


Briefing and Draft Press Statement on Syria

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What's In Blue

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Tomorrow morning (24 October) Council members will be briefed by the Joint UN-Arab League Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi via video-conference from Cairo on his recent visit to Syria and countries in the region (Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Turkey). Council members are likely to be particularly interested in the responses Brahimi has received to his proposal for an Eid al-Adha ceasefire. Brahimi's assessment of the impact of the Syrian crisis on its neighbours may also be of interest to Council members.

Brahimi has suggested a three-day ceasefire during the Eid al-Adha period, which starts this Friday (26 October), and has lobbied for support for this initiative in the countries he visited. While Iran and Turkey have supported the call, both the Syrian government and the opposition groups have expressed skepticism about the ceasefire and have not publicly agreed to it.

Yesterday (22 October) Russia circulated a draft press statement on the initiative and it seems unlikely that agreement on the draft text will be reached until after tomorrow's briefing. Council members may wish to get Brahimi's inputs on the chances of such a ceasefire holding and on particular elements that he would see benefit in highlighting in a press statement.

While it appears that Council members are broadly supportive of the ceasefire initiative, some members have asked for additional language to the draft text, including references to humanitarian access and assistance. It also seems that some Council members would like to include language on the need for the Syrian government to respond positively to the call for a ceasefire and to allow unimpeded access to humanitarian personnel.

Another area in the draft press statement that is expected to come up for further discussion is the desire of some members to link the Eid al-Adha ceasefire with the sustainable cessation of armed violence asked for in resolutions 2042 and 2043, adopted on 14 and 21 April respectively. A possible contentious issue that may need to be resolved is how to characterise any sort of political transition.

Council members may be keen to hear more about Brahimi's discussions with leaders and key political figures in the countries he has visited over the last few weeks. However, it is unclear if Brahimi is ready to offer more concrete proposals – other than the temporary ceasefire suggestion – about the way forward.

Another area that Council members may be interested in is the upcoming Doha meeting with opposition groups which was expected to take place on 15 October and has been postponed but may be rescheduled for early November. This meeting is expected to

reappoint the Syrian National Council bodies as well as to expand the representative bodies of the Syrian opposition.

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