

Brussels V Conference “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” – Speech by Jean-Yves Le Drian (30 March 2021)

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High Representative,
Secretary-General,
Ministers,

This month of March 2021 marks **the sad anniversary of a decade of chaos for Syria**, for which the responsibility lies with the Damascus regime and its foreign supporters who have been caught up in a **military re-conquest with tragic and deadly consequences** for the civilian population.

That is why I wish today to send a **message of support, determination and action** to the Syrian people.

1/ With our European Union partners, we will continue to stand by you.

- France reiterates its call for **secure, comprehensive and unhindered humanitarian access** to be guaranteed, including across borders, to help the people living in the north-eastern and north-western regions of the country who depend on international assistance.
- Our support also goes to **refugees** who have fled the conflict, and to countries who have taken them in.
- This support is **tangible support**, to which we will allocate an **additional €560 million for the 2021-2022 period**.

2/ We also remain completely determined to fight impunity of crimes committed in Syria.

- Because, **without justice, there can be no peace or political solution**.
- And because it is **a matter of principle and a collective security issue**, particularly when it comes to chemical weapons.

Last month, a former member of Syrian intelligence services was convicted by the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz. This was a historic first step. Judicial proceedings are also underway in France, following a complaint filed in Paris for the chemical attacks

committed by the Syrian regime against its people. We lend our support to the work of national courts. And we lend our support to international mechanisms for fighting impunity. **We will continue our efforts so that light can be shed on the violence of these past ten years and so that its perpetrators can be held accountable.**

3/ Lastly, I would like to assure you that we are working towards a credible and lasting political solution, so that Syria can move forward on a path to peace, stability and sovereignty.

The conditions for enabling this are known. They were laid down in Security Council **Resolution 2254** more than six years ago. Although the Syrian regime appears to wish to reduce this framework to a constitutional process without any credibility, there are more pressing matters.

- I'm thinking of the **preparation of free and fair elections**, in which all Syrian should be allowed to participate, including refugees and displaced persons.
- I'm thinking of the **safe and voluntary return of refugees**, which cannot be envisaged unless there is concrete change on the ground. A first step would be to **set free prisoners who are being arbitrarily held.**

As long as the Syrian regime continues to foment instability, the humanitarian crisis and terrorist threats, **France and the European Union – and I say this in no uncertain terms – will oppose the financing of the reconstruction of Syria, the normalization of relations with Damascus and any easing of sanctions.**

The Syrian people, however, must know that they can count on **our sustained support**. That is the reason we are holding this meeting.

Thank you.