

Statement by Minister Dion at conclusion of International Syria Support Group meeting

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Statement

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The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs, today issued the following statement at the end of the meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) in Vienna, Austria:

“Today Canada, along with 25 countries and organizations, urgently sought measures to prevent the collapse of the nationwide cessation of hostilities in Syria. I raised particular concerns over the Syrian regime’s continued use of barrel bombs on civilian neighbourhoods as well as the targeting of hospitals and medical clinics.

“Discussions also addressed the sieges that have kept hundreds of thousands of children, women and men without access to food, medicine and urgent humanitarian supplies.

“I was pleased that one of the concrete outcomes of today’s meeting was a commitment by the ISSG to ensure immediate and regular aid deliveries to all besieged and hard-to-reach communities across Syria. Starvation as a weapon of war must come to an end. The ISSG called on the World Food Programme to undertake humanitarian airdrops across Syria if access is not provided by June 1, 2016.

“It is important to move toward the goal of a country-wide halt to the practice of laying siege to communities. Canada is already contributing to initial airdrops in Syria, and I signalled our full support for the expansion of airdrops to all affected communities in the country, where operationally feasible.

“I drew particular attention to the plight of detainees, calling for:

- the immediate release of women and children, in particular;
- the UN to be provided with a list identifying all detention facilities in Syria; and
- independent international inspections of all those sites.

“I also called for the suspension of all death sentences in Syria.

“Importantly, the ISSG welcomed the approach toward the next round of talks on political transition set out by Staffan de Mistura, UN Special Envoy for Syria. Resuming peace talks is an urgent need. Reaching a solution will be long and difficult, but the Syrian people have suffered long enough. Canada joins ISSG members in calling on the parties to return to UN-led intra-Syrian peace talks and to participate constructively in serious discussions on the formation of a transition governing body.”

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