



Resolution 1878 (2012)¹

The situation in Syria

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly is appalled by the situation in Syria, where, in the last thirteen months, more than 11 000 people have been killed, tens of thousands have fled the country and hundreds of thousands more have been internally displaced as a direct result of the brutal repression by the Syrian autocratic leadership of an uprising with democratic aspirations.

2. The Assembly firmly condemns the widespread, systematic and gross human rights violations, amounting to crimes against humanity, committed by Syrian military and security forces, such as the use of force against civilians, arbitrary executions, the killing and persecution of protesters, enforced disappearances, torture and sexual violence, including of and against children. It equally condemns the human rights violations committed by some of the armed groups combating the regime.

3. The Assembly reiterates that there can be no impunity for those who commit crimes against humanity, whoever they are. All allegations of violations and crimes must be properly investigated and their perpetrators brought to justice, including, as appropriate, before the International Criminal Court.

4. Two draft resolutions of the United Nations Security Council condemning the violence in Syria were vetoed by Russia and China in October 2011 and March 2012. Following the international community's failure, for more than a year, to agree on action on Syria, the Assembly notes that, today, a common position is gradually emerging: two resolutions were unanimously adopted by the United Nations Security Council on 14 and 21 April 2012 authorising the deployment of United Nations unarmed military observers to Syria to report on the implementation of a full cessation of armed violence. This emerging unity can at last constitute the basis for effective action by the international community in a situation the emergency and gravity of which cannot accommodate individual countries' geopolitical considerations.

5. The Assembly fully supports the six-point peace plan proposed by the joint envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr Kofi Annan, and calls for its full implementation by all parties to the conflict. Although violence levels have dropped markedly since the ceasefire began on 12 April, the Assembly regrets the continuing violations of the ceasefire and the increasing number of deaths. It calls for the immediate withdrawal of government troops and weapons from population centres.

6. Kofi Annan's peace plan should be given every chance of success in order to avoid fully fledged civil war. The Assembly thus welcomes the deployment of United Nations observers on the ground and calls on the Syrian authorities and the international community to ensure that observers are granted full freedom of movement and access to the whole territory of the country, as well as all the means necessary to monitor the respect of the ceasefire and of the right to demonstrate peacefully.

7. The Assembly stresses, however, that Kofi Annan's peace plan is not solely about establishing a UN-supervised ceasefire and ensuring urgently needed humanitarian assistance. Its implementation and the total cessation of violence should ultimately guarantee the creation of a space where democratic changes can be brought about in Syria in a peaceful manner. The conditions should thus be gradually created to allow for a "Syrian-led political process", as advocated by the peace plan, and eventually for free and fair elections. The

1. Assembly debate on 26 April 2012 (16th Sitting) (see [Doc. 12906](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Marcenaro; and [Doc. 12911](#), opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Santini). Text adopted by the Assembly on 26 April 2012 (16th Sitting).

Syrian people should be free to build their own future. To facilitate this objective, the Assembly calls on the United Nations Security Council to urgently put in place an embargo on the importation of all weapons and military material into Syria.

8. The member States of the Council of Europe should deploy every effort to ensure respect of the agreed peace plan, including sanctions agreed by the European Union, the League of Arab States and some individual States, the implementation of which is being co-ordinated by the Group of Friends of the Syrian People. The Assembly emphasises that these are directed not against the Syrian people but against individuals and institutions associated with the repression or supporting or benefiting from the regime.

9. The dictatorship which has oppressed the Syrian people for decades has no future. It is impossible to anticipate how much time it will take and how much more suffering it will cause, but it seems clear that Assad's regime is coming to an end. This places great responsibility on both the international community and the domestic opposition.

10. The Syrian population is a mosaic of ethnic, cultural and religious groups and this diversity, together with the territorial integrity of Syria, must be preserved in a future post-Assad Syria. The Assembly calls on the various groups of domestic opposition to unite in order to be considered as a legitimate alternative offering all Syrian citizens, irrespective of their ethnic origin, culture or religion, the prospect of a peaceful, democratic and pluralist Syria. Noting the under-representation of Christians in the Syrian National Council, any post-Assad future must guarantee the religious tolerance that Christians have enjoyed until now.

11. The Assembly underlines that respect for human rights, the recognition of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and the choice in favour of dialogue and democracy are not mere declarations of principle but the prerequisites for uniting and strengthening the opposition. The latter is currently divided due to lack of clarity on these fundamental principles and the ensuing fear, among various minority groups, of a change which they perceive as a threat.

12. The Assembly therefore insists that human rights must be respected now and any violations, also those committed by the opposition, must be firmly denounced and stopped so as to give credible evidence that human and minority rights will be effectively respected in a new Syria. Building this new Syria will require the active engagement of all parts of Syrian society in a sincere effort of pacification and reconstruction after a dramatic year of division and violence.

13. The Assembly supports all efforts, both at international and domestic level, to help build a new, democratic and pluralist Syria, respectful of human rights and the rights of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities. It appeals to the international community to support initiatives aimed at uniting the opposition with a view to bringing about democratic change in Syria. It urges caution vis-à-vis those forces which, because of specific geopolitical interests or for sectarian reasons – in Syria as in other countries of the Arab Spring – are providing political and financial support to extremist groups.

14. As an immediate priority, with 1.5 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, the Assembly urges the provision of unhindered humanitarian assistance to the wounded, refugees, displaced persons and all those in need. Humanitarian supplies and services must be made available under conditions which protect civilians and aid workers. The Assembly, welcoming the hospitality extended by Turkey and congratulating the Turkish authorities, considers it important to build, where appropriate, possible future refugee camps further away from the border with Syria so as to allow for the better safety of refugees.

15. The Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to respond positively to the appeals launched by the relevant agencies of the United Nations in order to address the humanitarian needs of the tens of thousands of refugees fleeing from Syria into Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, as well as of the estimated 1.5 million people affected by the crisis in Syria itself. 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 on all member States of the Council of Europe to provide individual Syrian asylum seekers with appropriate protection, whether this be asylum or subsidiary protection.