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Syrian refugees: how to organise and support international assistance?

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Mr Şaban DİŞLİ, Turkey, Group of the European People's Party

A. Conclusions of the committee

1. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy welcomes the draft resolution presented by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, which draws attention to the worsening situation of all those affected by the Syrian conflict.
2. While regretting the failure of the international community in general, and of Europe in particular, in providing support for Syrian refugees, the committee underlines that responsibility for the present situation lies in the first place with the Syrians and the Assad regime.
3. The committee insists that the problems posed by the dramatic situation of refugees and displaced persons in Syria and in receiving countries can only be solved if there are prospects for peace and a political solution to the conflict and reiterates its support for the international peace conference on Syria (Geneva 2).
4. It agrees with the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons on calling on the Council of Europe member States to show increased solidarity and to share responsibility by taking the necessary measures to cater for Syrian refugees as effectively as possible.
5. The member States of the Council of Europe, as well as the international community as a whole, should also be encouraged to respond urgently to the calls for funds, including additional funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to assist the Syrian refugees and also the neighbouring countries receiving them, as well as the displaced persons within Syria.

B. Proposed amendments

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, before paragraph 1, insert the following paragraph:

“The Parliamentary Assembly dealt with the situation of Syrian refugees in its Resolution 1902 (2012) on the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, adopted in October 2012; in its current affairs debate, held in April 2013, on Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq: how to organise and support international assistance?; in its Resolution 1940 (2013) on the situation in the Middle East, adopted in June 2013 and in its Recommendation 2026 (2013) on the situation in Syria, adopted in October 2013.”

1. Reference to committee: Reference 3958 of 26 April 2013. Reporting committee: Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. See [Doc. 13372](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 27 January 2014.



Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, before paragraph 2, insert the following paragraph:

“The Assembly underlines that the problems posed by the dramatic situation of refugees and displaced persons in Syria and in receiving countries can only be solved if there are prospects for peace and a political solution to the conflict, and reiterates its support for the international peace conference on Syria (Geneva 2).”

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

In the draft resolution, after paragraph 12.15, add the following paragraph:

“ensure that the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian conflict, both in Syria and in the neighbouring countries, including the need for urgent international assistance, are put as a priority on the agenda of the international peace conference on Syria (Geneva 2).”

C. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Dişli, rapporteur for opinion

1. The situation of Syrian refugees has been on the agenda of the Parliamentary Assembly since the beginning of the conflict. The Assembly dealt with this issue in its [Resolution 1902 \(2012\)](#) on the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria, adopted in October 2012; in its current affairs debate, held in April 2013, on “Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq: how to organise and support international assistance?”; in its [Resolution 1940 \(2013\)](#) on the situation in the Middle East, adopted in June 2013; and in its [Recommendation 2026 \(2013\)](#) on the situation in Syria, adopted in October 2013. On 21 November 2013, the Bureau of the Assembly issued a statement deploring the fact that the organisation of an international peace conference on Syria (Geneva 2) had not yet been convened and that no date had been fixed. This background should be recalled in the present resolution.

2. In [Recommendation 2026 \(2013\)](#), the Assembly underlined that the problems posed by the dramatic situation of refugees and displaced persons in Syria and in receiving countries can only be solved if there are prospects for peace and a political solution to the conflict. The Assembly therefore supported wholeheartedly the organisation in Geneva of an international peace conference on Syria (Geneva 2) and recommended that the Committee of Ministers urge the governments of Council of Europe member States to make use of their bilateral relations with Arab and other States in the region to secure their support for a ceasefire in preparation of the peace conference.

3. It called on the Council of Europe member States to show solidarity and share responsibility by taking the necessary measures to cater for Syrian refugees as effectively as possible. In this respect, it welcomed the Swedish authorities' decision to grant permanent residence permits and the right to family reunion to all Syrian refugees currently in the country, as well as to those who would arrive and obtain a resident permit. The Assembly encouraged other member States to consider taking similar measures.

4. It also called on the Council of Europe member States, as well as the international community as a whole, to respond urgently to the calls for funds, including additional funds to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to assist the Syrian refugees and also the neighbouring countries receiving them, as well as the displaced persons within Syria. Noting the recent sharp increase in the arrival of Syrian refugees in European non-neighbouring countries, international solidarity and assistance should also be extended to these countries.

5. The situation of refugees and displaced persons has continued to deteriorate. In December 2013, Amnesty International issued a briefing entitled “An international failure: The Syrian refugee crisis”, where it states that “the international community has failed miserably to support refugees from Syria or the main countries of refuge”. European Union member States were also very strongly criticised. Germany offered to take 10 000 Syrian refugees, nine other member States offered to take 2 340 more and the remaining 18 European Union member States offered no places at all. It should be noted that my country, Turkey, hosts more than half a million Syrian refugees, registered by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).²

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

6. While waiting for the outcome of the Geneva 2 peace conference on Syria, which was opened on 22 January in Montreux and continues in Geneva, the international community, and the member States of the Council of Europe in particular, should show more solidarity and share responsibility by taking the necessary measures to cater for Syrian refugees as effectively as possible, and in particular the measures indicated by the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons in paragraph 12 of the draft resolution.