

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Abedin, Huma <AbedinH@state.gov>
Sent: Saturday, March 10, 2012 11:27 AM
To: H
Subject: Fw: 3/10: AL Council Meeting Update (1) - SBU

In case you don't have

From: Feltman, Jeffrey D
Sent: Saturday, March 10, 2012 08:23 AM
To: Sullivan, Jacob J; Abedin, Huma
Subject: Fw: 3/10: AL Council Meeting Update (1) - SBU

S may be interested in the email below, from our DCM in Cairo. It covers Lavrov's opening remarks in Cairo today and the very good responses from HBJ and Saud. I'll start calling people fairly soon for read-outs of the meeting.
 Jeffrey Feltman

From: Sievers, Marc J
Sent: Saturday, March 10, 2012 06:44 AM
To: Hallett, Stephanie L; Zurcher, Kenneth M; Smith-Levy, Rachel M; Hof, Frederic C; Howard, Peter M; Grimm, Brian M; Henzel, Christopher P; NEA-Syria-DL; Parrs, Walter; Irwin, Matthew T; Hop, Neil W; Sawyer, Julie L; Grantham, Chris W; Tenbrink, Shawn N; Knopf, Payton L (USUN); Lasensky, Scott B; Ried, Curtis R (USUN); Catalano, Elisa; Haynes, Timothy F; Miller, James N; NEA-Staff-Assistants-DL; Djerassi, Alexander M; SES-O; S_SpecialAssistants; L'Ecuyer, Paula I; NEA-Press-DL; NEA-FO-DL; Brimmer, Esther D; Pittman, H Dean; Holt, Victoria K; Pforzheimer, Annie; Desjardins, Marc L; Smyth, L. Reece; Angha, Negah; Reisser, Wesley J; Lapenn, Jessica; Gibson, Courtney L; Mossberg, Benjamin D; Catalano, Elisa; Plews, Arthur G; Ried, Curtis R (USUN); Conlon, Steven M; Andreoli, Peter D; Carlon, Amy C; Hof, Frederic C
Cc: Blome, Donald A; Patterson, Anne W; Aguilo, Patricia M
Subject: RE: 3/10: AL Council Meeting Update (1) - SBU

I attended the opening session, which concluded about half an hour ago. The interesting parts were Lavrov's remarks followed by replies the HBJ and Saud al-Faisal.

Lavrov, speaking English, made the following main points:

- Russia supports the Arab peoples' drive for democracy and reform and the new reliance on Islamic values. Having suffered from revolutions, Russia supports peaceful, evolutionary change.
- Russia is watching developments in the region with concern and believes outside actors should act carefully.
- On Syria, Russia is not protecting vested interests as some claim but is protecting international law. The UN Charter calls for the respect of states' sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia never waged colonial wars in the Arab region and respects the rights of all Arab states.
- Russia seeks an end to violence, allowing distribution of humanitarian assistance, now is not the time to discuss blame, that can be done later. Ending violence requires applying leverage to all parties, not just the regime.
- An independent, impartial monitoring mechanism is needed. Russia with China vetoed Feb 4 SC resolution because it was not realistic to call for regime to withdraw from cities without calling for armed groups to do same. Russia could not support a resolution that could not be implemented.
- Russia may support the new SC resolution provided that the point is to stop all violence, deliver assistance, and promote dialogue. Russia could not understand the logic of the Friends of Syria meeting in Tunis since only the Syrian opposition was invited.
- Russia views cooperation with the Arab League as strategic.

HBJ made the following points in reply, speaking in Arabic:

- There is systematic genocide by Syrian government while we are speaking about ceasefire. There are no armed gangs, but rather systematic killings for 8 to 9 months. The regime called the killers “armed gangs” in order to portray that the Syrian regime is not responsible. After the UNSC failed to issue a resolution, the killings and violence increased.
- There has to be an immediate ceasefire and a humanitarian process that runs in parallel with a clear political process. After all that has happened, especially killings in Baba Amr and other Syrian cities, we should not only call for a ceasefire, but also a peace process, the approval of the Arab plan, and permitting humanitarian aid to enter.
- We are not against Syria. Syria is an important country in the Arab world, and so is Russia. We want to look into the means to solving this issue according to the Syrian peoples’ demands. The Arab League and Russia may play an important role in this issue if we reach a common ground on the political process. I know Russia wants to solve the issue, and we agreed at the Arab League that there has to be a political track for solving this issue.
- The Syria committee will [now] meet with Lavrov to discuss a comprehensive process and not a partial process to solve the crisis. After all the losses of lives and hostages and injured people, we should not speak about a partial process because this will be a crime against the Arab and Syrian people. There has to be a comprehensive process, the results of which are known to us, in order to solve the Syrian issue.

Saud Al Faisal then made the following response, after which the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister declared the opening session adjourned.

- Syria will be the lead issue of this ministerial council session. Syrians are facing a military machine that is still unsatisfied with all the killings among old men, women and children. All efforts were in vain in light of the ignorance of the Syrian regime.
- Some of the supporters of the Arab initiative changed their position when this issue was discussed at the UNSC. These countries that did not approve the UNGA and UNSC resolutions on Syria gave a license to the Syrian regime to continue its killings.
- When the Friends of Syria conference was held, there was focus on sending relief and humanitarian assistance but this is useless so long as no common understanding on the means to send this assistance is reached. It is very important to be able to send the assistance and aid to the harmed and deserving Syrian people.
- We ask Russia to support the Arab initiative to solve the Syrian crisis.
- Kofi Annan should not only focus on humanitarian issues, but should also have authorities to solve the security and political situation in Syria.

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This email is UNCLASSIFIED.

From: Hallett, Stephanie L**Sent:** Saturday, March 10, 2012 1:05 PM**To:** Zurcher, Kenneth M; Smith-Levy, Rachel M; Hof, Frederic C; Howard, Peter M; Grimm, Brian M; Henzel, Christopher P; NEA-Syria-DL; Parrs, Walter; Irwin, Matthew T; Hop, Neil W; Sawyer, Julie L; Grantham, Chris W; Tenbrink, Shawn N; Knopf, Payton L (USUN); Lasensky, Scott B; Ried, Curtis R (USUN); Catalano, Elisa; Haynes, Timothy F; Miller, James N; NEA-Staff-Assistants-DL; Djerassi, Alexander M; SES-O; S_SpecialAssistants; L'Ecuyer, Paula I; NEA-Press-DL; NEA-FO-DL; Brimmer, Esther D; Pittman, H Dean; Holt, Victoria K; Pforzheimer, Annie; Desjardins, Marc L; Smyth, L. Reece; Angha, Negah; Reisser, Wesley J; Lapenn, Jessica; Gibson, Courtney L; Mossberg, Benjamin D; Catalano, Elisa; Plews, Arthur G; Ried, Curtis R (USUN); Conlon, Steven M; Andreoli, Peter D; Carlon, Amy C; Hof, Frederic C**Cc:** Blome, Donald A; Sievers, Marc J; Patterson, Anne W; Aguilo, Patricia M**Subject:** 3/10: AL Council Meeting Update (1) - SBU**SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED – PLEASE DO NOT DISTRIBUTE OUTSIDE USG**

Colleagues,

Today is the first day of the formal semi-annual Council of Foreign Ministers meeting, chaired by Kuwait. While the agenda is long and includes routine items for discussion, today's focus is Syria. The Arab League Ministerial Committee on Syria (led by Qatari PM/FM HBJ and including FMs of Egypt, Sudan, Oman, Algeria, and AL SYG Elaraby) held a meeting this morning at the Arab League to discuss the situation in Syria as Special Envoy Kofi Annan and his Deputy Nasser Al-Qidwa traveled to Damascus. [Note: We understand that Al-Qidwa will explicitly serve as Annan's deputy, *not* as an Arab League representative/envoy.]

Currently, there is a press conference underway to inaugurate the formal meeting (we will send summaries shortly – HBJ is speaking now). Immediately following these remarks, Arab FMs will go into a closed-door meeting with Russian FM Lavrov, who is already at AL HQ and is present for the public remarks.

FM Lavrov met separately last night with the FMs of Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Lavrov also met separately with Elaraby, Kofi Annan, and UN SYG Ban Ki-Moon. During this meeting, Elaraby, Ban, and Annan all stressed that the international community must be on same page and pushing in same direction to find a solution to the crisis. All, including Lavrov, agreed something must be done to stop the violence and that there should be a single process (led by Special Envoy Kofi Annan) for beginning a dialogue between the internal/external opposition and the Syrian regime. Annan stressed that the regime must agree to begin a political process that takes into account the November 2 Arab action plan (stop violence; release detainees; military withdrawal from urban areas; free movement of media and humanitarian orgs). They all reportedly agreed that, while the regime certainly must take the first step, the international community should also urge the opposition to engage in an Annan-led political dialogue with the SARG.

Separately, we learned that a delegation from the Arab League led by Mohammed Sobeih (AL Asst SYG for Palestine) will travel to Jeddah tomorrow to discuss the latest developments in Syria with the OIC, and to coordinate Arab and Muslim positions regarding issues of mutual concern, namely Syria, Palestinian affairs, Sudan, Somalia, Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen.

Regards,

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