

Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Christos Stylianides on the situation in Syria

eeas.europa.eu/delegations/syria/8601/statement-high-representativevice-president-federica-mogherini-and-commissioner-christos_en

We join the ISSG chairs in urging the UN to prepare a proposal for political transition, based on relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and input given by the Syrian parties. This proposal should serve as the starting point for future direct negotiations facilitated by the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura who has our full support. We are ready to actively accompany his work in this direction.

We are also ready to rapidly provide support to stabilisation, reconstruction and the return of refugees and internally displaced people to their homes in safe conditions, once a political transition has started.

For this to happen, the entire international community must act collectively and forcefully now to ensure respect for the cessation of hostilities and the ISSG agreements on humanitarian access. This is essential not only to relieve the suffering of the Syrian people, but also for the parties to regain confidence in the political process.

Any initiative on humanitarian grounds should follow the "do no harm" principle and aim at ensuring the full protection of civilians wherever they are. What is needed is an immediate lifting of sieges across Syria and unhindered country-wide humanitarian access.

Any humanitarian operation should be led and monitored by the UN, ICRC and humanitarian partners, in line with humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. It is for the humanitarian community to determine what assistance is necessary in besieged communities. The establishment of humanitarian corridors, in line with the Geneva Conventions and relevant protocols, should solely serve a humanitarian purpose and under no circumstances be part of a military strategy.

Sieges, the use of starvation of civilians as a tactic of war, violate international humanitarian law. The deteriorating humanitarian situation in Eastern Aleppo as well as in other areas across the country where supply lines are being cut, demands immediate action. The EU calls again for an immediate humanitarian pause in fighting to ensure medical evacuations and the delivery of medicine, food and water from and into Eastern Aleppo and other besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

The continued airstrikes and barrel bombs on Darayya and other areas across Syria are unacceptable. The EU calls on all parties to immediately halt any attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, in particular against medical facilities, schools, markets and internally displaced people camps; they constitute new and grave violations of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, reports of alleged chemical gas attacks are of grave concern. The EU looks forward to the upcoming report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism established by the UNSCR 2235.