Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

"We must show that we will not abandon the Syrian people in their darkest hour"

2012-02-24

In the Foreign Secretary's intervention he said:

"I am grateful to the Government of Tunisia for hosting this landmark meeting and to the Arab League for their leadership.

Today we must show that we will not abandon the Syrian people in their darkest hour. We must take five important steps:

First, we have widened our international coalition to more than sixty nations from five continents, and it will be strengthened further in the future. Those who back the Syrian regime from now on will find themselves in an even more isolated and indefensible minority.

Second, we should impose a diplomatic and economic stranglehold on the Assad regime. As Friends of Syria we must shut every door in its face and choke off support for its campaign of terror. So we must stop all oil purchases from Syria and all investment in Syria; restrict the regime's access to arms and to fuel for their military vehicles; reduce diplomatic ties with Syria and apply assets freezes and travel bans. I call on all nations here to adopt without delay concrete sanctions that will have an effect on the regime, and I am confident that at the European Union we will add to them in the coming days.

Third, we should help Syria's political opposition groups, applauding the vision that the SNC set out today for the future of their country, based on democratic principles and the protection of all Syrians. Syria should not belong to one family, to one coterie, or to one Party. It belongs to all the people of Syria equally, in all their religious and ethnic diversity. By miring itself in the blood of innocent people the Syrian regime has forfeited the right to lead. So from today we should recognise the Syrian National Council as a legitimate representative of the Syrian people.

Fourth, we should provide all necessary humanitarian assistance for Syrians affected by the violence, and make immediate preparations, including in neighbouring countries. Britain will play an active part in these efforts, and I call on others to do the same.

And fifth, we should pledge an end to impunity for crimes against humanity. Those responsible for the murder of entire families, the shelling of homes, the execution of

detainees, the cleansing of political opponents and the torture and rape of women and children must be held to account. We have the will and the means to do this. Britain is helping to document crimes with those who have fled the violence. They should be no hiding place for those committing crimes.

By taking these measures today our message to the Syrian people is this:

We will bring all possible pressure to bear for a credible ceasefire and a political transition in accordance with the Arab League plan.

We will use all diplomatic and economic means to stop the activities of what has now become a criminal regime.

We will make it harder for them to terrorise you, by cutting off their funds and supplies.

We will help you unite and agree a political future for your country on your terms.

And we will provide the aid and humanitarian assistance you desperately need, and help you obtain justice for the crimes you have endured.

The measures we have adopted today are only a beginning.

We will not have succeeded until the bombardment of civilians has stopped and the requirements of the Arab League peace plan have been met. So the Arab League will have the full support of the United Kingdom in returning to the United Nations Security Council once again. We must show our resolve in the coming days and weeks and be prepared urgently to take further steps as the situation requires, and for as long as is required, to save lives and restore peace to Syria.”

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/we-must-show-that-we-will-not-abandon-the-syrian-people-in-their-darkest-hour