

QUOTE

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

WRITTEN REPLY FOR QUESTION NO: 2509 (NW2990E)

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**MR L.S NGONYAMA (COPE) TO ASK THE MINISTER:**

Whether South Africa still maintains consular or diplomatic relationships with Syria; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details in light of the recent allegations of the use of chemical weapons against civilians in the on-going war in Syria?

REPLY:

(1) South Africa still maintains full diplomatic relations with the Syrian Arab Republic. In light of the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria, the Minister has, throughout 2012 and 2013, scaled down the operations of the South African Mission in Damascus, including evacuating the families of transferred staff and authorising intermission transfers for non-essential transferred staff members. In December 2012, the Minister ordered the temporary relocation of the remaining staff which consist of the South African Ambassador to Syria and the Corporate Services Manager to the town of Chtaura in Lebanon from where bilateral relations with both Lebanon and Syria are now serviced. This was also where the Ambassador was during the chemical weapons attack on 21 August 2013.

UNQUOTE