

**UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SYRIA
NAJAT ROCHDI**

**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON SYRIA
14 September 2022**

Monsieur le President, Ambassador Nicolas de Rivière (France)

1. C'est un vrai honneur pour moi d'adresser le Conseil aujourd'hui en tant que l'Envoyée Spéciale Adjointe pour la Syrie.
2. The Special Envoy briefed you two weeks ago on his latest engagement to move the political process forward. Since then, he has engaged Arab, European, Iranian, Russian, Turkish and US representatives in Geneva, and appreciates their support. He also engaged with the Syrian Negotiations Committee in Geneva and looks forward to visiting Damascus as soon as possible to engage the Government of Syria. He remains focussed on addressing substantive challenges that have faced the Constitutional Committee and to see it reconvene at the earliest in Geneva. In parallel, he continues his consultations to advance a wider confidence-building step-for-step process.
3. Today, let me take a step back and touch on immediate concerns that cause so much suffering for so many Syrians, and tell you what we are doing to ensure these issues are front and centre of any political process:
 - First: civilian safety and security and a consolidated ceasefire;
 - Second: the humanitarian suffering of the Syrian people and its exacerbation by the country's economic collapse;
 - Third: the tens of thousands of arbitrarily detained, abducted, forcibly disappeared and missing persons;
 - And fourth: the specific ways, in which the conflict impacts women and girls and our efforts to ensure the meaningful participation of Syrian women, equally and together with men, in its resolution.

Monsieur le President,

4. Two weeks ago, the Special Envoy called for restraint in the face of a troubling escalation of violent incidents. But Syrian civilians are still being killed, maimed, detained, displaced and unable to return home in safety. Their infrastructure and livelihoods are still being destroyed. Even in the past two weeks of *relative* calm, we have seen, not only ongoing exchanges of

rocket and artillery fire and other security incidents, but also continued reports of sporadic air and drone strikes in different areas of northern Syria – as well reports of Israeli airstrikes, including some that temporarily took Aleppo airport out of service. And of course, there have also been violent incidents by listed terrorist groups, including fresh violence in al Hol.

5. It remains clear that the political process will not advance meaningfully or sustainably until violence is curtailed and ultimately ends. Resolution 2254 itself recognizes the close link between a ceasefire and a parallel political process.
6. Of course, we take note of the ongoing efforts by different international stakeholders to preserve different ceasefire arrangements, which have contributed to freezing frontlines for over two years. And we are fully aware of the myriad challenges in de-escalating violence further than that, and in dealing with the presence of listed terrorist groups in a manner that complies with obligations to protect civilians.
7. But a nationwide ceasefire remains a fundamental goal of the political process – something which we continue to underline to Ceasefire Task Force participants in Geneva. And we strongly underline too the obligation of all parties to strictly adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law.

Monsieur le President,

8. I commend the work of humanitarian colleagues who continue to work to meet the needs of Syrian civilians – as those needs skyrocket, as access remains constrained and threatened, and as resources dwindle. We are supporting them very practically, through the Humanitarian Task Force in Geneva. We need to use all tools available to us to ensure the full implementation of Security Council Resolution 2642– through all modalities, whether cross-border or cross-line, with increased support for life-saving aid and early recovery.
9. But we must look not only at how to meet the humanitarian needs of Syrians, but how to stem the sources of their needs. De-escalating violence would take us a long way in that regard. So would addressing the factors driving displacement or fear of return, which must be safe, dignified and voluntary. Addressing all these factors is part of creating a safe, calm and neutral environment in which a political process can unfold. Action is also needed to deal with Syria’s economic collapse – a major source of needs. Stabilizing the conflict and advancing a sustainable political solution are the best ways

to stem this economic collapse. But meanwhile, Syrians are struggling with essentials: food on the table, fuel for warmth, basic services and livelihoods.

10. The economic crisis is complex, goes without saying. And a decade of conflict coupled with the impact of mismanagement, sanctions - and more recently, the de facto division of the country, the Lebanese financial crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and the reverberations from the Ukraine war - have all contributed to leaving the Syrian economy in such dire straits. To stem this economic collapse we therefore need step-for-step confidence building measures within the political process across a range of issues – just as we continue our humanitarian work.

Monsieur le President,

11. Every month, we stress the priority of addressing the issue of the detained, abducted and missing persons. The relatives of those whose fates and whereabouts are unknown – mothers, wives and daughters in particular - bear the brunt of supporting families financially, physically and emotionally, while also leading an unfathomable search for their loved ones. This search puts them at high risk of exploitation, harassment, violence and stigma, on top of extortion to secure ransom or bribes, in times of incredible economic hardship. And they are often in the impossible situation of having to declare a loved one missing because this is the only way to support their families, in terms of, for instance, rights to inheritance, custody or property.
12. We are greatly concerned at reports that the continued practice of arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearance, abductions and kidnapping for ransom, including of women and children continues.
13. The families of the missing have, however, recently achieved a milestone. They have worked hand in hand in the past years, alongside civil society organizations as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, our Office, and other organizations. And their voice is now reflected in the recent report of the Secretary-General, calling for your support for a new international body for addressing these issues in a humanitarian and holistic manner, that is victim, survivor and family centric, grounded in the right to know and as the only way to start for the families the healing process.

Monsieur le President,

14. Syrian women are suffering from detention, torture and abduction themselves, as well as their family members. And they are definitely not the

only ones who need our help. Syrian women in general, have carried a special burden throughout the conflict. Many are managing and sustaining households and holding communities together, in the absence of men. And yet, just as they need livelihoods, many women find themselves unable to secure jobs or advancement, given the conflict and its impact on the economy.

15. The Special Envoy and I, like my predecessor, attach great importance to hearing the voices of Syrian women in the political process. Syrian women can and must play an active role in shaping a political solution and in ensuring that it translates into reality on the ground.
16. Two weeks ago, I consulted extensively with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board in Geneva, as did the Special Envoy. We had a series of discussions that brought home the realities of conflict, which they framed as increasingly compounded by factors beyond the control of Syrians.
17. They underscored the effects of the economic crisis; the dangers of a youth exodus hollowing out society, the economy and state institutions; and depredations that Syrian adults and children face, including refugee and IDP communities – such as sexual abuse and forced labour at the expense of an education – as humanitarian needs grow and humanitarian budgets are stretched to their limits. They reminded me that Syrian children are growing up without their health, education and standard of living assured, and with gaping uncertainty to their futures. And they are developing an ambitious workplan and we will continue to facilitate their meetings and amplify their *diverse* voices.
18. Meanwhile, the Civil Society Support Room's two new thematic working groups will convene in Geneva very soon to support the political process.
19. These dialogues are part of the facilitation and engagement of our office with a broad range of Syrians, allowing us to keep close contact with those who see the situation on the ground, allowing insights Syrians' evolving views, and providing us with advice on creative openings for the political process.
20. Above all, the women who meet in the Women's Advisory Board, and the participants in the wider civil society dialogues, demonstrates to all of us that, despite many differences among them, common ground can be found. This is the most important insight I have gathered so far in this job: that progress is possible, and that Syrians can come together to rescue their country and focus on its future. That they are committed and willing to engage and that their fight is one of a peaceful future for Syria. We must

advance a sustainable, inclusive political solution to keep the hope for those who are fighting every day and correct Syria's trajectory on all these fronts.

Merci Monsieur le President.