Syria: compact action is needed, but the conditions are not ripe for military action

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The international community must take “compact” action in Syria to tackle a humanitarian crisis that is “deeply worrying”, but the conditions are not ripe for military action. The statement was made by Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi from Istanbul, where he discussed the Syrian dossier with Italy’s international partners in the margins of the Conference on Somalia.

Terzi said he did not believe military action to be “an option on the table outside of the UN Security Council”. And “the conditions for intervention on the Libyan model do not exist, either in the UN or among the western countries, or among the governments of the region”. As for the humanitarian crisis, Terzi pointed out that Italy has already undertaken medical assistance initiatives for the population

Italy, continued the Foreign Minister, is in favour of drafting a UN Security Council resolution that would “markedly reinforce the international observers’ operational and self-defence capability. He defined Russia’s position as “central” in this respect and hoped that its government understood that the position of Syrian president Bashar El Assad is “definitively compromised” and that “a political solution must be found”. The head of Italian diplomacy also declared that he was in favour of increasing the sanctions against the leaders of the Syrian regime and of a greater involvement by the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The Syrian crisis was also discussed in Berlin during a meeting between Putin and Merkel. The German Chancellor called for a political solution in Syria and underscored that Russia and Germany shared the same interest in resolving the situation in Syria, even though they sometimes prefer “different routes” to achieve that end. The Russian president said that in Syria the precursors of civil war now exist, and civil war is in no-one’s interest. “We agree with Angela Merkel that escalation must be avoided”, he added. Putin will also be discussing Syria in Paris with the new French president, Francois Hollande.

From Tunisia, China and the Arab countries, who were meeting in Hammamet for the 5th China-Arab Forum, launched an appeal for the parties to the Syrian conflict to apply the Annan Plan in full. The aim must be to avoid the danger of foreign intervention and a scenario of anarchy and civil war. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Yang Jiechi, said that “the international community must double its efforts and exhort the Syrian authorities to apply the Annan Plan strictly and immediately”.

The mission to the region by the UN and Arab League Envoy for Syria, Kofi Annan, continues. After his visit to Damascus he has travelled to Beirut for talks with the Lebanese prime minister, Najib Mikati. Annan said he was “frustrated and impatient” in the face of the continuing violence and killings in Syria. He wanted, he said, “to see more rapid progress towards peace”.

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