Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

The bloodshed continues in Syria to this day

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Thank you very much Mr President, and for your patience. I will keep this short and simple.

We all have a role to play. A Security Council resolution cannot end this war. That is why the meeting that we are having today is such an important one. And we should be under no illusions; it is a stain on the reputation of the United Nations and its members that the bloodshed continues in Syria to this day.

We've seen a numbers of false dawns over the last five years, and today is no different. Steffan de Mistura has just told us: what we have today may change tomorrow.

Yes, it is true that the Regime has agreed to road access to all 17 besieged areas requested by the UN. The International Syria Support Group has got us to this point. But we know that Asad's words count for very little. People are still going hungry, still going without medicine, and coming under sustained attack.

Since the start of June there has been some progress on access to besieged area, but let's be honest, this is too little and too late. Most of the 17 identified besieged areas remain cut off. Not only does this fall short of the access called for, but access to the locations which has been allowed is being disputed, disrupted, stripped of essential medical items, as Stephen O'Brien has just set out so starkly.

Worse yet, the delivery of aid to Darayya and Douma both were met by brutal attacks, including with barrel bombs. There is little left in the regime that can shock, but punishing areas after humanitarian access is agreed, after life-saving supplies are delivered, is beyond inhuman. It is calculating, it is cruel, it is sick, it is sadistic.

Mr President,

We need to remain resolute in the face of such cruelty. There is a path forward, and I'll make 3 brief points:

First, the regime's promises must translate into real action on the ground. Far more convoys must get through and reach all areas in the June plan within the next two weeks.

Second, we need to be clear that we will not sit idly by until land access is delivered. We must continue to plan for air delivery by the World Food Programme as agreed by the ISSG

Foreign Ministers in Vienna last month. That’s not ideal, but it’s what we need to do if ground access is not being granted.

And finally, thirdly, as I said at the beginning: no illusions. The steps I’ve measured are a Band-Aid. Until the sieges are lifted, and the bombs stop falling, we can’t rest in our efforts to find a longer term solution to the violence.

The only way to achieve that is a political settlement, one that will return Syria to stability and peace. That will require an inclusive government, and one that we can work with to tackle Daesh and other extremists. Only when that happens will stability return to the region, will the flow of people fleeing stop, and the suffering of the people of Syria end.

Thank you.

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