences.

There can be no military solution to the conflict, and the elimination of Da'esh and other UN-listed terrorist entities in Syria requires a political solution to the conflict in Syria.

Therefore, the EU's strategic objectives in Syria are focused on six key areas:

- (a) An end to the war through a genuine political transition, in line with UNSCR 2254, negotiated by the parties to the conflict under the auspices of the UN Special Envoy for Syria and with the support of key international and regional actors,
- (b) Promote a meaningful and inclusive transition in Syria, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the Geneva Communiqué, through support for the strengthening of the political opposition,
- (c) Save lives by addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country in a timely, effective, efficient and principled manner.
- (d) Promote democracy, human rights and freedom of speech by strengthening Syrian civil society organisations,
- (e) Promote accountability for war crimes with a view to facilitating a national reconciliation process and transitional justice,
- (f) Support the resilience of the Syrian population and Syrian society.

These objectives were endorsed by the [Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions](#) of 3 April 2017 that, together with the [Joint Communication by the High Representative and the Commission of 14 March 2017](#), form the EU [Strategy for Syria](#), a country specific part of the [EU regional strategy for Syria, Iraq and the Da'esh threat](#) adopted in March 2015 and [reviewed in May 2016](#).

Implementing this Regional Strategy, the EU has also stepped up its engagement, including by supporting, by non-military means, the efforts of the Global Coalition to counter Da'esh. The [EU actions to counter Da'esh](#) illustrate that the EU is fully committed to fighting terrorism, both inside and outside the European territory. [The Syria and Iraq: Counter Terrorism/Foreign Fighters Strategy](#) was endorsed at the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting of 20 October 2014 and the EU established an [autonomous sanctions regime to target i.a. ISIL/Da'esh in September 2016](#).

The EU has called for an end to the unacceptable violence in Syria, which continues to cause the suffering of millions of Syrians and immeasurable destruction of infrastructure. Attacks on cultural heritage are also an unfortunate consequence of the conflict. The EU continues to condemn in the strongest terms the continuing violence and the widespread and systematic violations [of human rights](#). In March 2017, the EU delivered [statements](#) at the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic during the Human Rights Council session. [On 19 July 2017](#), the EU decided to provide €1.5 million to support the International, Impartial and Independent

Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in Syria.

The European Union has responded decisively to the violent repression of anti-government protests in Syria which began in March 2011, by [suspending its cooperation with the Syrian Government](#) under the European Neighbourhood Policy and gradually extending [restrictive measures](#). These measures have been targeted and include humanitarian exemptions. The EU will continue its policy of imposing additional sanctions targeting the regime and its supporters, as long as the repression continues. On 29 May 2017, the Council extended EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime until **1 June 2018**. The sanctions currently in place include notably an oil embargo, restrictions on certain investments, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on equipment and technology that might be used for internal repression, as well as on equipment and technology for monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. It now includes 255 persons and 67 entities targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze over the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. See the annex for an overview of sanctions in place.

The EU has been at the forefront of the work done to put Syrian chemical weapons under international control, to eventually lead to their destruction. In March 2016, the EU provided funding of €4.6 million to the Organisation for Prohibition of [Chemical Weapons](#) (OPCW) special missions in the Syrian Arab Republic, including activities related to the OPCW Fact Finding Mission and the Joint Investigative Mechanism (UNSCR 2235). The [fourth JIM report](#) was published in October 2016. The EU delivered a [statement](#) in the OPCW on 7 March 2017. On 17 July 2017, the Council added **16 persons** to the list of those targeted by EU restrictive measures against the Syrian regime for their role in the development and use of **chemical weapons against the civilian population**.

The [EU Delegation to Syria](#) expatriate staff continues to operate from Beirut, carrying out regular missions to Damascus.

### **EU as the leading donor**

The Syrian crisis is the world's worst humanitarian disaster. The EU is the leading donor in the international response to the crisis, with over **€9.5 billion** from the EU and Member States collectively allocated in humanitarian and development assistance since the start of the conflict.

Since 2011, the European Commission's support in response to the Syrian crisis has exceeded **€3.9 billion**, including both immediate humanitarian assistance, and non-humanitarian aid, which responds to immediate and medium-term needs. The Commission has allocated almost €1.120 billion in assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and vulnerable communities inside Syria (almost 70% is humanitarian, channelled through EU humanitarian aid- €780 million, and non-humanitarian: ENI – €233.9 million, IcSP – €75.2 million, EIDHR – €13.7 million, DCI-Food – €15.1 million) as well as €1.6 million from the [Madad Fund](#).

At the 2016 London conference Supporting Syria and the Region, the EU and the Member States pledged over €3 billion for the year 2016 to assist people inside Syria as well as Syrian refugees and the communities hosting them in neighbouring countries.

The European Commission pledge for 2016 amounts to €1.115 billion and has been fully delivered. The Commission has also given an indicative amount for 2017 of €1.275 billion, bringing the total pledge for the two years to €2.39 billion. These funds will mostly come from humanitarian assistance and the [European Neighbourhood Instrument](#). A significant amount of European Commission funding pledged is also channelled through the [EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#).

This commitment was confirmed at [the Brussels Conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region"](#) held on 5 April 2017, during which the EU restated its London pledge for 2017 and pledged an additional amount of €560 million for 2018 for Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, with the ambition to maintain this sustained level in 2019. At the Brussels Conference, the international community confirmed €5.6 billion/USD 6.0 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2017 for the Syria crisis response, and €3.5 billion for the period 2018-2020.

### **Humanitarian assistance**

Since 2011, the Commission has responded to the dire humanitarian situation by ensuring principled assistance and protection for those population in need. The EU supports humanitarian programmes implemented by its partners (United Nations, International organizations and International NGOs) in respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence, irrespective of political, religious or ethnic affiliations of beneficiaries and only responding to humanitarian needs. Through its first-line emergency response, the EU and its humanitarian partners respond to primary needs of the most vulnerable.

The EU has provided nearly **€1.75 billion** humanitarian assistance for life-saving emergency response, food, water, emergency medical treatment, sanitation, hygiene, protection, education in emergency and shelter to millions of Syrians inside Syria and to Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries.

Through our humanitarian aid inside Syria, we are reaching millions of people across the country, starting from the first line emergency response. We are helping humanitarian partners to respond to needs from the situation of early displacement.

Thanks to lifesaving humanitarian aid provided by the European Commission since the beginning of the crisis:

- Some 2 million people gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene items;
- 850 000 people received food;
- 1 million people received essential items and shelter,
- 350 000 children have been covered by child protection programmes.

The EU also supports humanitarian partners to preposition stock and contingency planning to anticipate new population movements.

The humanitarian and protection situation remains extremely difficult for civilians in many parts of the country, including where fighting is still ongoing, such as in Raqqa governorate, with persisting food, health and protection needs, and lack of access to basic services.

While humanitarian convoys have recently finally gained access to some of the hard to reach areas in South and Central Syria, access to the estimated 4.54 million people in hard-to-reach areas, including 540,000 in besieged locations, remains a key challenge.

The EU has been continuously calling for the respect of an effective ceasefire, of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and of human rights law, the protection of civilians, especially children, women and other vulnerable groups and for unhindered unconditioned humanitarian access to all those in need.

### **Non-humanitarian assistance**

The Commission has mobilised over €2.7 billion in non-humanitarian aid, including:

- €723 million through the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) to address the medium term needs of civilians inside Syria as well as of refugees and hosting communities in the region (education,

livelihoods, local governance, health, access to basic services);

- €380 million through Macro-financial Assistance (MFA) to Jordan to assist with the influx of Syrian refugees;
- €236 million through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace for assistance programmes in opposition-controlled areas in Syria, mediation efforts, transitional justice preparation and measures to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities in the region, as well as to support the destruction of Syrian chemical stockpiles and chemical threat prevention;
- €242 million through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) to Turkey;
- €26 million through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights;
- €61 million through the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI)
- €1040 million channelled through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (including from the instruments ENI, IPA and DCI)

Since its establishment in December 2014, most non-humanitarian aid for Syria's neighbouring countries is channelled through the [EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis, the 'Madad Fund'](#) (EUTF Madad). The EUTF aims to bring a more coherent and integrated EU response to the crisis by merging various EU financial instruments and contributions from Member States into one single flexible mechanism for quick disbursement. The EUTF primarily addresses longer term resilience needs of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq, as well as the hosting communities and their administrations.

The mandate of the Trust Fund has been extended so that it can also operate in the Western Balkans where relevant to the flow of Syrian refugees. In the future the Trust Fund may also start financing resilience activities inside Syria and could become a funding tool for reconstruction, resettlement and governance support following a political settlement of the crisis. With contributions and pledges from 22 Member States, amounting to over €93 million, and contributions from various EU instruments, the Fund has reached a **total volume of more than €1 billion to date**. Projects focusing on education, livelihoods and health have already been approved, covering a total of €1040 million out of which €449 million have been contracted to the Trust Fund's implementing partners on the ground.

So far, the EUTF has allocated €282 million to support education needs in the region (€232.7 million for primary education, €49.3 million for higher education).

The programmes aim to reach children and young people who have fled the war in Syria to take refuge in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Children and youth in host communities will also benefit. The services provided include access to quality education, protective services and civic and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Furthermore, the EU Trust Fund for Syria is helping improve access to quality higher education, distributing scholarships to vulnerable and internally-displaced students in Syria, Syrian refugees and vulnerable host communities in the region. A total of 3,847 full scholarships, 5,741 language courses and 40,000+ counselling sessions will be provided in the coming four years allowing students to attend and complete undergraduate and master's degrees, professional courses and language classes in key sectors like nursing, pharmacy, education, engineering and business administration, among others.

Since the on-set of the Syrian crisis, substantial non-humanitarian assistance inside Syria has also been provided by the Commission through the [European Neighbourhood Instrument](#), targeting in particular education, livelihoods and civil society support.

Thanks to this financial support, 2.3 million children have had improved access to education at primary and secondary school level (over 4,000 schools reached). Furthermore, more than 11,367 emergency job-opportunities for Syrians have been created (including 4,000 job opportunities for women) and numerous micro-grants for small-size businesses have been provided. More than 85,000 Syrians inside Syria have benefitted from improved community-based activities thanks to the strengthening of grassroots civil society activities.

In addition, Commission funds from the [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#) have also supported the protection of Human Rights Defenders as well as capacity-building of Syrian journalists.

### **Assistance to neighbouring countries**

With Syrians fleeing the conflict to neighbouring countries since the start of the crisis, these countries are now hosting an unprecedented number of refugees. The European Union is strongly supporting Syrian refugees

and their host communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

### **Jordan**

In **Jordan** there are over 650 000 Syrian registered refugees, half of which are children. EU leaders have met Jordan representatives and visited the country many times throughout the last five years.

At the [2017 Brussels Conference](#), the EU and Member States pledged more than 2/3 of the €5.6 billion pledged for 2017. The Conference co-chairs, on behalf of the international community and Jordan reconfirmed and strengthened their commitments, made at the 2016 London Conference in view of strengthening Jordan's resilience vis à vis the impact of the Syria crisis and of inclusive and sustainable economic development.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has allocated more than **€1095 million** in assistance to refugees and vulnerable communities. This includes more than €306 million from the humanitarian budget, €380 million from the Macro Financial Assistance (MFA) Instrument, over €229 million from the ENI/European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, €141 million from the EU Trust Fund for the Syrian crisis and more than €38 million from the [Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace](#).

The Commission's humanitarian aid has helped more than 350 000 Syrian refugees in Jordan. With 83% of the refugees in Jordan living in urban settings, the Commission supports the most vulnerable refugees through cash assistance as it is considered the most cost-efficient and dignified modality. Specific programmes support women and children's needs, since approximately 52% of these refugees are children and 51 % are women. Another priority in 2015 has been to respond to the emergency needs of asylum seekers at the border between Syria and Jordan where today more than 50 000 people remain stranded, awaiting access to Jordan.

In addition, the EU has made available, mostly through Budget Support, an average of €100 million each year in bilateral assistance (all grants) to Jordan under the European Neighbourhood policy, which brings the **overall amount to over €1.6 billion**.

### **Lebanon**

The EU pays tribute to the outstanding efforts Lebanon is making since the outset of the conflict. The country is hosting more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees

representing one fourth of the Lebanese population, which is the highest per-capita concentration of refugees worldwide. At the 2016 London Conference, the EU Commission pledge increased its support to invest in resilience and sustainability of Lebanon. This commitment was confirmed at the [2017 Brussels Conference](#) held on 4-5 April 2017, during which the EU reiterated the pledge made in London a year earlier and confirmed its willingness to have similar levels of support for 2018 (€560 million pledged for Jordan, Lebanon and Syria) and maintain the level of engagement in 2019.

For **Lebanon**, since the beginning of the crisis, the European Commission has allocated **more than €1,2 billion**. This includes more than €439 million in humanitarian aid and close to €562 million for development and stabilisation support. This support is mainly financed by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument/European Neighbourhood Instrument (close to €250 million), more than €290 million through the EU Madad Fund, and €44 million from the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace to address longer term resilience needs of affected civilians. In Lebanon, through its partners, the EU's humanitarian aid reaches around 750 000 people.

This support comes on top of €219 million in regular bilateral cooperation for Lebanon under the European Neighbourhood Policy. This shows that the EU was able to quickly mobilise a 200% increase of funding for Lebanon to effectively address the country's huge needs resulting from the refugee crisis.

## **Turkey**

In Turkey there are over 2.9 million registered Syrian refugees, making Turkey the largest host of refugees in the world. In November 2015, the EU announced the setting up a legal framework – the **EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey** – with **€3 billion** to deliver efficient and complementary support to Syrian refugees and host communities in Turkey. Priority is given to actions providing immediate humanitarian, development and other assistance to refugees and host communities, national and local authorities in managing and addressing the consequences of the inflows of refugees. [The EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey](#) focuses on humanitarian assistance, education, migration management, health, municipal infrastructures, and socio-economic support. €2.9 billion has been allocated, for both humanitarian and non-humanitarian assistance. Of this, €1,66 billion has been contracted and €838 million has been disbursed.

## **Examples of work done through the facility:**

*EU humanitarian aid under the Facility is funding the provisions of food, non-food items (including winterisation assistance), health assistance and protection through humanitarian partners. The Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) charges cash monthly on the debit cards of the most vulnerable refugees. With this money, they cover basic needs like food or housing. At the end of June 2017, more than 680,000 refugees have received support through this programme. The Commission intends to support 1.3 million refugees in the course of 2017.*

*Education is another top priority where the Facility has contracted nearly €550 million. End of May 2017, the first payments to refugee families under the [Conditional Cash Transfer for Education \(CCTE\) project](#), have been made for 56,000 children. This programme builds on the ESSN and provides cash to vulnerable families to promote school enrolment and regular school attendance. The CCTE – worth €34 million and implemented by UNICEF - is the Commission's biggest ever education in emergencies programme. The Commission expects 230,000 children to benefit directly in the first year.*

*In addition, with a direct grant of €300 million signed last autumn with the Ministry of National Education we ensure that half a million Syrian refugee children have access to education by providing Turkish and Arabic language courses for Syrian children, as well as catch up trainings, school transfer and educational material among others. Furthermore, with the help of the World Bank and KfW we are building 70 new schools benefitting 50.000 Syrian children.*

## **Iraq**

Closely linked to the Syria crisis is the crisis in Iraq. The Iraq crisis –like Syria - is a UN Level-3 emergency with over 10 million people in need of humanitarian aid, in a country of 36 million. This includes 3.3 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and 239 000 refugees from Syria.

The European Commission is stepping up its humanitarian assistance to help the most vulnerable in Iraq. The initial allocation for 2017 of €42.5 million comes on top of over €159 million in humanitarian assistance that the European Commission has already made available in 2016 and the delivery of 266 tons of aid offered by countries through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism in response to Mosul emergency. EU aid is covering the essential needs of the most vulnerable in Iraq, including food, health care, water, sanitation and hygiene as well as protection, shelter and education in emergencies.

## ANNEX - RESTRICTIVE MEASURES ON SYRIA

The EU restrictive measures on Syria consist of:

- Prohibition on the import of arms and related material from Syria. Export restrictions on certain equipment, goods and technology that might be used for internal repression or for the manufacture or maintenance of such products. The measure includes a prohibition on related financial assistance as well as insurance and reinsurance.
- Obligation for member states to inspect vessels and aircraft if there are reasonable grounds to believe they carry arms, related material or equipment which might be used for internal repression. This applies in member states' seaports, airports and in their territorial sea, in accordance with international law. Items that may not be exported from the EU to Syria must be seized.
- Import ban on crude oil and petroleum products from Syria. The prohibition concerns import, purchase and transport of such products as well as related finance and insurance. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in the Syrian oil industry. This covers loans and credits, acquisition or extension of participations and the creation of joint ventures. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on investment in companies engaged in the construction of new power plants for electricity production in Syria.
- Prohibition to participate in the construction of new power plants, including related technical or financial assistance.
- Ban on exports to Syria of key equipment and technology for the oil and gas industry. The ban also includes a prohibition on related technical and financial assistance. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Ban on trade in goods belonging to Syria's cultural heritage which have been illegally removed from Syria with the objective of facilitating the safe return of those goods.
- The assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU are frozen and it is prohibited to make funds or economic resources available, but the provision allows for legitimate trade to continue under strict conditions.
- Ban on trade in gold, precious metals and diamonds with Syrian public bodies and the central bank.
- Ban on supplying banknotes and coinage to the Syrian central bank.
- Member states must not give new grants and concessional loans to the Syrian government.
- Asset freeze on 67 entities and 235 persons responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime. The release of certain frozen funds or economic resources may be authorised exceptionally under certain conditions if they are intended, inter alia, for humanitarian purposes; for evacuations from Syria; or in order to make payments on behalf of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for activities related to the OPCW verification mission and the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.
- Travel ban on 235 persons responsible for or associated with the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria or supporting or benefiting from the regime.
- Export ban on equipment, technology or software primarily intended for monitoring or interception of the internet or telephone communications.
- No disbursements and payments in connection with existing loan agreements between Syria and the European Investment Bank, as well as the suspension of technical assistance contracts relating to projects in Syria.
- Prohibition to trade Syrian public or public-guaranteed bonds to or from the government of Syria or its public bodies and Syrian financial institutions. No brokering or issuing services for such bonds are allowed.
- Prohibition for Syrian financial institutions to open new branches or subsidiaries in the EU or to establish new joint ventures or new correspondent banking relationships with EU banks.

- EU banks are prohibited from opening offices or accounts in Syria. Under certain conditions, member states may authorise derogations from this prohibition.
- Member states are to restrain short and medium term financial support for trade with Syria, including export credits, guarantees and insurance. No more long-term support.
- No insurance or re-insurance to the Syrian government, public bodies, corporations or agencies (except health and travel insurance or compulsory third party insurance for Syrian persons or entities in the EU).
- Cargo flights operated by Syrian carriers and all flights operated by Syrian Arab Airlines may not have access to EU airports.
- Prohibition to export luxury goods to Syria.
- Prohibition on the export of aviation fuel to Syria.

For more information, see [legislation](#) instituting these restrictive measures and [Frequently Asked Questions on EU restrictive measures](#).