Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary updates Parliament on Syria

2012-07-04

In a written statement to Parliament following the Ministerial Action Group meeting in Geneva on 30 June the Foreign Secretary said:

“The situation in Syria remains grave, with hundreds of people dying every week, mainly at the hands of the Syrian regime. The British Government is at the forefront of international activity aimed at bringing about an end to the violence and making progress on political transition in Syria.

On 30 June, I travelled to Geneva for the first meeting of the Ministerial Action Group on Syria, at the request of United Nations/Arab League Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan. The Action Group held intensive talks on a political transition plan for Syria and agreed that there should be a transitional governing body in Syria; that it should be made up of representatives of the present Syrian Government, the opposition and other groups, formed on the basis of mutual consent. It is our clear understanding that this would preclude President Assad.

It is important that those governments present in Geneva now maintain the pace of the political process, and hold the Syrian parties - starting with the Syrian Government - to comply fully with the cessation of violence and engage in a genuine political process.

To that end we welcome the meeting of Syrian opposition members in Cairo on 2/3 July. We commend the Arab League and Joint Special Envoy’s efforts to bring the opposition together, and we will continue to stress the need for the opposition to have unity of purpose. We have increased UK funding for the Syrian opposition and civil society groups, providing £1.5 million of assistance in this financial year to help provide human rights monitoring and media training for activists, and other non-lethal support, including communications equipment.

I will attend the next meeting of the Friends of the Syria in Paris on 6 July. We will look to the meeting to endorse the outcome of the Ministerial Action Group, and reiterate that President Assad cannot form part of any transition in Syria.

We will also call on countries represented at the Friends of the Syria meeting to implement further sanctions against the Syrian regime, building on the 16 rounds of EU sanctions which have included asset freezes and travel bans on a total of 129 individuals and 49 entities. In particular, we call on countries to support the EU oil embargo and to adopt their own embargoes, in order to maintain the financial pressure on the regime. We welcome the EU’s

recent decision to strengthen the arms embargo by introducing a specific prohibition on insurance related to arms shipments bound for Syria. We are strongly urging all countries to refrain from providing weapons to the Syrian regime.

In parallel, we will take forward work in the United Nations. We continue to believe the UN Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities to bring about an end to the violence. We will continue discussions on a UN Security Council Resolution. We will support the efforts of the Human Rights Council and Commission of Inquiry in documenting crimes and human rights violations and abuses that have been committed, so that those responsible can be held to account.

The British Government will continue to focus on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Syria. The UK is providing £8.5 million for food, medical care, shelter and other essential support to tens of thousands of people in need in Syria as well as to help refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq. In partnership with the UN and international community, we will put pressure on the Syrian government to match its words with actions and immediately allow full, unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies."

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-updates-parliament-on-syria