

QUOTE

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR ORAL REPLY**

**QUESTION NO: 382 (NO3794E)**

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**MS C.C. SEPTEMBER (ANC) TO ASK THE MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION:**

What steps is the Government taking to bring about a resolution to the conflict in Syria?

**REPLY:**

- (1) South Africa remains deeply concerned about the continuing violence and deteriorating human rights situation in Syria and has persistently called on all the parties to the conflict to stop the violence and respect as well as protect the rights of the Syrian population. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, South Africa has condemned all human rights abuses; in particular violations of the rights of vulnerable groups, such as women and children. All the parties have the responsibility to protect and preserve human rights. South Africa reaffirms its commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria and that any political transition must reflect the will of the Syrian people. South Africa rejects any calls for regime change and outside military interference or any action not in line with the Charter of the United Nations.
- (2) The South African Government is deeply disappointed that the efforts of the United Nations-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative to convince the Syrian Government and opposition forces to adhere to a ceasefire during the Muslim celebration of Eid-al-Adha had been met with failure. The South African Government is committed to encouraging all parties involved in the current conflict in Syria to engage in a process of all-inclusive national dialogue, free of any form of violence, intimidation or outside interference aimed at regime change, in order to satisfy the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Syrian people. It will continue to promote this approach in the United Nations Security Council, where South Africa is a non-permanent member until December this year, as well as within the important groupings of BRICS and IBSA.

UNQUOTE

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

South Africa is concerned over reports by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that the conflict in Syria has taken on the dimensions of a full-scale civil war. Both sides therefore have obligations under international humanitarian law. South Africa also reiterates that all those in violation of international law and international humanitarian law should be held accountable.

South Africa is disappointed that the United Nations Security Council has, as yet, not been able to apply pressure on all sides to bring an end to the violence and to comply with their respective obligations under the Six-Point Plan and the Geneva Action Group Communiqué. It is essential that a political path be supported by a united, cohesive international effort towards a Syrian-led negotiated political transition aimed at establishing a democratic pluralistic society in which minorities are protected.

South Africa was disappointed in the decision by the UN-Arab League Special Envoy, Mr Kofi Annan, not to continue with his Mission after the end of August 2012. South Africa also took note of his reason for resigning as being the inability of the international community to find common ground that will ensure a peaceful resolution of the armed conflict in Syria and the continuing covert arming and funding of opposition groups.

South Africa welcomed the appointment of Mr Lakhdar Brahimi as UN-LAS Joint Special Representative (JSR), as well as the decision by the UN Secretary General to maintain an Office in Damascus following the failure of the UNSMIS mission in Syria. The first direct effort of the JSR to intervene in the crisis by attempting to broker a ceasefire over the Eid-al-Adha Muslim celebration was met with failure when both Government and opposition forces continued with military operations against each other.

The UNHCR as well as the Syrian Arab Red Crescent are reporting that 2.5 million Syrians are directly affected by the internal conflict. At present there are more than 1.2 million internally displaced citizens. Since the start of the conflict, the UN has registered 229 000 Syrian citizens as refugees. Of these, 80 000 are being hosted in camps in Turkey, 72 000 have been recorded in Jordan, 57 000 in Lebanon and 18 000 in Iraq.

South Africa takes its responsibility as a member of the Security Council seriously, because its decisions impact the lives of ordinary people. South Africa thus cannot support any resolution on Syria it perceives as one sided (i.e. sanctions not aimed at both sides of the conflict) Our view is that a one-sided resolution would only make the situation on the ground worse, pushing the government to further pursue the military option and emboldening the opposition to continue to reject talks. South Africa remains convinced that in a complex, divided society such as Syria, there can be no military solution.