



## **STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

### **EU arms embargo on Syria**

**From May 2011 to the end of May 2013 the European Union imposed a full arms embargo on Syria in response to the violent repression by Syrian government forces of peaceful protests and the following violent conflict in the country. Due to disagreement between EU states about allowing the supply of arms to rebel forces in Syria large parts of the embargo were lifted per 1 June 2013.**

In May 2011 the European Union imposed sanctions on Syria in response to the violent repression by Syrian government forces of peaceful protests. It called on the Syrian security forces to exercise restraint. Council Decision 2011/273/CFSP and Council Regulation No 442/2011.

The sanctions included an embargo on the supply of arms, military equipment and equipment which might be used for internal repression.

In January and June 2012 several EU Council decisions were made that specified in more detail the items and services banned under the arms embargo. This included telecommunications monitoring and interception equipment and certain goods that might be used for the manufacture and maintenance of equipment, which might be used for internal repression. Council Regulation EU No 36/2012 18 January 2012 and Council Regulation EU No 509/2012 16 June 2012.

In July 2012, in an effort to address the problem of arms and other embargoed items being transported from other countries through the EU to Syria it was decided that EU Member States should inspect all vessels and aircraft bound for Syria within their territories and with the consent of the flag state if they have reasonable grounds to believe that the cargo may include sanctioned items. Council Decision 2012/420/CFSP 23 July 2012.

In November 2012 the EU decided to extend restrictive measures until 1 March 2013, imposing a renewal term of only three months instead of one year. Council Decision 2012/739/CFSP 29 November 2012.

In February 2013 the EU decided to renew the restrictive measures against Syria for a further three months, amending them so as to provide greater non-lethal support and technical assistance for the protection of civilians.

In April 2013 the EU decided to allow the supply of certain equipment to Syrian opposition forces. It was decided that EU member states may authorize the supply of non-lethal equipment which might be used for internal repression and technical assistance and financing related to non-lethal military equipment to the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary forces when intended for the protection of civilians.

From June 2013 most parts of the EU arms embargo on Syria were lifted after a decision late May to continue export and import restrictions related to Syria with the exception of arms and material and certain equipment which might be used for internal repression. The EU decided to create a list of items which might be used for internal repression the transfer of which from or via the EU to Syria would remain prohibited. The supply of equipment and software for use in

monitoring of communications by the Syrian regime remained prohibited and so was the import of weapons and other military equipment from Syria. The EU council stressed the commitment by EU states to base their decisions on exports of arms to Syria on the EU Common Position defining common rules governing the control of exports of military technology and equipment. Council Decision 2013/255/CFSP 31 May 2013.

No further conditions were put on the supply of arms to Syria. However, a preceding Council declaration noted the commitment by EU states that weapons supplied to Syria would be for the Syrian National Coalition for Opposition and Revolutionary Forces and intended for the protection of civilians and that member states would not immediately start with the such supplies. The Council announced that it would review its position before 1 August 2013. (Council declaration 27 May 2013) However, this review did not happen.

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