

Syria, with specific reference to the humanitarian situation: - extracts from the debate

Type: [News](#) Reference: [92820](#) Duration: [00:04:05](#) Lieu: [Strasbourg, France - European Parliament](#)
End production: [13/03/2013](#) First transmission: [13/03/2013](#)

During a debate with EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton MEPs focus the discussion on the humanitarian situation in Syria and neighbouring countries and condemned the death of a member of the European Union's delegation in Syria who has been killed yesterday night in a rocket attack in a Damascus suburb. Ahmad Shihadeh, a member of the European Union's delegation in Syria, lived in the area and was killed while providing humanitarian help to the community. The EU withdrew international staff and closed its Damascus office in December amid worsening violence, but local Syrian staff remained.



According to the Local Co-ordination Committees (LCC), an opposition activist network, the attack took place when two surface-to-surface missiles landed in Darayya, south-west of the capital, on Tuesday night. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, another opposition activist group based in the UK, said government forces had bombarded the town. Ashton and MEPs have called again on all sides to take urgent steps to end the violence, which has led to the deaths of some 100,000 innocent citizens and over one million refugees seeking shelter in neighbouring countries. MEPs have also called on the EU to show solidarity and come to the aid of Syrian refugees, instead of leaving it to Syria's neighbouring countries to manage the arrival of asylum seekers alone. Last month, a delegation of four MEPs visited the main refugee camp in Jordan in order to meet refugees who have fled the conflict in Syria and to see at first hand the conditions on the ground. The aim was to assess the refugee crisis and what help the EU can give to meet these exceptional challenges. Syrian refugees are arriving in unprecedented numbers in Jordan. The UN Refugee Agency says over 242,000 Syrian refugees are registered or awaiting registration in Jordan, and the daily arrivals are expected to increase steadily. The UK has announced that it will provide non-lethal aid to the Syrian opposition, mainly armoured vehicles, body armour and search-and-rescue equipment.

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TIME	DESCRIPTION	DURATION
00:00:00	Title	00:00:05
00:00:05	Exterior view of the EP, Strasbourg	00:00:05
00:00:10	SOUNDBITE (English) ASHTON Catherine VPC/HR "I've learned with great sadness the tragic death yesterday of Ahmad Shihadeh a policy officer of the EU delegation in Syria . he was killed during a rocket attack in the Damascus suburb of Darayya where he lived. Ahmad died while providing humanitarian aid to the community . Our though are with his family and friends, and his colleagues in the delegation . Mr President we know the situation, in Syria is appalling, that Bashar al-Assad should leave power , the fighting should stop and the country, according to some reports 70% destroyed, needs to be rebuild. This situation reflects in partly the inability of the international community to find a coherent. united way	00:00:44

	the international community to find a coherent, united way to respond to the horror that has been perpetrated and to act collectively to protect the people".	
00:00:54	SOUNDBITE (English) Catherine ASHTON VPC/HR "We are constantly trying to adapt to the situation on the ground. Every single financial instrument available to the EU and its member states has been engaged and joint efforts, to assist Syrians inside and outside the country. To provide assistance to the refugees and their hosts countries, to support human rights activists, to rise their cases and students to continue their studies, and to help people simply to survive".	00:00:25
00:01:19	SOUNDBITE (English) Catherine ASHTON VPC/HR "We need to make sure that our support reaches the right people, that it does not fall in the hands of extremists. So far we provides 100 million euro of non -humanitarian support. It's not yet, of course enough, but we are determined to do as much as we possible can".	00:00:15
00:01:34	SOUNDBITE (Spanish) José Ignacio SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA (PPE, ES) "I think we got to ask certain questions: in what terms might a political agreement be possible? What about the obligation to protect, what does technical assistance and not lethal weapons means? Are we going to keep waiting for the USA to save our beacon? We are in a very embarrassing and complex situation. You said that two member states talked about a partial lifting of the embargo, but have no bridge this in the Council. This situation is regrettable, it is dramatic and lamentable".	00:00:38
00:02:12	SOUNDBITE (French) Véronique DE KEYSER (S&D, BE) "I think an excessive number of weapons in this situation is not going to lead to fewer fatalities , but more, I think we should put the emphasis entirely on the political side of things. And this powerlessness, that you and I feel today will not be resolved trough providing arms. Those in public opinion, and there are many people asking for this, who want to help the first generation of Syrian rebels, need to be careful before adopting this approach".	00:00:30
00:02:42	SOUNDBITE (English) Guy VERHOFSTADT (ALDE, BE) "Most of the camps are right at the bolder with Turkey. We have to stop to think that we have first of al to have the approval of the regime of Assad in Syria before we can act".	00:00:15

00:02:57	SOUNDBITE (English) Guy VERHOFSTADT (ALDE, BE) "Yes, we give money, of course we send aid, but almost all that money all that aid, is not going to this people . no, our aid is going to the areas of the regime, because, this is the way, Mr Chairman, the UN is working, the red cross is working, trough governments, trough the regimes, trough Assad, and that almost all our money, for the moment, is only going to the people loyal to Assad. Even worse, a few weeks ago there sere three convoys send for the first time tot he North of Syria, sending wrong goods to the wrong places. I think really we have to understand that there is a humanitarian disaster".	00:00:47
00:03:44	SOUNDBITE (English) Charles TANNOCK (ECR, UK) It's hard to know how much worse the situation ca become before Moscow feels compelled to do something or to help. Or that the free Syrian army could become armed, and avoid the arms to go to the Salafist by the west , and in the mean time we must deploy every resource at our disposal to galvanize the international community to end this disaster".	00:00:21
00:04:05	END	00:00:00