

Statement of His Excellency Iyad Ameen Madani, Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation at the Opening Session of the Executive Committee at the Level of Permanent Representatives

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Assalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatu Lahi waBarakatuh.

Upon the special request from His Excellency Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, Chair of the current session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the OIC Executive Committee holds its meeting today at the level of Permanent Representatives to follow up the latest developments of the Syrian crisis which is entering its sixth year while millions of Syrians were displaced seeking refuge outside their home country or searching for peace in other areas of their war-torn country.

The Syrian regime and its allies are pursuing their all-out war against unarmed civilians in a blatant violation of international covenants and legitimacy which prohibit the targeting of civilians and condemn the use of force and the policy of systematic killing of citizens by ruling regimes.

The OIC affirmed its position on the Syrian crisis at all levels ever since it started as a peaceful movement demanding some reform from a regime that has oppressed Syria, its society and inhabitants for nearly half a century. The OIC confirmed in summit and ministerial resolutions its condemnation of the policy of killing, devastation and displacement the regime in Damascus is following against the peaceful movement and the legitimate demands of the Syrian people for reform, change and political participation.

The Final Communiqué of the 13th Islamic Summit Conference held in Istanbul on 14-15 April 2016 expressed serious concern over the ongoing violence and bloodshed in the Syrian Arab Republic, and stressed the need to preserve Syria's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Permanent Representatives,

Brothers and Sisters,

While the international community, including the OIC, continues its condemnation and denunciation, the Syrian regime and its allies persist in a scorched land policy and use of all kinds of weaponry, including those internationally prohibited, at a rate that can only be described as war crimes and crimes against humanity, perpetrated against Syrian citizens in their homes, towns and villages. Even hospitals and schools are not spared.

The international community is required to really express its being as such. What began as a demand by people for reform has become a humanitarian catastrophe at the hands of a regime whose ferocity and ability to kill, intimidate and destroy have no limit. The regime continues its excesses against international legitimacy and human standards; Meanwhile, world powers talk endlessly about potential exits from the crisis, which has become a chapter of the international scene of conflict which Syrians and Syria are paying for. Syria has become another episode in the series of disunity, division and strife in the region.

The Efforts of Europe and its Union hardly exceed the humanitarian efforts made by civil society organizations, without significant political weight. The United States of America looks from a distance, talking about economic sanctions against war criminals, and is busy with its own presidential campaigns touching the ethics of their candidates.

The Russian Federation, an OIC observer member, has continued to support a regime that has destroyed its country and decimated its citizens, under the pretext of combating terrorism. However, the starvation policy and brutal bombing would only lead Syrian citizens to such organizations in search for food or hope in life. Yes, the vicious circle continues when simple citizens are labeled as terrorists, to justify more bombing and destruction.

Russian politics in the region has, since 30 September 2015, turned into intensive air sorties under the counterterrorism cover. Instead of attacking the areas under the control of terrorist organizations, these air raids focused on the strongholds of the moderate opposition, thus pushing these groups to search for alliances among extremist groups to strengthen them. This has given rise to the claim that everyone - all the opposition - are extremist terrorist movements.

The crisis did not create terrorism but the oppressive and unjust military and security approach of the regime and its supporters created the enabling environment as the US invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan had done. This Russian strategy does not differ from the Russian campaign in Chechnya between 1999-2009 that besieged and destroyed the cities and their inhabitants.

Did the Syrian opposition movement began as a movement of terrorism? Was Jabhat Al-Nusra, Jaish Al-Islam, and Ahrar Al-Sham behind the people's movement in Idlib?

Perhaps Their Excellencies the Ministers of Foreign Affairs may review in their next meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, how the observer status can be granted to a State that legitimize for itself such an outright hostile approach.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We believe that the international community, especially the UN Security Council, which failed last night because of the Russian veto, must assume its responsibilities and take all urgent measures to stop the genocide suffered by the Syrian people especially in Aleppo.

It should apply punitive measures against Assad Regime and officers and bring them to trial for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that they have been committing against the Syrian people.

An immediate cessation of hostilities, including bombing, slaughtering, and sabotage carried out by the Syrian regime and its allies must be effected and an immediate truce approved to allow humanitarian relief convoys to deliver food materials and medicines to the population in the besieged areas in Aleppo and other Syrian cities and villages.

We also renew our call to the international community and the active States to put pressure on the Syrian regime and compel it to accept a political solution to the Syrian crisis within the framework of relevant UNSC resolutions.

We also have to mention that the OIC Member States are responsible for reaching a coexistence formula that considers respecting interests and mutual benefits and to refraining from the use of sectarian discourse as a tool for expanding political influence. We hope that the Islamic Rapprochement Initiative launched by the Istanbul Summit would be a bridge to get to such a formula. This group, which includes 57 countries, cannot continue without an impact on the international political process and without an independent will.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We meet here not to emphasize unilateral positions or out of the clouds that may envelop our bilateral relations, but to search for a common position that reflects the will of the Ummah.

Wa salamu alaikum wa rahmatu Lahi wabarakatuh

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