

Syria Consultations and Draft Press Statement

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What's In Blue

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Council members are scheduled to be briefed tomorrow morning (29 November) by the Joint UN-Arab League Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi, in consultations on his progress towards a political solution to the Syrian crisis. In other developments, earlier today (28 November) Russia circulated a draft press statement condemning terrorist attacks that took place in Damascus on Wednesday that reportedly killed dozens of civilians. The draft was under silence procedure until 4 pm today, although it seemed several Council members had concerns with the text.

Regarding tomorrow's consultations, it seems that Council members are eager for Brahimi to articulate a clear plan for a political solution to the Syrian crisis, and hope that he will present such a plan tomorrow. (Speaking to the press in early November, Brahimi had expressed interest in a new Council resolution on Syria, on the basis of the Action Group for Syria's 30 June Geneva Communiqué, which identified steps for a "Syrian-led political process leading to a transition.") Though there has been little talk of a possible resolution in the ensuing weeks, it is conceivable that Council members will be interested in learning how any plan articulated by Brahimi might be supported by Council resolutions.

The last Council press statements concerning Syria were issued on 4 and 5 October, condemning the shelling by the Syrian armed forces of the Turkish town of Akcakale and terrorist attacks in Aleppo, respectively. It seems that negotiations over the current draft may revolve around a desire for similar parity between Council pronouncements against the Syrian opposition and Syrian government.

More recently, on 9 and 12 November two draft press statements were circulated by the US and Russia, respectively, addressing various facets of the Syrian crisis. Neither of those statements was ultimately agreed upon. These drafts were circulated in the context of the formation of the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces on 11 November. This umbrella opposition council has since been recognised as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people by nine countries, including France (on 13 November) and the UK (on 20 November). The US has expressed support but has stopped short of full recognition. Council members will be interested in learning about the impact of the new National Coalition on Brahimi's mediation efforts.

Council members were last briefed exclusively on the Syrian crisis on 6 November, when the head of the Department of Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, reported on the failed ceasefire brokered for the Eid al-Adha holiday at the end of October. At that time, Feltman had cautioned against equating the formation of a united opposition with the establishment of a transitional government.

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