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The situation in Syria

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 2026 (2013)

Committee of Ministers

1. Like the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers is appalled by the humanitarian tragedy that has been unfolding in Syria for more than three years now, and by the widespread violations and abuses of human rights affecting the Syrian population every day, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Already in May 2012, the Committee issued a statement condemning these violations with the utmost firmness and calling upon all parties in Syria to cease immediately all forms of violence.
2. The Committee of Ministers strongly condemns the indiscriminate attacks against civilians, including the use of barrel bombs as well as the sieges and starvation as a war weapon, and calls for increased humanitarian assistance in line with the UN Security Council Resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014).
3. The Committee also notes with grave concern the increased targeting of civilians based on their ethnicity, religion and/or confessional affiliations.
4. The Committee calls for the release of all arbitrarily detained persons, starting with women and children, as well as the sick, wounded and elderly people, and including United Nations personnel and journalists. It also calls for the release of the two bishops kidnapped near Aleppo on 22 April 2013.
5. The Committee of Ministers calls upon all parties involved to fully implement without further delay the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, endorsed by the UN Security Council Resolutions 2118 (2013), 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014).
6. The Committee again underlines that a peaceful and democratic solution founded on full respect for human rights, and based on a constructive dialogue, is the only way forward for Syria. In this connection, the Committee of Ministers fully subscribes to the Assembly's view that the Syrian people should be free to build their own future through a Syrian-led political process and the holding of free and fair elections. The Committee also agrees with the Assembly that the governments of all member States should facilitate the launch of a Syrian-led process that will lead to a genuine political transition, on the basis of the Geneva Communiqué, that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, regardless of their religion or belief, for a free and democratic Syria, in which human rights and persons belonging to minorities are respected.
7. The Committee of Ministers takes note of the removal of the chemical weapons declared by the Syrian authorities in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2118 (2013) and urges the Syrian Government to fully co-operate with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).
8. The Committee of Ministers also fully endorses the Parliamentary Assembly's call to the international community to focus on tackling the dramatic humanitarian consequences of the conflict in Syria. It calls upon the Syrian authorities and all other parties to the Syrian conflict to ensure full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014) and, among others, to take immediate steps to facilitate the expansion of humanitarian relief operations in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2165 (2014). It takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding work done in a perilous environment by the humanitarian workers

1. Adopted at the 1210th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (22 and 24 October 2014).



present in Syria. As in its statement in May 2012, the Committee of Ministers also commends the important efforts made by many countries, including Council of Europe member States, to take in and provide assistance for Syrian refugees. In particular, it highly appreciates the efforts made by Turkey, having received alone, according to information provided by the Turkish Government on 16 October 2014, an estimated 1,500,000 Syrians in need, as well as the efforts made by Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq.

9. The Committee agrees with the Assembly's call to all member States to show solidarity and shared responsibility in this international effort, including by responding to the appeals by the United Nations and other humanitarian organisations for urgent financial and in-kind assistance. In this connection, it notes that, following the visits he made to Syrian refugee camps and centres in Armenia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Germany, the Commissioner for Human Rights called on European governments to provide greater assistance for all the Syrian refugees seeking safe haven, in particular children.