Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

I urge all concerned to improve humanitarian access in Syria

2013-09-26

I welcome the initiative of my colleague FM Fabius to host this important meeting here today and provide National Coalition President al-Jarba with the opportunity to explain his vision of a new Syria.

The Foreign Secretary and I met the Coalition recently in London earlier this month and again here at UNGA. We strongly underlined our political and practical support to them at those meetings and I stress that support again now.

I wish to make three brief points:

Firstly, a political solution leading to a democratic transition in which all Syrians play a part is inconceivable without the moderate opposition. Their vision of a Syria for all Syrians, full participation and equality between all of Syria's communities protected by the rule of law is the right one. And we must all rally round to ensure those who are struggling to make this vision a reality on the ground against regime attacks and the threat of extremist and terrorist groups and make sure they get all the help they need.

The Syrian people are caught between a brutal regime on the one hand and extremists on the other. It is frankly an outrage and an insult to all of this here and most importantly to the Syrian people that a narrative has developed to contrast the regime of stability on one hand and the extremists and terrorists on the other. It is vital that we clearly and loudly support the moderate opposition we see before us today.

Secondly,

It is also essential that the international community ensures swift destruction of Syria's chemical weapons' stockpiles. There must be strong, internationally-agreed consequences for Syrian non-compliance.

The use of chemical weapons is a war crime. Those in the regime responsible for attacks must be held to account.

But as his Excellency, the President said, no one should think that recent focus on chemical weapons, means we have forgotten the terrible suffering that Assad is inflicting on the Syrian

people by conventional means, or the urgent need for a political solution to end the conflict. Rather we need to seize this diplomatic progress to set an early date for Geneva II and to support the opposition to create the conditions for a successful outcome.

So welcome the assurances in President al-Jarba's letter to the Security Council of 19 September that reiterates that the National Coalition is committed to attending Geneva II, as well as his firm condemnation of chemical weapons and call for their elimination from Syria.

Lastly,

The Syrian people urgently require more humanitarian assistance, but the UN's Syria appeal for this year remains underfunded and humanitarian organisations are unable to access many of those in need. The United Kingdom will continue to lead the international effort to address humanitarian needs on the ground. And we all need to heed the passion and frustration of those who host the refugees. To recognise the impact on them and their people of this continuing nightmare.

Yesterday we announced a further £100 million UK contribution to the UN appeal. We have now provided over £500 million in humanitarian aid to date. Our largest ever contribution to such an occasion. On Tuesday we hosted a meeting with partners and UN agencies to discuss what more we collectively need to do and yesterday the EU and Jordan co-hosted an event focused on access and funding.

We expect up to a further $1 billion to be pledged this week. May I urge you to consider what further pledges you could make to this appeal. We also need to intensify our lobbying of others to do more as well as focus international efforts with a UN-hosted pledging conference as early as possible.

And we urge you to put pressure on all concerned to improve humanitarian access in Syria, including by backing a strong Presidential Statement on access in the Security Council.

The UK will continue to be at the forefront of international efforts to bring an end to the suffering of the Syrian people.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/i-urge-all-concerned-to-improve-humanitarian-access-in-syria