



THE EU AND THE SYRIA CRISIS



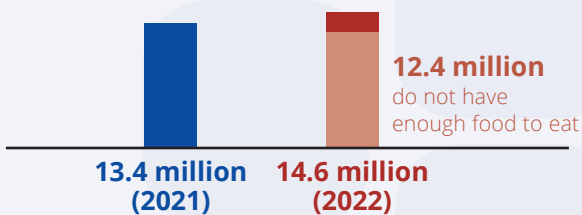
“As the world is confronted with yet another war, Syrians must not be forgotten. The future of Syria and its people has been held hostage to the conflict for the past 12 years. In all those years, the European Union has always been there to address the needs of the Syrian people and work towards a lasting and comprehensive political solution. Today, we are once more saying that we cannot and will not look away.”

Josep Borrell

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice-President of the Commission

15 March 2022 marked 11 years since the beginning of the crisis in Syria. The level of violence remains high and there is little progress in sight towards a sustainable resolution of the conflict. Syria today finds itself on a trajectory of protracted instability and **the humanitarian needs are at their highest**. The levels of poverty are unprecedented due to the drastic deterioration of the economy exacerbated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war waged by Russia on Ukraine.

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF SYRIANS IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN AID



Syrian refugees constitute the **largest displacement crisis in the world** with **5.7 million** registered refugees.

Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have **shown extraordinary solidarity towards the refugees**, so have other host countries in the region such as Egypt and Iraq. They continue to require assistance to meet

the growing needs of the refugees and the communities hosting them.

The European Union firmly believes that **only a credible political solution** in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254¹ and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué² **will ensure a peaceful future and sustainable stability for Syria and the region**.

The EU continues to work in support of an **UN-mediated, inclusive, credible, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned dialogue** in Geneva as the only way forward towards a genuine political solution and a peaceful, prosperous future for the Syrian people.

The EU remains actively engaged with all regional and international partners and with Syrian civil society to support the UN-led Geneva process. The EU also continues to support the Syrian population, as well as refugees and the communities that host them in neighbouring countries, with humanitarian, stabilisation, development and economic assistance.

The European Union is convinced that sustainable peace goes hand in hand with the restoration of Syria's social fabric. This will only be achieved when all Syrians will feel safe, free and able to live in dignity in their own country.

1 - United Nations Security Council resolution 2254 was unanimously adopted on 18 December 2015. It calls for a nation-wide ceasefire, unhindered humanitarian access and a political settlement in Syria.

2 - The Geneva Communiqué was issued on 30 June 2012 after a meeting of the UN-backed Action Group for Syria. It laid out a six-point plan intended to stop the violence and move the two sides towards a political settlement. It was endorsed by UN Security Council resolution 2118/2013.



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The right to **safe, voluntary, informed** and dignified return is an individual right of refugees and internally displaced persons. The EU supports Syrian refugees and their aspiration to live safely in their own country. However, **for Syrians to be able to return, the necessary conditions need to be in place.** The EU works closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the conditions that are needed for organised returns to be safe. Access to the entire territory is needed for UNHCR and other mandated humanitarian organisations to monitor the situation, assess needs independently and deliver services to all solely based on needs. **These basic requirements are not yet in place.**

In the meantime, it is **essential to maintain asylum spaces in host countries and to continue strengthening the resilience of refugees and the communities that host them.** This is why the **EU continues to show solidarity with and support for refugee-hosting countries.**

The EU's assistance in response to the Syrian crisis benefits Syrian refugees and the Turkish, Lebanese and Jordanian people, by helping to create job opportunities, infrastructure including schools, as well as better health and water services.

The EU will be **ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only once a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition** is firmly underway, negotiated by the Syrian parties on the basis of UNSC resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

The EU's funds for reconstruction cannot be invested in a context that could exacerbate pre-war inequalities and deepen long-standing grievances. There can be no shortcuts in the way towards a truly sustainable peace. **The rule of law and basic human rights must be guaranteed to ensure that reconstruction efforts will benefit all Syrians.**

Only then can reconstruction lead to genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

EU SANCTIONS



Since 2011, the EU has put in place targeted sanctions against the Assad regime and its supporters to halt repression and increase pressure in support of a lasting political settlement of the Syrian crisis in line with UNSC resolution 2254.

EU sanctions on Syria mostly target specific individuals and entities. They are designed to avoid impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including additional global efforts to combat the coronavirus pandemic. Exports of food, medicines or medical equipment such as respirators and ventilators are not subject to EU sanctions. Even for potentially dangerous goods banned from entering Syria, exceptions are allowed for humanitarian purposes.



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HOW IS THE EU HELPING?



Saving lives
by addressing the **humanitarian needs** of the most vulnerable Syrians across the country and in the region



Supporting the UN-mediated intra-Syrian negotiations towards a genuine political transition



Strengthening Syrian civil society organisations to provide community support to the population and promote democracy, human rights and freedom of expression



Promoting national reconciliation, transitional justice, justice for detainees, missing persons and their families, and **accountability** for war crimes



Supporting the **resilience of Syria's population** and society, **refugees** in neighbouring countries, the **communities and countries that host them**

€27.4 billion

Since the outbreak of the conflict in 2011, the EU and its Member States have mobilised **€27.4 billion** to help those affected by the Syrian war. This makes the EU collectively the **largest provider of international aid in response to the Syria crisis**, delivering humanitarian, stabilisation and resilience assistance inside Syria and in neighbouring countries.

BRUSSELS VI CONFERENCE ON "SUPPORTING THE FUTURE OF SYRIA AND THE REGION", 9-10 MAY 2022

The overarching objective of the Brussels Conferences is to **support the Syrian people** and **mobilise the international community in support of a lasting political solution** to the Syria crisis, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254.

As with the five previous editions, Brussels VI will address the most critical humanitarian and resilience issues affecting Syrians and communities hosting Syrian refugees, both inside the country and in the region. It will renew the international community's **political and financial support for Syria's neighbours**, particularly Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan, as well as Egypt and Iraq. Brussels VI will be the main pledging event for Syria and the region in 2022. As in previous years, the Conference will also provide an interactive platform for dialogue with **civil society and NGOs active in Syria and the region** through an online survey and targeted discussions with EU and UN local partners in Syria and the region as well as on the Day of Dialogue on 9 May 2022.



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Syrians have been paying the highest price for the crisis. Throughout the 11 years, they have shown admirable resilience and resourcefulness. The EU has continuously supported them and continues to do so, to alleviate the consequences of the conflict and build their future. Rasha and Nizar are two of them:



Rasha

Aviation Assistant – Damascus, Syria

“Although I’ve been around aircrafts for so long, I still get this heart flutter every time I watch an aircraft take to the skies. It never gets ordinary being here. Every day is a new adventure for me.”

It’s a Wednesday afternoon and Rasha has just finished closing the day’s flights between Damascus and her home city of Qamishli in Syria. For the second time this week she has helped humanitarian staff to check in, board and fly safely between the capital and the country’s North.

Rasha joined WFP’s team in Syria in early 2021 as an Aviation Assistant for the WFP-run United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) at Qamishli airport in Syria’s Northeast. Prior to that, she worked in commercial aviation for seven years.

As conflict lines shifted dramatically over the years of crisis in Syria, the roads linking Damascus to the two Northern governorates of Qamishli and Aleppo were difficult. Air became the most viable way for UN staff and humanitarian workers to travel between Damascus and the country’s North. With domestic airlines further disrupted by COVID19, the launch of UNHAS in Syria in July 2020, with EU support, was a crucial link for the people in need of assistance.

“If it wasn’t for UNHAS, humanitarian staff would have faced many challenges in accessing families in need.” What used to be a 16-hours drive is now a one-hour flight.

Today, UNHAS in Syria serves 39 humanitarian organisations including UN agencies. Even with COVID-19 precautions strictly followed, the airline service transports every month an average of 350 passengers between Damascus, Aleppo and Qamishli.

In 2021, the humanitarian needs across Syria reached unprecedented levels. It’s more important than ever that staff can rapidly and safely reach those who are in urgent need of assistance. The European Union is a primary donor of UNHAS in Syria since its launch, and it continues to support its operations especially at a time where humanitarian needs are on the rise in Syria.



Nizar

Farmer – Northern Syria

“These trees were thirsty in the days when we had no water, but they came back to life after the pump was rehabilitated and the water was back. Thank God they are bearing olives.”

“Water is life,” says Nizar, a farmer from Raqqa, holding a fruit-laden branch from an olive tree.

In Northern Syria, the sight of small children lugging heavy water containers is just one of the many images of the suffering caused by Syria’s worst water crisis in decades. In addition to the ongoing bloody conflict and the resulting destruction of infrastructure, climate change has affected annual rainfall.

“We were suffering greatly because of the water. We used to fill the water tank of ten barrels for ten thousand Syrian pounds, and the water was polluted and unfit for drinking, causing many illnesses... This forced many people to leave.”

For farmers like Nizar, who represent the vast majority of the population, the scarcity of water available for irrigation undermines a major source of their livelihood, as well as causing severe food insecurity in the region.

Following the rehabilitation of the main water station in Raqqa, a project supported by the EU and other international organisations, partners and donors, the residents of Raqqa now have access to running water. Something that was missing from their lives for many years.

