

# October 2012 Monthly Forecast

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## **In Hindsight: Syria**

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At press time, the Council was not scheduled to hold a meeting in October focused on Syria despite continuing intensification of the crisis there. After the conclusion of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) on 19 August and decreased Council activity on Syria, it may be timely to take stock of the Council's response to the situation.

### **Syria Raised**

Since being first discussed by the Council on 26 April 2011, when the Secretary-General briefed on the unfolding crisis, Syria has been dealt with under the agenda item “the situation in the Middle East” (existing since 1960). The following day the then head of the Department of Political Affairs, B. Lynn Pascoe, briefed on the anti-government demonstrations, which had begun in mid-March. Russia asserted that Council action on Syria would constitute interference in a domestic matter. Lebanon, at the time an elected member, was also reluctant.

As the crisis in Syria continued, it became apparent that divisions in the Council were affecting its ability to engage effectively on the issue. In May 2011, EU members raised the situation several times during Council meetings (including during the 10 May open debate on protection of civilians) while Pascoe also started using the monthly “horizon-scanning” briefings to highlight the Syrian crisis.

### **Divisions Deepen**

By June 2011, supporters of Council action on Syria had the necessary nine votes for a resolution condemning the Syrian government's response to the crisis. Yet China and Russia emphasised the internal nature of the situation, while both countries—along with Brazil, India and South Africa—were also wary of Council action. It was only on 3 August 2011 that the Council adopted a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2011/16](#)) expressing concern over the deteriorating situation in Syria.

### **No Consensus**

In August 2011, the UK—with EU and US support—circulated a draft resolution calling for an assets freeze on President Bashar al-Assad and other key figures, a travel ban, an arms embargo and the establishment of a sanctions committee. The draft was contentious with Russia most notably arguing that dialogue should be pursued with Syria, not sanctions. As other members likewise expressed reservations, the text was modified to address some of the concerns while retaining the non-compliance language in the resolution.

On 4 October 2011, the Council voted on a draft resolution ([S/2011/612](#)) condemning Syria's excessive use of force and expressing the Council's intention to consider further non-military measures. Nine Council members voted in favour of the draft resolution and four abstained (Brazil, India, Lebanon and South Africa), but the resolution was vetoed by China and Russia (see table below), paralysing the Council.

On 15 December 2011, Russia called for consultations to discuss a draft resolution on Syria it had proposed calling for a cessation of violence by all parties. Yet the draft did not include elements that others considered essential, including withdrawal of the military from the streets.

### **Different Year, Same Divisions**

On 1 February, Morocco formally submitted a new draft supporting the political transition in Syria as outlined by the Arab League on 22 January. Although the draft included additional co-sponsors, mainly Turkey and ten other Arab states, the draft resolution ([S/2012/77](#)) was vetoed again ([S/PV.6711](#)) by China and Russia on 4 February (all other members voted in favour).

As the crisis continued, Kofi Annan—who had been appointed UN-Arab League Joint Special Envoy pursuant to a 16 February General Assembly resolution ([A/RES/66/253](#))—briefed Council members on 16 March about his mediation efforts. During this short period the Council acted with a degree of unanimity as demonstrated on 21 March when the Council adopted a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2012/6](#)) supporting Annan's "six-point plan". This called for an inclusive political process, cessation of all violence, humanitarian access, release of those arbitrarily detained, access for journalists and the right to peaceful demonstrations. On 5 April, the Council issued a presidential statement ([S/PRST/2012/10](#)) calling on the Syrian government to cease violence by 10 April and the opposition to do likewise 48 hours thereafter.

Subsequently, through [resolution 2042](#), on 14 April the Council authorised the deployment of an advance team of 30 unarmed military observers to report on the implementation of the cessation of armed violence by all parties. On 21 April, it adopted [resolution 2043](#), establishing UNSMIS for 90 days and calling for the urgent implementation of the six-point plan. The mission, under the command of Gen. Robert Mood, was comprised of up to 300 military observers.

Throughout UNSMIS's mandate, the Council was briefed every 15 days. On 16 June, Gen. Mood decided to suspend UNSMIS activities due to the deliberate targeting of the mission and other security concerns. From that point, the relatively unified approach of Council members began to dissolve, as it appeared UNSMIS would not have the desired impact on the ground. Foreign Ministers of the P5 met in Geneva—along with regional representatives—and this "Action Group for Syria" issued a 30 June communiqué calling for all parties to recommit to the six-point plan and mapped out steps for a "Syrian-led political process leading to a transition." Yet fundamental divisions remained as to what this political transition would involve and whether it was contingent on Assad's removal from power.

On 11 July, the UK circulated a draft resolution ([S/2012/538](#)) under Chapter VII. The text endorsed the 30 June communiqué, renewed UNSMIS for 45 days and threatened sanctions on the Syrian government if it did not cease its activities within ten days. Russia also circulated a draft resolution ([S/2012/547/Rev.2](#)), endorsing the communiqué, renewing UNSMIS for three months but making no references to consequences for non-compliance. The Council voted on the UK draft (but not the Russian draft), which was again vetoed by China and Russia on 19 July (Pakistan and South Africa abstained). The following day, the Council unanimously adopted [resolution 2059](#), tersely renewing UNSMIS for a final 30 days.

Frustrated by little traction gained by the six-point plan, Annan announced his resignation on 2 August. Lakhdar Brahimi (Algeria) was appointed Joint Special Representative for Syria as of 1 September. After traveling to Syria and the region, Brahimi briefed Council members on 24 September, keeping expectations of what could be achieved rather low.

### Syria: Council Votes Taken on Draft Resolutions

Date of Vote	UN Document	Contents	Outcome of Vote
4 Oct 2011	S/2011/612	Condemned use of force by Syrian authorities. Expressed intention to consider further options, including measures under article 41.	<b>Not adopted</b> (9-2-4) Veto: China; Russia. Abstention: Brazil; India; Lebanon; South Africa.
4 Feb 2012	S/2012/77	Supported the Arab League's 22 January decision to facilitate a Syrian-led political transition.	<b>Not adopted</b> (13-2-0) Veto: China; Russia.
14 April 2012	S/2012/219 (S/RES/2042)	Authorised the deployment of 30 military observers to Syria.	<b>Adopted</b> (15-0-0)
21 April 2012	S/2012/245 (S/RES/2043)	Established UNSMIS for 90 days.	<b>Adopted</b> (15-0-0)
19 July 2012	S/2012/538	Stipulated that Syrian authorities cease troop movements—and use of heavy weapons—in population centres. Stipulated that article 41 measures would be imposed in the case of non-compliance.	<b>Not adopted</b> (11-2-2) Veto: China; Russia. Abstention: Pakistan; South Africa.
20 July 2012	S/2012/560 (S/RES/2059)	Extended UNSMIS for a final 30 days.	<b>Adopted</b> (15-0-0)

