Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"There can be no political process without a genuine ceasefire."

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Thank you very much, Mr. President. Thank you.

John, I don't think the people of the world are remotely fooled by what is going on in Syria. They know that it is not just a civil war. They know that it is a barbaric proxy war, and it is a conflict that is being fed, and nourished, and armed, and abetted, and protracted, and made more hideous, by the actions and inactions of governments in this room. And they look to us, grown-ups, people with families, people who know about them, people with university degrees, to set aside our differences and any selfish sense of strategic national interest, and to put the people of Syria first.

And that means recognizing that there can be no political process without a genuine ceasefire, and there can be no genuine ceasefire, unless there is a genuine political agreement that we can have a transition away from the Asad government. Because it is the Asad government that is responsible, that regime is responsible for the vast majority of the 400,000 deaths.

It is the Asad regime that has dropped, and continues to drop, barrel bombs on its own citizens. It continues to use, there have been two incident documented by the UN/OPCW of the dropping of chlorine gas, how can we sit by and let that happen? Burning, blistering, barbaric chlorine gas being dropped on innocent people. And as for the monstrous bombing of the aid convoys and medical facilities that we have seen in just the last day or so, well, as John Kerry rightly said, there are only two possible culprits. And I hope very much, obviously, that the truth will emerge very shortly about what exactly happened.

But more importantly, laying aside recrimination, I hope that we will learn that the court of international opinion will not continue to tolerate this slaughter. And I think the world is looking to us to do more now than just to mouth the empty platitudes of Resolution 2254, but to actually put it into effect, into practical effect, and get that peace process going again, get those conversations going again in Geneva. And I think there is scope to build on the vision for a future of Syria as laid out by the High Negotiations Committee of a an open, pluralistic, democratic Syria with respect to all minorities.

And there is space, as you rightly said Mr President, John, at the beginning, there is space to compromise, and the should be not too many red lines. But above all, we have got to use this moment, this UNGA, to keep the precious forward momentum, whatever there is left, in the Kerry-Lavrov process, and I again pay tribute to both John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov on their efforts to get this thing done, and to move it all forward. We can do it, the people in this room can do it, they can work to produce a ceasefire, they proved that before.

And they can get talks going, and we can approach these things in a spirit of compromise. But we can't have that spirit of compromise, we can't have those talks, that ceasefire without the will, as Jose Manuel rightly said earlier today, without the will and the goodwill of the people in this room. I think it is possible, and I think that there is that scope for compromise, I think that sometimes it's pretty gloomy now, let's face it, but sometimes the hour is darkest before dawn.

But what I really want everybody to think about today, is that if in a year's time, we are here again in UNGA, and there are still bombings, and there are still killings, and there is still slaughter, and there are still massacres going on in Syria, then I'm afraid the responsibility for that will lie overwhelmingly with the people broadly represented in this place, and above all, with the Asad regime and its sponsors.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/there-can-be-no-political-process-without-a-genuine-ceasefire