Foreign & Commonwealth Office (UK)

Foreign Secretary meets Syrian opposition

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Speaking after meeting the Syrian opposition at the Foreign Office in London he said:

“I have held meetings today here at the Foreign Office with members of the Syrian opposition, both from the Syrian National Council and from the National Coordination Body.

“We are very concerned in the British Government about the continuing violence, the continued actions of the Syrian regime in killing many of their own people, committing by all accounts terrible torture and abuse and of course we want to continue to step up the international pressure on the Assad regime, a regime that has long since lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the wider world.

“That pressure takes many different forms. In the European Union, we have adopted strong sanctions already including a ban on the import of Syrian crude oil in to the European Union, that’s ninety per cent of Syrian crude oil, as well as many other sanctions, travel bans and asset freezes on particular individuals and entities. We’re working with our European partners to add further to those sanctions in the coming days and weeks.

“It also includes debating the matter in the United Nations General Assembly, specifically in the third committee of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Committee, which we will be doing this week and sponsoring a resolution on Syria. We remain disappointed of course that at the United Nations Security Council in early October the resolution which we sponsored was vetoed by Russia and China which I continue to believe was a great mistake on their part, particularly in the light of recent events and I hope that we can return to the matter in the future at the United Nations Security Council.

“We’re working closely with the Arab League. I spoke to the Secretary General of the Arab League, Mr El Araby, yesterday and we commend the efforts that they have made to bring together Arab opinion, to put well worked out proposals to the Syrian regime; but these are proposals that have not been accepted, a great mistake on the part of the Assad regime.

“And so today we have met with members of the opposition. They have described to me some of the grave abuses and loss of life taking place in Syria. I have of course expressed the view we’ve held since the summer that the Assad regime should go, that is the best thing for the future of Syria. But I’ve also emphasised the importance to them of achieving a united platform and a unified body among the opposition. At an extreme moment in their nation’s

history it is important for opposition groups to be able to put aside their own differences and come to a united view of the way forward.

“I’ve also emphasised to them the importance of non violent protest and the importance of retaining international support in this situation through non violent protest. And finally I’ve emphasised to them the importance of respecting the rights of minorities. Syria is a complex country. I’ve emphasised that democracy means not only holding elections in the future, but entrenching human rights including the rights of minorities in Syria and that will give reassurance both within Syria and to people who wish the Syrian people well all over the world.

“We will continue our contacts with the Syrian opposition. I’ve appointed a senior official to lead our liaison and coordination with them. During the Turkish state visit to London this week we will have further important discussions with Turkey about the situation in Syria and will be in constant touch with the Arab League as they come to their Ministerial meeting on this tomorrow.

“The message for the regime is that the rest of the world is talking to the Syrian opposition, that we are looking to a different future for Syria, for the Syrian people to decide for themselves what, what we want is what so many people in Syria want, a free and democratic future for the people of Syria. And I think the Assad regime will find that more and more Governments around the world are willing to work with the opposition to step up the level of their contacts as we have done today as part of the increasing pressure on this regime and its completely unacceptable behaviour.”

Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-meets-syrian-opposition