

Syria: 12 Years of Humanitarian Crisis and Polarization

*Siria: 12 años de crisis
humanitaria y polarización*

Natalia Jiménez Alegría

Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations

njimenez@sre.gob.mx



Abstract

The conflict in Syria has dragged on for 12 years, political solutions are at a standstill and the humanitarian crisis has escalated. The current situation indicates that the Security Council is highly polarized, and this is one of the reasons that prevents progress being made, at a high human cost. During Mexico's most recent participation in the Council, the need to consider alternatives inside and outside the Council became clear. During that time, the role of elected members (E10) was important to find a balance.



Resumen

El conflicto en Siria se ha prolongado por 12 años, las negociaciones políticas se encuentran estancadas y la crisis humanitaria ha incrementado. La actual coyuntura indica que el Consejo de Seguridad se encuentra polarizado y ello es una de las razones que impide que haya avances para resolver esta crisis con alto costo humano. Durante la más reciente participación de México en el Consejo quedó clara la necesidad de replantear alternativas dentro y fuera de él. Asimismo, se destaca el papel de los miembros electos (E10) para encontrar equilibrios.



Keywords

Syria, humanitarian situation, chemical weapons, political solution, E10



Palabras clave

Siria, situación humanitaria, armas químicas, solución política, E10

Syria: 12 Years of Humanitarian Crisis and Polarization

Natalia Jiménez Alegría

Context and background

The situation in Syria became a part of the Security Council agenda in response to the repression of the protests that arose in that country during the Arab Spring, which aimed to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad.

In subsequent years, the parties to the conflict multiplied and their zones of control in the country changed as a result of their military actions. The main actors on the ground have been the Syrian army, armed opposition groups, Kurdish militias and their allies (the United States, Russia, Türkiye and other countries in the region).¹ In addition to terrorist groups such as Islamic State and Al-Nusra, mainly in the early years.²

¹ "Syria War: A Brief Guide to Who's Fighting Whom," in BBC, April 7, 2017, at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39528673> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

² For more information on the terrorist groups that have been active in the Syrian conflict and have motivated reactions from foreign armies, see Charles Lister, *Profiling Jabhat al-Nusra*, Washington D.C., Brookings Institution (Analysis Paper, 24), July 2016, at https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/iwr_20160728_profiling_nusra.pdf (date of access: June 12, 2023).

This conflict, which also involves world and regional powers,³ has generated the largest refugee and internal displacement crisis in the world: more than 14 million Syrians have left the country in search of protection, and more than 6.8 million are internally displaced.⁴ In 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) estimated more than 350 000 deaths in a decade.⁵ The documentation of these deaths follows a strict methodology, so it is highly probable that the number of fatalities is higher. There are more than 100 000 missing people,⁶ 15.3 million people require humanitarian assistance, and more than 12 million are in a situation of food insecurity,⁷ in addition to other long-term consequences for the population, such as the effects of severe malnutrition and the impact on mental health.⁸

Faced with the paralysis of the Security Council, other bodies have acted to find solutions for Syria and to investigate atrocities. The General Assembly established the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the

³ For more information on the participation of regional actors, see, “Syria’s War Explained from the Beginning,” in Al Jazeera, April 14, 2018, at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/4/14/syrias-war-explained-from-the-beginning> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁴ “Syria Refugee Crisis Explained,” in USA for UNHCR, March 14, 2023, at <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁵ “Oral Update on the Extent of Conflict-Related Deaths in the Syrian Arab Republic,” in OHCHR, September 24, 2021, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2021/09/oral-update-extent-conflict-related-deaths-syrian-arab-republic?LangID=E&NewsID=27531> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁶ Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, *Syria’s Missing and Disappeared: Is There a Way Forward? Recommendations for a Mechanism with an International Mandate*, Geneva, OHCHR, June 17, 2022, at https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/PolicyPaperSyriasMissingAndDisappeared_17June2022_EN.pdf (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁷ Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview: Syrian Arab Republic*, New York/Geneva, United Nations, December 2022, at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/syrian-arab-republic-2023-humanitarian-needs-overview-december-2022> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *A Decade of Loss: Syria’s Youth after Ten Years of Crisis*, Geneva, ICRC, February 2021, at https://www.icrc.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/Worldwide/Middle-East/syria/icrc-syria-a-decade-of-loss_en.pdf (date of access: June 12, 2023).

Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIM).⁹ For its part, the Human Rights Council established the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.¹⁰ At the regional level, the League of Arab States was active in the early years of the conflict. After breaking off diplomatic relations, some countries have recently reestablished them.¹¹

Syria in the United Nations Security Council, 2021-2021

First reactions and blockages

The Security Council held its first meetings on Syria in April 2011.¹² Beginning that year and in response to the rapid unfolding of events, including indications and subsequent evidence of the use of chemical weapons, the Council met periodically. Given the escalation of violence, in July 2012 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) declared that hostilities in Syria had reached the level of a non-international armed conflict.¹³ Al-

⁹ “International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011,” A/RES/71/248, January 11, 2017, at <https://undocs.org/A/RES/71/248> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹⁰ “Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic,” in the Human Rights Council, at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/iici-syria/independent-international-commission> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹¹ “No Consensus on Syrian Arab League Return after Saudi Summit,” in AP News, April 15, 2023, at <https://apnews.com/article/syria-saudi-arabia-arab-league-meeting-e9da2b932bd-f37aad0f6a27181bcdd3b> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹² Security Council, “The Situation in the Middle East, Including the Question of Palestine,” S/PV.6520 (Resumption 1), April 21, 2011, at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/701731> (date of access: June 12, 2023); and “The situation in the Middle East,” S/PV.6524, April 27, 2011, at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/702233> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹³ Stephanie Nebehay, “Exclusive: Red Cross Ruling Raises Questions of Syrian War Crimes,” in Reuters, July 14, 2012, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-syria-crisis-icrc/exclusive-red-cross-ruling-raises-questions-of-syrian-war-crimes-idUSBRE86D09H20120714> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

though violations of the norms of international humanitarian law became increasingly frequent, the Council's action was limited.

The first declarations by the Security Council were press statements, and the first statement from the presidency was in August 2011.¹⁴ The first resolutions were adopted in April 2012,¹⁵ after the veto had been used twice.¹⁶ Given the lack of action and the blockages, the General Assembly also held meetings and adopted resolutions in parallel. Of note is the resolution of February 2012, which condemned the human rights violations, supported the Arab League's call for political dialogue, and called for the appointment of a special envoy.¹⁷

It is notable that the Syria file has recorded the highest number of vetoes (19) over the last 12 years.¹⁸ Of note is the veto of the draft resolution to refer the situation in Syria To the International Criminal Court,¹⁹ in accordance with Article 13 (b) of the Rome Statute,²⁰ and the vetoes that ended the Joint Investigation Mechanism (JIM) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the U.N. for investigation of the use of chemical weapons.²¹

¹⁴ "Statement by the President of the Security Council," S/PRST/2011/16, August 3, 2011, at <https://undocs.org/S/PRST/2011/16> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹⁵ S/RES/2042(2012), April 14, 2012, at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2042\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2042(2012)) (date of access: June 12, 2023); and S/RES/2043(2012), April 21, 2012 at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2043\(2012\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2043(2012)) (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹⁶ Draft Resolution, S/2011/612, October 4, 2011, at <https://undocs.org/S/2011/612> (date of access: June 12, 2023); and Draft Resolution, S/2012/77, February 4, 2012, at <https://undocs.org/S/2012/77> (date of access: June 12, 2023). China and Russia vetoed both drafts.

¹⁷ "The Situation in the Syrian Arab Republic," A/RES/66/253, February 21, 2012, at <https://undocs.org/A/RES/66/253> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹⁸ Security Council, "Veto List," in Dag Hammarskjöld Library, at https://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/scact_veto_table_en.htm (date of access: June 12, 2023).

¹⁹ Security Council, "The Situation in the Middle East," S/PV.7180, May 22, 2014, at <https://undocs.org/S/PV.7180> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²⁰ Draft resolution, S/2014/348, May 22, 2014, at <https://undocs.org/S/2014/348> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²¹ "In Hindsight: The Demise of the JIM," in Security Council Report, December 28, 2017, at https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2018-01/in_hindsight_the_demise_of_the_jim.php (date of access: June 12, 2023).

Emergence of three channels: chemical weapons, political process, and humanitarian situation

Prior to Mexico's participation in the Security Council, significant resolutions were adopted that set the tone for the debates that took place in 2021 and 2022. The first was presented in September 2013, when the Security Council approved resolution 2118, which required the verification and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons program and condemned its use.²²

Second, given the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, resolution 2165 was adopted in July 2014,²³ which authorized four border crossings to open for 180 days. Two of these crossings, Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam, are on the border with Turkey; one, Al Yarubiyah, is on the border with Iraq; and one, Al-Ramtha, is on the border with Jordan.

The cross-border mechanism was renewed with similar characteristics and a number of adjustments to the timetable until 2017. Since that year, these crossings have been reduced, as a result of the fact that the Syrian Government was regaining control of its territory. In January 2020, only the Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam crossings were renewed, while in July of that year, after two draft resolutions vetoed by Russia and China, only the authorization for Bab al-Hawa was renewed for a single year.²⁴

Third, in December 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2254, which outlined a roadmap for a transitional political process to end the conflict,²⁵ and includes other measures to build confidence, such as locating missing people and creating conditions for the return of refugees.

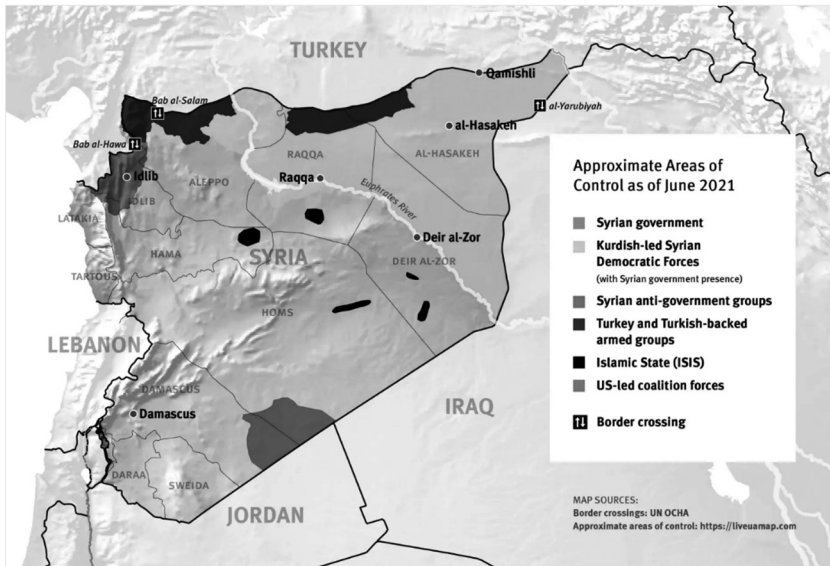
²² Security Council, "Security Council Requires Scheduled Destruction of Syria's Chemical Weapons. Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2118 (2013)," press release, SC/11135, September 27, 2013, at <https://press.un.org/en/2013/sc11135.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²³ Security Council, "With Millions of Syrians in Need, Security Council Adopts Resolution 2165 (2014). Directing Relief Delivery through more Border Crossings, across Conflict Lines," press release, SC/11473, 14 July 2014, at <https://press.un.org/en/2014/sc11473.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²⁴ S/RES/2533(2020), July 13, 2020, at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2533\(2020\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2533(2020)) (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²⁵ Security Council, "Security Council Unanimously Adopts Resolution 2254 (2015). Endorsing Road Map for Peace Process in Syria, Setting Timetable for Talks," press release,

The aforementioned resolutions gave rise to three channels with which the Security Council deals with the situation in Syria on a monthly basis: political, humanitarian, and chemical weapons. Generally, there are contributions from the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, in charge of the political process; from the High Commissioner for Disarmament, and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and representatives of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), as well as members of civil society. During the two year period in which Mexico was part of the Council, the renewal of the cross-border crossing became one of the main diplomatic challenges.



Source: Taken from “Syria: Russian Veto Would Shut Down Last Aid Lifeline,” in Human Rights Watch, June 10, 2021, at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/06/10/syria-russian-veto-would-shut-down-last-aid-lifeline> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

sc/12171, December 18, 2015, at <https://press.un.org/en/2015/sc12171.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

Regarding the situation on the ground, the map of Syria has been changing as intense battles have been fought for control of the territory between the different parties to the conflict. By 2021 and 2022, the Syrian Government had recovered most of the territory, except for the northwest and northeast.²⁶ The map illustrates the location of the border crossings and the main areas under control of various actors.

Participation of Mexico in the United Nations Security Council, 2021-2021

General dynamics

The prevailing climate in the Security Council on Syria upon Mexico's arrival was characterized by a high level of politicization. In the two years of its participation, the Council did not produce official documents on the political process or the use of chemical weapons. The resolutions to renew the authorization of the cross-border mechanism saw the greater part of the negotiation.

At the beginning of 2021, the narrative mainly concerned the situation in the country and the civilian population, after a decade of conflict. The Secretary-General's monthly reports drew attention to the deterioration of the economy and food security, especially the growing rate of malnutrition among children.²⁷ A particularly relevant issue in all the situations under analysis by the Council were the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, access to and distribution of vaccines.²⁸

²⁶ Center for Preventive Action, "Conflict in Syria," in Council on Foreign Relations, at <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-syria> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²⁷ OCHA, "A Decade of War in Syria: What Have Humanitarian Agencies Learned? A Virtual Lecture by Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordination, at the Geneva Graduate Institute," March 16, 2021, at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/decade-war-syria-what-have-humanitarian-agencies-learned-virtual-lecture> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

²⁸ Richard Gowan, "A Fresh Chance for the Security Council to Tackle COVID-19," in International Crisis Group, April 6, 2021, at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/fresh-chance-security-council-tackle-covid-19> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

Regarding the positions of the permanent members, on the one hand, France, the United Kingdom and the United States (P3) favored maintaining the cross-border mechanism²⁹ and rejected the allegations about the effects of unilateral sanctions on the humanitarian situation in Syria. Russia questioned the need for the cross-border mechanism and its transparency,³⁰ as well as the presence of U.S. troops in Syrian territory.³¹ For its part, China emphasized the temporary nature of the cross-border mechanism and the importance of respecting Syrian sovereignty.³²

The elected members (E10) favored the continuity of the mechanism, with certain differences in line with their bilateral relations with Syria. As the resolution that gave rise to the cross-border mechanism was penholdered by Australia, Luxembourg and Jordan, the tradition has been maintained that the co-penholdership of the resolution falls to members of the E10. Ireland and Norway assumed this responsibility in 2021 and 2022.³³

The dynamics of confrontation extended beyond the substantive issues and began to encompass issues of format. In the case of the humanitarian and political channel, some members of the Security Council chose to include exclusive monthly meetings for each topic in their work programs.

²⁹ United States Department of State, “Joint Statement by the Secretary of the United States of America, the Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom, and the Foreign Ministers of France, Germany and Italy,” press release, March 15, 2021, at <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-by-the-secretary-of-state-of-the-united-states-of-america-the-foreign-secretary-of-the-united-kingdom-and-the-foreign-ministers-of-france-germany-and-italy/> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³⁰ Permanent Mission of Russia to the United Nations, “Statement by First Deputy Permanent Representative at an Open VTC of UNSC Member on the Political and Humanitarian Situation in Syria,” May 26, 2021, at https://russiaun.ru/en/news/sc_260521 (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³¹ Lolita C. Baldor, “A Look at the U.S. Military Mission in Syria and Its Dangers,” in AP News, March 24, 2023, at <https://apnews.com/article/syria-us-troops-drone-attack-6194dca97f594e3609914637463c4ce3> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³² Chinese Permanent Mission to the United Nations, “Remarks by Ambassador Geng Shuang at Security Council Briefing on Syria,” September 28, 2021, at http://un.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/chinaandun/securitycouncil/regionalhotspots/asia/yz/202109/t20210930_9574152.htm (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³³ Arthur Boutellis, “Lessons from E10 Engagement on the Security Council,” in International Peace Institute, November 2022, at https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/2211_Lessons-from-E10-Engagement.pdf (date of access: June 12, 2023).

Renewal in July 2021

In 2021, and given the deterioration of the humanitarian situation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the P3 requested the opening of two border crossings that were previously closed; Russia was opposed to this. Mexico supported the text proposed by the co-penholders of the resolution, who in principle requested the renewal of the Bab al-Hawa crossing and the reopening of the Al Yarubiyah crossing. It considered that this approach had a greater possibility of finding a middle ground. During the negotiations it became clear that Russia would not accept the reopening of the second crossing, so, in a second version of the resolution, the co-penholders only kept the authorization for Bab al-Hawa for one year.

Before the formal start of negotiations in New York, a summit between the United States and Russia was held in Geneva,³⁴ where the renewal of the cross-border mechanism was one of the topics on the agenda. This resulted in both countries becoming decisively involved in the context of the Security Council, particularly on the eve of the authorization's expiration date.

Russia insisted on the time period being restricted to six months, and its delegation circulated an alternative text. Taking into account the history of the exercise of the veto, it was highly probable that this could happen again if the one-year time limit was maintained.

Mexico was prepared for various scenarios and had expressed its position regarding the central importance of maintaining the Bab al-Hawa crossing for a year, principally because a 12-month mandate would give greater certainty to the planning of humanitarian operations.

In the hours before the decision was taken, intense negotiations were held between the United States and Russia. On the morning scheduled for the adoption, both the co-penholders, as well as Russia and the United States, requested more time to reach an agreement. On the sidelines, the original co-authors requested the support of the E10 to accept a text that would be an intermediate point between the various initial positions.

³⁴ The White House, "Remarks by President Biden in Press Conference," Geneva, Switzerland, June 16, 2023, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/16/remarks-by-president-biden-in-press-conference-4/> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

In that text, the project proposed by Russia was taken up again, however, the only realistic possibility for the renewal period to be 12 months. With this, resolution 2585 (2021) could be adopted unanimously with the co-sponsorship of the United States and Russia.³⁵

The wording on the term of validity was proposed as an initial period of six months, plus another six months subject to the publication of a report from the Secretary-General that focused on the transparency of operations and progress in terms of crossings between conflict lines (*cross-line*).

In addition to the emphasis on transparency and cross-line access, resolution 2585 (2021) highlighted early recovery projects, priority issues for Russia, and elements that marked the reports to the Security Council in the subsequent months.

Renewal in July 2022

The atmosphere in the various Security Council files after Russia's invasion of Ukraine became tenser and more complex. As the renewal date approached, questions continued about the transparency and effectiveness of the mechanism, as well as the imposition of unilateral sanctions. By June 2022, that is, one month before the authorization expired, five shipments of humanitarian aid had been able to cross between conflict lines from areas controlled by the Syrian Government to the northwest.³⁶ In monthly sessions, OCHA highlighted the difficulties in organizing these operations, cross-line. First, security, since it is an active area of conflict, and second, the multiple authorizations, necessary from both the Government and the groups that control this region.

In general terms, OCHA highlighted that, given the different logistical challenges, aid shipments delivered between conflict lines to the northwest were complementary to deliveries and distribution from the Bab

³⁵ Security Council, "Security Council Extends Use of Border Crossing for Humanitarian Aid into Syria, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2585 (2021)," press release, SC/14577, July 9, 2021, at <https://press.un.org/en/2021/sc14577.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³⁶ United Nations, "Daily Press Briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General," June 13, 2022, at <https://press.un.org/en/2022/db220613.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

al-Hawa crossing. To put these in context, at the end of 2022, an average of 600 trucks per month with humanitarian assistance were entering Bab al-Hawa.³⁷ Meanwhile, there were nine shipments between conflict lines from August 2021 to November 2022, which strategically positioned 134 trucks with supplies.³⁸

It is worth specifying that these figures refer to the northwest region of the country. After authorization for the Al Yarubiyah crossing was not renewed, access for U.N. agencies to the northeastern region is taking place between conflict lines. As for the southeastern region, where the Rukban camp is located, U.N. agencies have not had access since 2019.³⁹

Month after month, the updates the Security Council received showed no sign of improvement. At the political level, the stagnation was more evident⁴⁰ due to the lack of commitment of the representatives nominated by the Government. Additionally, in 2022 the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance grew to an all-time high, as did the population facing food insecurity.⁴¹ A cholera epidemic also emerged, due, among other things, to the lack of drinking water resulting from the accumulated damage to civil infrastructure over more than a decade of conflict.

³⁷ OCHA, “Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Martin Griffiths. Statement for the Security Council Briefing on Syria,” December 21, 2022, at <https://reliefweb.int/report/syrian-arab-republic/under-secretary-general-humanitarian-affairs-and-emergency-relief-coordinator-mr-martin-griffiths-statement-security-council-briefing-syria> – December 21, 2022 (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³⁸ Security Council, “Implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016), 2393 (2017), 2401 (2018), 2449 (2018), 2504 (2020), 2533 (2020), 2585 (2021), and 2642 (2022). Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of Humanitarian Resolutions,” S/2022/956, December 15, 2022, para. 59, at <https://undocs.org/S/2022/956> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 66.

⁴⁰ Steven Heydemann and Karam Shaar, “Zombie Diplomacy and the Fate of the Syria’s Constitutional Committee,” in Brookings Institution, January 24, 2022, at <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2022/01/24/zombie-diplomacy-and-the-fate-of-syrias-constitutional-committee/> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁴¹ Security Council, “Implementation...,” para. 75.

The humanitarian emergency and deteriorating security situation in Al-Hawl camp in the northeast were also critical.⁴²

In this context, and to maintain the sole access route, in July 2022, Norway and Ireland opted for a technical renewal of resolution 2585 (2021) for 12 months. The P3 supported this temporary solution while Russia only agreed to a six-month renewal. Unlike 2021, following Russia's aggression against Ukraine diplomatic channels had been impacted and reduced.

The co-penholders prepared a draft resolution that maintained the initial authorization for six months, renewable for a further six months after the issuance of a report.⁴³ Similar to what happened in 2021, Russia presented its own project whereby border crossing was authorized for six months, with a new resolution, rather than a report, being required for its renewal.⁴⁴ The text of the co-penholders had 13 votes in favor, including that of Mexico, the abstention of China and the veto of Russia.⁴⁵ Faced with the Russian veto, Mexico regretted that the veto had been exercised with regard to a strictly humanitarian resolution and subsequently participated in the General Assembly debate convened in compliance with resolution 76/262.⁴⁶

The Russian text was not adopted, only obtaining votes in favor from Russia and China; the P3 voted against, and the E10 abstained. Kenya, on behalf

⁴² *Ibid.*, para. 25.

⁴³ Draft Resolution, S/2022/538, July 8, 2022, at <https://undocs.org/S/2022/538> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁴⁴ Draft Resolution, S/2022/541, July 8, 2022, at <https://undocs.org/S/2022/541> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁴⁵ Security Council, "The situation in the Middle East," S/PV.9087, July 8, 2022, at <https://undocs.org/S/PV.9087> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

⁴⁶ Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations, "Intervención de México en el debate de la Asamblea General sobre el veto de Rusia para renovar el mecanismo transfronterizo de asistencia humanitaria en Siria," July 21, 2022, at <https://mision.sre.gob.mx/onu/index.php/eventos/1867-21-de-julio-2022-intervencion-de-mexico-en-el-debate-de-la-asamblea-general-on-russia-s-veto-to-renew-the-cross-border-mechanism-for-humanitarian-assistance-in-syria> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

of the E10, gave an explanation of vote underlining the need for the Security Council to take action in a critical situation like Syria.⁴⁷

After various bilateral exchanges, a new draft resolution was presented that adjusted the text proposed by Russia by including a special report from the Secretary-General in addition to a new resolution. In practice, this wording made it possible to refer to the new resolution as a “technical confirmation.” The project, approved as resolution 2642, received 12 votes in favor, none against, and the P3 abstained.

Before the participation of elected members for 2021 and 2022 ended, Ireland and Norway began negotiations to facilitate the extension of the mechanism for a further six months. At the beginning of January 2023, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2672.

Conclusions

Except for specific cases in which consensus was reached, polarization in the Security Council has been a constant. The differing positions are due not only to varying national situations, but also to a range of factors and interests in the region. In the midst of the geopolitical jockeying for position, the fact is that this is one of the largest humanitarian and forced migration crises in recent decades. It is regrettable that, given the suffering of the people of Syria, political dialogue has stalled. This was evident in the final months of Mexico’s participation, when the lack of neutrality of Switzerland was used as an argument to stop participating in meetings of the Constitutional Committee.

The active participation of elected members is crucial to balance certain positions. Although there are differences between the approaches of each elected member, in the second year of Mexico’s participation it was possible to form a common front to maintain the authorization of the cross-border mechanism. The scope of the work by the E10 should not be

⁴⁷ Security Council, “Security Council Rejects Two Draft Resolutions Aimed at Renewing Cross-Border Humanitarian Operations in Syria’s North-West,” press release, SC/14963, July 8, 2022, at <https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14963.doc.htm> (date of access: June 12, 2023).

underestimated, especially in light of the initiatives that have also been developed in the General Assembly and that will surely continue in the face of constant deadlocks in the Security Council.

The international community's debt to the Syrian people remains. The earthquakes of February 6, 2023 are a reminder of the situation that millions of people face and the urgency of seeking sustainable solutions. Mexico expressed its solidarity with a contribution of USD 6 million to the Syrian people, through the Cross-Border Humanitarian Fund managed by OCHA.