



Security Council Briefing on Syria (Political/Humanitarian), 30 October 2023

Malta Statement delivered by Francesca Gatt,
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Thank you, President.

Let me begin by thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and Director Worornu for their briefings. At a time of escalated regional violence and tensions, your messages of practical steps towards peace and dignity are crucial.

Since we have last met to discuss Syria, a deadly increase in military activity has gripped the northwest of the country. Most notably, the 5 October attack on a Syrian military graduation ceremony in the city of Homs.

Hostilities and government strikes in the northwest have damaged critical infrastructure such as power and water networks. The Alouk water station is yet again non-functional.

These attacks have also resulted in the killing of over 61 civilians and the displacement of over one-hundred thousand people from 91 affected communities.

Israeli airstrikes on Damascus and Aleppo international airports have further destabilised the regional situation and have disrupted crucial UNHAS flights for those working on the Syrian response.



Put simply, the conflict continues to rage in Syria. A spill over from the ongoing tensions in Israel and Gaza can only further exacerbate an already volatile situation.

President

Within this context, the humanitarian situation across the country remains perilous. Millions lack water due to chronic fuel shortages, violence, and the impact of climate change. Ahead of the winter months, there remains an urgent need for winterisation support for nearly 6 million internally displaced Syrians. 12.1 million people remain food insecure with 2.5 million no longer receiving food or cash transfers due to underfunding.

Protection needs to remain at the heart of this crisis. As we have heard today, acute protection needs for tens of thousands of displaced in the north-west remain largely unaddressed, with gender-based violence and early and forced marriage a daily reality for Syrian women and girls.

Against this backdrop we urge greater resourcing of the Syrian Humanitarian Response Plan, which remains critically underfunded at 29.4 per cent, as we have heard today from Director Wosornu. Greater humanitarian, protection, and early recovery, resilience and livelihood support are needed now more than ever.



The humanitarian crossings at Bab Al Hawa, Bab Al Salam, and Al Rai remain a critical lifeline for millions of the most vulnerable civilians in the northwest.

Malta reaffirms its support for the delivery of humanitarian aid via all modalities and calls for the authorization of each of these crossings to be renewed for as long as the needs persist.

President,

As outlined by Special Envoy Pedersen, only a political solution, in line with UNSCR 2254, can resolve the root causes of this crisis and provide the safety, dignity, and justice which Syrians long deserve.

Notwithstanding the regional escalation of recent weeks, the momentum which has built towards the reconvening of the Syrian Constitutional Committee must be maintained. The body must resume its work without delay.

All players, including the Astana Format, the Arab Contact Group, must come together to continue the vital work of finding solutions to this conflict, which has caused too much misery, for too many, for too long.

This must be accompanied by meaningful, coordinated reciprocal and verifiable actions related to the Steps for Steps initiative. This includes progress on the missing, the disappeared, and those arbitrarily detained in Syria.



President

In conclusion, Malta urges maximum restraint for all parties in Syria and the region at this time of escalation. We once again reiterate our call for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria and for parties to refrain from further action which could tip the region into greater calamity.

I thank you.