Terzi: «The line has been crossed. The people need protection» (La Stampa)

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Italy is ready to support tougher a resolution regarding the humanitarian crisis in Syria. This, in brief, was Minister for Foreign Affairs' Giulio Terzi 's comment in light of the massacre in Houla.

Mr. Minister, once again the international community seems to be standing by powerlessly.

«Allow me first to express the horror and pain of these images, we have all seen them; it is impossible to stand by and watch as dozens of children are so brutally murdered. The line has been crossed, something has to be done. There is no time to waste. The coming days are going to be decisive. Kofi Annan is about to go to Damascus and Ban Ki-moon will present his report to the Security Council on Wednesday».

How does Italy intend to act?

«I spoke about his with Ban on Tuesday in New York, and after Houla asked that the Security Council meet immediately, as did happen. I am in constant contact with the ministers of the most heavily involved countries. A short time ago I called my Turkish colleague Ahmet Davutoglu in order to arrange to meet in the margins of the conference on Somalia in Istanbul to speak about Syria».

Is there still confidence in the Annan plan?

«Support for the Annan plan must be convinced and unreserved, but the Syrian regime has perhaps not understood that it is not open-ended, and that responsibility for violations of its conditions falls entirely on the government of Damascus and its refusal to cooperate. General Mood's report leaves little room for interpretation of what happened».

Do you mean to say that there are other options on the table?

«The only option I feel can definitely be ruled out is the continuation of the massacres. If necessary we will boost the observers mission to 2,000-3,000 persons and, if all else fails to stem the violence and launch a political process to end the crisis, the Security Council will have to assess how to make the mission and its capacity for self-defence more effective».

How, by arming the observers?

«We are talking about operations based on chapter VII of the Charter, which need the consensus of all 15 council members».

It seems unlikely that Russia and China will agree to a tougher resolution, given Moscow's opposition even to a declaration of condemnation yesterday.

«China's, and even more importantly Russia's, role is crucial. We are discussing an idea that is not yet on the table. If similar scenarios were to be repeated in the future, it will be necessary to assess all the factors including the concept of "the responsibility to protect", i.e. the duty that States have to protect their populations. If UN resolutions were to intervene in such a context, or in relation to what are called "humanitarian corridors", we would support them. We must now work to let the Annan plan work».

What do you think of the proposal by Barack Obama?

«The Yemen model would certainly be the best option, and eventual efforts in that sense can rely on Italy's convinced support ».

Is there any risk of the conflict spreading?

«We are seriously concerned about such an eventuality, signs of which have already shown up in the violence reported in Lebanon in recent days, particularly in the city of Tripoli».

Mr. Minister, what is Italy's national interest in the Syrian crisis?

«As a global actor Italy has a direct interest in regional stability and in preventing terrorist movements from flourishing. And then, we musn't forget our troops deployed in the UNIFIL mission in Lebanon».

What is our commitment in terms of the humanitarian crisis?

«We are sending a field hospital to Jordan that will be set up at the border with Syria in a area capable of absorbing 3,000 refugees. Medical kits are also to be sent that will serve for the treatment of 10,000 patients over 3 months, in addition to those distributed by the UNHCR and the Syrian Red Crescent for treating gunshot wounds ».

Source : https://www.esteri.it/en/sala_stampa/archivionotizie/interviste/2012/05/20120528_terzisiriahula/