Syria – Terzi meets the opposition. “The regime must end the violence; the Annan Plan is not open-ended”

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Italy supports the Syrian opposition on the road to the pacification of the country. Foreign Minister Giulio Terzi met the current holder of the revolving Presidency of the Syrian National Council (SNC), Bourhan Ghalioun, and underscored that it is the responsibility of the regime in Damascus to “bring an end to the unacceptable violence against the civilian population”.

Unacceptable violence: lessening the pressure not sufficient

After the UN Resolution demanding a ceasefire in Syria, “the violence has not diminished. There’s been some sign of a let-up in the pressure by the regime, but that is not sufficient”, explained Terzi. “It is the responsibility of the regime in Damascus to bring an end to the unacceptable violence against the civilian population”, added the Minister. He underscored that Kofi Annan’s Plan for a solution of the crisis in Syria is not “open-ended”. However, at present it remains the only instrument to bring an end to “an unacceptable situation of violence and suffering” and create a context “that must become peaceful”.

The Annan Plan “is at risk because the Assad regime is sabotaging it”, stated Ghalioun. He in turn underscored that the UN-Arab League Special Envoy’s Plan is intended “to bring an end to the dictatorship. If this were not the case, it would no longer have the support of the Syrian people”.

The UN Observers’ mission should be strengthened

To increase the efficacy of the Annan Plan, in Terzi’s view, “the UN Observers’ Mission should be strengthened. They must be free to travel throughout the country”. Italy, he pointed out, has made a transport aircraft available to the observers whose numbers should, as he suggested a few days ago, be increased to 3000.

From the Syrian National Council, Italy expects “reassurances for the members of all communities, and the Christian community in particular”, that in Syria’s future they will not be marginalised or discriminated against by the new political set-up. To this firm invitation to Ghalioun, Terzi added his appreciation of the SNC’s espousal of the principle of respect for the fundamental freedoms.

The SNC Secretariat General is meeting today, 13 May 2012, in Rome to evaluate developments in the situation in Syria and to discuss the appointment of a new President. “The decision will be based on the consensus of all”, said Ghalioun, who asked Terzi for an SNC office to be opened in Rome.

The Syrian crisis will be the focus of the European Union’s Foreign Affairs Council taking place on Monday 14 May 2012 in Brussels. Other topics on the agenda are the Middle East, Afghanistan (in the run-up to the NATO Summit in Chicago), Burma-Myanmar and Ukraine (the case of the former premier, Timoshenko).

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