Syria – Terzi in the Senate – “UN Security Council must shoulder its responsibilities”

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Of all the critical theatres, “the situation that most alarms us is Syria”. These were the words of Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi during a hearing in the Senate with the Defence Minister on the international missions and Development Cooperation initiatives Italy is currently engaged in. He specified that he had informed members of the Security Council of “our expectation that the highest body of the United Nations should face up to its responsibilities”. The Foreign Minister also stated that “strengthening the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) could be a first step”.

Coherent management is needed, says Terzi

The situation in Syria “has leapt to the top of the agenda for the international community. The situation needs to be managed as coherently as possible to ensure that the Security Council can have a more effective and decisive role”, added Terzi, who underscored the importance of “avoiding clashes and fractures along the old lines” in the Council.

Meeting of the Friends of Syria contact group brought forward

Terzi then reported to the Senate that “the meeting of the restricted Friends of Syria contact group has been brought forward and will probably take place in Istanbul”, where the Ministerial on Somalia is being held on 1 June (2012).

Diplomats expelled

The pressure being exerted on Assad’s regime by the international community was stepped up significantly following the massacre in Houla, where over 100 people, including many children, were killed. On Tuesday 29 May the major western chanceries – including Italy’s – took a coordinated step and expelled Syrian diplomats, who were declared personae non gratae. This sent out “a strong and unequivocal message to the regime in Damascus regarding our utter condemnation of the intolerable violence against civilians”, explained Terzi.

“Courageous steps today, not tomorrow”

The UN and Arab League Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, has visited Damascus to ask Assad to take “courageous steps now, not tomorrow, to implement the Peace Plan”. In other words, to stop all military operations, to respect protesters’ freedom to demonstrate peacefully and to release prisoners.

The situation in Syria, and especially the massacre in Houla, will be discussed at an extraordinary meeting of the UN’s Human Rights Council on Friday 1 June 2012 in Geneva. This will be the 4th time Syria has topped the Human Rights Council’s agenda since the revolts in that country started in 2011.

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