

PES presidency declaration on Syria 2013-10-11

The situation in Syria has turned into a humanitarian crisis unprecedented in the 21st century. The death toll has exceeded 110,000. More than two million refugees have crossed the borders of neighbouring countries and seven million are reported to be internally displaced. Only an immediate cease fire can prevent more human bloodshed.

The UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria speaks of crimes against humanity through widespread and systematic attacks on civilians. In addition, the long awaited report by the UN chemical weapons inspectors, released the 16th of September, confirmed the fact that chemical weapons were used against the Syrian population. The use of chemical weapons is absolutely unacceptable, and it should not remain without consequences.

The PES fully supports the adoption of the UN Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013) on chemical arms, and expects this will lead to a joint initiative ensuring a comprehensive diplomatic and political solution through a Geneva 2 peace conference. The efforts currently being made by the OPWC (Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons) will be crucial in this context. We congratulate the OPWC with the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize and are sure they will continue to contribute towards a broader solution for Syria.

The PES condemns Bashar Al-Assad for the crimes the regime has conducted against its people. All perpetrators of crimes against humanity should be brought to justice. Hence, the Security Council should refer these cases to the International Criminal Court (ICC). All actors who wish to play a role in shaping Syria's future must respect the basic human, political and social rights of Syrians regardless of their gender, ethnicity or religion.

The pledges made by EU member States to increase humanitarian access to Syria must be reinforced. All parties involved should agree to put protection of civilians first and allow for unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. We will also endeavor to increase aid funding for refugees in the region. The PES urges the EU to mobilize its capacity and resources in order to support the member countries that are under severe refugee pressure.

The PES will continue to strive for a concerted EU response with regards to the situation in Syria, either through the established UN mechanisms or by means of a joint EU initiative. The challenges faced by the international community to respond to these mass atrocities do indicate a need for more reflection on the established mechanisms for multilateral response. A reform of the United Nations is therefore recommended.

The PES will continue its work to strengthen and support the progressive and democratic forces in Syria and to prepare for a future of Syria in peace, prosperity and democracy.

