

# June 2014 Monthly Forecast

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Posted 30 May 2014

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MIDDLE EAST

## Syria

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### Expected Council Action

Sigrid Kaag, Special Coordinator of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)-UN Joint Mission, will brief Council members on the implementation of [resolution 2118](#) regarding the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons. This will be a sensitive briefing given the Secretary-General has [reported](#) that the 30 June final deadline for complete removal and destruction of the arsenal will not be met.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Valerie Amos will brief Council members on humanitarian access. At press time, it seemed momentum was building towards a draft resolution to follow-up the lack of any meaningful implementation of [resolution 2139](#) since its adoption on 22 February.

Council members will also be closely watching the 3 June presidential elections—widely viewed as a sham poll in the midst of a violent civil war that will bestow upon President Bashar al-Assad a further seven years in office.

### Key Recent Developments

Kaag last briefed Council members on 8 May, reporting that Syria had missed the extended deadline of 27 April for the complete removal of its declared chemical weapons materiel. The remaining 7.2 percent includes precursors to produce sarin, held at one site that cannot be reached due to the security situation. There was also a discussion of the OPCW's 29 April announcement that it would deploy a fact-finding mission to investigate allegations that the regime had used chlorine-filled bombs against civilians. On 27 May, a team in Syria to investigate the allegations came under attack, there were no casualties.

On 13 May, UN-Arab League Joint Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi resigned and briefed Council members on the failure of the Geneva peace talks, largely due to the government's intransigence.

The collapse of peace talks and Brahimi's subsequent resignation rendered the political track dead and contributed towards a shift by France and the US, as well as many other Council members, towards taking up High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay's call to refer Syria to the ICC. On 22 May, China and Russia cast their fourth joint veto on Syria and blocked the French [draft resolution](#) referring Syria to the ICC, co-sponsored by 65 member states. All other Council members voted in favour of the referral.

On 29 May, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-wha Kang briefed Council members on humanitarian access. The most recent Secretary-General's report did not indicate any progress in implementation of resolution 2139's key demands, such as authorising cross-border aid operations, allowing access in besieged or hard-to-reach areas, observing medical neutrality, ceasing aerial bombardments or easing administrative hurdles. In fact, access has dropped significantly since the last reporting period due to a new transport mechanism put in place by the government. The report says that the government is failing its responsibility to look after its own people and that its arbitrary denial of aid, in particular by not opening relevant border crossings, is a violation of resolution 2139 and international law. The report calls on the Security Council to urgently consider its next steps to ensure compliance with its demands.

#### Underlying Problems

The situation in Syria is devastating, with a death toll estimated at 162,000. According to UN sources, there are 2.8 million refugees, 6.5 million internally displaced persons and 9.3 million in need of humanitarian assistance, with almost 241,000 living in besieged areas. There are a further 3.5 million in areas rarely accessed by humanitarian workers. (OCHA has said that these numbers will be updated mid-year to better reflect current realities on the ground.)

Adding to the dire humanitarian situation are alarming reports of intentional government policies of starving areas under siege and deliberately attacking the health infrastructure. The regime has increased its use of incendiary weapons, cluster bombs and barrel bombs, with recent allegations that it has used chlorine bombs. The proliferation of extremist armed groups and their increasing use of car bombs, mortars and tunnel bombs under government military positions have contributed to the escalating violence.

Meanwhile, the political and accountability tracks seem indefinitely blocked.

#### Key Issues

In the fourth year of the conflict, the key issue is whether and when the parties, in particular the government, will meaningfully implement resolution 2139 on humanitarian access. An issue for the Council is what further steps it might take if substantive implementation continues to lag.

The Council will also need to grapple with the lack of Syria's full compliance with resolution 2118 on chemical weapons as the 30 June completion deadline for all removal and destruction activities approaches.

Finally, another issue for the Council is moving beyond the failed Geneva peace talks to find other ways to resuscitate efforts for a political solution to the crisis.

#### Options

On humanitarian access, Council members could adopt a Chapter VII resolution authorising cross-border and cross-line aid operations, legally enabling the UN to get aid to those in besieged and hard-to-reach areas.

Concerning chemical weapons, given that the final deadline for all removal and destruction activities will not be met, Council members will need to determine what, if any, steps to take to compel Syria's full compliance. However, with the focus firmly on humanitarian access it seems unlikely the Council would come forward with any firm action on this track, such as sanctions, ahead of the deadline. The Council could also formally request that the OPCW present its assessment of the alleged use of chlorine bombs to the Security Council.

The conclusion of presidential elections might revive some Council members' desire to stress in a statement that elections should have been held only in the context of a negotiated political solution.

#### Council and Wider Dynamics

There is extreme frustration among Council members and the broader international community that resolution 2139 has not led to an appreciably improved humanitarian situation. NGOs have been critical of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the aid entering the country has remained in government-controlled areas. The 15 May communiqué of the core Group of Friends of Syria—including Council members France, Jordan, the UK and the US—announced that in their national capacities they would move towards delivering half of their aid across the borders of Syria's neighbouring countries.

There is momentum to table a draft resolution to create legal obligations on the regime to allow aid across borders and conflict lines. Despite the 22 May veto of the ICC referral, humanitarian leads Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg and the P3 are looking for a consensus text. However, the degree of flexibility in negotiations may be limited, given that the precise aim of the resolution will test China and Russia's staunch adherence to the principle of sovereignty.

Anticipating such a text, Russia circulated its own draft humanitarian resolution on 13 May that supported localised ceasefires, like that reached in Homs on 2 May, as a way towards less violence and an eventual political settlement. Council members met informally at expert level only once, on 16 May, to discuss the text. A significant majority of Council members expressed a strong preference for Australia, Jordan and Luxembourg to remain the penholders on the issue. Many added that the Council could not support a text that described Homs as a positive example of government-opposition engagement when the ceasefire had only been reached after two years of government bombardment and siege tactics to starve the area into submission.

On chemical weapons, the latest report confirms several Council members' long-held belief that the 30 June completion deadline would be missed. Some have also raised questions over whether Syria may be holding on to the final tranche of chemicals as a bargaining chip until the issue regarding its chemical weapons production facilities is resolved and also perhaps until the 3 June elections are complete.

Either way, these members believe the OPCW-UN Joint Mission will need to continue to play a role past the deadline until there is total removal and destruction, clarification of whether Syria has made a full declaration of its chemical weapon arsenal and destruction

of the 12 facilities that were to be destroyed by 15 March. Meanwhile, Russia has expressed a strong preference to move the issue out of the Council after 30 June, allowing the OPCW to deal with any remaining issues on a purely technical level.

France is the penholder on Syria.

#### UN Documents

##### Security Council Resolutions

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22 February  
2014  
[S/RES/2139](#) This resolution demanded that all parties, in particular the Syrian authorities, allow humanitarian access in Syria across conflict lines, in besieged areas and across borders and expressed the intent to take further steps in the case of non-compliance.

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27  
September  
2013  
[S/RES/2118](#) This resolution was adopted unanimously by the Council and required the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpiles, called for the convening of the Geneva II peace talks and endorsed the establishment of a transitional governing body in Syria with full executive powers.

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##### Secretary-General's Reports

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23 May  
2014  
[S/2014/368](#) This was the eighth OPCW-UN Joint Mission monthly progress report.

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22 May  
2014  
[S/2014/365](#) This was the third report on implementation of resolution 2139 on humanitarian access.

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##### Security Council Meeting Record

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22 May  
2014  
[S/PV.7180](#) was the meeting record of the veto by China and Russia of draft resolution S/2014/348 referring Syria to the ICC.

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##### Other

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22 May  
2014  
[S/2014/348](#) This was the French draft resolution referring Syria to the ICC, co-sponsored by 65 member states, vetoed by China and Russia. All other Council members voted in favour of the referral.