



Security Council

Distr.: General
22 December 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 14 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I hereby request that the attached letter dated 7 December 2017 from the President of the Syrian Negotiation Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Abdallah Y. Al-Mouallimi
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 14 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Syrian Negotiation Commission, it is with great urgency that I bring your attention to the dire situation in eastern Ghutah, Rif Dimashq Governorate. As we work to secure a political solution for Syria in Geneva, Syrian civilians in eastern Ghutah are confronting a humanitarian catastrophe deliberately inflicted by the Syrian regime. As in the past, the regime, aided by some of its allies and the silence of guarantors, ramped up its brutality ahead of and during this eighth round of Geneva talks, killing dozens of civilians, including children and women, and destroying vital facilities in eastern Ghutah. This intensification persists in Duma, Harasta, Irbin, Hamuriyah and many parts of Syria.

If Security Council members do not act now to break the Syrian regime's brutal siege, more of the hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians trapped in eastern Ghutah will die. Since 2012, over 400 civilians in the area have died from starvation and denial of medical care, including over 200 children. Today, 500 children require urgent medical evacuation, with medical help a short drive away, according to the Special Adviser to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Jan Egeland. Eastern Ghutah's victims are its most vulnerable inhabitants — infants, the elderly, s

What is occurring in eastern Ghutah is a re-enactment of the regime's unlawful policy in Homs, Darayya, Madaya and elsewhere: to push innocent civilians to the brink of devastation and to starve them into submission. The regime further escalates the situation militarily in order to obstruct the political process in Geneva. By so doing, it draws responses that feed into that goal while the unified opposition represented by the Syrian Negotiation Commission is pushing for a political transition and positive engagement in the Geneva negotiations. It is clear to us, our international allies and the wider international community that the regime is focused on a military solution while it sets preconditions for its engagement with the political process.

Against this urgent backdrop, the Syrian people call upon Security Council members:

- (a) To break the siege of eastern Ghutah through all necessary measures, including the use of air bridges to ensure continuous humanitarian access;
- (b) To enforce the de-escalation agreement and support the deployment of United Nations monitors to eastern Ghouta to ensure that vulnerable civilians are not subjected to further war crimes and crimes against humanity;
- (c) To bring leverage on the Syrian regime and its backers to achieve progress in the intra-Syrian talks in Geneva;
- (d) To hold war criminals accountable by establishing a venue for criminal prosecution. While the International Criminal Court route remains blocked, there is a viable option through a special tribunal for Syria initiated by the General Assembly.

Anyone who attempts to say that we are setting preconditions within the Geneva process is misguided. The foregoing is an urgent appeal, based on international law, including Security Council resolutions [2254 \(2015\)](#) and [2165 \(2014\)](#), by our people for protection, free and unfettered access to aid and genuine accountability for all war crimes that are taking place in Syria. Our responsibility as the Syrian Negotiation Commission is to meet the needs of our people and achieve their aspirations, remaining true to our principle of bringing about a transition towards a democratic and free Syria. In this regard, we can still stop eastern Ghutah from facing the same

fate as Darayya, Madaya and other areas, if Council members immediately take the action necessary to enforce international humanitarian law.

(*Signed*) Nasr **al-Hariri**
President, Syrian Negotiation Commission
