



Security Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2013

Original: English

Letter dated 3 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to write to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the Syrian Coalition dated 3 December 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this and the accompanying letter from the Syrian Coalition circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mark Lyall Grant



Annex to the letter dated 3 December 2013 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the people of Syria and the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, I have the honour to refer to the Security Council briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator to be held on Tuesday, 3 December 2013.

It is the overriding responsibility of States to meet the needs of its citizens affected by armed conflict. This is highlighted by article 23 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and article 70(2) of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Convention, which place upon States the duty to permit free passage of medical supplies and essential foodstuffs to citizens in need, as well as to facilitate the rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian personnel, equipment and aid.

The Syrian regime has a long and documented history of deception and of violating the laws of war. In September, the independent commission of inquiry showed how “since the beginning of Syria’s unrest, Government forces have strategically assaulted hospitals and medical units to deprive persons perceived to be affiliated with the opposition of medical care” ([A/HRC/24/CRP.2](#)). According to statements made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, on 2 December, massive evidence has been compiled by the independent commission of inquiry indicating “responsibility at the highest level of government, including the head of State” for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including using starvation as a method of warfare and imposing devastating sieges on cities sympathetic to the opposition. We believe the international community must be vigilant in holding the regime to account. We ask that the Council call upon the Syrian regime to grant immediate and unfettered access to the commission of inquiry and take immediate steps to refer the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court.

Since this conflict began, the Syrian regime has — for almost three years — systematically delayed and prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid, using its control of access as a war tactic to starve civilians into submission and achieve its military goals. On repeated occasions when briefing the Council, including in April 2013 and October 2013, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has detailed how the regime has wilfully obstructed the delivery of critical aid, including, but not only, through bureaucratic impediments.

The Assad regime has strategically and repeatedly besieged cities and towns throughout Syria, denying innocent Syrians access to food, water, and urgently needed medical care. According to the independent commission of inquiry, “such sieges appeared to be calculated to render the conditions of life unbearable, forcing civilians to flee” ([A/HRC/24/46](#)). Assad’s forces have burned harvests in opposition-controlled territories, killed and burned livestock, and systematically employed starvation as a method of warfare, in direct violation of the laws and customs of war (*ibid.*). The regime’s policy has caused the deaths of thousands, enabled the re-emergence of diseases such as polio and allowed malnutrition to become a chronic condition facing many of Syria’s most vulnerable groups.

On 2 October the Security Council issued a presidential statement (S/PRST/2013/15) calling on the Syrian regime to adhere to international law and promote access to humanitarian aid, to which the regime has responded with a letter dated 22 November.

For any commitments by the regime to be meaningful, it must provide immediate, full and unimpeded access in all areas within Syria under its control. It must remove its forces currently laying siege to population centres, notably in the cities of Moadamiya (7,000 civilians trapped), Al Hajar Al-Aswad (50,000), Homs old city (4,000 people), and in the Ghouta region, including Douma, Erbin, Kafr Batna and Zamalka (227,500 people). It must allow the evacuation of the wounded and sick as well as of the civilians that request it. It must commit itself to and implement humanitarian pauses. It must lift the well-documented bureaucratic impediments. It must promptly facilitate cross-line and cross-border operations from neighbouring countries, including through Turkey. It must grant decent treatment to the wounded and the sick, facilitate the delivery of medical equipment and health services and release arbitrarily detained persons, as requested in the Geneva communiqué of 30 June 2012. The regime must comply with the aforementioned in a systematic, consistent manner.

As it has previously stated to the members of the Council, the Syrian Coalition remains committed to improving humanitarian access and helping to implement the Council's presidential statement. In this regard, the Coalition has appointed designated interlocutors from within the Coalition, who have the necessary authority to engage with humanitarian actors on operational and policy issues. On a very recent occasion, the Coalition coordinated with aid non-governmental organizations, local Free Syrian Army (FSA) brigades, and relevant intermediaries to successfully negotiate and transport large quantities of aid from and through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, originating in Lattakia, travelling through both government and opposition checkpoints, and delivering humanitarian assistance deep into opposition-controlled areas as far north as Azaz.

The Coalition is committed to furthering the cooperation with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other bodies that will result in the provision of aid to Syrian people who are in desperate need of such assistance. To that extent, the Coalition is forming a committee composed of regional representatives. This committee will facilitate further discussions with the FSA commanders and local brigades regarding securing routes for humanitarian convoys, agreeing on periodic mutual pauses in fighting for aid deliveries, committing not to target medical facilities and personnel, and continuing to pursue demilitarization of civilian and medical institutions. It will also continue to help assess the most urgent needs in opposition-controlled areas, prioritize efforts for aid delivery and, when needed, facilitate evacuation of civilians from conflict areas.

The Syrian Coalition looks forward to cooperating closely with international partners as well as international and domestic non-governmental organizations to facilitate humanitarian access to all Syrians, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity or politics. The Syrian Coalition will pursue its efforts by focusing on the populations of Nubl and Zahra (45,000). The Syrian Coalition also intends to promote and facilitate the campaign of vaccination against polio, which is currently being implemented under the coordination of the World Health Organization, in opposition-controlled areas.

It is vital that the Security Council maintain its pressure on the Assad regime and ensure immediate, full and unimpeded humanitarian access. On behalf of the Syrian people, we urge the Council to adopt a Security Council resolution that will stop the Assad regime's violations of international humanitarian law. A robust resolution will accelerate efforts to end the regime's policy of besiegement and starvation, and enable the immediate delivery of humanitarian assistance, including food, water and medical care, to Syrians throughout the country.

(Signed) **Najib Ghadbian**
Special Representative of the Syrian Coalition
to the United Nations
