SYRIA: In Napolitano’s talks in Jordan – Italy in the ‘core-group’ of Friends of the Syrian People

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Head of State, Giorgio Napolitano, in the company of Minister for Foreign Affairs Giulio Terzi, is in Jordan for a three-day visit. His discussions will focus on relations between Rome and Amman, but his meetings with King Abdallah II, Prime Minister Awn Khasawneh, President of the Senate Taher Masri and Speaker of the Lower House Abdul Karim Doghmi will offer an opportunity to exchange views on the Syrian crisis. Jordan, which has been dealing in recent weeks with the arrival of refugees fleeing Damascus, plays a crucial role in the complex diplomacy of the region.

Dassù: the emergency is also a humanitarian one

Italy is part of a 13-member “core group” – that also includes the U.S., Germany, France, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Morocco – of the Friends of the Syrian People, which met over the weekend in Istanbul. “I confirmed in my speech”, said Under-Secretary Marta Dassù, who was present at the meeting, “that we are allocating three million euro to the humanitarian emergency, a pledge we had already made in Tunis”, she said, referring to the first conference of the Friends of Syria held in the Tunisian capital in late February.

Annan: the deadline is now

In their second conference in Istanbul, the nearly 80 Friends of the Syrian People who most want an end to the repression in Syria called for the indication of a deadline by which the Bashar Al Assad regime must comply with the 6-point peace plan drafted by international mediator Kofi Annan. This demand, made to the same special Arab League and UN envoy, was accompanied by verbal warnings, especially from US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, that there would be “serious consequences” if the killing of opposition members did not cease. Head of the Arab League Nabil al Arabi called for pressure on the UN Security Council to adopt severe measures against the Assad regime.

“For the moment”, Under-Secretary Dassù explained, “the compromise we arrived at in Istanbul is to push Annan”, when he is speaking to the Security Council, to outline “a sort of timeframe, to say that his 6-point plan is not “open-ended”, but “must have a deadline”. Dassù also pointed out that there were “strong differences” among Arab countries on the idea of arming the Syrian opposition, citing Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, who are “in favour of a

political and peaceful solution". "Italy is concerned", the Under-Secretary asserted, "about the spread of civil war" both in the form of "a worsening of the already serious humanitarian crisis" as well as "on a regional level that would be difficult to control" (her explicit reference was to the "problems in Lebanon "where "a major Italian military contingent" is deployed).

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