



## RESOLUTION:

### **THE THREAT OF EUROPEAN JIHADIST FIGHTERS**

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting  
in Belgrade, Serbia on 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2014

#### Recognising:

- The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSR) estimated that from late 2011 to 10 December 2013 – up to 11,000 individuals from 74 nations have gone to Syria to fight against the Assad government;
- Among Western Europeans, the number has more than tripled from up to 600 in April 2011 to 1,900 in March 2014;
- Western Europeans represent up to 18 per cent of the foreign fighter population in Syria, with the majority of recruits coming from France, Britain, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands;
- Syria constitutes one of the most alarming humanitarian crises in recent years, resulting in more than 100.000 deaths, 2 million refugees and forcing 9.3 million of Syrians to require humanitarian assistance;
- Following violent governmental repression of manifestations in Syria in March 2011, the European Union has repeatedly called for an end to the violence in Syria and has blocked the Association Agreement and all bilateral cooperation programs with the Government of Assad;
- That the rise of jihadist terrorist organisation ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) marks the emergence of a new form of terrorism that not only fights states but also wishes to take their place;
- That ISIS has committed atrocities that can be classified by the international community as crimes against humanity. Among the horrors perpetrated by ISIS in the Syrian and Iraqi conquered territories, there is the will to perpetrate a severe ethnic cleansing that culminated in the persecutions of different minorities such as Christians, Yezidis and the beheadings of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff;

- That on the basis of multiple testimonies it is clear that IS fighters have been committing crimes against humanity;
- That French-born terrorist Mehdi Nemmouche, executor of an odious anti-Semitic attack in which 3 people were killed at the Brussels Jewish Museum on 25 May 2014 is now thought to have been trained by ISIS in Syria the previous month.

### **Acknowledging:**

- European Governments should be fully aware of the threat to internal security that the return of European fighters from Syria and Iraq represents, as they become more vulnerable to terrorism. In this sense, Europol warned in its 2012 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report that returning fighters “have the potential to use their training, combat experience, knowledge and contacts for terrorist activities inside the EU”;
- The attack by Mehdi Nemmouche is not an isolated case but is inscribed in a wider terroristic strategy that aims at weakening European countries;
- In that regard, the beheading of French hostage Hervé Gourdel in Algeria proves the intent of ISIS to act beyond the borders of Syria and Iraq;
- The need to avoid such situations in the future and to protect EU citizens on EU territory from foreign extremisms;
- It is necessary to identify and track the activities of EU citizens in Syria and ISIS controlled parts of Iraq through a European-wide cooperation, with an active collaboration of the Republic of Turkey;
- Due to the instability of borders in Iraq and Syria and the consequent difficulty in identifying European fighters on the ground, in most cases families themselves are alerting the authorities. Families, worried about the danger involved, or seeking the truth about the death of a relative, request the help of European governments;
- The European Commission is tackling the issue mainly through non-criminal measures such as monitoring the movement of foreign fighters (eg via the Second Generation Schengen Information System and the EU Passenger Name Record Directive) and the tracking of payments related to terrorist movements (eg via the Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme).
- On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 2014, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved a resolution demanding countries toughen their laws to prevent the flow of foreign fighters to terror groups like the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)

### **YEPP calls on:**

- The EU and its Member States to engage in a further cooperation regarding the establishment of preventive measures, using existing mechanisms such as FRONTEX in an optimal way: such measures should be taken particularly in order to stop EU citizens leaving for Syria and Iraq to fight for ISIS before they exit the EU;
- The EU and its Member States to use their diplomatic expertise to convince Turkey to actively cooperate in the effort to prevent EU citizens to access the territories controlled by ISIS;
- European Member States to invest resources in intelligence capacity and information gathering in countries that have an evident presence of European foreign fighters;
- European Member States to increase their effort in intercepting communication and tracking financial transfers between European states and jihadist movements in Iraq and Syria;
- The European Commission to encourage Member States to adopt and implement criminal and administrative sanctions for jihadist fighters who return to European soil. Such sanctions should include the prosecution of those who fought or participated in fighter trainings, freezing of their assets and bank accounts, withdrawal of their social security, confiscation of their passports and stripping of their citizenship;
- European Institutions and Member States to establish dynamic and efficient cooperation between national police forces, through the use of joint investigation teams and under the supervision of Europol; if existing mechanisms appear insufficient, Member States should have and use the option to create a European police force in view of aforementioned goals.