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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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Resolution 2047 (2015)[1]

Humanitarian consequences of the actions of the terrorist group known as "Islamic State"

Parliamentary Assembly

1. One year after the adoption of Resolution 1971 (2014) "Syrian refugees: how to organise and support international assistance?", the Parliamentary Assembly is dismayed to see that the situation in Syria has become considerably worse, giving rise to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis.

2. In the year 2014 alone, the conflict set a grim record, with 76 000 people killed, 3 500 of them children, and with thousands more reported missing, either in prisons or in areas controlled by the jihadists, throughout the conflict-hit region.

3. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), approximately 11.5 million people, of whom 4 million are refugees, have fled Syria, and there are around 7.5 million internally displaced persons. One of the consequences of this conflict is that Syrians have become the largest group of refugees under the UNHCR's mandate.

4. The Assembly is deeply concerned about the rise of the terrorist group known as "Islamic State" ("IS"), which continues to carry out increasingly frequent war crimes, ethnic cleansing, crimes on religious grounds and crimes against humanity, aggravating the conflict and consequently causing a huge influx of refugees to neighbouring countries.

5. Due to the activities of Da'esh, the so-called "Islamic State", in Iraq and Syria, the border between these countries has become meaningless, transforming the two countries into a single battleground. As a result, in addition to hundreds of thousands of Syrians, many Iraqis have also been adversely affected by the atrocities committed by the terrorist organisation. The United Nations has recently announced that there are close to 3 million refugees and internally displaced persons in Iraq, most of whom have been resettled in the camps throughout the Kurdish region. As an immediate neighbour to the conflict-stricken areas, Turkey has received more than 200 000 Iraqis, including 20 000 Yezidis and Christians, and built three camps for 37 500 internally displaced persons inside Iraq.

6. The arrival of huge numbers of Syrian refugees is affecting on the neighbouring countries' socio-economic and political life, giving rise to ever-increasing tensions between the host countries' nationals and the Syrian refugees.

7. The Assembly would again like to pay tribute to the generosity of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, which alone have taken in almost 92% of the refugees, not without effects on these countries' socio-economic life.

8. It also welcomes the fact that Germany has so far taken in 33 000 persons from Syria through humanitarian programmes, which is more than one third of those Syrian refugees who have found shelter outside of the crisis region; the special programme by the German Bundesland Baden-Württemberg, taking in up to 1 000 women and minors who are victims of sexual violence; and the Swedish authorities' decision to grant permanent resident status to Syrian asylum seekers.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 21 April 2015 (13th Sitting) (see Doc. 13741, report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Mr Jean-Marie Bockel). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 21 April 2015 (13th Sitting).

9. The Syrian conflict has resulted in the separation of large numbers of children from their families and an increase in the number of unaccompanied minors, so the new generation of Syrians faces a risk of statelessness. Unaccompanied minors, women and girls represent a very high percentage of the refugees and find themselves in a situation which is worse than uncertain, and often dangerous, thus becoming archetypical victims of all kinds of exploitation and violence.

10. In Jordan and Turkey, for example, 85% of Syrian refugees live outside camps, often without resources and resort to begging – adults and children alike – or suffer from exploitation.

11. The situation of internally displaced persons in Syria also gives cause for increasing concern, particularly in northern Syria, where attacks by "IS" prevent any assistance from reaching people who find themselves in a situation of utter destitution, victims of a medical and humanitarian disaster occurring as a result of the lack of doctors and medicine and the re-emergence of diseases, such as polio, tuberculosis, scabies and typhoid.

12. The Assembly notes and condemns the new rise in the numbers of victims of traffickers, particularly among migrants arriving via the Mediterranean Sea, and points to the need to put effective measures in place to combat such trafficking.

13. The Assembly also notes that many countries are not taking people in as expected or issuing airport transit visas; it repeats its appeal for international solidarity and asks States, whenever possible, to grant refugee status. In practice, Syrian refugees are often sent back or end up in detention centres. But Turkey has taken in a large number of Syrians and Germany, Sweden and Armenia have adopted measures to take in a limited number, through resettlement measures.

14. The Assembly welcomes and supports the UNHCR's proposal to put in place a resettlement policy and a humanitarian admission plan, and it encourages States to introduce such policies to enable greater numbers of Syrian refugees to be taken in, and particularly those who are members of the most vulnerable groups.

15. The Assembly reiterates its appeal to all States to show solidarity and responsibility in the face of this unprecedented humanitarian crisis, to take all necessary steps to prevent their nationals from joining the ranks of "IS" and also to join forces in order to start a peace process in the region.

16. Consequently, the Assembly invites the member States of the Council of Europe, the observer States with the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly and all the States concerned by the situation of Syrian refugees to:

16.1. increase the funds allocated to humanitarian organisations, particularly the UNHCR, and actively support their activities;

16.2. support and make commitments to the setting up, if possible, of a resettlement and humanitarian admission plan;

16.3. provide temporary and/or international protection to Syrian refugees, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees (1951 Geneva Convention), and allow them to work during that period, following the example of Turkey;

16.4. activate solidarity mechanisms to share the responsibility between European Union (EU) member States (the EU directive on temporary protection (2001/55/EC) is an option);

16.5. offer adequate support to countries such as Italy and Greece, which are currently experiencing high pressures of refugee flows, so that they can comfortably receive asylum seekers and process their asylum applications;

16.6. activate immediately an urgent project for the relocation of Syrian refugees rescued at sea in Greece and Italy to different countries across Europe, as recommended by the UNHCR;

16.7. provide legal and safe passage for Syrians wishing to go to EU member States;

16.8. grant visas for the purposes of study or employment or for humanitarian or family reasons, particularly to the most vulnerable groups;

16.9. cease collective expulsions at land and sea borders and rescind the requirement for an airport transit visa for Syrian nationals;

16.10. ensure that they do not return refugees to countries lacking appropriate reception and protection capacities;

16.11. provide additional assistance to Syria's neighbouring countries and take measures to provide Syrian refugees with all the resources and supplies they need for subsistence, in terms of food, medicine, clothing and medical care;

16.12. give special attention to the internally displaced persons in Syria, who are in a situation which is worse than calamitous and lack the strict minimum for subsistence;

16.13. continue to implement protection and assistance programmes for the most vulnerable groups and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of the women and children inside camps;

16.14. take action against smugglers in the Mediterranean Basin;

16.15. combat statelessness, safeguarding the future of young Syrians as far as is possible;

16.16. take measures to facilitate the integration of Syrian refugees, putting comprehensive integration policies in place;

16.17. put in place training programmes for military and police personnel;

16.18. prosecute persons responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity;

16.19. support the reconstruction of the city of Kobane in order to prepare the city for the return of refugees.

17. The Assembly also asks States, and particularly those States which are parties to the conflict, to take all necessary measures to involve women in the peace process and to comply with international law by allowing United Nations teams to do their work.