Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary: time running out for the Assad regime

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Speaking ahead of his visit to Moscow, the Foreign Secretary said:

“It is a familiar tactic of the Assad regime to blame others for what is happening in their country, to try to get out of responsibility for the scale of death and destruction. We are absolutely sickened in the British Government and across the international community by what we’ve seen over the last couple of days, in particular the deaths of more than a hundred unarmed men, women and children.

“Of course they are part of twelve thousand, perhaps fifteen thousand deaths in Syria over the last year, predominantly at the hands of the regime and so they are more statistics in that huge total. But I think they also shine a light for the whole world on the nature of this conflict, on the oppression and brutality of the regime and the deaths of so many children, although they are among again many hundreds of children who have been tortured, abused or murdered by the Assad regime, again illuminates the type of tyranny that the people of Syria have been experiencing.

“So the British Government is taking several steps in response. I’ve already given instructions that the Syrian charge d’affaires be summoned to the Foreign Office so that we can underline our absolute horror at what has happened, but also our continued insistence that the Syrian regime should implement Kofi Annan’s six point plan that they currently refuse to do.

“I have also called for urgent discussions in the United Nations Security Council so the world as a whole can put more pressure on the Syrian regime. We are also discussing with our, with our allies what other steps we can take over the coming days and within the European Union we will be working on more sanctions on the regime.

“I have also discussed this morning with Kofi Annan, the UN Special Representative on these matters who’s travelling to Damascus for meetings tomorrow. I’ve discussed with him the scope for increasing the size of the UN monitoring mission which is currently coming up to its strength of three hundred monitors. We think there’s a good case for increasing the size of that mission and I’ve discussed with him the urgency of getting a political process going in Syria which is his objective before time runs out. Time will run out before too long on that.

“I’m travelling to Moscow later this evening to discuss with the Russian Foreign Minister this situation. The Russians have a great deal of leverage over the Syrian regime. We have had

many differences of view with Russia at the Security Council, but Russia does support the Annan plan and so I hope Russia will redouble its efforts to get the Assad regime to implement that plan. It's not in the interests of Russia, just as it's not in the interests of anybody in the world, for Syria to descend in to an even bloodier situation and into full scale civil war and that is now the danger.

"… The important thing at the moment is to try to make the Annan plan work. The international community is not agreed on whether there would be intervention or what type of intervention there would be if the Annan plan didn't work. Certainly if we come to the point where the Annan plan has clearly failed, Britain will be arguing for a stronger response from the world, from the United Nations Security Council, increasing our support to the opposition, imposing further sanctions and measures on the Syrian regime. But our emphasis now and the emphasis of all the permanent members of the Security Council - Britain and Russia included - is to try to get the Annan plan to work. But time is running out for the Assad regime to adopt that plan, implement that plan and stop the torture, abuse and murder of their own people".

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-time-running-out-for-the-assad-regime