

**DEPUTY SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR SYRIA
CLAUDIO CORDONE**

BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL

12 October 2026

Mr President,

1. I am briefing you from Damascus following engagements in New York during High-Level Week, including a meeting between President Ahmad al-Sharaa and the Secretary-General, who welcomed steady progress in Syria and reaffirmed the United Nations' readiness to support Syria's political transition, economic recovery and reconstruction.

Mr President,

2. The economic situation is one of the keys to the success of the transition and stability in Syria. Greater availability of goods, investment announcements and renewed financial connections are encouraging. But success will ultimately be measured by tangible improvements in people's daily lives, benefitting all Syrians.
3. For many, essentials have become harder to afford. Recent fuel price increases have driven up transport and production costs, compounding currency depreciation, further eroding purchasing power. Food prices rose by an average of around 30 percent following the increases. In response to demonstrations across the country, the authorities announced measures to mitigate the impact, including reduced diesel prices.
4. Economic pressures are also affecting essential services. The World Health Organization has highlighted shortages of medicines and medical supplies. Teachers have protested over salaries and working conditions, while disruptions to municipal services have compounded daily hardships.
5. On the positive side, sanctions relief has opened opportunities for investment and financial cooperation. Finance Minister Barnieh has outlined reforms to strengthen public financial management. The European Union announced €620 million in support, and the World Bank has approved a \$175 million agricultural project. Syria will also be well represented at this week's Annual Meetings of the World Bank and IMF taking place in Bangkok.
6. The task now is to translate these opportunities into sustained support for Syria's recovery. Syrians expect international political goodwill to turn into financing, technical assistance and projects that deliver tangible benefits to communities. Reforms to strengthen institutions, transparency and equitable growth are also expected. Following on from the meeting with the Secretary-General during High Level Week, we are exploring with the Government the possibility of supporting an international recovery and reconstruction conference, grounded in Syria's priorities.

Mr President,

7. Recovery also demands investment in Syria's human capital. An estimated two million children are still out of school. Damaged facilities, teacher shortages, and economic hardship continue to impede access, while the return of displaced families is placing additional pressures. I welcome efforts to rehabilitate schools and reinstate dismissed teachers.
8. At the same time, university admission guidelines recently reissued have caused alarm regarding access to certain fields of study, including reserving degrees in specific institutions to male or female students, a prohibition on joining political parties or organizations as a prerequisite of enrollment, and restrictions faced by persons with disabilities. I urge the authorities to review these guidelines, in consultation with all stakeholders, to ensure equal access to higher education, free from direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of gender, disability or political affiliation.

Mr President,

9. Recent incidents of violence are a reminder of the scale of communal wounds and grievances that contribute to the fragility of Syria's transition. On 30 September, seven people were killed and four injured when gunmen attacked a minibus in Homs. The victims were reportedly Alawites, and witnesses alleged that the attackers questioned passengers about their sectarian identity. I welcome the authorities' announcement of an investigation. It is equally important to reassure affected communities, prevent reprisals and avoid collective blame.
10. Concerns over communal security have also been heightened elsewhere. On 3 October, unidentified individuals on motorcycles reportedly entered and opened fire at shops and civilians in al-Suqaylabiyah, triggering protests by the local Christian community, and a security response. There are unresolved tensions since the civil war between the town and surrounding communities. Additionally, tensions rose in the predominantly Shiite town of Nubl following reports of a kidnapping that the authorities subsequently said was fabricated. Once again, such incidents illustrate how quickly local disputes and rumours can acquire a sectarian dimension, underscoring the need to respond promptly and address communal grievances, prevent incitement and rebuild trust.
11. In this context, I commend the initiative taken by the government to develop a national action plan against hate speech, which remains a serious concern across Syrian society. It must be confronted and prevented from escalating into incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, while respecting freedom of expression, in accordance with international law. Yesterday, my Office and UN experts facilitated a workshop, held under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, to begin such a process. The United Nations will continue to cooperate with the authorities in this regard, including by supporting inclusive consultations.

Mr President,

12. Syria continues to confront attacks by Daesh, such as the one on 17 September in Daraa governorate resulting in the killing of three members of the Internal Security

Forces. Gas pipelines were also reportedly sabotaged in Deir Ezzor on 28 September and Homs on 7 October. I welcome the international pledges this month in Rome of more than \$75 million in support of counter-terrorism efforts in Syria.

Mr President,

13. Israeli military activities in south Syria continued on a daily basis. They include expanding engineering and construction works, checkpoints, searches, detentions and shootings. I echo the concerns expressed last week by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the continuing impact on civilians of such activities, including the killing on 5 October of a man near an IDF military position. There were other incidents of IDF shooting of civilians and detentions, with a total of 49 individuals reportedly remaining in Israeli custody. And on 23 September, 14 members of a settler group crossed the ceasefire line before Israeli forces returned them.
14. I reiterate the Secretary-General's call for an end of the violations of the 1974 Disengagement of Forces Agreement and full respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Diplomacy is the only way to reach agreement on security arrangements, consistent with international law.

Mr President,

15. In Sweida, there were fewer violent incidents along contact lines this month, and movement along the Damascus-Sweida highway improved. But the political stalemate continued. Tensions persist among Druze factions over Sweida's future and its relationship with Damascus. At a demonstration on 7 October, some participants displayed Israeli flags, although this should not be seen as representative of the wider Druze community.
16. Beyond these political divisions, serious humanitarian and human rights concerns remain unresolved in Sweida. They include the educational future of over 14,000 Sweida students, detainees and missing persons, and obstacles to the return of displaced Druze and Bedouin families, all of which are compounding mistrust between communities.
17. Accountability is equally important to rebuilding trust. Judicial proceedings related to violations committed during last year's July violence have commenced, and sentences have been issued in a number of cases involving all parties. I welcome these steps. Nevertheless, continued attention to fair-trial safeguards, including the right of defence, remain important to strengthening confidence in the judicial process.
18. Ultimately, and despite foreign interference, a durable solution in Sweida requires a Syrian-Syrian dialogue to address local concerns within the framework of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. My Office stands ready to support efforts to revive the September 2025 roadmap, restoring state authority while addressing legitimate community grievances.

Mr President,

19. On the northeast, implementation of the 29 January agreement continues, including the gradual integration of former SDF personnel into state institutions and the transfer of salary payments to Damascus. Challenges remain regarding the number of personnel integrated and the unresolved status of the Women's Protection Units. Education in the Kurdish language and recognition of school certificates are still under discussion, while housing, land and property disputes remain, impeding returns.
20. Demonstrations in Hasakeh calling on the Government to assert its sovereignty drew contrasting reactions from Arab and Kurdish communities, underscoring the importance of advancing integration through dialogue and not confrontation.

Mr President,

21. Institutional reform and development is another important part of Syria's transition. On 16 September, the People's Assembly passed legislation abolishing the Assad-era Counter-Terrorism Court, nullifying its rulings and establishing mechanisms for property restitution. Ministerial hearings on education and energy were early examples of the Assembly's emerging oversight role.
22. Work is also continuing on draft transitional justice legislation. It will be vital that it ensures impartial accountability, addressing individual responsibility regardless of the victims or perpetrators, and respecting due process. We look forward to the submission of the draft law for debate and adoption by the People's Assembly. The United Nations stands ready to advise on this and other legislative drafts, in full respect of Syrian leadership and ownership. I also encourage the strengthening of cooperation between Syrian institutions and international mechanisms supporting transitional justice.
23. Looking ahead, my Office continues to engage with the authorities in discussions on their plans for future electoral events and United Nations' support. You will also recall that the Constitutional Declaration envisages the drafting and adoption of a permanent constitution during the transitional period. We continue to underline the importance of an early start of such a process, ensuring that it is inclusive, transparent and participatory, and are ready to support it. It will be especially important in affirming the equal rights of women and of Syria's diverse communities.

Mr President,

24. On 5 October the authorities published a draft law governing non-governmental organizations, reportedly informed by contributions from some 1,000 civil society representatives, which is welcome. I encourage the authorities to maximize further meaningful consultation and ensure that the final legislation protects civic space, enabling organizations to operate freely.
25. Civil society representatives have continued to call for stronger representation of women in public institutions, including for a target of 30 per cent. The recent graduation of 150 female police officers is a welcome step towards greater participation in the security sector. We encourage broader efforts to ensure that women are meaningfully represented in decision-making and play a full role in public life.

Mr President,

26. Let me conclude by reiterating my Office's readiness to develop our cooperation with the Syrian government, working from inside Syria, seeking to connect effectively Syrian and international efforts to ensure the success of a Syrian-led and owned transition.

Thank you.