

European Neighbourhood Watch

Issue 84 • July 2012



Thinking ahead for Europe

Preparing for a post-Assad Syria: What role for the European Union?

The summer in Syria is particularly hot and dry this year. As the battle for Aleppo is raging, already 200,000 people have fled Syria's second biggest city. Estimates of the total number of internally displaced persons currently hover at around 1 million. The UNHCR has registered around 125,000 individuals who have sought refuge in Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. Based on the average daily new arrivals in neighbouring countries, this figure could rise to 200,000 refugees by the end of 2012. International organisations and agencies, neighbouring countries and other states are trying to alleviate some of the stress of the unfolding humanitarian disaster.

The EU too is engaging in relief efforts. So far, it has given more than €90 million in humanitarian assistance (€63 million from the Commission and more than €27 million from member states). It continues to call for unhindered access for humanitarian organisations to assess the needs of the civilian population and to provide humanitarian and medical aid where needed.

Apart from the displaced, wounded and the sick, the death toll keeps rising too. In the 16 months since the government of President Bashar al-Assad began its violent repression of the uprising, 18,000 Syrians are estimated to have died. The EU has been calling for a process of transitional justice. It has commended the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria and its investigations into alleged violations of international human rights law with a view to holding accountable those responsible for such violations, including those that may amount to crimes against humanity.

The violent implosion of Syria has underscored the deterioration of the strategic environment in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. For years, Syria and Lebanon have been sites of strategic competition between Iran and Turkey. Tehran has given the Alawite-dominated regime in Syria its support in the decades-long suppression of Syria's Sunni majority. Iran, whose main instrument in Syria and Lebanon is the radical Shiite force Hezbollah, also gave Damascus support in its adventures in Lebanon. As the current crisis in Syria deepens, Iran has been reported to have warned Turkey not to intervene militarily or risk activating the Iranian-Syrian mutual defence agreement and thus meeting with a harsh response.

In the last decade, Turkey has been investing heavily in Syria. Ankara believed that by engaging with the secular regime in Damascus, it could lure Syria (and Lebanon by proxy) away from its close alliance with Iran. Also, Turkey

tried to broker a peace deal between Syria and Israel but negotiations collapsed after Israel invaded Gaza. The subsequent inability of Turkey to overcome the hostile fallout from the Mavi Marmara incident with Israel, has led to a dramatic worsening of Turkish-Israeli relations. At the same time, Turkey has a keen interest in averting an Israeli military operation against Iran's nuclear facilities.

After months of futile attempts to convince President Assad to begin a transition to a more open and democratic system, Turkey unequivocally called for his departure. It unilaterally slapped sanctions upon the regime and has firmly sided with the Syrian opposition, whose representative organisation, the Syrian National Council, it hosts. Turkey has also allowed the Free Syrian Army to set up camp on its side of the 900-kilometre-long border with Syria and, like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has propped it up with financial support. However, Turkey is unlikely to intervene unilaterally, especially in view of the deadlock in the UN Security Council over the issue.

Together with China, Russia has blocked three different attempts by the US and its EU allies to impose sanctions on Syria under the heading of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. For fear of being embroiled in another protracted and bloody conflict with wider geopolitical ramifications, there is no appetite in the West for a military intervention in Syria. Instead, the US and the EU are waging an economic war on the Assad regime.

For its part, the EU has cranked up the pressure on Assad and his cronies by adopting a comprehensive package of restrictive measures. In 17 rounds of tightening sanctions, the package now includes, among others, an embargo on exporting arms and equipment for internal repression to Syria (accompanied by an obligation for EU countries to inspect vessels and aircraft heading to Syria if they suspect the cargo contains arms or equipment for internal repression, and an obligation to seize such items if they are found); a ban on providing grants, loans, export credit insurance, technical assistance, insurance and reinsurance for exports of arms and of equipment for internal repression to Syria; a ban on exports of key equipment and technology to the Syrian oil and gas sectors; a freeze on 52 entities' assets held within the EU, including the Syrian central bank; and an asset freeze and a visa ban on 155 persons associated with the regime and/or responsible for violent repression or human rights abuses.

Money is the main reason to believe that the Assad regime cannot last. Inflation is reported to be as high as 30%; the regime is said to be freely printing money; the

CEPS European Neighbourhood Watch monthly newsletter focuses on the EU's relations with its northern, southern and eastern neighbours, as well as the countries in the EU's enlargement sphere. Every issue of the newsletter presents an overview of the major developments of the past month complemented by an editorial that comments on the most important current development in these regions. CEPS Neighbourhood Watch is distributed electronically and free of charge to over 10,000 international recipients.

We slightly modified the structure of the newsletter providing more links to the selected documents without reproducing their content. Under each heading we opted for chronological order.

Table of Contents

Editorial: "Preparing for a post-Assad Syria: What role for the European Union?"

General

Eastern Neighbourhood

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Moldova
Ukraine

Southern Neighbourhood

Algeria
Egypt
Israel
Lebanon
Libya
Morocco
Occupied Palestinian Territories
Syria
Tunisia

European Neighbourhood Watch Editorials' Index

CEPS Neighbourhood Watch Editorial address

CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY STUDIES (CEPS)

Place du Congrès 1, phone: +32 2 229 39 11
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium fax: +32 2 219 41 51
website: www.ceps.eu
e-mail: neighbourhood@ceps.be *Subscribe!*

Editorial team:

Steven Blockmans and Hrant Kostanyan

Syrian pound has depreciated against the dollar by than half on the black market. Meanwhile, the regime is running out of foreign cash. Some 90% of Syria's oil used to go to the EU but sanctions have now put a stop to that. Trade has plummeted. Monetary support from Iran cannot be counted on indefinitely as Iran itself is buckling under unprecedented sanctions from the EU and the US.

But for all the pressure applied by the West, the effects thereof are partly undone by Russia, which continues to provide cover to the besieged Assad regime and is asserting its influence through arms sales and a naval presence in support of the regime.

A tipping point in the conflict was reached with the opposition's successful attack on the national security building in Damascus on July 18th, which killed the architects of the regime's violent repression. The attack has helped to boost the morale of the opposition forces and has consolidated the belief in the West that the fall of the dictator is inevitable. It has dawned even on Moscow that Assad's days are numbered. The regime itself has reacted angrily to the bomb-attack by launching what may turn out to be a make-or-break offensive to regain control over parts of Damascus and other big cities that fell into the hands of the ever-stronger and better organised opposition forces.

The most troubling scenario for the region, as indeed the world, may also be the most likely one: protracted chaos and sectarian violence in Syria, leaving a security vacuum and an opportunity for terrorist organisations like Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda to harvest the country's weapons of mass destruction, in particular the large stockpiles of chemical weapons, with an on-going risk of spill-over effects affecting the security and stability of neighbouring countries. A prolonged period of great uncertainty, with regional and global powers trying to preserve their own interests in Syria, highlights the limits of unilateralism.

The EU should now actively plan for a post-Assad Syria. Arguably, these plans should extend beyond its measured lifting of sanctions and half-hearted responses to the monumental changes that have ripped through other parts of the Arab world. The conditioned levels of financial support and the speed with which trade liberalisation and mobility of people can be achieved under the European Neighbourhood Policy's revised approach are simply not enough to rebuild the country's bombed-out towns and cities, to create a rule of law-based democracy, and to turn the potentially vicious circle into a virtuous one. What is needed in terms of peace-building in Syria is the extension of Marshall-like aid which goes beyond the EU's current means and capacities.

Together with its partners, the EU must review and recalibrate its policies towards Syria, as indeed the entire region. After all, the EU cannot pursue an effective humanitarian, political, or military strategy towards Syria on its own and without taking into account the security interests of Syria's neighbouring countries. In recognition of the geostrategic shifts in the Middle East and the Gulf, and pursuant to the constitutional obligation imposed upon the European Union by way of the Lisbon Treaty (Article

8 TEU), the EU should plan for the creation of a regional space of shared security.

Given the zero-sum security metrics in the region, and to a certain extent at global level, a common security framework that commits all relevant actors, takes everyone's security needs into account, and thus diminishes the mistrust that fuels proliferation, would be a huge step forward. Arguably, the EU is better placed to launch such an initiative than the US, Russia or China. The EU has maintained day-to-day exchanges with all countries in the region, including Iran since the Islamic revolution. It is leading the E3+3 talks with Iran on nuclear non-proliferation, is currently steering the Quartet's efforts in the Middle East Process and has strategic relations with Turkey. The EU could inspire the countries in the region by using the historical experience of its own creation. It would be up to High Representative Catherine Ashton, supported by the European External Action Service, and in cooperation with the member states and the European Commission, to draw up a plan that revives the idea of a security zone for the wider Middle East. Such a plan would fit well into the current efforts to revamp the European Security Strategy.

*Steven Blockmans
CEPS Senior Research Fellow and Head of Unit*

General

HRVP appoints new European External Action Service Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia

Brussels, 27 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Eastern Neighbourhood

Expand EU free trade eastwards, say MEPs

03 July 2012 . [Link](#)

European People's Party publishes declaration on how to strengthen the Eastern Partnership process

Batumi, 11 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on Nagorno Karabakh

Brussels, Brussels, 18 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Chair's conclusions: Eastern Partnership Foreign Ministers Meeting

Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Remarks by High Representative Catherine Ashton following the Eastern Partnership Ministerial Meeting

Brussels, 23 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Civil Society Forum co-Chairs welcome opportunity to monitor implementation of Eastern Partnership roadmap

Brussels, 23 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Armenia

Remarks by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, following his meeting with President of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan
Yerevan, 4 July 2012 . [Link](#)

“Armenia in Europe” conference in Yerevan
Yerevan, 4 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Azerbaijan

Remarks by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, following his meeting with President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev
Baku, 5 July 2012. [Link](#)

Belarus

UN appoints Special Rapporteur on Belarus
5 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Commissioner Füle: independent media plays crucial role in Belarus
23 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Georgia

Remarks by Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, following his meeting with President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili
Tbilisi, 4 July 2012 . [Link](#)

The President of the European Council meets the Head of the EUMM
05 July 2012. [Link](#)

Commissioner Füle on “Georgia’s European Way – the EU and its European Neighbours”
Batumi, 11 July 2012. [Link](#)

Moldova

EU and Moldova agree to share information on drugs
Lisbon, 17 July 2012 . [Link](#)

Ukraine

Local EU Statement in Ukraine on the ECHR judgment in the case Lutsenkov
Kyiv, 04 July 2012. [Link](#)

Ukraine’s Public Finance Management Systems Needs Further Improvements, say World Bank and European Union
Kyiv, 09 July 2012. [Link](#)

Commission amends visa facilitation agreement for citizens of Ukraine
Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Russia

Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on the amendments to the Russian NGO law
Brussels, 10 July 2012. [Link](#)

Toward EU-Russia Strategic Partnership in Research and Innovation

11 July 2012. [Link](#)

Southern Neighbourhood

The largest North/South Mediterranean civil society gathering since the Arab Awakening is launched

05 July 2012. [Link](#)

Emerging Arab democracies face tough economic challenges

25 July 2012. [Link](#)

Algeria

50th anniversary of Algerian independence

04 July 2012. [Link](#)

Egypt

Remarks by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with President Morsi

Cairo, 19 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the appointment of the new Prime Minister of Egypt

Brussels, 24 July 2012. [Link](#)

Israel

Statement following the meeting between President Barroso and Prime-Minister Netanyahu

Brussels, 9 July 2012. [Link](#)

Speech by President Barroso at the official dinner hosted by Shimon Peres, President of Israel

Jerusalem, 9 July 2012. [Link](#)

President of the European Commission's Speech on the occasion of President Barroso's honorary doctorate at the University of Haifa: Moving together towards a brighter future

Haifa, 10 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the killing of Israeli tourists in Bulgaria

Brussels, 18 July 2012. [Link](#)

Eleven meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council: Statement of the European Union

Brussels, 24 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement of Commissioner Štefan Füle at the press conference after the EU-Israel Association Council

Brussels, 24 July 2012. [Link](#)

Lebanon

EU announces new support for Lebanon

Brussels, 13 July 2012. [Link](#)

Lebanon: Next steps towards finalising the Action Plan of cooperation with the European Union

Brussels, 18 July 2012. [Link](#)

Council conclusions on Lebanon

Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Libya

Joint statement by the spokespersons of High Representative Catherine Ashton and Commissioner Štefan Füle on the Libyan elections

Brussels, 7 July 2012. [Link](#)

European Commission adopts decision adding Libya to Euro-Med regional cooperation programmes

Brussels, 13 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the announcement of preliminary results of Libyan elections

Brussels, 19 July 2012. [Link](#)

Council conclusions on Libya

Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Morocco

UfM labels new project on the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean University in Morocco

08 July 2012. [Link](#)

Occupied Palestinian Territories

Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton following her meeting with President Abbas in Paris

Brussels, 6 July 2012. [Link](#)

President of the European Commission visits Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territories

09 July 2012. [Link](#)

President of the European Commission Press statement with Prime Minister Fayyad in Ramallah

8 July 2012. [Link](#)

President of the European Commission's Speech on the occasion of the inauguration of the Police Training Centre

Jericho, 8 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by President Barroso following his meeting with Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian Authority

Press point/occupied Palestinian Territory, 8 July 2012. [Link](#)

Syria

Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton following the meeting of the Friends of the Syrian People

Brussels, 6 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by the spokesperson of High Representative Catherine Ashton on incursions by Syrian forces into Lebanese territory
Brussels, 8 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement from Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva on worsening humanitarian crisis in Syria
Brussels, 31 July 2012. [Link](#)

Commissioner Füle on human rights and civil society in Syria: revealing the truth, preparing the transition
Brussels, 12 July 2012. [Link](#)

Tunisia

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the killings in Tremseh, Syria
Brussels, 13 July 2012. [Link](#)

Further concrete support for transformation in Tunisia
Tunis, 9 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by Kristalina Georgieva, EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, on Syria
Brussels, 17 July 2012. [Link](#)

Statement by High Representative Catherine Ashton on bomb attack on national security building in Damascus
Brussels, 18 July 2012. [Link](#)

Council takes steps to limit arms deliveries to Syria
Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Council conclusions on Syria
Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

Europe responds to the acute humanitarian needs in Syria
Brussels, 23 July 2012. [Link](#)

European Neighbourhood Watch Editorials' Index

Issue 83, June 2012

History does not move in straight lines

Issue 82, May 2012

Implications of the Eurozone crisis for EU foreign policy - costs and opportunities

Issue 81, April 2012

Do the BRICS make a Bloc?

Issue 80, March 2012

The Ukraine Question

Issue 79, February 2012

Some European comments Putin's foreign and security policy

Issue 78, January 2012

Putin's faltering return

Issue 77, December 2011

The Arab Spring – Is it a Revolution?

Issue 76, November 2011

The Responsibility to Protect and Regime Change

Issue 75, October 2011

East goes right, South goes left

Issue n. 74, August-September 2011

The political and legal logic for Palestinian statehood

Issue n. 73, July 2011

The Timoshenko case and the rule of law in Ukraine

Issue n. 72, June 2011

The Arab Regatta – a half year report card

Issue n. 71, May 2011

Review of the Review – of the European Neighbourhood Policy

Issue n. 70, April 2011

Bringing Democracy Support onto the Front-burner

Issue n. 69, March 2011

Interculturalism between the twin hazards of multiculturalism and assimilation

Issue n. 68, February 2011

Time for change: EU trade policy towards the Eastern Partners – The case of Georgia

Issue n. 67, January 2011

Dignity, Democracies and Dynasties

Issue n. 66, December 2010

Time for Justice in Kosovo

Issue n. 65, November 2010

Civil society in the Eastern Partnership

Issue n. 64, October 2010

Rendez-vous with Eastern Europe

Issue n. 63, September 2010

Here is your opinion of the European Neighbourhood Policy

Issue n. 62, July/ August 2010

What is your opinion of the European Neighbourhood Policy?

Issue n. 61, June 2010

Turkey and its neighbourhood

Issue n. 60, May 2010

Time for a Tripartite Gas Pipeline Consortium for Ukraine

Issue n. 59, April 2010

Yanukovich's dubious deal

Issue n. 58, March 2010

Russia in Europe and the West

Issue n. 57, February 2010

Messages from Central Asia for the High Representative

Issue n. 56, January 2010

Sequel to the Lisbon Treaty for the EU's diplomatic representation

Issue n. 55, December 2009

What to do with President Medvedev's draft European Security Treaty?

CEPS Neighbourhood Watch Editorial address

CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN POLICY STUDIES (CEPS)

Place du Congrès 1,
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

website: www.ceps.eu

phone: +32 2 229 39 11

fax: +32 2 219 41 51

e-mail: neighbourhood@ceps.be *Subscribe!*

Editorial team: Steven Blockmans and Hrant Kostanyan