

Beat: Politics

We have many reasons to be concerned

Elmar Brok on Syria

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USPA NEWS - The situation in Syria continues to deteriorate and the violence threatens to spread to neighbouring countries. MEPs will debate what can be done for the millions of refugees during next week's plenary session on 22 May.

We spoke to Elmar Brok, a German member of the EPP group who is the chair of the foreign affairs committee, about the risks facing the region.

The refugee situation is escalating. What is the impact on Europe so far?

The impact on Europe is critically important and morally important. If you see that there are millions of refugees within and outside Syria, that the conflict is now destabilising neighbouring countries such as Lebanon and Jordan and the problems Turkey is facing, then we have many reasons to be concerned.

There have been many media reports about EU citizens joining Islamist opposition militias in Syria. Could they represent a danger for Europe and should anything be done to stop them?

It's still not clear which parts of the opposition can be supported. There are for example the Salafists, who like the Assad dictatorship are not in favour of democracy, human rights or more liberty for the people. We should push Saudi Arabia and Qatar not to support as it will only lead to more problems later. It's a very difficult situation and therefore the main concern is the European inability to support more strongly certain parts of the opposition.

How do you see the role of neighbouring countries such as Israel or Turkey in the crisis? What should the EU do to influence them?

We have to ensure Syria is not a battle field for certain forces, which have nothing to do with Syria, like Saudi Arabia and Iran.

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