

On the situation in Syria

1. Syria has been ruined and traumatised by a murderous civil war for over six years. Half of the country's inhabitants have been forced to flee and today still live in uncertain conditions, more than 6 million are internally displaced and 5 million in camps in the neighboring countries. As part of the Syrian population now enjoys a slight respite from mindless killing and savage destruction, the European Green Party calls on the international community not to draw its attention away from this country.
2. We welcome the different cease-fires that have happened during the last period of time, but we should strengthen the diplomatic efforts, in order to allow a continued suspension of hostilities, a consolidation of the cease-fire and the beginning of another round of peace talks. These peace talks must also give an opportunity to the civil society, including women, youth and ethnic and religious minorities to voice their contribution. Since the start of this tragedy, the EGP has been very clear: We reject and condemn attempts to coerce Syrians into submission by military force and repression. Such military and violent solutions cannot provide a sustainable path forward for Syria and a future for Syrians. and only an inclusive, political process will provide an end to the war and a truly lasting peace. Setting pre-conditions or excluding negotiating parties, such as the Kurds, is the best guarantee to see fighting resumed.
3. There will be a time to reflect and assess the mistakes and failings of the European Union and its Member States and of the international community at large in the Syrian conflict. There will be a need to draw necessary conclusions with regards to the dramatic consequences of the assistance of toppling a dictator through military means. Yet, the time is now for pooling all European diplomatic resources in support of the current UN-led peace talks. At the same time, the Gulf States are also called upon to contribute their part to the solution.
4. While side-lined and marginalised at the diplomatic table - mostly because of its own doing – European states have a role to play in the recovery and reconstruction of Syria and an experience to share in terms of reconciliation, fostering trust and overcoming the destructive forces of war. European states, together with local oppositional democratic forces such as local councils and various NGO's, should promote a vision of a future Syria, which is plural, inclusive, democratic and respectful of all groups. European states should use its influence and economic weight to press all actors - in particular its regional partners - to de-escalate, rather than re-fuel, the conflict. Some of the underlying reasons of the social unrest are ecological ones such as the droughts due to global climate change worsened by the exhaustive draining of the ground water. The question of water resources has been a contributing factor in regional conflicts.
5. We reiterate our absolute condemnation of the atrocities and the widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, committed by the forces of the Assad regime and its allies, as well as the abuses and crimes against humanity committed by non-State armed groups, in particular Daesh (also sometimes called IS or ISIS) and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly al-Nusra). All war crimes and violations of human rights must be prosecuted. Reconciliation will have to be based on the due process of law.

6. We deeply deplore that many governments and some of our close partners have provided military support to warring actors that have been, and still are, responsible for serious crimes. We are deeply concerned by the fact that the armed opposition in Syria is dominated by numerous radical Islamist militias, who, in the territories they control, harshly discriminate against or persecute women, sexual minorities, non-Muslims and Muslims who do not subscribe to their rules of religious practice.

7. We denounce the complicity of President Putin in the destruction in Syria, as illustrated most gruesomely by the flattening of parts of Aleppo by Russian air forces. Nevertheless, the EGP must deal realistically with the fact that Russia has secured itself a decisive role on the Syrian question. Foreign involvement has contributed to the prolongation and aggravation of this war. We hereby also condemn other foreign powers' military involvement, especially Saudi Arabia's, in promoting and supporting the military capabilities of terrorist and Takfirist organisations. We especially note Turkey's efforts to further destabilise the situation on the ground by invading Syrian territory and conducting warfare, mainly against Syrian Kurdish military groups that had been successfully protecting their native lands from Daesh and other extremist troops.

8. We vehemently condemn the crimes against humanity that have been perpetrated by all parties involved in this bloody 6-year conflict. These are the worst human rights violations in recent history and should not be excused by any arguments, either religious, ethnic or political. The reports of such violations perpetrated in detention centres under the control of the Assad regime are appalling.

9. We remain convinced that there can be neither an effective conflict resolution nor sustainable peace in Syria without accountability for the crimes committed by the Assad regime and the other conflicting parties. Peace is not antonymous to justice; lasting peace requires transitional justice. If justice is our goal, then we cannot sit back and wait until the war comes to an end. We therefore welcome the UN resolution establishing the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria with the purpose of collecting evidence of the most serious crimes committed in Syria. We call on all European governments to secure sufficient funding for the Mechanism to be able to carry out its important tasks. In this context, the EGP welcomes the announced Conference on Syria to be held in Brussels on April 5th 2017. The EGP expects the presence of the democratic oppositional forces inside and outside of Syria at this conference. We stress the importance of full transparency regarding any financial support that is offered.

10. We deplore the blockage of a referral by the UN Security Council to the International Criminal Court. We therefore call for an EU coordinated accountability strategy towards the crimes committed in Syria by asking Europe's national governments to establish and strengthen the principle of universal jurisdiction across their national courts. The broader the principle is implemented in national courts, the narrower are the chances of Syrian individuals to get away with their crimes.

11. We condemn the heinous acts of Daesh within the region and beyond, including against civilians in the streets of cities such as Berlin, Brussels, Istanbul, London and Paris, and we firmly wish to see the defeat of this criminal group of mass murderers, bringing perpetrators of war crimes to justice. Fighting Daesh is not enough unless the foundations of its recruitment are addressed; these include sectarianism, marginalisation and discrimination against entire groups, including Arab Sunnis. We need a clearly thought through strategy, driven by locals, to find the kind of sustainable solution to the conflict that does not guarantee the creation of Daesh's successor. The hard lessons from the liberation of Fallujah need to be carefully reminded as the battle of Mosul unfolds and that of Raqqa approaches.
12. Europe should support, wherever possible, the building of the capacities of the people and civil society of Syria, including through actors that promote human rights, equality (including gender equality and minority rights), democracy and empowerment, inside Syria, but also outside its borders for the population in exile.
13. Beyond, in the long run, the European Union will have to join the UN in organising and managing a substantial effort towards a post war state building process in Syria.
14. The EGP reiterates its solidarity with Syria's neighbouring countries and nations that, by hosting millions of Syrian refugees, have reminded the world, and in particular the European governments, that solidarity to those in distress is a fundament of mankind. Europe should be ashamed of itself.
15. We condemn the hijacking of European development, migration and foreign and security policies by narrow-minded, xenophobic and parochial considerations. We urge Europe to step up its support to the neighbours of Syria who are hosting the millions of refugees that fled their country, which should not translate into the construction of walls designed to prevent migration, or the fostering of autocratic regimes.
16. We propose the European institutions and Member states to support education programs for Syrian refugee children. The EU-Turkey deal hasn't solved the refugees' situation, but only pushed the challenge out of Europe's territory instead. We urge our Member States to finally live up to their principles and to their obligations under international humanitarian law, vis-à-vis refugees and asylum-seekers (including through humanitarian visa). The EU member states should keep their promises to relocate the agreed number of 160.000 refugees from Greece and Italy. Until date a mere 10% of these people have been relocated. In addition to these numbers, the EU should relocate an additional number of (vulnerable) refugees, identified by UNHCR, to relieve refugee camps in the region and to provide for safe alternative routes to those of (often criminal) human smugglers. Also, under the condition of the guarantee of security, we want European countries to help in facilitating safe voluntary returns for refugees to Syria and to help the country in building a new Syrian society based on democratic values and respect of human rights. We reiterate our commitment to establish a truly European Asylum procedure and policy.