SYRIA: Napolitano says “Yes” to diplomatic action – Annan: Damascus in favour of “peace plan”

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Support for the diplomatic efforts of the “Friends of Syria” group and concerns over the exodus of thousands of refugees to Jordan. But also an exchange of views on the new regional equilibria in light of the “Arab Spring”. The President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, has met King Abdallah during his 3-day visit to Jordan. The two heads of state discussed a wide range of Middle East issues, as well as the difficulties Amman is facing in receiving the waves of refugees pouring over the border each day from Syria.

The Head of State, accompanied by Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi, underscored the “grounds for concern and complex analysis of Jordan’s approach to the Syrian crisis”. A problem that goes beyond the immediate emergency, considering that historically – starting with the Palestinians – the Hashemite Kingdom has had to address long-term refugee issues that have structurally altered the country’s demographic profile. In this light, the participation of both countries, italy and Jordan, in the “Friends of Syria” Group which met on Sunday 1 April 2012 in Istanbul is of much more than merely formal significance.

Terzi: The “Friends of Syria” meeting was a success

A meeting which, commented the Foreign Minister in Amman, was a success. Terzi remarked on “the great effort, including at the economic level”, made by Jordan. A country “that is experiencing an inflow of thousands of refugees over the Syrian border, at least 4000, according to the UNHCR”, and over 90000, say other sources. The end of the refugee crisis will clearly involve the stabilisation of the entire area, which has been strongly influenced by the Arab Spring, the ripple effect of which has also been felt in Jordan.

Napolitano, who expressed his support for the mission by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, linked the current events in Syria to the Arab Spring and underscored that “Jordan is making up ground with respect to democratic conditions”. As he explained, “We found the King of Jordan to be very interested in developments in the countries of the Arab Spring, starting with Libya, to which Jordan is paying close attention. But we also discussed the still fluid situation in Egypt”.

NATO’s position

In the meantime, in New York, and in his role as UN and Arab League Special Envoy, Annan has announced that Damascus has agreed to implement his “peace plan” by 10 April. The Syrian activists, opponents and ordinary citizens who for over a year have been resisting the forces loyal to President Bashar al Assad have expressed scepticism. So too has the United States. Through their Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, the US has underscored that in recent months the Syrian government has failed to respect too many promises.

During the second meeting of the “Friends of Syria” in Istanbul on Synday 1 April, the Arab League and the western nations asked Annan to draw up a timetable for the implementation of his plan. Opponents of the Assad regime reiterated their appeal to arm the free army of deserters. But NATO once again expressed in clear terms its opposition to providing arms for the rebels.

Source :
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