Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

UN briefings are a stark reminder of horror Syrians face

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Thank you Mr President,

I would like to thank the Secretary-General, Ms Navi Pillay, Ms Margaret Chan, Antonio Guterres and Ms Kyung-Wha Kang for their detailed briefings today. These briefings are a stark reminder of the horror and dire humanitarian need facing ordinary Syrians. Nearly three years ago the Syrian people bravely stood up to demand their legitimate and universal rights. Since then, Assad has waged a brutal war against his own people. He is responsible for the biggest humanitarian crisis and some of the worst human rights violations in the world.

The Syrian Permanent Representative claimed that the briefings we heard today were like a Hollywood film. It is truly shocking how he can brazenly deny the suffering that his government is inflicting on its people.

Like others, I warmly welcome the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2139 on Syria Humanitarian Assistance. This is the first time that the Council has come together in support of a humanitarian resolution since the start of the conflict three years ago.

The passing of this resolution is an important diplomatic step, but it will only make a practical difference on the ground if the Syrian regime and its backers respond immediately to the demands in the resolution. The resolution demands that the Syrian regime lift its sieges, end the abhorrent and indiscriminate use of barrel bombs in populated areas, and allow the United Nations and its partners to deliver aid across borders. More than 1 million people in the most extreme need would immediately benefit from UN aid delivered across borders.

The Security Council will review the humanitarian situation every 30 days. And, as the resolution makes clear, we fully intend to take further steps if the demands set out in this resolution are ignored.

At the same time, there has been absolutely no sign of the Assad regime demonstrating any willingness to negotiate the necessary political transition endorsed by the Security Council in resolution 2118. The National Coalition approached the Geneva negotiations constructively and in good faith. They published a statement of principles for the Transitional Governing Body. Mr Brahimi has been crystal clear that the responsibility for the failure of the last round lies squarely with the regime.

Mr President,

The United Kingdom continues to receive reports of widespread and systematic human rights violations being committed by the Syrian regime. We hope that the March session of the UN Human Rights Council will next week support the adoption of a resolution calling for the extension of the current Commission of Inquiry mandate. It is vital that the Commission of Inquiry team continues their work on documenting human rights abuses and violations to ensure those responsible are held to account.

The COI must be given unfettered access to Syria. We have made consistently clear that all those responsible for the most serious international crimes in Syria should be held to account. The situation in Syria should be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Mr President

The message to the Syrian regime is loud and clear: end the killing of your own people; stop the indiscriminate aerial bombardment, in particular the use of barrel bombs; lift the sieges; allow humanitarian aid to reach those in desperate need; and engage in negotiations to a political settlement of the conflict as outlined in the Geneva Communiqué.

Thank you.

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/adoption-of-unscr-2139-on-syria-humanitarian-assistance-welcomed