



## HOW CAN THE EU BE A CREDIBLE PEACE PROMOTER IN THE MENA REGION?

The Middle East and North Africa region is a powder keg. Different types and levels of conflicts are continuing to unfold across the region starting from historical un-resolved and stalemated peace processes, as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Western Sahara conflict. While Syria is entering the 5<sup>th</sup> year of war, and Libya has turned into another failed state, the regional political and security threat of Daesh seems to become less and less a temporary geopolitical concern, with worrying spillover threatening on-going fragilities and domestic hostilities in Iraq and Turkey. At the same time, EU policy-makers have started to realise that this threat cannot easily be contained by targeted military operations or by simple political inaction.

The EU is currently revising its [European Neighbourhood Policy \(ENP\)](#), and it seems likely that it will put a greater emphasis on security, this trend is confirmed in the European Parliament's recent report adopted in AFET on "[Security Challenges in the MENA](#)". The EU's approach to peacebuilding in the MENA region has been quite often "conflict-driven" and, rather often responses to conflicts that are embedded in existing regional and bilateral programmes (and the most recent "turn" of the ENP towards the security dimension is a case in point). The field of resilience and humanitarian aid is where the EU is more actively promoting a human security approach in the short-term. While this is successfully providing support to fragile and conflict-affected areas, it can cause dependence on the EU as a human security provider, and thus failing to achieve the long-term objective through which human security is provided locally by states through their domestic legal frameworks.

**For this, SOLIDAR strongly calls for the EU institutions to take a greater step to become a credible peace promoter in the region by adopting a comprehensive EU approach to peacebuilding based on a long-term political engagement to promote and respect human security that involves considering the sustainable development goals (SDGs) as an integral part of the response. This approach should be based on:**

- **Respecting and promoting the access to and enjoyment of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights (ESCRs), in accordance with International human rights law and key International Labour Standards and ILO core Conventions;**
- **Promoting long-term and inclusive socio-economic policies and programmes including investments in education, employment and decent work, as key to achieve cohesive societies and the establishment of stable and functioning democratic institutions;**
- **Fostering participation of freely chosen representative organisations, local civil society organisations,**

**community-based organisations, and independent trade unions in decision-making processes.**

Looking at the upcoming revision of the ENP, the **new policy should tackle the root causes of conflicts, such as weak institutions, bad governance, lack of democracy and fundamental freedoms, coupled with violation of human rights standards, inequalities, and lack of social justice, unemployment and shrinking space for CSOs.** Also, relations with the “neighbours of the neighbours“ would require promoting sustainable regional integration and cooperation, so as to face regional challenges and enhance peace and development within partner countries and beyond, instead of focusing on securitised responses to political problems that would certainly help fostering radicalisation and exacerbate conflicts, rather than solving them.

**Read more about SOLIDAR’s view of the European Neighbourhood Policy:**

SOLIDAR ENP up close No. 5 [‘Time to establish a new equal European neighbourhood partnership’](#) (July, 2015)

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**solidar**

Rue du Commerce 22 | B-1000 Brussels

T +32 (0)2 500 10 20 | F +32 (0)2 500 10 30