



**CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND DISASTER RESPONSE
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE**



**BRIEF REVIEW,
2011-2013**

I. CHRONICAL IN BRIEF

The crisis in Syria was prompted by protests in mid-March 2011 calling for the release of political prisoners. National security forces responded to widespread, initially peaceful demonstrations with brutal violence. From summer 2011 onwards, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad refused to halt attacks and implement the meaningful reforms demanded by protestors. In July 2011, accounts emerged from witnesses, victims, the media, and civil society that government forces had subjected civilians to arbitrary detention, torture, and the deployment and use of heavy artillery.

A protest movement against the Syrian government began to escalate, as simultaneous demonstrations took place in major cities across Syria – al-Hasakah, Daraa, Deir ez-Zor, and Hama. On 18 March, after various calls for a "Friday of Dignity", after regular prayers' speech in mosques, thousands of pilgrims chanted "God, Syria, Freedom" and slogans against the President Assad, demanding an end to alleged government corruption. The protesting mobs were met with a violent crackdown orchestrated by state security forces. Sporadic rampages continued for days while on 8 April, heavy clashes erupted in Daraa between protestors, the military and unknown groups of gunmen in which 23 protestors and 19 soldiers were killed. The military also stated that 75 soldiers were wounded by, what they called, terrorist gunmen. The Syrian uprising was only a month old in April 2011, when 72 protesters were killed by security forces firing on crowds. Many of the dead were in the southern village of Ezra, near Daraa and in a suburb of Damascus.

At this stage the EU expressed profound concern and called on the Syrian authorities to refrain from using violence and *"to listen to the legitimate aspirations of the people and address them through inclusive political dialogue and genuine reforms and not through repression"* [Declaration by Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission (HR/VP), on behalf of the EU on the violent crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in Syria, 22 March 2011]. On 27 April, the Security Council of the UN held a public debate on Syria and was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs while on 29 April, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution requesting an investigative mission to Syria.

On Saturday 28 May, the Syrian military entered the towns of Rastan and Talbiseh, a day after their biggest demonstrations so far. On 30 May, it was reported that residents of Rastan and Talbiseh had fired at the army with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades. As a consequence the EU decided to respond by imposing restrictive measures against Syria and persons responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria. These measures included an embargo on arms and equipment that may be used for internal repression, as well as an asset freeze and a travel ban targeting a list of thirteen individuals. The aim of these measures was to achieve a change of policy by the Syrian leadership without further delay. The EU urged Syria to put an immediate end to violence and swiftly introduce genuine and comprehensive political reform, the only way to provide peace and stability for Syria in the long term. Failing that, the EU considered extending the restrictive measures in light of the developments, including at the highest level of leadership. Until the end of May the EU

extended the visa ban and assets freeze imposed on 13 officials and associates of the Syrian regime to 10 more individuals, including President Bashar al-Assad, in view of the continuing repression against the civilian population [Council of the European Union, Press releases]. The Association Agreement and the cooperation with Syria, including under the European Neighborhood Policy Instrument were frozen. The EU expressed its grave concern about the situation unfolding in Syria and the deployment of military and security forces in a number of Syrian cities. The EU strongly condemned unacceptable violence against peaceful demonstrators, the increasing number of fatalities and called on the Syrian security forces to exercise restraint instead of repression. [Declaration by the HR/VP Catherine Ashton on the unfolding situation in Syria, 18 May 2011].

On its behalf the Syrian government announced in the beginning of June that 120 security personnel had been killed in the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour. Meanwhile Turkish officials reported more than 4000 Syrians have crossed into Turkey. In view of the gravity of situation the EU extended the sanctions against Syria by imposing restrictive measures on seven additional persons and introducing such measures against four entities associated with the Syrian regime [Council of the European Union, Press releases]. On 8 June the UN Council members were briefed on current events by Assistant Secretary General Oscar Fernandez Taranco in closed consultations. Discussions followed on a draft resolution on the situation in Syria circulated on 25 May 2011 by the UK, France, Germany and Portugal. Some members were uncomfortable with what they saw as possible action-oriented language which might lead to robust follow-up by the Council. Another issue raised by members like Brazil, South Africa, India, China and Russia was that the Council should not be prescribing precisely how a country should reform itself politically. However, there was never a vote on this draft.

An armed blockade was imposed on the city of Hama on 3 July. As Hama became one of the main opposition centers of the uprising, it turned into a focal point of the growing crisis. On 6 July, a surprising step was taken by the US ambassador, Robert Ford, when he visited Hama and declared that he will stay there till Friday. Syria reacted with anger with this visit. The French ambassador joined the US one on that day to show the French support to the victims. On 8 July, more tanks were deployed around the outskirts of Hama, as part of a strengthening blockade, following protests involving an estimated 500 000 people the previous weekend. It has been estimated that up to 350 000 of the city's 700 000 population have taken part in many of the protests. In a separate incident on the same day, political prisoners attempted to mutiny in Hama's central prison, to which security forces responded with live ammunition. The death toll in the prison is still unknown. The Syrian state news agency reported that eight policemen were killed in clashes in Hama.

Up to that **over 2200 protesters have been reported dead since 15 March 2011.**

The EU urged Syria's leadership to call off such security operations immediately and refrain from the continued use of force against civilians. The EU called for a political process leading to rapid and concrete implementation of substantial reforms, addressing the legitimate demands of Syrian people on their way to a peaceful, genuine and irreversible transition to democracy. EU noted with extreme concern the deteriorating humanitarian situation of many Syrians. Thousands of people were displaced, including in the neighboring countries, as a result

of the violence. Provision of basic goods and services had been interrupted repeatedly. The EU stressed that the Syrian authorities bear responsibility for the humanitarian situation of the Syrian people and strongly urged them to allow safe and unhindered access by humanitarian agencies to all affected areas. The situation continued to affect neighboring countries and constituted a threat to regional peace, security and stability. Therefore, the EU persisted in its efforts to ensure that the UN Security Council assumes its responsibility in this respect, including by condemning the ongoing violent repression. The EU acknowledged the efforts by Turkey and other regional partners on the different aspects of the crisis, in particular the humanitarian aspects, and declared that it would work with them to address the situation in Syria. The EU stated *"its readiness to assist in addressing the humanitarian implications of the crisis in the region"* [3106th Council meeting Foreign Affairs, 18 July 2011, press release].

The UN's Security Council met to discuss the situation in Syria on 2 August. The US, UK and France wanted to formally condemn Syria, but Russia and China were afraid that *"it could be used as a pretext for military intervention in Syria"*. At the same day, Syrian dissident Radwan Ziadeh asked US President Barack Obama and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to demand President Bashar al-Assad to step down.

In view of the gravity of situation in Syria, the EU Council strengthened sanctions and added more Syrian individuals and entities to the list of those targeted by an asset freeze and travel ban twice in August. The Council further tightened the EU's sanctions against the country's regime and imposed a ban on the import of Syrian oil to the EU. The prohibition concerned purchase, import and transport of oil and other petroleum products from Syria and banned investment in key sectors of the Syrian oil industry. EU also banned the delivery of Syrian-denominated bank notes and coinage produced in the EU to the Syrian Central Bank.

On 4 October, China and Russia vetoed a draft resolution, sponsored by France, Germany, Portugal and the UK, which condemned the Syrian crackdown on protestors. Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa abstained. Several rounds of negotiations substantially altered the text. However, language on the Council's intent to consider further measures if the Syrian regime failed to implement the resolution's provisions remained. In addition, on 15 November UN issued a press statement condemning the attacks against several embassies and consular premises in Syria. During the Council's 9 November open debate on protection of civilians, the High Commissioner for Human Rights said there was a risk of civil war in Syria.

In early December 2011, the Syrian government accepted an Arab League plan to send team of observers to monitor the situation on the ground and agreed to withdraw army equipment from cities. Nevertheless human rights activists have strongly criticized the head of the Arab League monitors, Omar Idilbi of the Local Coordination Committees, adding that there are fears he might not be neutral.

In light of the continued repression in Syria, the EU reinforced restrictive measures against the Syrian regime based on human rights activists' reports of some 200 people killed by Syrian security forces in the villages of the northwestern province of Idlib on December 19 and 20, 2011. Trade in Syrian public bonds and the provision of insurance and re-insurance to the Syrian government were prohibited in the EU. Syrian banks would no more be allowed to

neither open new branches in the Union nor establish joint ventures or correspondent banking relations with European financial institutions. The European Council banned exports of key equipment and technology to the Syrian oil and gas sectors, i.e. refining, liquefaction of gas, exploration and production. Moreover, participation in the construction of new power plants in Syria was prohibited. Exports of equipment and software intended for use in the monitoring of internet and telephone communications by the Syrian regime was also banned. Finally, the Council added more and entities persons responsible for human rights violations supporting the regime to the list of those targeted by an asset freeze and a visa ban [Council of the European Union, Press releases].

In a Speech on Syria on December, 13, 2011 HR/VP Catherine Ashton declared: *“Now all members of the UN Security Council must assume their responsibilities in relation to the situation in Syria...I have also met other leaders of the Syrian National Council and welcomed the ongoing efforts by the Syrian opposition to establish a united platform and to work for a shared vision for the future of Syria and the transition to a democratic system. ... Further individuals and entities linked to the regime have been added to the assets freeze and travel ban: 86 individuals and 30 entities are now on the list. .. We have made it clear that we are ready to provide emergency assistance should humanitarian needs be confirmed. ... We are also recognizing the vulnerability of the Syrian refugees hosted by neighbouring countries, notably Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and we are ready to support these refugees if the host countries request our help and we have made that knowledge available to them. .. I call on the Syrian authorities to allow humanitarian access. ..I hope we'll see action in the Security Council: that all members will take their responsibilities, and respond to this and respond to what the UN Commissioner for Human Rights has said, with a great sense of urgency.”*

Furthermore, the President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy asked for Russian support to the action by the UN Security Council and to the Arab League Plan at the 28th EU-Russia Summit [Remarks following the 28th EU-Russia Summit, 15 December 2011].

Notwithstanding international concerns President Assad's forces began using large-scale artillery operations in January 2012, against the insurgency, which led to the destruction of many civilian homes due to indiscriminate shelling. **By early April, the estimated death toll of the conflict, according to activists, reached 10 000.**

UN Security Council Resolution S/2012/77

On 4 February a Security Council draft resolution condemning the violence in Syria and supporting the Arab League's 22 January decision to facilitate a Syrian-led political transition was vetoed by China and Russia with all other Council members voting in favour. On 16 February the General Assembly adopted a similar resolution which additionally requested the Secretary-General to appoint a special envoy for Syria. During the monthly Middle East briefing on 28 February, DPA briefed on the deteriorating situation in Syria saying there were credible reports of in excess of 7,500 dead. On 29 February, Kofi Annan was appointed as the UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy for Syria. In other developments, the first meeting of the Friends of Syria was held on 24 February in Tunis.

Security Council Resolution S/2012/77 demands that the Syrian government, in accordance with the Plan of Action of the League of Arab States of 2 November 2011 and its decision of 22 January 2012, without delay:

- a) cease all violence and protect its population;
- b) release all persons detained arbitrarily due to the recent incidents;
- c) withdraw all Syrian military and armed forces from cities and towns, and return them to their original home barracks;
- d) guarantee the freedom of peaceful demonstrations;
- e) allow full and unhindered access and movement for all relevant League of Arab States' institutions and Arab and international media in all parts of Syria to determine the truth about the situation on the ground and monitor the incidents taking place; and
- f) allow full and unhindered access to the League of Arab States' observer mission;

The EU welcomed as well the League of Arab States' resolution of 22 January and its initiative to seek UNSC support for a political solution. Given the Syrian regime's continued use of violence against civilians, the EU designated further 22 individuals and 8 entities (total of 108 individuals and 38 entities) to be subject to restrictive measures. The EU urged all members of the UN Security Council to uphold their responsibilities to end the violence against the Syrian population and support the Syrian people [3142nd Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, 23 January 2012]. In a Speech on the situation in Russia on 01 February 2012, HR/VP Catherine Ashton stated: *"with thousands of people killed and violence escalating across Syria, we strongly urge Russia to join the international consensus, and allow the Security Council to act on the basis of the Arab League proposals and the joint draft resolution"*.

At the Council Foreign Affairs meeting in February`2012 the EU expressed support for the Group of Friends of the Syrian people and Syrian opposition and recognized the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative. The EU welcomed the resolution on Syria adopted by an overwhelming majority in the UN General Assembly, condemning Syrian regime's violations of human rights [3149th Council meeting, Foreign Affairs, 27 February 2012].

In March`2012, responding to the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and on its borders, the European Commission allocated an additional €7 million to finance life-saving assistance to those who have been wounded or forced to flee the ongoing violence in the country. This brought the overall contribution by the Commission at that moment to €10 million. The European Commission was fully mobilised to help meet the humanitarian needs of the Syrian people both inside and outside the country (in Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan and Iraq) through the work of humanitarian organisations and in accordance to the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality.

Situation in Syria have resulted in a flow of Syrian refugees into Turkey and refugee camps have been set up on the Turkish side of the Syrian border. As a result of it on 13 April 2012 the NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) received an official request for assistance from Turkey.

Ceasefire attempt (April–May 2012)

The Ghanaian diplomat and former UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan was appointed on 23 February 2012 as the UN-Arab League envoy to Syria, in an attempt to end the civil war taking place. He developed a six-point plan for peace:

1. *commit to work with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people, and, to this end, commit to appoint an empowered interlocutor when invited to do so by the Envoy;*
2. *commit to stop the fighting and achieve urgently an effective United Nations supervised cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties;*

To this end, the Syrian government should immediately cease troop movements towards, and end the use of heavy weapons in, population centres, and begin pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres.

3. *ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting, and to this end, as immediate steps, to accept and implement a daily two hour humanitarian pause and to coordinate exact time and modalities of the daily pause through an efficient mechanism, including at local level;*
4. *intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons, including especially vulnerable categories of persons, and persons involved in peaceful political activities, provide without delay through appropriate channels a list of all places in which such persons are being detained, immediately begin organizing access to such locations and through appropriate channels respond promptly to all written requests for information, access or release regarding such persons;*
5. *ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and a non-discriminatory visa policy for them;*
6. *respect freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed.*

Terms of Resolutions S/RES/2042 (2012) authorizes an advance team of up to 30 unarmed military observers to liaise with the parties and to begin to report on the implementation of a full cessation of armed violence in all its forms.

Established by United Nations Security Council resolution 2043 of 21 April 2012, initially for a 90-day period, to monitor a cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties and to monitor and support the full implementation of the Joint Special Envoy's six-point plan to end the conflict in Syria. Resolution 2043 authorizes up to 300 unarmed military observers, plus an appropriate civilian component. As of 30 June 2012, United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) consisted of 278 military observers, 81 international civilian staff and 40 local civilian staff. After initial relative lull, hostilities in Syria resumed and on 15 June 2012, UNSMIS had to suspend its activities owing to an intensification of armed violence across the country. On 20 July 2012, the Security Council extended the mission for 30 days and said that any further extension could be possible only *"in the event that the Secretary-General reports and the Security Council confirms the cessation of the use of heavy weapons and a reduction in the level*

of violence sufficient by all sides" to allow the UNSMIS monitors to implement their mandate. As those conditions were not met, UNSMIS mandate came to an end at midnight on 19 August 2012.

Anand's peace plan provided for a ceasefire, but even as the negotiations for it were being conducted, Syrian armed forces attacked a number of towns and villages, and summarily executed scores of people. On 12 April, both sides, the Syrian Government and the Free Syrian Army (FSA) entered a UN mediated ceasefire period. It was a failure, with infractions of the ceasefire by both sides resulting in several dozen casualties. The peace plan practically collapsed by early June and the UN mission was withdrawn from Syria. Annan officially resigned in frustration on 2 August 2012.

In April, the Foreign Affairs Council called for an immediate and full implementation of the UNSC resolutions 2042 authorising the immediate deployment of an advance team of up to 30 unarmed military observers and 2043 establishing the full UN supervision mission in Syria (UNSMIS) with an initial deployment of up to 300 unarmed military observers to monitor a cessation of armed violence. The Council adopted restrictive measures on export of further goods and technology which may be used for repression and banning the export to Syria of luxury goods [3159th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, 23 April 2012].

In a Speech on Syria (17 April 2012) HR/VP Catherine Ashton, defined UNSC resolution as a unified international community call to *"the urgent, comprehensive and immediate implementation by the Syrian government of all the elements of the Envoy's six-point proposal in their entirety"* and stated that China and Russia must continue to play a key role in bringing a solution to the conflict. Together with Member States, the EU had put together a contribution of €29 million in humanitarian aid to Syria and affected neighbouring countries. HR/VP Ashton offered assistance of the EU to Turkey, as support to neighbouring countries is also essential, and promised sanctions and restrictive measures to continue as long as repression continues.

At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in May the EU reiterated its call on the Syrian authorities to fully and immediately comply with the Joint UN-League of Arab States Special Envoy Kofi Annan's plan as endorsed by UNSC resolutions 2042 and 2043 and abide by all their commitments to the UN. The Council called on all sides to respect the safety of humanitarian workers and deplored the death of two humanitarian workers killed. The EU urged the UN Humanitarian Response Plan to be implemented immediately. The Council extended further restrictive measures to total of 128 individuals & 43 entities /3166th Foreign Affairs Council meeting, 14 May 2012/.

Renewed fighting

Following the Houla bloodshed of 25 May 2012 and the consequent FSA ultimatum to the Syrian government, the ceasefire practically collapsed, as the FSA began nationwide offensives against government troops. On 1 June, President Assad vowed to crush the anti-government uprising, after the FSA announced that it was resuming *"defensive operations"*. On 6 June was reported 78 civilians killed in Al-Qubeir. The UN observers headed to Al-Qubeir in the hope of investigating the alleged massacre, but they were met with a roadblock and small arms fire before reaching the village and were forced to retreat.

On 22 June 2012 Syria Government forces shot down Turkish F-4 Phantom II military jet near the Turkish-Syrian border. United States research vessel EV Nautilus arrived three days later at the crash site to join the search and rescue operations. Her two remotely operated vehicles Hercules and Argus conducted search at the seabed in 1280 m (4200 ft) depth and located the debris of the aircraft, and brought parts of the downed jet up to the surface. The bodies of the pilots were elevated on 4 July 2012 with the help of a special constructed device in a 45-minute operation. Tensions between Syria and Turkey dramatically escalated following this incident, as both sides disputed whether the jet had been flying in Syrian or international airspace when it was shot down. Bashar al-Assad publicly apologized for the incident, and relations between the two countries cooled.

Four days after Syria shot down a Turkish war plane; on 26 June 2012 NATO has assembled for a special session. Following the NAC meeting NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen made the official statement at the press point – *"The North Atlantic Council has just met at Turkey's request to hold consultations within the framework of article 4 of the Washington Treaty. This article states that Allies 'will consult whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence, or security of any of them is threatened. We discussed the shooting down of a Turkish aircraft by Syria. All Allies have approved a statement setting out our firm position. We consider this act to be unacceptable and condemn it in the strongest terms. It is another example of the Syrian authorities' disregard for international norms, peace and security, and human life. Our thoughts at this difficult time are with the missing Turkish aircrew, their families and their loved ones. We continue to follow the situation closely and with great concern. NATO Allies will remain seized of developments on the southeastern border of NATO. And let me make this clear: The security of the Alliance is indivisible. We stand together with Turkey in the spirit of strong solidarity..."*.

In June`2012 the European Commission announced increasing humanitarian aid by € 10 million that brought to € 43 million the total amount, to reach an estimated 700 000 people affected by the continuing violence inside Syria and in neighbouring countries. EU Member States provided €24.6 million in humanitarian aid. Between 1.5 and 3 million people were affected by the violence in Syria, over an estimated 87 000 people had already fled the country and were hosted by neighbouring countries.

European Commission also adopted special measure to support Syrian population and refugees that amounted to a total of €23 million. Given the circumstances and the operational constraints on the ground, the focus was put on projects implemented by partners with a solid track record in the country and in the region. In Syria itself, €12.6 million were made immediately available to assist the Syrian people in coping with the unrest and its consequences and preparing for a transition. In Lebanon, the overall objective of the special measure was to mitigate the impact of the influx of Syrian refugees. More precisely, a €5 million action were to support the medium and longer term needs of both the local Lebanese population and of Syrian refugees in the main host communities in Lebanon. In Jordan, the planned activities with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for a total of €5.4 million, contributed to ensuring safe and appropriate services for Syrians living in Jordan [European Commission, press release].

By mid-July 2012, fighting had spread across the country. Acknowledging this, the International Committee of the Red Cross & Red Crescent declared the conflict as a **civil war**.

On 18 July, Syrian Defense Minister Dawoud Rajiha, former defense minister Hasan Turkmani, and the president's brother-in-law General Assef Shawkat were killed by a bomb attack in Damascus. The Syrian intelligence chief Hisham Ikhtiyar, who was injured in the same explosion, later succumbed to his wounds. On the next day, 19 July, Iraqi officials reported that the FSA had gained control of all four border checkpoints between Syria and Iraq. Almost month later, on 19 September, rebel forces reported they seized a border crossing between Syria and Turkey in Ar-Raqqah Governorate. It was speculated that this crossing, along with several other border crossings into Turkey and one into Iraq, could provide opposition forces with strategic and logistical advantages, allowing them greater ease in transporting supplies into the country. In late September, the FSA moved its command headquarters from southern Turkey into rebel-controlled areas of northern Syria.

Also on 20 July, the UN Council adopted resolution 2059 renewing UNSMIS for a final period of thirty days and conditioning any further renewal on the cessation of the use of heavy weapons by the Syrian government and a reduction in violence by all sides. On 19 July a draft resolution under Chapter VII and co-sponsored by France, Germany, Portugal, the US and the UK was vetoed by China and Russia with Pakistan and South Africa abstaining.

On its side, the European Commission doubled its aid for emergency medical care, shelter, food and water to those Syrians most affected by the ever-worsening crisis, both inside and outside the country. An additional €20 million of relief aid brought the European Commission's total assistance in this crisis to €63 million (€40 million in humanitarian aid) at that time. The EU Member States had contributed to date € 27.5 million in humanitarian aid. The additional funding was provided to projects which provide food, water, sanitation, shelter, medical support and supplies, as well as psychological support for an estimated 1.5 million Syrians inside the country as well as to Syrian refugees. In addition, €23 million were allocated to assist the Syrian people to cope with the unrest and its consequences including medium-long term assistance to Internally Displaced People or people who have fled to neighbouring countries [European Commission, Press release]. Stefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood declared that in Syria, the EIDHR was currently supporting different actions for a total of around 4.5 million, such as a project that protects the internet freedom of independent bloggers, writers and journalists [Human rights and civil society in Syria: revealing the truth, preparing the transition, 12 July 2012].

In a statement on UN Security Council debate on Syria on 29 August 2012, the EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva announced that Europe has already provided over €146 million in humanitarian assistance and that Europe stands ready to increase this amount to match the massive evolving needs with massive funding.

Due to worsening crisis in Syria in September the European Commission increased its emergency aid with €50 million, bringing total contribution up to €119 million, and to total of €200 million the assistance from European Commission and Member States – roughly half of all international humanitarian aid to the crisis. Target beneficiaries of the aid were more than 1.5

million people in Syria and a large proportion of the almost 200 000 Syrians who have fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and Iraq. Assistance was also provided to some 500 000 Palestinian refugees and another 87 000 Iraqi refugees who live in Syria. Breakdown of EU humanitarian funding: 61% inside Syria and the rest distributed between Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Additionally, EU increased assistance to Syrian Refugees in Jordan (more than 87 000 Syrians and 27 000 of them living in refugee camps). In the end of the month as a major donor in the Syrian crisis and a leading advocate on behalf of the affected civilians and aid organizations, the European Union jointly with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan brought together relevant stakeholders to discuss the most pressing challenges, coordinate activities and identify ways to bring relief to violence-hit communities. It was stated that the EU is the most generous donor with €222 million (over €84 million EU MS and more than €137 million EC; the latter figure includes €96 million in humanitarian aid) [European Commission, Press releases].

In a speech to European Union Heads of Delegation in September the President of the European Commission Barroso declared that inability to act will only discredit the UN.

In a press statement the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, expressed the hope that South Africa, as a non-permanent member, would help the UN Security Council uphold its responsibility: *"We have asked China, as permanent member of the Security Council, to redouble its efforts to ensure the United Nations Security Council can contribute effectively to the solution of the Syrian crisis"* [Press Statement by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso following the 15th EU-China Summit].

EU sanctions against the Syrian regime were once more strengthened (19th round) including: prohibition of the import into the EU of arms from Syria; denied access to EU airports for flights operated by Syrian Arab Airlines. The Council added 28 persons & 2 entities to the list of those subject to a travel ban and an asset freeze [3191st Foreign Affairs Council meeting]. The Justice and Home Affairs Council in October endorsed the establishment of a Regional Protection Programme to support Syria and neighbours to deal with crisis.

International mediator Lakhdar Brahimi said on 24 October 2012 that the Syrian government has agreed to a ceasefire during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Adha. After Brahimi's ceasefire agreement officially ended on 30 October, the Syrian military expanded its aerial bombing campaign in Damascus. A bombing of the Damascus district of Jobar was the first instance of a fighter jet being used in Damascus airspace to attack targets in the city. The following day, Gen. Abdullah Mahmud al-Khalidi, a Syrian Air Force commander who was described by the state media as one of the country's top aviation experts, was assassinated by opposition gunmen in the Damascus district of Rukn al-Din. In early November 2012, rebels made significant gains in northern Syria. The rebel capture of Saraqib in Idlib governorate, which lies on the strategic M5 highway, further isolated Aleppo from government-controlled areas of the country. On 18 November, rebels took control of Base 46 in the Aleppo Governorate, one of the Syrian Army's largest bases in northern Syria, after weeks of intense fighting with government forces.

The Syrian crisis affects

The civil war in Syria has polarized the Middle East between Sunni Muslim powers such as Turkey and the Gulf Arab states, who support the Sunni rebels, and Shi'ite Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah, who back Assad. The president belongs to the Alawite faith, an offshoot of Shi'ite Islam. As well as drawing Shi'ite and Sunni fighters into Syria from Lebanon, the conflict has raised sectarian tensions within the small Mediterranean state, as violence has spilled over the border and brought the country to political deadlock.

In November`2012 Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanon-based Shi'ite militants from Hezbollah vowed they will keep fighting in Syria's civil war alongside President Bashar Assad's forces as long as necessary. As a result in mid-December 2012, American officials expressed suspicions that their guerrillas firing Scud ballistic missiles at rebel fighters inside Syria. Reportedly, six Scud missiles were fired at the Sheikh Suleiman base north of Aleppo, which rebel forces had occupied.

On 18 January 2013, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and OCHA head Valerie Amos briefed Council members in consultations on humanitarian situations in Syria and the region. Amos reported that there were as many as 4 million in need within Syria, including 2 million internally displaced persons, and 650 000 Syrian refugees negatively impacting the economic and political situations in host countries. She also highlighted the indiscriminate nature of the violence, distressing reports of sexual violence and the need for unhindered humanitarian access. Pillay reiterated the findings of an independent study commissioned by her office that more than 60 000 people had died in the Syrian conflict and repeated her call for the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC. On 29 January, Council members were briefed in consultations by the UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative for Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, on his efforts towards a political solution to the Syrian conflict. Brahimi also suggested the Council might want to set up inquiries into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria to complement the work being done by the Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry. As of 24 February, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees had registered more than 740 000 Syrian refugees in neighboring countries, while elsewhere the UN has estimated that up to 70 000 people have died in the Syrian conflict. A draft press statement proposed by Russia on 21 February regarding a series of bombings in Damascus that killed at least 50 people failed to achieve consensus following objections from the US that the statement should also make reference to attacks on civilians conducted by the government of Syria. Similarly, Council members were also unable to agree to a draft press statement proposed by France on 1 February on the humanitarian situation, in particular a call for cross-border humanitarian access to areas under the opposition's control. Russia, while supportive of OCHA's efforts, appeared to have a problem with the Council making a public statement on the cross-border issue.

The President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy after his meeting with president of Egypt Mohamed Morsi in January`2013 declared: *"the massacre in Syria has to stop. Assad must step aside, in order to facilitate an inclusive and democratic transition. It is tragic that the Syrian regime has again shown that it is not willing to commit to a credible*

political solution to the crisis. Tragic, when we know that (according to the UN) since the beginning of the uprising in March 2011 the crisis has caused the death of 60 000 people”.

In Speech on behalf of HR/VP Catherine Ashton on the situation in Syria it was noted that the EU had almost doubled all types of assistance in and outside Syria. Over €500 million (of which over €350 million is in humanitarian aid) targeted long-term actions on supporting refugees. It was also announced that EU was preparing preventive measures in case of a potential chemical weapon incident with focus more on the trans-border element of this threat on which we cooperate closely with Syria's neighbors such as Jordan and Turkey. The message of preparation for the "day after" and transition was conveyed.

In the period of 26-31 January 2013 NATO deployed six Patriot missile batteries to defend Turkey from possible attack from Syria went operational on Saturday. The United States, Germany and the Netherlands each sent two batteries to Turkey and up to 400 soldiers to operate them after Ankara asked NATO for help. A battery (under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Marcel Buis) from the Netherlands, consisting of 5 missile launchers, has been deployed next to an airport on the edge of Adana, a city of around 1.6 million and 120 km away from the Syrian border. Another battery of 7 launchers has been deployed at a US-Turkish air base east of the city. All batteries were being stationed around three southeastern Turkish cities and NATO declared they will protect 3.5 million Turks from missile attack. NATO strongly denied the Patriot missiles as a precursor to a no-fly zone that Syrian rebels have been requesting to help them hold territory against a government with overwhelming firepower from the air.

In February 2013 in a European Commission MEMO dedicated to *EU's response to the “Arab Spring”: The State-of-Play after Two Years* the following assessment was given:

“Outstanding security challenges remain, first and foremost the ongoing civil war in Syria with its evident risks of spill-over to neighbours, graphically illustrated by the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have flowed into neighbouring countries such as Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. The EU suspended bilateral cooperation with the Syrian government and froze the draft Association Agreement. The EU thereafter initiated and progressively expanded a policy of targeted restrictive measures, including i.a. an arms embargo, an asset freeze and travel ban on members of the Syrian regime and an oil import embargo.

The EU fully supports the Joint Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and the League of Arab States, Lakhdar Brahimi, in his efforts to find a negotiated solution to the crisis. The EU has urged the UN Security Council to agree on UN action towards Syria. The EU Foreign Affairs Council of December 2012 declared the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces as legitimate representatives of the Syrian people.

The EU has so far allocated more than €400 million for humanitarian aid. Beyond humanitarian aid, €100 million has also been provided by the European Commission through the different EU instruments to complement humanitarian aid. The EU is the leading donor internationally. The EU has repeatedly urged the Syrian regime to allow humanitarian workers, agencies and organisations unhindered access to those in need”.

On 20 February 2013, a car bomb exploded in the Mazraa neighborhood of Damascus near the Ba'ath Syrian Regional Branch headquarters, killing at least 53 people and injuring

more than 235. None of the organized groups on either side in the conflict claimed responsibility. On 21 February, the FSA in Quasar began shelling Hezbollah positions in Lebanon. Prior to this, Hezbollah militants had been shelling villages near Quasar from within Lebanon. A 48-hour ultimatum was issued by a FSA commander on 20 February, warning the militant group to stop the attacks or face retaliation. In response, on 18 March 2013, the Syrian Air Force attacked rebel positions in Lebanon for the first time.

As a consequence of this NATO declared no intention of intervening militarily in Syria after a Syrian opposition leader claimed the Patriot missiles to protect rebel-held areas from President Bashar Assad's airpower. "*NATO has no intention to intervene militarily in Syria*", a NATO official said after opposition leader Moaz Alkhatib had asked US Secretary of State John Kerry to extend the umbrella of the Patriot missiles to cover the Syrian north. The Sunni Muslim cleric took over Syria's vacant chair at the Arab League summit in Doha despite announcing on Sunday that he would step down as leader of the Syrian National Coalition.

Following the extremely spread of violence from both sides which results into an increased scale of internally displaced persons (IDP), the EU decided to boost its funding for Syria to keep up with increasing humanitarian needs. The European Commission was to provide additional humanitarian funding of €30 million to help people affected by the Syrian crisis, bringing its total contribution to over €126 million. The new aid targeted approximately 2 million people in Syria, and a considerable number of the more than 474 000 Syrians who had fled across the borders. Humanitarian assistance was also given to vulnerable host communities of the displaced inside Syria and in Jordan and Lebanon. The financial contributions covered health care for the wounded and others in need of emergency treatment, shelter, food, water, sanitation and household items. The surge of aid brought the humanitarian assistance from the European Commission and the Member States of the European Union at that time to over €310 million – more than half of all international humanitarian aid to the crisis. Prior to this new funding allocation, the European Commission had already budgeted €90 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring states, with an additional €6 million allocated to Iraqi refugees based in Syria. Other funding Instruments of the European Union had mobilised €85 million in response to the Syrian crisis. At that stage, the breakdown of EU humanitarian funding was 45% inside Syria and the rest distributed between Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. The European Union Member States (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) had also mobilised humanitarian funding of over €184 million.

The European Commission adopted the second special measure for Syrian refugees, to step up its response to the needs of increasing numbers of displaced Syrians who fled to Lebanon and Jordan. To complement the humanitarian assistance already provided, the special measure, financed from the ENPI, worth almost €21 million helped to respond to the medium and long term needs of refugees and their host communities in the areas in Lebanon and Jordan most affected by the influx of refugees. €10 million were made available to Lebanon and €10.85 million to Jordan. That increased up to €41.5 million the EU funding allocated to Lebanon and up to €20.85 million to Jordan [European Commission, Press release].

In March 2013 Štefan Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy announced additional support of €30 million to help Lebanon in managing the refugee crisis. This brought total help so far to €70 million. In a Statement on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva informed that estimated 4 million were affected by the violence, at least 2 million internally displaced in Syria and more than 623 000 refugees. She mentioned that EC allocated almost €150 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring states, with an additional €6 million allocated to Iraqi refugees based in Syria and €3.3 million to Palestinians in Lebanon. Total EU contribution (EU plus MS) reached more than €358.5 million at that moment. Other funding instruments had mobilised €85 million and the Member States: €208 million. 45% of the funding was inside Syria and the rest was divided between Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. EU European Commission decided to pledge €100 million for 2013 at International Pledging Conference additional to the €100 million already contracted for the crisis in 2011/2012, bringing the Commission's humanitarian funding for the crisis to €200 million. *“The crisis in Syria is the one with the most dramatic spill-over risks that exists today and could have dramatic consequences for the region, and, therefore, Europe.”* [Speech by Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response: Syria: Time is running out, April 2013].

In April 2013 the EU decided to allocate another sum of €30 million additional financial support for refugee crisis, which brought the total amount of financial assistance to Lebanon to more than €90 million in humanitarian and non-humanitarian aid. At that moment Lebanon hosted the highest number of Syrian refugees: more than 400 000. In June 2013 EU provided new €50 million support to Jordan to deal with Syrian refugee crisis [European Commission, press releases]. Month later the EU responded to spiraling needs with more humanitarian aid: €65 million for more than 4 million people (1.4 million refugees). With more intense fighting in Syria and just three months after pledging € 100 million at the Kuwait donors' conference, the Commission stepped up its effort to fund aid agencies because of the scale of the emergency. The additional funding was allocated to Syria to assist the more than four million people who have been forced to flee their homes, and to neighbouring countries that have generously welcomed some 1.4 million refugees. According to the European Commission the economic costs of hosting Syrian refugees were estimated in 2013 at \$ 700 million for Lebanon, \$851 million for Jordan, €600 million to Turkey (foreseen to reach €1 billion by the end of the year) [European Commission, Press release].

At the Foreign Affairs Council meeting in May 2013 the EU remained deeply concerned by the spill-over of the Syrian crisis in neighbouring countries and supported their efforts to contain it. EU was seriously concerned with the involvement of extremist and foreign non-state actors in the fighting in Syria, which is further fuelling the conflict and posing a threat to regional stability. EU remained committed to the sovereignty, independence and the territorial integrity of Syria. EU expressed its great concern regarding the possible use of chemical weapons in Syria. EU reiterated the importance of the role of the fact-finding mission established by the UNSG to investigate allegations of use of chemical weapons. The EU was deeply concerned with the rise of religiously or ethnically motivated violence. The EU reiterated the urgent need for a political solution of the conflict and welcomes the joint US-Russian call for a peace conference on Syria

to promote a political process based on the principles included in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012 [3241st Foreign Affairs Council meeting].

On 3 May 2013, the Shabiha, also known as Shabeeha or Shabbiha (groups of armed men in civilian clothing who act in support of the Ba'ath Party government of Syria, led by the Al-Assad family) reportedly committed a massacre of civilians near the city of Baniyas. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights officially reported that at least 50 people – and possibly as many as 100 – were killed. Witnesses' reports said the dead were killed with knives or blunt objects and that dozens of villagers were still missing.

Lately in May, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen claimed no direct military role in Syria for the alliance and warned against any stepped-up western military involvement. He made it clear NATO envisions no wider role in the Syrian conflict, despite NATO's previous military intervention – on humanitarian grounds – in the Balkans and Libya. *"It is absolutely outrageous what we're seeing in Syria,"* Rasmussen said. *"But there is a clear difference between Libya and Syria. We took responsibility for the operation in Libya based on a very clear United Nations mandate to protect the civilian population and we got active support from countries in the region. None of these conditions are fulfilled in Syria".* Moreover, Rasmussen said Patriot missiles in Turkey define the limits of alliance assistance in the region. *"Let me stress once again that NATO is engaged in defending and protecting our ally Turkey, but I do believe that the right way forward in Syria is a political solution".*

In June 2013 the EU adopted a joint communication that proposed a comprehensive EU approach for Syria and neighbouring countries: *"Towards a comprehensive EU approach to the Syrian crisis"*. The communication envisages aims and tasks as: to support a political process that brings a sustainable solution to the crisis; support the political settlement; prevent regional destabilisation from the spill-over of the conflict in neighbouring countries; address the dramatic humanitarian situation and assist affected populations; prepare for the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation phase; prevent the radicalisation of EU citizens and deal with EU 'foreign fighters' that have travelled to the conflict zone continue urging the United Nations to deal with claims of violations of human rights, international humanitarian law and fundamental freedoms.

The joint communication offers detailed report on the amount of assistance and the efforts so far in Syria and neighboring countries (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Iraq). The EU has mobilised all of its instruments in order to contribute to a wider international response. To that date, €678 million in humanitarian assistance had been committed by Member States and from the EU budget. In addition, the EU had mobilised €175 million from other non-humanitarian budget instruments. In sum, the total response to the crisis has already reached over €850 million. The joint communication announces that the Commission will allocate an additional €400 million from this year's budget to humanitarian and economic and development needs in Syria and the neighbouring region, particularly Jordan and Lebanon, bringing the overall contribution of the EU to over €1.25 billion thus far.

The President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy welcomed the joint Russian-US initiative for a Geneva II conference [Remarks by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy following the 31st EU-Russia Summit].

The Justice and Home Affairs Council issued the following statement: *The issue of foreign fighters, i.e. Europeans moving abroad (in particular to Syria) to join jihadists, is a worrying trend of the terrorist threat in Europe today. Addressing the challenge of individuals indoctrinated by violent extremism ideologies, requires a broad societal approach in terms of prevention. The European Radicalisation Awareness Network and the future EU programme on Countering Violent Extremism represent concrete measures to prevent and counter that threat.*

In a June Statement on Syria President Barroso pointed out the EU as largest humanitarian donor with assistance of more than €840 million and announced that the Commission would deploy additional €400 million for Syria and neighbouring countries in particular Lebanon and Jordan [Statement of President Barroso on Syria].

In a Joint statement after the G8 Summit in Lough Erne (UK) on 17-18 June 2013 European Council President Van Rompuy and European Commission President Barroso declared: *“The European Union is already contributing with almost € 1 billion to address the humanitarian crisis. And we recently announced an additional 400 million as a response to the deterioration of the situation in the country and in the region”*. They stressed the need to press for a political solution via convening a Geneva II conference.

On 12 July FSA reported that one of its commanders, Kamal Hamami, had been killed at the hands of Islamists a day before. The rebels declared that the assassination, perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, was tantamount to a declaration of war.

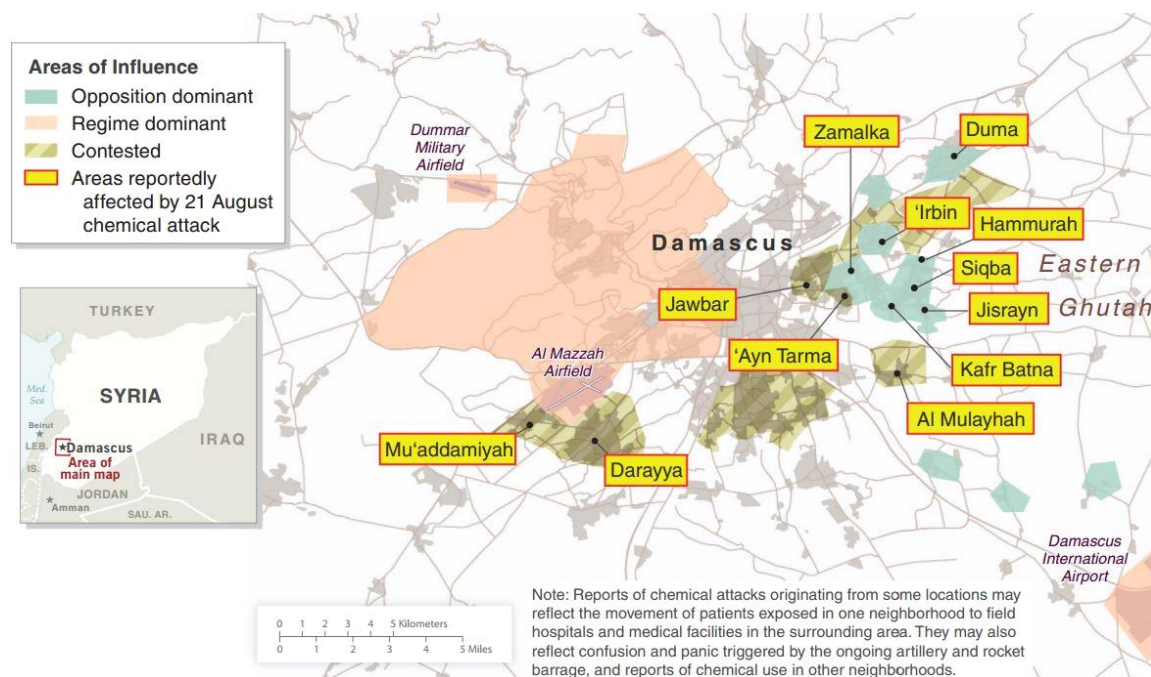
On 18 July, Kurdish PYD forces secured control of the northern town of Ras al-Ain, after days of fighting with the al-Nusra Front. In the following three months, continues fighting between Kurdish and mainly jihadist rebel forces, led to the capture of two dozen towns and villages in Hasakah Governorate by Kurdish fighters, while the Jihadists made limited gains against the Kurds in Aleppo and Raqqah governorates. In Aleppo, Islamists were reportedly ethnically cleansing Kurds from towns in the countryside and massacring them; leading to a mass migration of civilians to the town of Afrin.

The “chemical issue”

On 19 March 2013, the Government of Syria and the opposition each accused the other of employing chemical weapons in an attack that killed dozens in Aleppo province. France raised the issue in the UN Council under “other matters” on 20 March. On 21 March the UN Secretary-General announced his intention. In a 22-March letter, the Secretary-General said he would establish a technical mission to investigate the Aleppo incident. On 22 March, the Council issued a press statement condemning a terrorist attack on a mosque in Damascus that killed more than 40 people, including a senior Muslim cleric.

Several months later, on 21 August 2013, the Ghouta suburbs of the Markaz Rif Dimashq district around Damascus, were struck by rockets containing the chemical agent SARIN. Hundreds were killed in the attack, which took place over a short span of time in the early

morning. Different sources estimated the death toll range **from 281 to 1729 fatalities**. Many witnesses reported that none of the victims they saw displayed physical wounds.



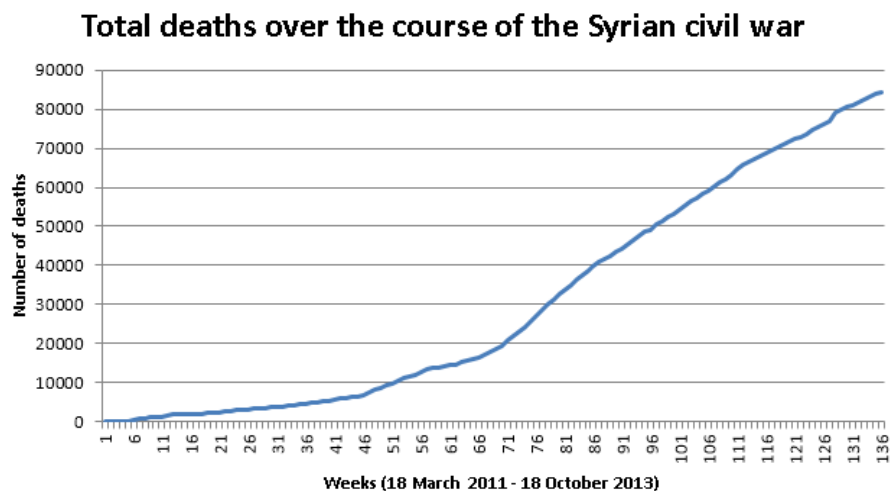
In reaction UN Council members met in consultations on 21 August to receive a briefing from Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson on attacks. Speaking at the stakeout after the meeting, Ambassador María Cristina Perceval (Argentina), Council President for August, said that *“all Council members agree that any use of chemical weapons by any side, under any circumstances, is a violation of international law”* and *“the members of the Security Council also welcomed the determination of the Secretary-General to ensure a thorough, impartial and prompt investigation”*. After completing the investigation three weeks later, the UN reported that it had confirmed the use of sarin in the Ghouta attack – *“The Mission collected clear and convincing evidence that surface-to-surface rockets containing the nerve agent sarin were used in the Ein Tarma, Moadamiyah and Zalmalka in the Ghouta area of Damascus”*. The report's lead author, Åke Sellström, said that the quality of the sarin used in the attack was higher than that used by Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, implying purity higher than the Iraqi chemical weapons program's 45–60%. Based on analyses of the UN's evidence, Human Rights Watch concluded the rockets that delivered the sarin were launched from areas under government control. Specifically, the inspectors listed the precise compass directions of flight for two rocket strikes and these pointed to the government's elite centre in Damascus, Mount Qasioun. The Syrian government rejected claims and called reports *“untrue story”*.

While the government and opposition blamed each other for the attack. Many governments, mostly in the Western and Arab world, said the available evidence showed the attack was carried out by the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a conclusion echoed by

the Arab League and the European Union. The government of Russia sided with the government's characterisation of the attack as a false flag operation by terrorists to draw foreign powers into the civil war on the rebels' side. The attack sparked debate in France, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries about whether to intervene militarily against government forces.

On 2 September 2013, the NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen quoted information from a variety of sources pointed to President Bashar Assad's forces being responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Ghouta on a massive scale, killing over a thousand civilians and wounding thousands more. However Rasmussen claimed he saw no further role for NATO in the Syria crisis, beyond defending Turkey. *"If a response to what has happened in Syria were to be a military operation, I'd envisage a very short, measured, targeted operation, and you don't need the NATO command and control system to conduct such a short, measured, tailored, military operation"*. Indeed, a NATO country took step into the conflict on 16 September 2013 when a Turkish warplane shot down a Syrian helicopter that had violated Turkish airspace. The Turkey's Armed Forces General staff reported that the Mi-17 attack helicopter had strayed into Turkish territory and was warned repeatedly before two Turkish warplanes scrambled and shot it down. The helicopter crashed one kilometer, or just over half a mile inside Syria, it said. This event has marked the first direct action involvement of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization since Syria's civil war began.

On 2 October 2013, the UN Council adopted a presidential statement on humanitarian access in Syria. Members were briefed on its implementation on 25 October by OHCA head, Valerie Amos. She expressed deep disappointment that, despite the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, access had not improved and there had been no major breakthrough in getting the Syrian government to lift bureaucratic impediments and other obstacles. On 10 October, Council members were briefed in consultations on the recommendations for the establishment of the OPCW-UN Joint Mission. The Council authorized the mission on 11 October to support, monitor and verify the destruction of the chemical weapons program by 30 June 2014.



Government and Hezbollah Offensives (October 2013 – present)

On 18 September, members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) overran the FSA-held town of Azaz in the north of the country. Lately same month, the Syrian government declared its intention to join the Chemical Weapons Convention.

On 9 October, rebels seized the Hajanar guard post on the Jordanian border near Daraa after a month of fierce fighting. Its fall meant rebels were currently in control of a swath of territory along the border from outside of Daraa to the edge of Golan Heights. The same day, Hezbollah and Iraqi Shiite fighters, backed up by artillery, air-strikes and tanks, attacked and captured the town of Sheikh Omar, on the southern outskirts of Damascus. Two days later, the Lebanese and Iraqis also captured the towns of al-Thiabiya and Husseiniya on the southern approaches to Damascus. The capture of the three towns, located between the two main highways leading to Jordan, strengthened the government hold on major supply lines and put more pressure on rebels under siege in the Eastern Ghouta area.

On 17 October, the Syrian government's head of Military Intelligence in Deir ez-Zor Governorate, Major General Jameh Jameh, was assassinated by rebels in Deir ez-Zor city. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported that he had been shot by a rebel sniper in the Rashdiya district of the city during a battle with rebel brigades. By 11 November, the military had captured a series of nearby positions, securing most of the area around Aleppo International Airport. A total of 17 cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been confirmed on 26 November. In addition to 15 cases confirmed in Deir-ez-Zor province, two additional cases were confirmed, one in Rural Damascus and one in Aleppo, confirming widespread circulation of the virus.

In the end of November, Turkey and Iran, which support opposing sides within the crisis, jointly called for a ceasefire before the peace talks scheduled for January 22, 2014. As it was mention hereinbefore the ceasefires have been announced previously, notably around Muslim holidays, but none have ever been upheld, despite pledges of commitment by both sides. On 29 November, the United States offered to contribute towards neutralizing Syria's priority chemical weapons stock, by allowing for destruction to take place on a US vessel at sea. Under a September UN Security Council resolution, Syria agreed to destroy its stockpile of toxic nerve agents and munitions by mid-2014. However, until the US proposal, no country was willing to host the destruction of the weapons.

On 2 December 2013 the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that an estimated 126 000 people have died during the conflict, more than a third of them civilians. The September figure estimated by the organization stood at 110 000.

Recent International community efforts

In a Statement on latest figure of refugees fleeing from the Syrian crisis in September 2013 the EU commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response declared: *"The European Commission has, since the end of 2011 and in direct response to the crisis, mobilised €515 million in humanitarian assistance for Syria and neighbouring countries. A further €328 million has also been mobilised through other EU instruments (i.e. for education, support to host communities and local societies), bringing the*

total funding from the EU budget to €843 million... At this stage, the breakdown of EU funding is: 47% inside Syria, 23.1% in Jordan, 24.3% in Lebanon and the rest distributed between Iraq & Turkey". She estimated the number of refugees arose to 2 million.

In September UNICEF and the European Union signed a new cooperation agreement that provided an additional €34.2 million to protect children affected by the Syria crisis and promote access to learning in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. By the end of 2013, the EU contribution to UNICEF in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey expected to reach more than €74 million [European Commission MEMO].

In the period October-November`2013 the EU has decided to fully meet the OPCW request and provide ten new armoured vehicles to support its mission in Syria and delivered on its pledges and mobilised another €85 million for Syria and Jordan. The allocation was aimed at providing assistance to the population inside Syria, Syrian refugees and host communities living in Jordan, as well as Syrian students in Europe.

In November at the 21st Japan-EU Summit leaders noted with great concern the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria and called for a swift destruction of the chemical weapons arsenal under the UN Security Council resolution [21st Japan-EU Summit Joint Press Statement].

Following the EU-US-Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Meeting of 18 November 2013 in Washington, the Joint Press Statement focuses on the following issue: *"Of special note, we discussed the threat posed by foreign fighters going to third countries, in particular Syria, and the possible response to address it. We intend to promote close information sharing between our respective agencies, as well as coordinated initiatives in third countries. We also discussed efforts of the U.S. and the EU in countering violent extremism and agreed to intensify our cooperation"*.

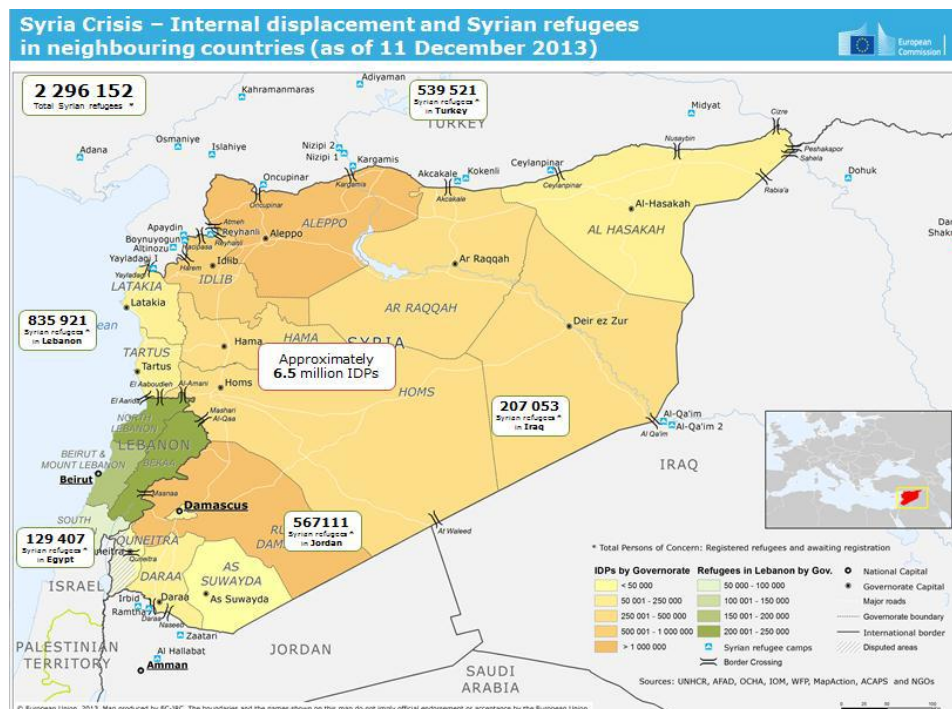
At the December 2013 Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting the phenomenon of Foreign Fighters was once again determined as a serious concern for European security. *"The increasing number of jihadist travelling from Europe to Syria and other hotspots pose a serious problem for both European internal security and to the stability and security of the region. The Commission welcomes the report presented by the EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator and the contributions from Europol and Frontex. The Commission, within its competences, will contribute by mobilising all relevant instruments and policies"*.

Humanitarian situation and needs

According to numerous international organizations the pace of the deterioration of the Syria conflict in recent months of 2013 was such that a humanitarian catastrophe is spreading throughout the whole region as the conflict not only destroys the traditional fabric of Syrian society but also seriously endangering the stability of the neighbors. The originally peaceful protests in Syria have developed into an intensive large-scale armed conflict leading to the death of more than 60 000 Syrians, according to UN estimates, and causing extensive damage to infrastructure and harm to the whole civilian population.

The humanitarian disaster caused by the conflict in Syria has impacted millions of people. According to latest ECHO Factsheet on Syria Crisis (Facts & Figures as of 11 December 2013):

- Estimated number of people affected by the crisis in need of humanitarian assistance: 9 300 000
- Estimated number of internally displaced: 6.5 million (UNOCHA)
- Number of refugees – registered & awaiting registration (UNHCR & GOT)
Lebanon: 835 921; Jordan: 567 111; Turkey: 539 521; Iraq: 207 053; Egypt & North Africa: 146 546; in TOTAL: 2 296 152.



The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate as violence intensifies and fighting continues throughout the country. The situation in parts of Rural Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs is particularly dire where more than half a million people remain beyond the reach of basic assistance. According to the UN, the number of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance has risen dramatically to 9.3 million people, up from 6.8 million in June. Similarly, the UN estimates that the previous figure of 4.25 million internally displaced persons is now more than 6.5 million. ECHO partners highlight the extremely vulnerable situation of large numbers of people in need in inaccessible areas under siege. There are now some 2.3 million refugees (registered and awaiting-registration) in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Egypt and North Africa.

There is also a growing concern for refugees living in Syria (Palestinian, Iraqi, Afghan, Somali and Sudanese), whose vulnerability is rising. The conflict increasingly implicates groups

of the population such as Kurds and Palestinians. Palestinians are getting further drawn into the conflict and numerous fatalities have been reported. Many Palestinians are displaced inside Syria or have fled the country; UNRWA indicates that over 420 000 Palestine refugees in Syria urgently require basic assistance. Between 15 and 29 August 47 000 people of Kurdish origin fled into the Kurdish region of Iraq giving mainly the lack of basic services and difficulties in finding food as reasons to leave Syria.

The International Humanitarian Response

A pledging conference is scheduled for January 2014. This second High-Level meeting organised to financially respond to the humanitarian needs on the ground will also be held in Kuwait.

The United Nations has announced that an international peace conference – referred to as Geneva II – will be convened in Geneva on 22 January 2014. The United Nations states that the goal of Geneva II would be to achieve a political solution to the conflict. This would be done through a comprehensive agreement between the Government and the opposition for the full implementation of the Geneva communiqué, which was adopted after the conference on 30 June 2012.

On 7 June 2013, the United Nations launched the largest appeal in its history with the revised Syrian Government Response Plan and Syrian Regional Response Plan calling for \$4.4 billion in total, to provide humanitarian aid to Syria and neighbouring countries. Both plans include unmet requirements from the previous versions:

- Revised Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan: the fifth revision (publicly released 7 June 2013) appeals for \$1.4 billion for the whole 2013 year (funded at 57.7%). New foreseen beneficiary figures are: 9.3 million people in need, including 6.5 million displaced.
- Revised Syrian Regional Response Plan (Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt): the fifth revision (released on 7 June) appeals for \$2.9 billion (including Governments of Jordan and Lebanon appeals of, respectively: US\$ 380 million and 449.6 million) (funded at 63.1%). Beneficiaries: up to 3.45 million Syrian refugees in the region by the end of 2013 (1 million in Jordan, 1 million in Lebanon, 1 million in Turkey, 350 000 Iraq and 100 000 in Egypt).

The EU with Member States is the largest donor in the region. With the pledges delivered after the donors' conference in Kuwait on 30 January and the adoption on 6 June of a major new package of EU assistance in response to the Syria crisis for the total amount of € 400 million, including € 250 million in humanitarian aid, the total committed EU humanitarian assistance now stands over € 1.5 billion (more than € 1.07 billion from Member States, and over € 515 million from the Commission's humanitarian aid budget). In-kind assistance has also been provided to Turkey and Jordan through the activation of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, which led to the delivery of ambulances, blankets, heaters and other items for a total value € 2.5 million. €461 million have been mobilised through other non-humanitarian EU

instruments (i.e. for education, support to host communities and local societies) – bringing the total to over €2 billion to date.

The Council also established EU Common Messages on the humanitarian aspects of the Syria crisis which included: a call for the absolute and urgent necessity to respect IHL in full and the obligation to protect civilians; a call for all parties to ensure the safety and protection of all humanitarian workers and medical personnel, and to facilitate the free passage of medical supplies to all areas, as well as safeguarding all health facilities and ambulances; a call for Syria to provide the necessary authorisation to scale up humanitarian operations within the country and to all parties to facilitate unimpeded access for humanitarian; a plea for neighbouring countries to maintain or re-establish open borders in order to provide safe haven for, and equal treatment to refugees, including Palestinian refugees; a plea for all donor countries to ensure the fulfilment of pledges already made and to continue to provide financial support to enable host countries to respond to the growing humanitarian needs of refugees; an appeal for all parties to facilitate the delivery of aid based on a transparent, efficient and accommodating regulatory framework; a call for a regional strategy to be developed to strengthen linkages between humanitarian and development assistance across the region, in association with development actors and international financial institutions; a call for humanitarian aid to be channeled in a way which fully respects the humanitarian principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Provision of humanitarian aid funded by the Commission is channeled through mandated and professional international organizations in accordance with the humanitarian principles; aid is provided to all those in need, irrespective of their creed or political affiliation. The Commission continues to call on all parties to the conflict to commit publicly to respecting in full their obligations to protect civilians, to ensure in particular the protection of medical personnel and facilities against the effects of fighting, and to allow access for humanitarian workers.

EU HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR SYRIA 2011-2013

Donor	Commitments (in €, Total Cash + In-Kind)
Austria	7 875 000
Belgium	10 300 000
Bulgaria	295 874
Croatia	15 758
Czech Republic	1 936 915
Denmark	39 962 105
Estonia	704 785
France	30 590 595
Finland	13 988 201
Germany	229 887 735
Greece	200 000
Hungary	374 653
Ireland	13 700 000
Italy	24 428 428

Latvia	43 000
Lithuania	34 754
Luxembourg	7 474 739
Malta	25 000
Netherlands	53 450 000
Poland	1 842 047
Portugal	50 000
Romania	306 456
Slovakia	190 000
Slovenia	90 000
Spain	9 477 533
Sweden	40 957 767
United Kingdom*	590 346 523
TOTAL MEMBER STATES	€ 1 078 548 868
EU**	€ 515 000 000
TOTAL EU	§€ 1 588 178 542

* This amount includes €269 566 502.98 which covers the period 13/9/2013 up to 12/3/2015

** This amount includes an allocation of €6 million for Iraqi refugees in Syria and €3.3 million for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

§ A further €461 million have also been mobilised through other non-humanitarian EU instruments for short term support (i.e. for education, support to host communities and local societies) – bringing the total to over €2 billion to date. [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf]

Major needs and related problems

The nature and magnitude of the humanitarian needs are critical in all parts of the country, be they in Government-, opposition- held or disputed areas. The focus is on life-saving activities. Treating and evacuating the wounded, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene, health, shelter and food assistance, are the main priorities. Protection remains central in the conflict, with very serious allegations of abuses reported against women and children, adding to the constant reports of indiscriminate killings and extra-judicial arrests and lately the use of chemical weapons. Food prices have risen dramatically. The availability of food stocks in many parts of Syria is becoming an increasing concern.

Humanitarian access in Syria has become ever more precarious, above all in disputed areas, exacerbated by security issues and cumbersome administrative and operational restrictions. Nevertheless, efforts continue to deliver humanitarian aid throughout the country, both in Government and opposition held areas, as well as in zones of active fighting. The situation in rural Damascus, Northern and Southern Syria is particularly difficult. Cross-line deliveries organized by United Nations agencies (since 31 January) have reached on various occasions the areas of Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Deir-ez-Zor and Idlib; Daraa was recently reached by a UN joint convoy. However, big gaps remain and various cross-lines humanitarian operations had to be cancelled for security reasons.

Assaults on humanitarian workers have also continued unabated (so far, 33 SARC volunteers and 13 UN staff members have been killed and ambulances and UN vehicles are still

being attacked and humanitarian workers are being kidnapped). 15 International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) have now been validated by the Syrian authorities and are formally allowed to operate in the country.

In neighbouring countries, the number of refugees more than doubled during the first three months of 2013 alone, and, as already mentioned, has now reached some 2.3 million. Countries bordering Syria are approaching a dangerous saturation point and they need urgent support to continue keeping borders open and assisting refugees. Assessment of the conditions of refugees living outside the camps is needed as well as humanitarian aid (especially shelter and water, hygiene and sanitation).

To date (December 2013), 17 polio cases have been confirmed in Syria: 15 from Deir ez-Zor governorate, 1 from Aleppo governorate and 1 from Rural Damascus. The confirmation of additional cases outside the contamination centre of Deir ez-Zor indicates that this is a widespread outbreak. Syria had not had an onset of wild poliovirus since 1999. A regional response strategy has been launched, comprising a multi-country polio response across the Middle East. Under the coordination of the Ministries of Health, World Health Organization and UNICEF, synchronized vaccination campaigns – targeting 23 million children under five with an estimated total budget of \$39 million– are being planned or are already underway in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

Key messages ahead

- Advocacy is vital through all possible channels to call for increased access and a strengthened presence of international community on the ground.
- Advocacy efforts should give special attention to the safe and to ensure the necessary measures for the timely delivery of vaccines, vaccination equipment and supplies region wide.
- Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the protection of civilians, including humanitarian workers and especially medical personnel and facilities throughout need to be ensured.
- Keeping the humanitarian and political tracks separate to facilitate access to those in need remains a priority.
- Continuation of efforts in crisis management is vital and urgent.
- Acknowledge the generosity of neighbouring countries in hosting Syrian refugees and continue to call on countries neighbouring Syria to keep borders open in line with international humanitarian law principles for the passage of all civilians without distinction, and facilitate the work of humanitarian actors where necessary, including border areas to ensure rapid and timely provision of aid.

II. THE REFUGEE IMPACT

One of the direct effects of the crisis in Syria in the region is the heavy influx of Syrian refugees to neighbouring countries. The vast number of Syrian refugees has serious security implications for host countries ranging from economic difficulties to social tensions. Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt are the countries which have been most severely affected by the crisis. They have experienced serious difficulties in managing the refugee crisis on their territory which is confirmed by the appeal for funding to UNHCR, international financial organisations and governments worldwide. The financial burden on these countries is the most evident effect of the crisis and it has further aggravated the situation in countries like Iraq which has been struggling to recover from the devastation of war. Moreover, the discontent of refugees with living conditions in refugee camps sometimes leads to riots and creates complex security challenges for local authorities. The frustration of local populations with the increasing number of Syrian refugees also poses a serious challenge for host countries' governments.

Due to the escalation of violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, the number of Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries has been increasing rapidly since the beginning of 2012. Based on the number of refugees who have registered or are pending registration, Syria's neighbours are today hosting more than two million Syrian refugees, which is further aggravating the growing strains on these countries' infrastructures and economies.¹

Lebanon has been the most seriously affected neighbouring country from the refugee crisis. The number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon in January 2012 was 6290 and it has been growing rapidly to reach 129 106 in December 2012 and 832 005 as of 28 November 2013. According to government estimates, the total number of Syrians in the country is 1 000 000 (Figure 1).²

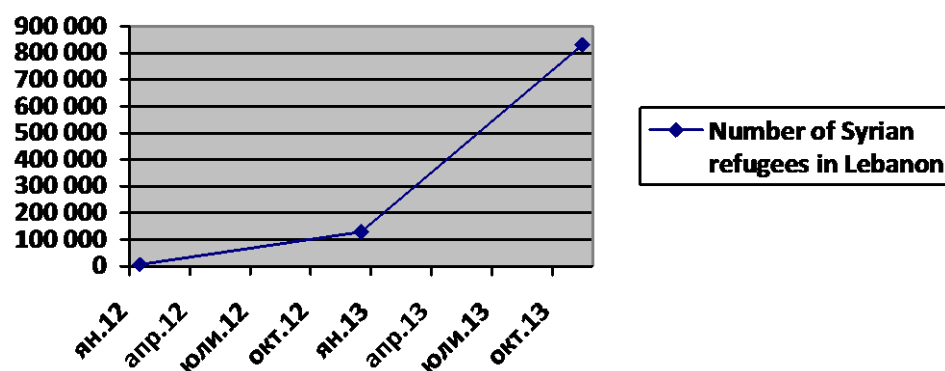
The economic and social repercussions of having such a rapid increase of refugee inflow to Lebanon have been devastating and have created huge pressures on the local populations. The number of Syrians currently registered as refugees or pending registration is equal to more than 18 per cent of the country's population, with groups of refugees scattered across 1400 localities. The impact is alarming, especially on the demographic structures in those regions, and has serious security implications. Health, education, and water and sanitation systems have all exceeded their capacities. This creates further tensions in local communities and puts immense pressure on government authorities.³

¹ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/syria.php>

² <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=122>

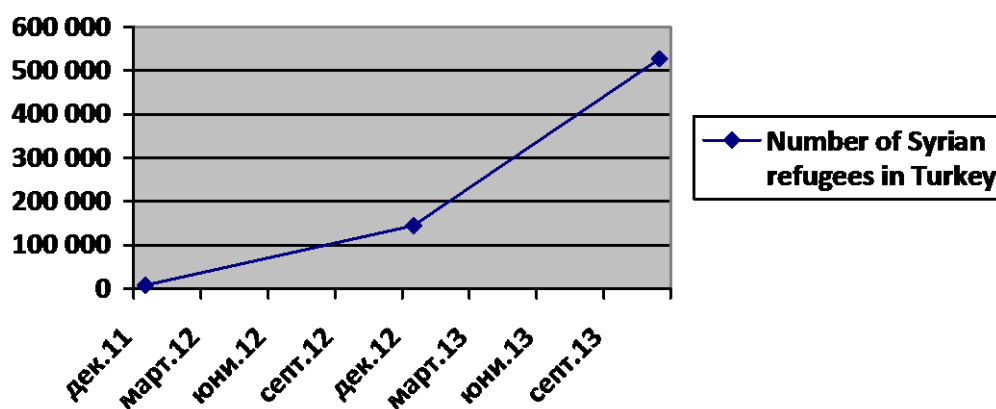
³ <http://www.unhcr.org/522747799.html>

Figure 1: Number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (data source: UNHCR)



According to UNHCR data, the number of registered Syrian refugees in Turkey was 8 000 in December 2011. Their number quickly reached 144 755 by December 2012. The UNHCR data as of 27 November 2013 shows that the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey is already 527 307. According to government estimates, the total number of Syrians in the country is 700 000 (Figure 2).⁴ The Turkish government has responded to the Syrian refugee influx with \$2 billion in support. Refugees are spread across 21 camps where they receive shelter, health care, security and other services. Almost a quarter of a million Syrians are already documented living outside of camps in urban locations, with many more pending registration.⁵

Figure 2: Number of Syrian refugees in Turkey (data source: UNHCR)

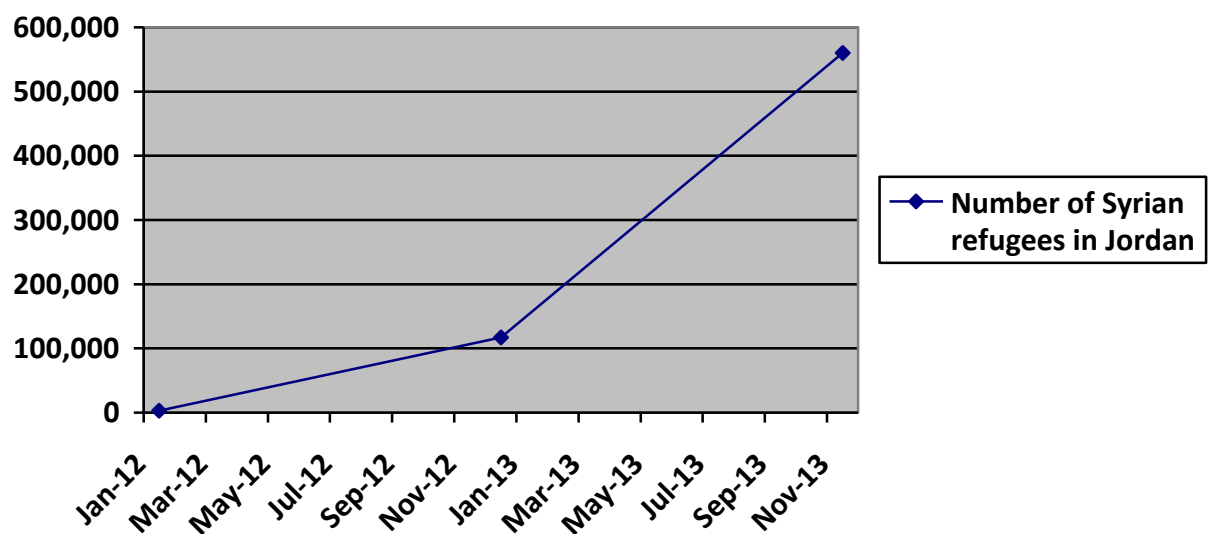


⁴ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224>

⁵ <http://www.unhcr.org/522747799.html>

In Jordan, the number of Syrian refugees in January 2012 was 2749 and reached 117 321 by the end of December 2012. The UNHCR data as of 28 November 2013 sets the number at 560 059 (Figure 3).⁶ The Syrian refugee influx has swollen the population size by 11 per cent, with 140 000 in camps. This increase has constituted an enormous pressure on Jordanian resources, services and infrastructure and it must be kept in mind that a sudden increase in a population by 11 per cent constitutes a serious security threat for any country. The cost of hosting refugees in 2013 solely in relation to electricity, water, education, health, municipalities, subsidised goods, and protection and reception, has now reached \$2.016 billion.⁷

Figure 3: Number of Syrian refugees in Jordan (data source: UNHCR)



According to UNHCR data, there were 8 Syrian refugees in **Iraq** in the beginning of 2012. The number of refugees at the end of 2012 was 67 625. The trend of dramatic increase in the number of refugees continued during 2013 to reach 208 054 as of 27 November 2013 (Figure 4).⁸

In Iraq, which is already struggling with serious security challenges and large-scale internal displacement of around one million people before the crisis in Syria began, the 160 000-strong Syrian refugee population has been swollen further by the recent influx of more than 40 000 people from areas of conflict in north and northeast Syria. As well as those in camps,

⁶ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

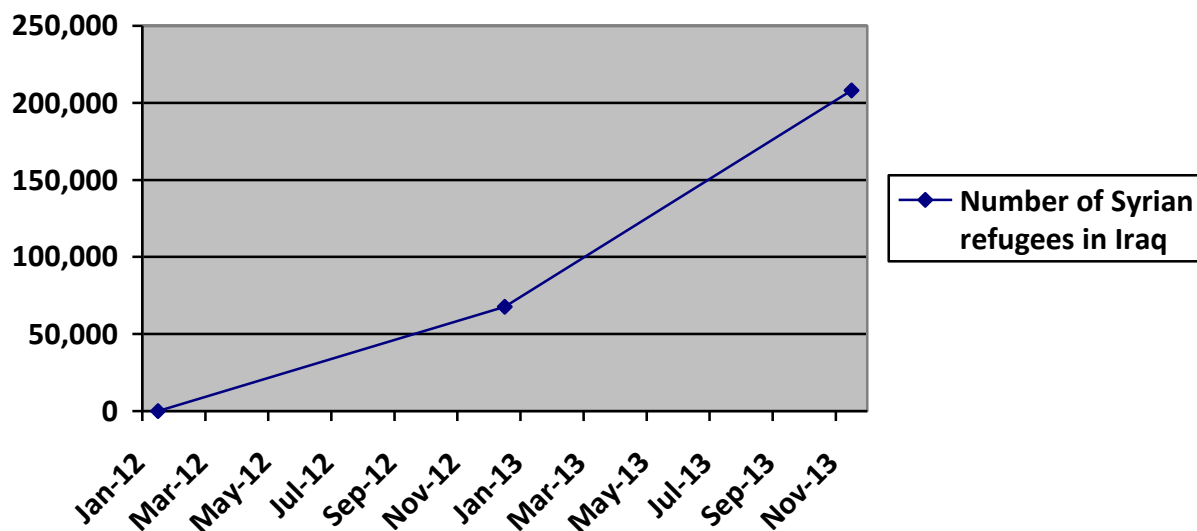
⁷ <http://www.unhcr.org/522747799.html>

⁸ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=103>

thousands of these refugees are living among the local population in situations that will become economically unsustainable without more help.⁹

The impact of the refugee crisis has been especially troubling for this country, which was not long ago devastated by war and is now struggling to rebuild a large part of its infrastructure and trying go back to normal life. The Iraqi response to the Syrian refugee crisis has had very tangible financial dimensions and the country has had to reallocate additional resources from its national budget to respond to the needs of the Syrians in refugee camps. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq, H. E. Hoshyar Zebari, reported at the Ministerial Meeting of the Refugee-Hosting Countries Bordering the Syrian Arab Republic in September 2013 that the Iraqi government has spent more than \$15 million during 2012 in response to the refugee crisis. In addition to that, the Kurdistan regional government allocated \$25 million to secure the needs of refugees. And these are only part of the financial resources that the country had to reallocate in order to tackle with the refugee crisis on their territory.

Figure 4: Number of Syrian refugees in Iraq (data source: UNHCR)

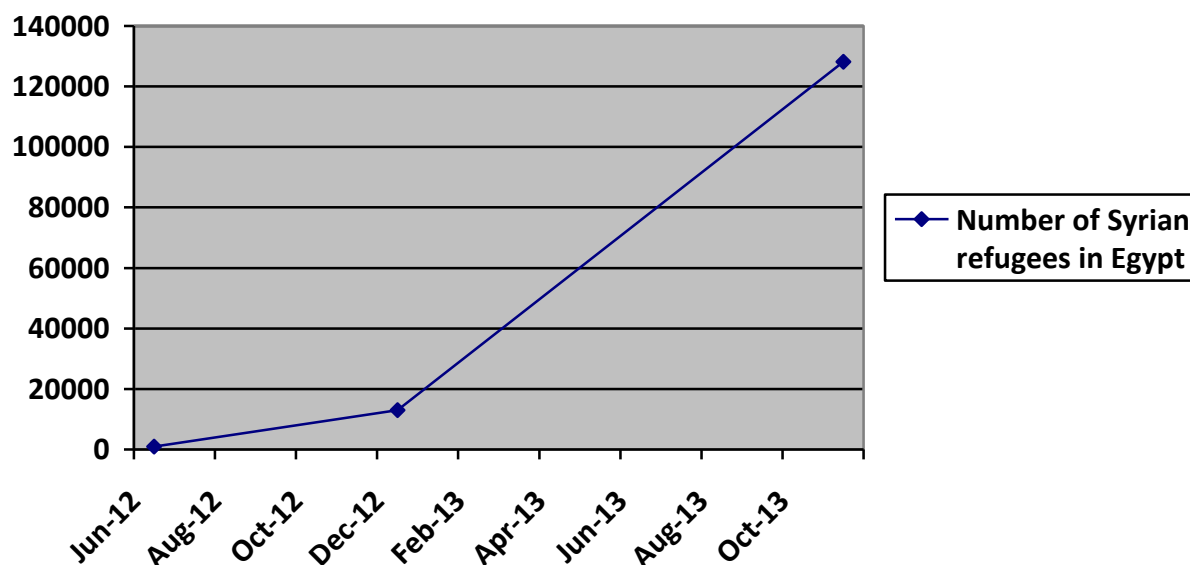


In **Egypt**, the number of Syrian refugees in June 2012 was 924 and reached 13 001 by the end of December 2012. The data as of 26 November 2013 sets the number at 128 158. According to government estimates, the total number of Syrians in the country is 300 000 (Figure 5).¹⁰

⁹ <http://www.unhcr.org/522747799.html>

¹⁰ <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=8>

Figure 5: Number of Syrian refugees in Egypt (data source: UNHCR)



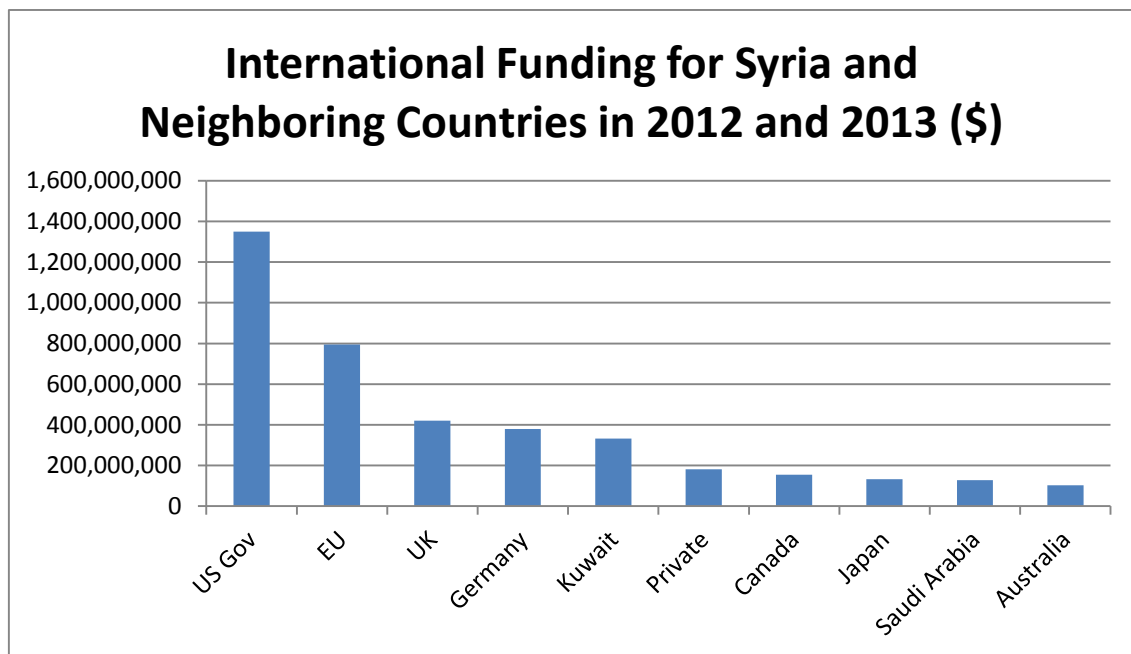
The UNHCR and USAID are just two of the organisations that have been supporting Syria neighbouring countries in their efforts to provide shelter and food to Syrian refugees and to process their documents as quickly as possible. The UNHCR has issued a funding appeal for \$372,390,514 for Turkey alone. The appeal for Lebanon is \$1,216,189,393; Egypt - \$66,705,984; Iraq - \$310,858,973; Jordan - \$976,576,971. The total U.S. Government assistance for 2012 and 2013 for the Syrian crisis humanitarian response is \$1,349,779,031. Other countries have also provided significant financial support in 2012 and 2013 which is detailed in Table 1 and Figure 6.

Table 1: USAID information on international funding for Syria and neighbouring countries in 2012 and 2013.¹¹

Country	Funding in \$
US Gov	1,349,779,031
EU	794,170,140
UK	420,152,326
Germany	379,468,400
Kuwait	332,220,977
Private	181,866,797
Canada	154,285,874
Japan	132,883,618
Saudi Arabia	128,173,182
Australia	102,796,612

¹¹ http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/syria_ce_fs03_11-21-2013.pdf

Figure 6: USAID information on international funding for Syria and neighbouring countries in 2012 and 2013.¹²



According to UNHCR estimates, by the end of 2013 half of the population of Syria will be in need of aid. This includes an anticipated 3.45 million Syrian refugees and 6.8 million Syrians inside the country, many of whom will be displaced from their homes.

The inability of host countries to respond to the needs of the Syrian refugees leads to a growing frustration and discontent among the refugee community which sometimes takes violent forms as for example the clashes in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan in October 2012. Dozens of Syrian refugees rioted over living conditions in the camp which led to clashes between the refugees and Jordanian security forces.¹³

The discontent however is not only on the side of refugees but also local populations show a growing frustration over the situation. A survey conducted by Jordan's leading research centre found large majorities of Jordanians in favour of closing the borders to Syrians altogether.¹⁴

The necessity to provide shelter, food and security to so many people puts enormous pressure on host countries' infrastructures and economies. However, the financial repercussions are only part of the problem. The social tensions in host countries are another

¹² http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/syria_ce_fs03_11-21-2013.pdf

¹³ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=506a7f925>

¹⁴ <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=506a7f275>

serious concern for their governments and the international community since they might have serious security implications. Not only neighbouring countries however face serious challenges due to the increasing number of Syrian refugees. European Union member states like Italy and Bulgaria also struggle to alleviate the social and economic tensions that stem out of the influx of Syrian refugees. Although the impact on EU member states have not been as severe as on Syria neighbouring countries, it should be noted that the capacity of host countries to respond to the refugee crisis varies depending on preparedness and financial resources. Thus, even a smaller number of refugees may create a crisis situation in countries like Bulgaria which had not been prepared for such a sudden increase in refugee influx.

The aggravated security environment in host countries and the lack of enough financial resources to support the response of their governments to the crisis have clearly indicated the need for more effective burden-sharing practices among UN members as well as within the EU. Few states in the world are capable of handling a refugee crisis with the magnitude witnessed in Syria neighbouring countries and it is therefore necessary that the international community develops better mechanism to support countries which carry the main burden of such crises. The increased international support will result in improved security environment in host countries and in the region itself and will possibly prevent the further spill-over effects of the refugee crisis to other countries.

DISCLAIMER

The presented information here above is made only for educational purposes by a team from the Crisis Management and Disaster Response Centre of Excellence (CMDR COE), for the period November-December 2013.

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Released on December 27, 2013
Sofia, Bulgaria