Syria: Humanitarian conference in Rome on 3 February, announces Bonino

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Bashar al-Assad's Syrian regime "does not have a future". This was the message to emerge from the meeting of the "Friends of Syria" Group in Paris on Sunday 12 January. Participants included the President of the Syrian National Coalition, Ahmad Jarba, and the foreign ministers of 11 countries, including Emma Bonino and the American Secretary of State, John Kerry.

Against the background of continuing violence in Syria, the goal of the Paris meeting was to discuss the Syrian opposition's as yet uncertain participation at the "Geneva 2" peace conference scheduled to start in Switzerland on 22 January. At the close of the meeting, Minister Bonino announced that and international humanitarian conference will be held in Rome on 3 February at the invitation of the UN.

Syrian national coalition must attend Geneva 2

"We urge the National Coalition to respond positively to the invitation to set up the Syrian opposition delegation" to attend the Geneva 2 negotiations, stated the 11 "Friends of Syria" countries in the closing statement adopted in Paris. "The Geneva II Conference", stated the 11, is aimed at "allowing the Syrian people to control its future and put an end to the current despotic regime through a genuine political transition".

Opposition must overcome its differences, says Bonino

The Coalition has not yet decided whether it will be attending Geneva 2, and will discuss the conference at an internal meeting on 17 January. Speaking in Paris, Coalition leader Jarba admitted that "some members of the Coalition still have questions, doubts and fears as to the success of 'Geneva 2'", and underscored that this is a crucial time for Syria's destiny.

Minister Bonino also expressed concern over the Coalition's internal divisions. "We told the Syrian opposition coalition that with these internal differences, the risk is that people will forget the atrocities committed by the regime", warned the minister. She recalled the Assad regime's grave responsibilities: ""It is unthinkable that those responsible for 130,000 deaths can stay in power".

Humanitarian conference in Rome

Minister Bonino insisted on the need to provide humanitarian aid and announced that an international humanitarian conference will be held in Rome on 3 February at the invitation of the UN. “As a country, we insisted that the humanitarian element cannot be viewed in isolation from the political process”, she commented. “We can’t talk of the future if we are unable to restore the Syrian people’s present”.

Italian port selected for chemical weapons transfer to be announced on 16 January

The Italian port chosen for the transfer of the Syrian chemical weapons from a Danish or Norwegian cargo ship to the American vessel, the Cape Ray, will be announced on Thursday 16 January. The announcement will be made during the Parliamentary hearing with the representative of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPAC). Minister Bonino reiterated that the choice will be based on “the technical requirements we have been asked to satisfy and which the Minister for Infrastructure is verifying”.

Bonino to meet OPAC Director General on Thursday 16 January

The OPAC Director General, Ahmet Uzumcu, will meet Minister Bonino on Thursday and will then head for the Italian Parliament, where he will explain to the Chamber and Senate Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees the arrangements for the chemical weapons transfer. The operation should take place in late January in the presence of OPAC inspectors, who will examine the material once it has been transferred to the Cape Ray.

Source :
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