Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UN Security Council: explanation of vote on the Syria resolution

2018-02-24

On 24 February the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 2401 demanding a cessation of hostilities in Syria to enable delivery of humanitarian assistance.

UK acting Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Stephen Hickey, said:

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of Resolution 2401 and in particular we applaud your work, together with Sweden as penholders.

But this is not a moment for self-congratulation. It's taken us far too long to agree this resolution. While we have been arguing over commas, Asad's planes have been killing more civilians in their homes and in their hospitals, imposing unbearable suffering. And despite the amount of time we have spent in this chamber over many years discussing the devastating humanitarian crisis, we have still not been able to achieve the peace and security that the Syrian people so desperately need.

As the conflict enters its eighth year, the situation in Eastern Ghouta and elsewhere in the country is far worse than we ever thought imaginable. The barbarity and depravity of the Asad regime shows no limits.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the pictures we see and the stories we hear from this comfortable chamber are the agonising reality for hundreds of thousands of civilians. For men, women and children who are being forced to eke out an existence underground to avoid being killed by a regime that commits daily atrocities against its own people.

I've heard some say that the information about the situation in Eastern Ghouta is propaganda. A doctor in Eastern Ghouta, having heard these comments, said this morning: "Amid the chaos and the bombs, it is the not being believed that almost hurts the most. We are dying here every day and when people say that they do not believe us, that is pain upon pain.

This isn't propaganda; it is a living hell for hundreds of thousands of residents of Eastern Ghouta. As we have repeated many times, the intentional and systematic targeting of civilians and civilian objects not only violates international humanitarian law, it is a war crime. And the UK will be unrelenting in our campaign to ensure accountability.

By voting in favour of this resolution today, we are standing up and saying that we will not stand by and let this happen. In the face of escalating violence, devastation and suffering, we must all now take practical steps to improve the situation for those living and dying in a hell of one man's making. This resolution demonstrates our resolve to put a stop to the brutal violence. It demands all parties cease hostilities without delay. That means right now; immediately.

The role and responsibility of this Council does not end with the passage of this resolution. Quite the opposite. All UN Member States, but particularly Council Members, must now take responsibility for ensuring that this resolution is implemented in full, without delay.

The resolution calls for the Council to review implementation within 15 days, but we must all be active in supporting and monitoring implementation from the moment we step out of this room.

If we see any of the parties violate the terms of this resolution, we must bring it back to the Council immediately.

Those with any influence over the Syrian regime – Russia, Iran – have a particular responsibility to ensure that this ceasefire is respected in full and without delay, that all sieges are ended and that humanitarian aid is delivered. This is the absolute minimum that the people of Syria deserve.

As much as we welcome the passing of this resolution today, it is only a small step.

Just as 1 aid convoy in 3 months to a besieged area cannot even begin to address the humanitarian crisis, one resolution alone cannot solve the situation in Syria. We must do everything in our collective power to ensure that this resolution is effective in delivering for those whom we have failed to date. And we must all send a clear message to the Asad regime: abandon your attempt to pursue a military strategy; stop fighting and engage seriously in UN-led political talks in Geneva.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the words of my Foreign Secretary. The entire world is looking at the Asad regime, Russia and Iran: you hold the keys not only to the end of this obscene conflict, but to the safety, humanitarian aid and basic medical treatment that is being denied to millions of people right now in Syria. For the mother giving birth underground in Eastern Ghouta, for the child unable to learn as schools are closed for yet another day, for the doctor battling airstrikes to treat patients in Idlib, all of us sitting here today owe it to the people of Syria to work together, with renewed and unyielding energy, to achieve a political solution that will bring peace to the Syrian people.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/syria-resolution-explanation-of-vote