

Réunion : Réunion du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies consacrée à La situation au Moyen-Orient

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Difficulté : ***

Éléments à fournir:

Joint Investigative Mechanism for Syria	Mécanisme d'enquête conjoint sur la Syrie
Jabhat Al-Nusra	le Front el-Nousra

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Thank you, Mr. President.

Thank you, as always, for presenting us with the unvarnished and unbiased facts.

Your remarks show once again what happens when this conflict continues and when Russia and the Assad regime relentlessly pummel civilian areas from the air and regularly block deliveries of humanitarian aid on the ground.

In opposition-held eastern Aleppo, at least 289 people have reportedly been killed since Tuesday. One Syrian volunteer reported 180 air strikes on eastern Aleppo on Saturday alone. Think of what you were doing on Saturday and imagine being subjected to 180 air strikes while you were doing it. A horrifying video from eastern Aleppo affirms a shocking inhuman barrage on civilian neighbourhoods.

Of course, we will hear today from the Syrian regime, the Russian Federation, we will hear a very different narrative. Russia will no doubt talk at length about how its unilateral pause in air strikes over eastern Aleppo was some kind of humanitarian gesture. The reality is that the Assad regime and Russia are continuing their starve-get-bombed-or-surrender strategy in eastern Aleppo: bombing the city's 275,000 residents, pausing to see if any will surrender to the Assad regime — a regime that, as both we and the Syrian people know, has systematically tortured those who have found themselves under its custodial authority. Would any of us trust that regime with the lives of our family members, with our kids, with our parents, with our siblings?

Consider that when Russia paused their air strikes over eastern Aleppo they did so unilaterally, meaning that they never deigned to coordinate their efforts with the UN or any other organization actually providing aid. That was not a humanitarian gesture.

Consider that during this pause in strikes Russia and the Assad regime never gave the UN permission to deliver a single parcel of food or medicine to eastern Aleppo — not one. That was not a humanitarian gesture.

Consider that Russian war regime planes dropped leaflets warning the people of eastern Aleppo to leave or be annihilated, as many of us discussed at our last briefing.

And consider that residents of eastern Aleppo reportedly received text messages warning people to flee before a “strategically planned assault” would happen.

Consider that last month Russia vetoed a resolution in this Council meant to end atrocities in Aleppo.

These also were not humanitarian gestures.

And remember that eastern Aleppo is not an isolated case, it is part of a countrywide strategy. Across Syria, Russia and the Assad regime are waging a campaign that includes sieges, the blocking of humanitarian aid, the indiscriminate bombardment of civilian areas and the use of barrel bombs.

So, members of this Council, we need to separate fact from fiction today. When we renewed the Joint Investigative Mechanism for Syria last week, I and many of you spoke about how we could not uphold the norm against chemical weapons use if we did not know what party was using chemical weapons. Here again, to uphold the humanitarian demands of this Council, we need to speak frankly and very specifically about which parties are responsible for the suffering of the Syrian people. That means condemning the atrocities committed by terrorist organizations like Jabhat Al-Nusra and ISIL — which the United States has done and will continue to do — but that also means telling the truth about Russia and the Assad regime’s actions. Today I will focus on just two features of regime and Russian terror

First, the Assad regime and Russia must stop the campaign of attacks that has destroyed countless schools, hospitals, homes and other civilian infrastructure.

Russia and the Al-Assad regime’s merciless attacks must end and those behind such attacks must know that we and the international community are watching their actions, documenting their abuses, and one day they will be held accountable.

Now I know right now today, with wind at their backs, these individuals feel impunity. So, though, did Slobodan Milošević, Charles Taylor and countless war criminals before them. Today's atrocities are well-documented, and the civilized world's memories are long.

Second, the Assad regime must end the suffering and torture in detention centres throughout Syria.

The United States, I want to stress, recognizes that non-State groups have also committed many abuses against detainees, including torture. We condemn any group using such tactics in the strongest terms and we demand that immediate access be granted to monitor all detention facilities, whether regime, or terrorist or opposition.

ISIL atrocities are in a category unto themselves, which is why the United States leads a 67-member coalition to defeat this terrorist organization.

Let me conclude: in January, the UN and the world raised alarm that the people in the community of Madaya, besieged by allies of the Assad regime, were starving.

Today we have reports of starvation again. Save The Children reported recently that Madaya is now also seeing an increase in child suicide attempts, something virtually unheard of in the town before.

One of these kids is a 15-year-old named Omar. Omar told a reporter recently,

"There is nothing left for me here, and I felt the easiest thing to do was to kill myself. I tried to throw myself from the balcony, but it wasn't high enough."

Omar's dad is in jail. His mom had to leave Madaya but she left Omar behind, so he did not get recruited into the Government's security forces.

"There is nothing to eat" Omar says. "We are being strangled here. It is like I am in prison".

And Omar has one other thought; one that you might expect from any teenager:

"I miss my mum waking me up in the morning." he says.

We — not just members of the Security Council, but all Member States of the United Nations — must be clear that the Assad regime, Russia and their allies are responsible for this destruction, both physical destruction and, for countless children like Omar, psychological destruction.

And in the face of that destruction, this overwhelming suffering, the perpetrators must know that the pursuit of a military solution is as foolish as it is brutal. Attacks on civilians fuel terrorism; they do not defeat terrorism. The perpetrators must also know that, like their ignominious predecessors through history, they will face judgment for their crimes.

Thank you.

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