Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Friends of Syria Ministerial Communique

2014-09-25

Representatives from the Friends of Syria met today with Syrian National Coalition President Hadi al-Bahra to demonstrate collective support for the moderate opposition led by the National Coalition, as they fight a two-front war resisting the brutality of the Assad regime and fighting extremists including ISIL.

We are appalled by the situation in Syria. The conflict has cost nearly 200,000 lives and left millions displaced and in need. And the extremist threat grows greater for all of us. Assad does not have the will or capability to combat the extremist threat effectively. He has failed to address the legitimate grievances of the Syrian people, and purposefully allowed the ISIL threat to develop and used them to counter the moderate opposition. This has caused extremism to grow into a problem endangering the entire region.

In the search for a political settlement and an end to extremism, Assad's policies are the root cause of Syria's problems, not the solution. He lost legitimacy, and is a driver of extremism, sectarianism, and disunity; the very opposite of what Syria now needs. Assad's regime is carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity. His barbaric tactics still include the use of chemical weapons, mass torture and execution, systematic repression of the Syrian people, barrel bombs in civilian areas, alliances with foreign extremist militias, wilful withholding of humanitarian aid, and using starve and surrender tactics against besieged communities. This means he can play no role in the future of Syria.

Today we underscore our commitment to a genuine political transition based on the Geneva Communiqué. It is the only way to address the legitimate grievances of the Syrian people, and defeat ISIL and the ideology they promote. We urge all moderates in Syria to unite to combat ISIL and build a more stable and inclusive future for Syria. The moderate groups in Syria are a vital element of both a future political settlement and in fighting the extremist groups on the ground in Syria. Many members of the Friends of Syria are increasing their support for the National Coalition and the groups affiliated with them, in order to help stabilise areas under their control. We welcome the recent US announcement of a train and equip programme for moderate elements of the opposition armed groups.

We give our strong collective backing to the National Coalition's vision for a Syria which will be democratic, pluralistic, respectful of human rights and the rule of law. We welcome the National Coalition's determination to reach out to all groups in Syria who share these values.

At a time when the country is still torn by the twin evils of repression and fanaticism, this vision should be a beacon, and we will spare no effort to make it a reality.

We welcome Staffan de Mistura to his new role as UN Special Representative, and offer him our full support.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/friends-of-syria-ministerial-communique