Federal Foreign Office (Germany) — auswaertiges-amt.de

Speech by Minister of State Michael Georg Link at the United Nations Security Council

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabr Al-Thani and his Excellency Nabil Al-Arabi for their briefings. I commend the efforts of the League of Arab States towards solving the crisis in Syria. It was important for this Council to listen to you today.

The Arab Spring has demonstrated that the people in the region want to shape their future peacefully, through negotiations and discussions, not at gunpoint and not in an atmosphere of fear and violence.

More than ten months have passed since events in Deraa and Damascus sparked peaceful protests in Syria against the Assad regime. The regime reacted with a brutal crackdown on its own people that has left thousands dead, and still it is ongoing.

This violence must stop immediately!

The Syrian people have been calling for freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and the ability to freely choose their leaders. President Assad has been responding by sending his tanks.

The Arab League has heeded the calls of the people in the region. Three months ago it elaborated a Work Plan to resolve the crisis, which the Syrian Government signed up to. However, the Assad regime did not substantially comply with the agreement. There was no cessation of violence, not all of those arrested were released and there was no withdrawal of the military from the cities and residential areas.

On the contrary, there has been a notable increase in violence from the regime over the past few days. This has forced the Observer Mission to suspend its activities. The country stands at the brink of civil war, with repercussions for peace and stability in the region. The Council has been silent too long, it has to step up to its responsibilities.

We must not forget that the majority of the demonstrations in Syria have been overwhelmingly peaceful, whereas the reaction of the authorities has been excessive. Those facts have been recorded by the international commission of inquiry established by the Human Rights Council. This is why we also advocate a Security Council commission of inquiry.

As the report of the commission of inquiry concludes, the systematic human rights violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime have been conducted pursuant to deliberate State policy. Members of the Syrian military and security forces may have committed crimes against humanity.

The Arab League on January 22nd set out a political framework for the way forward, which includes the formation of a transitional government.

The Arab League has turned to this Council asking for support. We hereby lend our voice to their demands, and we fully support their plan and all their previous efforts.

We must seize this opportunity. Now is the time for the Security Council to act.

The draft resolution endorsing the demands made by the Arab League is on the table. The text is a product of fruitful cooperation between members of this Council and Arab countries and was introduced to this Council by Morocco. It has Germany's full support.

We have to work for a political solution with regional ownership. We do owe it to the Syrian people not to close our eyes in the face of the ongoing repression. It is our responsibility, that of the members of the Security Council. Countries all over the world have expressed their support, especially those in the region. Let us act, and especially let us act without further delay!

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