Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary urges Security Council to support Moroccan resolution on Syria

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Speaking after the Security Council meeting yesterday the Foreign Secretary welcomed the Arab League's powerful report and stressed the urgency of passing a "meaningful and strong resolution". He expressed hope that those opposing the Moroccan draft resolution would agree to support it following discussions in the next 24 hours.

"I certainly think the discussion at the Security Council illustrated the strength of the arguments for the Arab League plan and also illustrated that there were not many arguments against it. Some of the nations that have had misgivings about passing such a resolution did not state very powerful arguments against it. So I think the benefit of the argument went very clearly to those of us advocating the support for this resolution. Of course, we will hold discussions with Russia and other nations over the next 24 hours to see if we can make progress on this resolution".

Responding to Russian concerns that the resolution might lead to a civil war or foreign intervention the Foreign Secretary said:

"We have people dying every day. We have between 30 and a 100 people being killed violently, every day. We have the torture and abuse of huge numbers of people, including children. What the Arab League are putting forward is a plan for a peaceful resolution of this situation. So that is the answer to those who think it could make the situation worse. This is a plan by the countries in the region for addressing this problem peacefully in a Syrian led political process… This is not about foreign intervention in Syria. This is about the United Nations Security Council supporting a Syrian-led political process instigated by the countries of that region"

He also rejected criticism that the resolution amounted to regime change:

"It's been our view for a long time that President Assad should go and has lost all credibility, not only internationally, but with so many of his own people as well. But that is not what it says in this resolution which supports the Arab League plan and calls on him to give the power to his deputy to conduct negotiations and discussions with all parties in Syria. I think it was very clear in what the Prime Minister of Qatar said in presenting the position of the Arab

League and what the Secretary-General of the Arab League said. They were very clear that that is what they are proposing and that is not regime change from the UN Security Council".

Earlier the Foreign Secretary had rejected the arguments of the Syrian Ambassador to the UN:

"The Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic spoke about the idealism of children in his country in the 1950s and 1960s without noting the irony that the descendants of those children, the children of 2012, are now being tortured and murdered in the name of their own government and it is not acceptable to try to blame the situation in Syria on everyone else, from outside intervention, to the Gulf States, to French diplomats, to Lawrence of Arabia This does not excuse such repression, violence, which is a shame on any nation".

UN Ambassadors will meet again this afternoon in New York to discuss the draft resolution further. The UK hopes that yesterday's debate will help bring agreement so that the Council can move swiftly to a vote. As the Foreign Secretary said:

"To fail to do so would be to undermine the credibility of this institution, betray the Syrian people, snub the Arab League and fail in this Council's responsibilities…The leaders of the Arab world putting forward a plan by which the Syrian people can decide on their own future. And that is surely something that all Members of the United Nations should be able to support".

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