



Doc. 13559
30 June 2014

Foreign fighters in Syria

Motion for a resolution

tabled by Mr Dirk Van der MAELEN and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

Most estimates put the number of European citizens who have travelled to Syria to join the insurgency since March 2011 between 400 to 2 000, with significant contingents from France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, Ireland, Denmark and Belgium. According to Western intelligence officials, the flow of Westerners travelling to Syria is increasing at an alarming rate.

These young men – and, occasionally, women - come from different social classes and ethnic backgrounds. Push factors range from socio-psychological to ideological and religious factors, the latter possibly being less important than often reported. According to expert studies, the majority of people who leave now to fight are in some way mobilised through bonds of kinship or friends, facilitated by social media.

European fears of a spill over from the Syrian war were amplified recently when it emerged that a French citizen, arrested in connection with a deadly attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels, spent much of last year with jihadist fighters in Syria. Instances of post-traumatic stress disorder are probably underreported, which might also entail risks upon return from a foreign fighting arena.

As the issue is of utmost relevance to democratic security on the continent, and since the Council of Europe is becoming more and more actively involved in the region affected by the Arab Spring, the Parliamentary Assembly should:

- raise awareness on the phenomenon of “foreign fighters” in Europe;
- gain in depth understanding of this phenomenon by conducting research of the key push and pull drivers of “foreign fighters”;
- provide recommendations for policy makers, civil society and other relevant actors to deter young European citizens from joining conflicts abroad and to deal with terrorism threats once they return.

Signed (see overleaf)



*Signed*¹:

MAELEN Dirk, Van der, Belgium, SOC
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ANDERSON Donald, United Kingdom, SOC
BAYKAL Deniz, Turkey, SOC
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BOURZAI Bernadette, France, SOC
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CILEVIČS Boriss, Latvia, SOC
CONNARTY Michael, United Kingdom, SOC
CROZON Pascale, France, SOC
CRUCHTEN Yves, Luxembourg, SOC
CSENGER-ZALÁN Zsolt, Hungary, EPP/CD
DAVIES Geraint, United Kingdom, SOC
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FIFOR Mihai-Viorel, Romania, SOC
FINCKH-KRÄMER Ute, Germany, SOC
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GROSS Andreas, Switzerland, SOC
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LEBEDA Pavel, Czech Republic, SOC
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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group