



Security Council briefing on Syria (Political/Humanitarian), 21 March 2024

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

Let me begin by also thanking Special Envoy Pedersen and ASG Musya for their remarks and for their continued efforts in addressing the political and humanitarian crises in Syria.

This month marks the 13th year of Syria's internationalised civil war. One of the deadliest conflicts of the 21st century, with up to three-hundred-and-six-thousand casualties. Despite repeated attempts at mediation, intervention by this Council, and the work of civil society, the conflict remains entrenched.

Malta greatly appreciates the work of the Special Envoy. We commend his tireless efforts aimed at etching out space for compromise, confidence, and conciliation between the parties.

Regrettably, they remain far apart. Malta urges genuine engagement with the good offices of the Special Envoy on his Steps-For-Steps initiative. We also call on all those with influence over the parties to agree on a date and venue for a resumed Constitutional Committee. This must not be delayed further.



President

Each month we are devastated by the reports of violent clashes across frontlines. The continued airstrikes and artillery shelling each month results in the killing, injury, and maiming of dozens.

Such reports represent only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to grasping the suffering of the civilian population.

We are gravely concerned at the humanitarian funding gap when it comes to the UN's response to support the 16 million Syrians in need.

We also take note of the Syrian women civil society organisations and the work of women's human rights defenders across north-western Syria. They face increasing pressure from local authorities which threatens their vital civil and legal work in the public sphere. We reiterate their calls for support and protection.

Without bridging the humanitarian gap, and providing such groups support and protection, we will witness reduction in medical, protection, and education services. The impact of which will be most acutely felt by women and girls and children. We have heard to today the stories of Hanna, Maha and Umm Ahmed. Like these, there are many, many more across Syria.



Malta reiterates the need for early recovery, resilience, and livelihoods programming in the country to help stabilise the humanitarian situation. Such an approach also protects the dignity of Syrians and supports a more sustainable aid approach in the years ahead. In this respect, we also commend the work of the United Nations and all humanitarian agencies and partners operating in Syria.

We are pleased to see the continued authorisation of the border crossing points, Bab Al Hawa, Bab Al Salam, and Al Rai, and note these must remain in place as long as the needs remain. We also reiterate the need for the facilitation of aid via all modalities in Syria, including that of crossline.

As we have heard today, more people need humanitarian aid in Syria than at any point in the crisis. As the Secretary General recently emphasised, international humanitarian law must be respected by the parties in Syria.

President

As we state here each month in the Council, there can be no military solution to the conflict in Syria. The only way forward is a political settlement in line with Resolution 2254.

Progress on the issue of the detained, disappeared and the missing would allow some semblance of peace to the thousands of families who know nothing of what happened to their loved ones.



In this regard, we welcome the development of the Terms of Reference for the Independent Institution on Missing Persons and call for sufficient budgetary allocations needed to set up a well-functioning Institution.

Now more than ever, and with the spillover effects of the war on Gaza being felt throughout the region, we must all redouble our political efforts.

As the Special Envoy stated last month, we must reject the status quo in Syria and refute the notion in some quarters that this conflict is easier to manage than to solve.

I thank you.