

**UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY SPECIAL ENVOY FOR SYRIA NAJAT ROCHDI**  
**BRIEFING TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL**  
19 November 2025

Good morning Mr. President, (Amb. Michael Imran Kanu, Sierra Leone), Excellencies,

1. I am briefing you from Oslo where I am attending a Senior Officials meeting hosted by the EU and Norway on the humanitarian situation in Syria – which is extremely serious, and which requires more support, and which my colleague Lisa will brief you on.
2. I recently left Syria after a lengthy visit. In Damascus I met with H.E. Syrian Foreign Minister Shaibani and the head of the Supreme Electoral Commission, as well as many Syrian women and men from all areas and backgrounds. My visit drove home the sheer scale of the challenges and the need for a genuinely inclusive political transition process.
3. After five decades of dictatorship and fourteen years of war, Syria seeks to build a new era. The challenges are truly daunting in making good on the commitments made to the Syrian people on an inclusive political transition, in dealing with the past and in rebuilding the economy. UNHCR estimates that more than one million Syrian refugees have returned. Much has been done in terms of reassurance and problem-solving internationally. We hope that this can be matched with deeper outreach domestically, to ensure stability and social cohesion.

Mr. President,

4. Let me welcome the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2799, which removed designations on President Sharaa and Minister of Interior Khattab. This was an important step towards reintegrating Syria into the international community.
5. We note renewed US executive action involving a further six-month waiver of most Caesar Act restrictions. We continue to urge the repeal of mandatory secondary sanctions. These are key impediments to enabling reconstruction and reviving the devastated Syrian economy, which is indispensable to stability and a successful political transition.

Mr. President,

6. In resolution 2799 you reiterated your full respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of Syria. Yet Israeli military operations and incursions into Syrian territory continue, in grave violation of Syria's sovereignty and of international law. They endanger civilians, inflame regional tensions, undermine the fragile security environment, and threaten the political transition. I received a strong appeal from Foreign Minister Shaibani for the United Nations to act to put an end to these violations. I call for Israel's violations to cease and for adherence to the 1974 Disengagement Agreement. And I appeal to the Security Council to assume its responsibilities in this regard.

Mr. President,

7. Resolution 2799 also recalled the main principles of Security Council resolution 2254. It welcomed Syrian commitments on humanitarian access and countering terrorism. It

recalled expectations regarding foreign terrorist fighters, human rights and safety and security of all Syrians regardless of ethnicity or religion, counter-narcotics, transitional justice, non-proliferation and the elimination of any remnants of chemical weapons; and regional security and stability. It spoke of an inclusive, Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political process. And it expressed the expectation that Syria will adhere to these and all other commitments made to all Syrian people. Let me touch briefly on several of these points.

8. Tensions, lawlessness and some violence persist in several areas, with sporadic exchanges of fire between forces on frontlines. Tensions and violence have continued in Deir-ez-Zor, despite the best efforts of the leaderships to implement the nationwide ceasefire; and also on the margins of Sweida, where serious clashes have been taking place. The continued presence of listed terrorist groups and foreign terrorist fighters remains an additional source of concern. We note the recent operations conducted by the Interim Authorities against ISIL, as well as those of the SDF. And we take note of Syria joining the Global Coalition against ISIL. Security fragility is a reminder that lasting peace in Syria depends on comprehensive security sector reform and credible programs of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.
9. Progress on accountability, transitional justice, and the missing is equally essential. The United Nations stands ready to assist Syria's National Commissions on these issues. We note a first trial now underway for crimes committed during the coastal events in March, and public statements from the national committee into the Sweida events in July that those who committed violations will be held accountable. The United Nations Commission of Inquiry is also continuing its investigation on the Sweida events. Syrians must feel that meaningful steps are being taken to end impunity, past and present, and to prevent any recurrence.
10. We continue to follow with real concern reports of abductions and enforced disappearances. This month, the Ministry of Interior briefed on their investigations into allegations of women's abductions. We reiterate the need to prosecute individuals involved, prevent any occurrence of abductions or enforced disappearances and to ensure strict compliance with international legal norms for security sector forces going forward.

Mr. President,

11. I briefed you last month on the Syrian process for establishing a transitional People's Assembly. Eighteen seats remain vacant in nine districts in northeast Syria and Sweida, where voting has been postponed. We await President Sharaa's appointment of the remaining one-third of the 210 seats in the People's Assembly. In my discussions with Foreign Minister Shaibani and the Head of the Electoral Commission, I appealed for transparency and a process that ensures fair representation of all communities, and of Syrian women.
12. The need for effective inclusion is equally relevant to the next stages of the political transition. The drafting of a permanent constitution is a foundational task. The act of defining a new social contract among Syrians must be a source of peace and unity.

13. Equally, the free and fair elections that are to follow that new constitution will require significant advance planning and early engagement from now, given the institutions and infrastructure that must be rebuilt after so many years of conflict and authoritarian rule.
14. It is therefore essential that the Syrian authorities and civil society begin now to build on the lessons learned and achievements of the political transition so far. This includes course correcting where necessary, and carefully designing processes that ensure that the extent of political inclusiveness to date is the floor and not the ceiling in this transition. The “Day of Dialogue” last week in Damascus co-hosted by the European Union and the Interim Authorities with Syrian civil society was a positive step in that regard. Genuine partnership and the protection of civic space are needed to promote inclusion, transparency and legitimacy in the transition process. We stand ready to support based on our long engagement through the Civil Society Support room and other fora.
15. I further wish to highlight the continued leadership and active engagement of Syrian women, who remain in close contact with our office and continue to call for safety and accountability and to express their readiness and capacity to contribute meaningfully and effectively to Syria’s future through political participation and leadership.

Mr. President,

16. In the northeast, further progress is needed to implement the 10 March agreement. Foreign Minister Shaibani reconfirmed to me the authorities’ support for implementation of the 10 March agreement. We have noted the SDF’s renewed statement of commitment to accelerating the integration of the SDF into the Syrian state. What is needed now are concrete mechanisms for commitments to become action, in terms of both military and political integration, in a spirit of compromise from both parties. Sporadic hostilities along the contact line this month remind us of the urgency of sustaining the ceasefire.
17. And we continue to call for progress to implement the 16 September roadmap for Sweida, where trust is extremely low as new clashes last week remind us. We encourage all parties to take tangible steps forward, particularly initial confidence-building measures, especially on detainees and abductees and the restoration of state services. Any framework for reintegrating Sweida needs to uphold Syria’s sovereignty, unity, independence, and territorial integrity, and address the very real anxieties felt by the Druze regarding their safety, human rights, and inclusion in Syria’s political future – as well as those of Bedouin communities.

Mr. President,

18. It is vital that the political transition succeeds for the Syrian people – men and women, who have equally struggled for the future and stability of Syria. We stand ready to work alongside and support the Syrian authorities, reflecting the broad hopes we hear from Syrians and member states for the United Nations’ continued political role in supporting the implementation of the milestones of the political transition over the coming years. We look forward to further engagement with the Syrian authorities and a wide range of Syrians, and indeed of this Council, in support of the role of this office and the United Nations in building a Syria that is sovereign, stable, united, and prosperous -- a Syria fulfilling the aspirations of all its citizens.

Thank you, Mr. President.