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The situation in Syria

Opinion¹

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Rapporteur: Mr Giacomo SANTINI, Italy, Group of the European People's Party

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons congratulates the rapporteur, Mr Pietro Marcenaro, on his excellent report and endorses the draft resolution as tabled.
2. The committee considers it vital to include on its agenda the question of the protection of Syrian refugees and displaced persons and the humanitarian assistance to be provided by governments in view of the increasingly serious human rights violations and the constantly worsening humanitarian situation.
3. The committee wishes to propose some amendments to further strengthen the draft resolution.

B. Proposed amendments to the draft resolution

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 14, insert the following paragraph:

“The Assembly considers it important to move, where appropriate, existing refugee camps further away from the border with Syria so as to allow for the better safety of refugees and ensure the civilian character of the camps.”

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 15, add the following paragraph:

“The Assembly urges all bordering countries to allow persons fleeing Syria access to their territory and access to protection without fear of *refoulement* and calls all member States of the Council of Europe to provide individual Syrian asylum seekers with appropriate protection, whether this be asylum or subsidiary protection.”

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Santini, rapporteur for opinion

1. At present, according to the latest estimates of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there are no fewer than one and a half million people needing humanitarian assistance in Syria. According to other sources, there are around 40 000 orphans. According to the estimates²

1. Reference to committee: Urgent debate, Reference 3849 of 23 April 2012. Reporting committee: Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy; See [Doc. 12906](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 25 April 2012.

2. Dated 24 April 2012 (except for the figures for Lebanon which date from 23 April 2012).

of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 48 583 people have fled to neighbouring countries: 23 702 to Turkey, 11 748 to Jordan, 10 804 to Lebanon and 2 329 to Iraq³. Unfortunately, given the arrivals of new refugees, these figures are changing day by day.

2. The Syrians who have found refuge in Turkey live in camps set up close to the border. The committee wishes to welcome the hospitality extended by Turkey and takes this opportunity to congratulate the Turkish authorities for having taken swift and appropriate action to manage the arrivals of Syrian refugees and meet their needs and for having reinforced their co-operation with the HCR so as to cope with the influx of refugees in the best possible way. In this connection, it refers to the visit to Antakya (Turkey) by the ad hoc sub-committee on the large-scale arrival of irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees on Europe's southern shores and its related visit report.⁴

3. Unfortunately, since that visit the situation has changed dramatically as, although at the time of the visit the Turkish authorities expected the refugees rapidly to go back to Syria, at present their number is steadily growing, in particular in the border provinces of Hatay, Gaziantep, Kilis and Sanliurfa.

4. The committee also notes that increasing numbers of Syrian Kurds are seeking refuge in Iraq. Most of them go to live with relatives or friends, whereas others live in camps open to the elements or under canvas.

5. The committee is gravely concerned at the humanitarian situation in Syria, especially the shortages of food, medication, fuel and staple products, and at the threats and acts of violence against the civilian population and medical and humanitarian staff.

6. It draws particular attention to the situation of persons displaced internally following the escalating violence and above all the plight of the women and children.

7. In these circumstances it can but endorse the comments made by the United Nations Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs, Ms Valerie Amos, to the effect that humanitarian aid must become the key concern for everyone and those of the United Nations emissary's spokesperson, Ahmad Fawzi, calling on Syria to allow the opening of "humanitarian corridors".

8. It welcomes the European Union initiative of allocating an additional budget of 7 million euros to fund survival aid for those who have been injured or forced to flee the violence being perpetrated in the country, bringing the European Commission's total contribution to 10 million euros.

9. The refugees' living conditions nonetheless vary depending on the host country. In Lebanon, for example, there are no Syrian refugee camps but there are Syrians who have fled the conflict. According to some sources, those that cross the border do not wish to register themselves for fear of reprisals.

10. The committee also wishes to draw attention to conditions in the camps and calls on the States concerned to offer decent living conditions and also to ensure that the children and adolescents can continue their education.

11. The committee unreservedly supports the United Nations appeal and calls on the member States to take the necessary measures to ensure that the refugees can benefit from international protection and to act in a spirit of solidarity, providing all the necessary assistance, since the vast majority of these refugees are in an extremely insecure situation and have no financial resources.

12. Lastly, the committee draws the attention of Council of Europe member States and non-member States to the risk, should the situation last, of mass arrivals of refugees not only in the countries bordering on Syria but also in other countries.

3. These figures do not include refugees who have already received assistance but are not yet registered.

4. AS/Mig/AhLarg (2011) 04 rev.