

League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria

Report of the Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria for the period from 24 December 2011 to 18 January 2012

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

“We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it, and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely he is sinful, very foolish” [Qur’an 33:72]

I. Legal bases

1. By resolution 7436 of 2 November 2011, the Council of the League of Arab States adopted the Arab plan of action annexed thereto, welcomed the Syrian Government’s agreement to the plan, and emphasized the need for the Syrian Government to commit to the full and immediate implementation of its provisions.
2. On 16 November 2011, the Council of the League of Arab States adopted resolution 7439 approving the draft protocol of the Legal Centre and the mandate of the League of Arab States Observer Mission to Syria, namely to verify implementation of the provisions of the Arab plan of action to resolve the Syrian crisis and protect Syrian civilians. The resolution requested the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States to take such steps as he deemed appropriate to appoint the Head of the League of Arab States Observer Mission and to make contact with the Syrian Government with a view to signing the Protocol.
3. By resolution 7441 of 24 November 2011, the Council of the League of Arab States requested the Secretary-General of the League to deploy the Observer Mission to the Syrian Arab Republic in order to fulfil its mandate under the protocol immediately on its signature.
4. The Syrian Arab Republic and the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States signed the protocol on 19 December 2011. The protocol provided for the establishment and deployment to the Syrian Arab Republic of a Mission comprising civilian and military experts from Arab countries and Arab non-governmental human rights organizations. Paragraph 5 stated that the Mission should transmit regular reports on the results of its work to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab State and the Syrian Government for submission — via the Arab Ministerial Committee on the Situation in Syria — to the Council of the League at the ministerial level for its consideration and appropriate action.
5. On 20 December 2011, the Council of the League approved the appointment of General Muhammad Ahmad Mustafa Al-Dabi from the Republic of the Sudan as Head of the Observer Mission.

II. Formation of the Mission

6. The General Secretariat requested Member States and relevant Arab organizations to transmit the names of its candidates for the Mission. On that basis, 166 monitors from 13 Arab countries and six relevant Arab organizations have thus far been appointed.

III. Visit of the advance delegation of the General Secretariat to Syria

7. In preparation for the Mission, an advance delegation of the General Secretariat visited the Syrian Arab Republic on 22 December 2011 to discuss the logistical preparations for the Mission.
8. In accordance with the protocol, the Syrian Government confirmed its readiness to facilitate the Mission in every way by allowing the free and safe movement of all of the observers throughout Syria, and by refraining from hindering the work of the Mission on security or administrative grounds. The Syrian Government side also affirmed its commitment to ensuring that the Mission could freely conduct the necessary meetings; to provide full protection for the observers, taking into consideration the responsibility of the Mission if it were to insist on visiting areas despite the warning of the security services; and to allow the entry to Syria of journalists and Arab and international media in accordance with the rules and regulations in force in the country.

VI. Arrival and preliminary visits of the Head of Mission

9. The Head of the Mission, General Muhammad Ahmad Mustafa Al-Dabi, arrived in the Syrian Arab Republic on the evening of Saturday 24 December 2011. He held a series of meetings with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Walid Al-Moualem, and with Syrian Government officials, who stated that they stood

prepared to cooperate fully with the Mission and to endeavour to ensure its success, overcoming any obstacles that may arise. The necessary logistical and security arrangements were agreed.

10. The Syrian side stated that there were certain areas that the security protection detail would not be able to enter with the observers for fear of the citizens' reaction. The Head of the Mission replied that that situation would enable the Mission to engage with citizens and opposition parties without government monitoring, thereby removing the citizens' fear of repercussions as a result of communicating with the Mission.

11. The Head of the Mission completed the technical field preparations and secured the necessary transportation and communication devices in order to start work. He met with the observers who arrived successively in Syria and briefed them on their duties and the bases of their work under the protocol. The observers took a special oath for the Mission which had been drafted by the Head.

12. On 27 December 2011, the Head of the Mission and ten observers conducted a preliminary visit to the city of Homs, one of the epicentres of tension, which has seen acts of violence and armed confrontation between the Army and the Syrian opposition. Some security barriers separating districts remain in place.

13. Immediately on arriving in Homs, the Head of the Mission met with the Governor of the city, who explained that there had been an escalation in violence perpetrated by armed groups in the city. There had been instances of kidnapping and sabotage of Government and civilian facilities. Food was in short supply owing to the blockade imposed by armed groups, which were believed to include some 3000 individuals. The Governor further stated that all attempts by religious figures and city notables to calm the situation had failed. He made enquiries regarding the possibility of addressing the issue of soldiers and vehicles blocked inside Baba Amr.

14. The Mission visited the residential districts of Baba Amr, Karam Al-Zaytun, Al-Khalidiyya and Al-Ghuta without guards. It met with a number of opposition citizens who described the state of fear, blockade and acts of violence to which they had been subjected by Government forces. At a time of intense exchanges of gunfire among the sides, the Mission witnessed the effects of the destruction wrought on outlying districts. The Mission witnessed an intense exchange of gunfire between the Army and opposition in Baba Amr. It saw four military vehicles in surrounding areas, and therefore had to return to the Governorate headquarters. It was agreed with the Governor that five members of the Mission would remain in Homs until the following day to conduct field work and meet with the greatest possible number of citizens.

15. Immediately on returning from Homs, the Head of the Mission met with the Government and insisted that it withdraw military vehicles from the city, put an end to acts of violence, protect civilians, lift the blockade and provide food. He further called for the two sides to exchange the bodies of those killed.

16. At that meeting, the Syrian side agreed to withdraw all military presence from the city and residential areas except for three army vehicles that were not working and had been surrounded, and one that had been taken from the Army by armed groups. The Syrian side requested the Mission's assistance to recover and remove those vehicles in exchange for the release of four individuals, the exchange of five bodies from each side, the entry of basic foods for families in the city, and the entry of sanitation vehicles to remove garbage. It was agreed at the end of the meeting that the Mission would conduct another visit to Homs on the following day in the company of General Hassan Sharif, the security coordinator for the Government side.

17. During that visit, the Mission was introduced to one of the leading figures in the opposition, who acted as media representative of the National Council. An extensive discussion took place regarding the offer of the Syrian Government and the best way to implement the agreement. As a result, the military vehicles were returned and removed; the bodies of those killed were exchanged; trucks entered the city with food; and three detainees and two women were released and returned to their families in the presence of the Mission, thereby calming the situation inside the city.

18. Five days after the monitors were deployed to five zones, the Ministerial Committee requested that the Head of the Mission report on the Mission's work. He travelled to Cairo and gave an oral presentation to the members of the Committee at their meeting of 8 January 2012. It was decided that the work of the Mission should continue and that the Head of the Mission should submit a report at the end of the period determined in the protocol, on 19 January 2012. After the Head's return to Damascus to resume his duties, the Mission faced difficulties from Government loyalists and opposition alike, particularly as a result of statements and media coverage in the wake of the Committee meeting. That did not, however, affect the work of the Mission or its full and smooth deployment across the country.

19. Following its arrival, and to this date, the Mission has received numerous letters from the Syrian committee responsible for coordination with the Mission. The letters refer to the material and human losses sustained by Government institutions and offices as a result of what is described as sabotage. They assert that all of the States' vital services have been affected.

V. Deployment of the Observer Mission to Syria

20. The observers were divided into 15 zones covering 20 cities and districts across Syria according to the time frame set out below. The variation in dates was a result of shortcomings in administrative and technical preparations, such as the arrival of cars and personnel. Care was taken to ensure even distribution of observers. Each unit comprised some ten observers of different Arab nationalities. The groups were deployed to Syrian governorates and towns as follows:

- On 29 December 2011, six groups travelled to Damascus, Homs, Rif Homs, Idlib, Deraa and Hama.
- On 4 January 2012, a group travelled to Aleppo.
- On 9 January 2012, two groups went to Deir Al-Zor and Latakia. However, both returned to Damascus on 10 January 2012 owing to attacks that led to the injury of two of the monitors in Latakia and material damage to the cars.
- On 10 January 2012, a group travelled to Qamishli and Hasaka.
- On 12 January 2012, a group travelled to Outer Damascus.
- On 13 January 2012, four groups travelled to Suwaida, Bu Kamal, Deir Al-Zor, Palmyra (Tadmur), Sukhna, Banyas and Tartous.
- On 15 January 2012, two groups travelled to Latakia, Raqqa and Madinat Al-Thawra.

Annex I. List of observers, their nationalities and their distribution.

21. The observers were provided with the following:

- A map of the region;
- A code of conduct for observers;
- The duties of the group leaders;
- The duties of the observers;
- Necessary equipment such as computers, cameras and communication devices.

22. An operations room was established at the offices of the League of Arab States in Damascus. The office is open 24 hours a day and is directly linked to the League of Arab States operations room in Cairo and to the groups deployed across Syria. The room receives daily reports from the field teams and conveys special instructions for monitoring. Owing to the volume of work, an additional operations room was opened at the Mission headquarters in Damascus with the task of allocating individuals and assigning committees on follow-up, detainees, the media and financial affairs. It coordinates with the main operations room at the offices of the League of Arab States.

23. In Latakia and Deir Al-Zor, the Mission faced difficulties from Government loyalists. In Latakia, thousands surrounded the Mission's cars, chanting slogans in favour of the President and against the Mission. The situation became out of control and monitors were attacked. Two sustained light injuries and an armoured car was completely crushed. In order to address the matter, the Head of Mission contacted the Syrian committee responsible for coordination with the Mission. Nevertheless, the Head of the Mission ordered the immediate return of the two groups to Damascus. He met the Minister for Foreign Affairs and made a strongly worded formal protest. The Syrian side strongly condemned the incident and extended a formal apology, explaining that the events were not in any sense deliberate. In order to emphasize the point, the Syrian Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs met with the members of the Latakia team and stated that the Syrian Government would address the shortcoming immediately and guarantee the safety and security of observers everywhere. He apologized to them for the unfortunate and unintentional incidents. The members were then assigned to new zones after four days' rest.

VI. Implementation of the Mission's mandate under the protocol

24. The Head of the Mission stresses that this assessment in terms of the provisions of the protocol summarizes the findings of the groups as relayed by group leaders at their meeting with the Head of the Mission on 17 January 2012.

A. Monitoring and observation of the cessation of all violence by all sides in cities and residential areas

25. On being assigned to their zones and starting work, the observers witnessed acts of violence perpetrated by Government forces and an exchange of gunfire with armed elements in Homs and Hama. As a result of the Mission's insistence on a complete end to violence and the withdrawal of Army vehicles and equipment, this problem has receded. The most recent reports of the Mission point to a considerable calming of the situation and restraint on the part of those forces.

26. In Homs and Dera'a, the Mission observed armed groups committing acts of violence against Government forces, resulting in death and injury among their ranks. In certain situations, Government forces responded to attacks against their personnel with force. The observers noted that some of the armed groups were using flares and armour-piercing projectiles.

27. In Homs, Idlib and Hama, the Observer Mission witnessed acts of violence being committed against Government forces and civilians that resulted in several deaths and injuries. Examples of those acts include the bombing of a civilian bus, killing eight persons and injuring others, including women and children, and the bombing of a train carrying diesel oil. In another incident in Homs, a police bus was blown up, killing two police officers. A fuel pipeline and some small bridges were also bombed.

28. The Mission noted that many parties falsely reported that explosions or violence had occurred in several locations. When the observers went to those locations, they found that those reports were unfounded.

29. The Mission also noted that, according to its teams in the field, the media exaggerated the nature of the incidents and the number of persons killed in incidents and protests in certain towns.

B. Verifying that Syrian security services and so-called *shabiha* gangs do not obstruct peaceful demonstrations

30. According to their latest reports and their briefings to the Head of the Mission on 17 January 2012 in preparation for this report, group team leaders witnessed peaceful demonstrations by both Government supporters and the opposition in several places. None of those demonstrations were disrupted, except for some minor clashes with the Mission and between loyalists and opposition. These have not resulted in fatalities since the last presentation before the Arab Ministerial Committee on the Situation in Syria at its meeting of 8 January 2012.

31. The reports and briefings of groups leaders state that citizens belonging to the opposition surround the Mission on its arrival and use the gathering as a barrier from the security services. However, such incidents have gradually decreased.

32. The Mission has received requests from opposition supporters in Homs and Deraa that it should stay on-site and not leave, something that may be attributable to fear of attack after the Mission's departure.

C. Verifying the release of those detained in the current incidents

33. The Mission received reports from parties outside Syria indicating that the number of detainees was 16,237. It also received information from the opposition inside the country that the number of detainees was 12,005. In validating those figures, the teams in the field discovered that there were discrepancies between the lists, that information was missing and inaccurate, and that names were repeated. The Mission is communicating with the concerned Government agencies to confirm those numbers.

34. The Mission has delivered to the Syrian Government all of the lists received from the Syrian opposition inside and outside Syria. In accordance with the protocol, it has demanded the release of the detainees.

35. On 15 January 2012, President Bashar Al-Assad issued a legislative decree granting a general amnesty for crimes perpetrated in the context of the events from 15 March 2011 through to the issuance of the decree. In implementation of the amnesty, the relevant Government authorities have been periodically releasing detainees in the various regions so long as they are not wanted in connection with other crimes. The Mission

has been supervising the releases and is monitoring the process with the Government's full and active coordination.

36. On 19 January 2012, the Syrian government stated that 3569 detainees had been released from military and civil prosecution services. The Mission verified that 1669 of those detained had thus far been released. It continues to follow up the issue with the Government and the opposition, emphasizing to the Government side that the detainees should be released in the presence of observers so that the event can be documented.

37. The Mission has validated the following figures for the total number of detainees that the Syrian government thus far claims to have released:

- Before the amnesty: 4,035
- After the amnesty: 3,569.

The Government has therefore claimed that a total of 7,604 detainees have been released.

38. The Mission has verified the correct number of detainees released and arrived at the following figures:

- Before the amnesty: 3,483
- After the amnesty: 1,669

The total number of confirmed releases is therefore 5152. The Mission is continuing to monitor the process and communicate with the Syrian Government for the release of the remaining detainees.

D. Confirming the withdrawal of the military presence from residential neighbourhoods in which demonstrations and protests occurred or are occurring

39. Based on the reports of the field-team leaders and the meeting held on 17 January 2012 with all team leaders, the Mission confirmed that all military vehicles, tanks and heavy weapons had been withdrawn from cities and residential neighbourhoods. Although there are still some security measures in place in the form of earthen berms and barriers in front of important buildings and in squares, they do not affect citizens. It should be noted that the Syrian Minister of Defence, in a meeting with the Head of the Mission that took place on 5 January 2012, affirmed his readiness to accompany the Head of the Mission to all sites and cities designated by the latter and from which the Mission suspects that the military presence had not yet been withdrawn, with a view to issuing field orders and rectifying any violation immediately.

40. Armoured vehicles (personnel carriers) are present at some barriers. One of those barriers is located in Homs and some others in Madaya, Zabadani and Rif Damascus. The presence of those vehicles was reported and they were subsequently withdrawn from Homs. It has been confirmed that the residents of Zabadani and Madaya reached a bilateral agreement with the Government that led to the removal of those barriers and vehicles.

E. Confirming the accreditation by the Syrian Government of Arab and international media organizations and that those organizations are allowed to move freely in all parts of Syria

41. Speaking on behalf of his Government, the Syrian Minister of Information confirmed that, from the beginning of December 2011 to 15 January 2012, the Government had accredited 147 Arab and foreign media organizations. Some 112 of those organizations entered Syrian territory, joining the 90 other accredited organizations operating in Syria through their full-time correspondents.

42. The Mission followed up on this issue. It identified 36 Arab and foreign media organizations and several journalists located in a number of Syrian cities. It also received complaints that the Syrian Government had granted some media organizations authorization to operate for four days only, which was insufficient time, according to those organizations. In addition to preventing them from entering the country until they had specified their destinations, journalists were required obtain further authorization once they had entered the country and were prevented from going to certain areas. The Syrian Government confirmed that it grants media organizations operating permits that are valid for 10 days, with the possibility of renewal.

43. Reports and information from some sectors [teams] indicate that the Government places restrictions on the movement of media organizations in opposition areas. In many cases, those restrictions caused journalists to trail the Mission in order to do their work.

44. In Homs, a French journalist who worked for the France 2 channel was killed and a Belgian journalist was injured. The Government and opposition accused each other of being responsible for the incident, and both sides issued statements of condemnation. The Government formed an investigative committee in order to determine the cause of the incident. It should be noted that Mission reports from Homs indicate that the French journalist was killed by opposition mortar shells.

Annex 2. A list of media organizations identified and a list of media organizations that entered Syria, according to the official information.

VII. Obstacles encountered by the Mission

A. Monitors

45. Some of the experts nominated were not capable of taking on such a responsibility and did not have prior experience in this field.

46. Some of the observers did not grasp the amount of responsibility that was being placed on them and the importance of giving priority to Arab interests over personal interests.

47. In the course of field work, some observers were unable to deal with difficult circumstances, which are at the core of their duties. Monitors must have certain traits and the specializations required for such work.

48. A number of the observers are elderly, and some of them suffer from health conditions that prevent them from performing their duties.

49. Twenty-two observers declined to complete the mission for personal reasons. Some observers offered unfounded reasons, which were not accepted by the Head of the Mission, while others had a personal agenda.

Annex 3. List of the names of observers who declined to complete the Mission.

50. Some observers reneged on their duties and broke the oath they had taken. They made contact with officials from their countries and gave them exaggerated accounts of events. Those officials consequently developed a bleak and unfounded picture of the situation.

51. Some of the observers in the various zones are demanding housing similar to their counterparts in Damascus or financial reimbursement equivalent to the difference in accommodation rates resulting from the difference in hotel standards or accommodation in Damascus. These issues do not warrant comment.

52. Some observers are afraid to perform their duties owing to the violent incidents that have occurred in certain locations. The unavailability of armoured cars at all the sites and the lack of bulletproof vests have negatively affected some observers' ability to carry out their duties.

Comments of the Head of the Mission concerning the observers

53. Some of the observers, unfortunately, believed that their journey to Syria was for amusement, and were therefore surprised by the reality of the situation. They did not expect to be assigned to teams or to have to remain at stations outside the capital or to face the difficulties that they encountered.

54. Some of the observers were not familiar with the region and its geography. The unavailability of armoured vehicles and protective vests had a negative effect on the spirits of some observers.

55. Some of the observers experienced hostility both from the Syrian opposition and loyalists. This hostility also had a negative effect on their spirits.

56. Despite the foregoing comments, the performance of many of the observers was outstanding and praiseworthy. Those who underperformed will improve with experience and guidance.

B. Security restrictions

57. Although it welcomed the Mission and its Head and repeatedly emphasized that it would not impose any security restrictions that could obstruct the movement of the Mission, the Government deliberately attempted to limit the observers' ability to travel extensively in various regions. The Government also attempted to focus the attention of the Mission on issues in which it is interested. The Mission resisted those attempts and responded to them in a manner that allowed it to fulfil its mandate and overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of its work.

C. Communication equipment

58. The Mission communicates with the various groups by mobile phones and facsimile machines connected to the local Syrian telephone network. Occasional cuts in service prevent the Mission from communicating with the groups.

59. The Mission was equipped with 10 Thuraya satellite phones. Such devices are hard to use inside buildings owing to the difficulty in obtaining a satellite signal. As a result, ordinary phones and fax machines, which are not considered secure communications equipment, were used to send daily reports, instead.

60. The communication equipment the Qatari observers brought with them was held at the Jordanian border, despite demands made by the Head of the Mission to the Syrian authorities to permit entry of that equipment. That notwithstanding, the amount of equipment would not have been enough to meet the needs of all sites and stations.

61. The Mission does not have portable two-way radios for communication between team members. The Chinese Embassy provided 10 such radios as a gift to the Mission. They were used in three sectors only.

62. Internet service is unavailable in some regions, and in other areas it is intermittent, including in the capital.

63. There are no cameras attached to the vehicles used by the Mission, which would facilitate observers' work in dangerous areas.

D. Transportation

64. The Mission has 38 cars at its disposal (23 armoured and 15 non-armoured), including 28 four-wheel drive vehicles and 10 sedans. It should be noted that the Mission's mandate requires the use of armoured four-wheel drive vehicles, given the nature of the Mission. The number of such vehicles currently available does not satisfy the needs of the Mission, particularly for transportation into trouble spots.

65. When it was first deployed, the Mission rented several cars from local sources for use in monitoring operations. However, owing to some acts of violence directed against the field teams, the rental companies recalled those vehicles and their drivers out of fear for their safety.

66. The Mission encountered difficulties in hiring drivers because the opposition groups refused to allow local drivers to enter their areas because they believed the drivers were members of the security services, which forces the observers to drive the vehicles themselves.

67. Some of the observers demanded to use vehicles sent by their countries, a demand that was denied by the Head of the Mission, who allocated the vehicles according to the needs of each zone.

Annex 4. List showing the number, types and distribution of vehicles and the countries that provided them.

E. The media

68. Since it began its work, the Mission has been the target of a vicious media campaign. Some media outlets have published unfounded statements, which they attributed to the Head of the Mission. They have also grossly exaggerated events, thereby distorting the truth.

69. Such contrived reports have helped to increase tensions among the Syrian people and undermined the observers' work. Some media organizations were exploited in order to defame the Mission and its Head and cause the Mission to fail.

VIII. Basic needs of the Mission, should its mandate be renewed

- 100 additional young observers, preferably military personnel
- 30 armoured vehicles
- Light protective vests
- Vehicle-mounted photographic equipment
- Modern communications equipment
- Binoculars, ordinary and night-vision

IX. Evaluation:

70. The purpose of the Protocol is to protect Syrian citizens through the commitment of the Syrian Government to stop acts of violence, release detainees and withdraw all military presence from cities and residential neighbourhoods. This phase must lead to dialogue among the Syrian sides and the launching of a parallel political process. Otherwise, the duration of this Mission will be extended without achieving the desired results on the ground.

71. The Mission determined that there is an armed entity that is not mentioned in the protocol. This development on the ground can undoubtedly be attributed to the excessive use of force by Syrian Government forces in response to protests that occurred before the deployment of the Mission demanding the fall of the regime. In some zones, this armed entity reacted by attacking Syrian security forces and citizens, causing the Government to respond with further violence. In the end, innocent citizens pay the price for those actions with life and limb.

72. The Mission noted that the opposition had welcomed it and its members since their deployment to Syria. The citizens were reassured by the Mission's presence and came forward to present their demands, although the opposition had previously been afraid to do so publicly owing to their fear of being arrested once again, as they had been prior to the Mission's arrival in Syria. However, this was not case in the period that followed the last Ministerial Committee statement, although the situation is gradually improving.

73. The Mission noted that the Government strived to help it succeed in its task and remove any barriers that might stand in its way. The Government also facilitated meetings with all parties. No restrictions were placed on the movement of the Mission and its ability to interview Syrian citizens, both those who opposed the Government and those loyal to it.

74. In some cities, the Mission sensed the extreme tension, oppression and injustice from which the Syrian people are suffering. However, the citizens believe the crisis should be resolved peacefully through Arab mediation alone, without international intervention. Doing so would allow them to live in peace and complete the reform process and bring about the change they desire. The Mission was informed by the opposition, particularly in Dar'a, Homs, Hama and Idlib, that some of its members had taken up arms in response to the suffering of the Syrian people as a result of the regime's oppression and tyranny; corruption, which affects all sectors of society; the use of torture by the security agencies; and human rights violations.

75. Recently, there have been incidents that could widen the gap and increase bitterness between the parties. These incidents can have grave consequences and lead to the loss of life and property. Such incidents include the bombing of buildings, trains carrying fuel, vehicles carrying diesel oil and explosions targeting the police, members of the media and fuel pipelines. Some of those attacks have been carried out by the Free Syrian Army and some by other armed opposition groups.

76. The Mission has adhered scrupulously to its mandate, as set out in the Protocol. It has observed daily realities on the ground with complete neutrality and independence, thereby ensuring transparency and integrity in its monitoring of the situation, despite the difficulties the Mission encountered and the inappropriate actions of some individuals.

77. Under the Protocol, the Mission's mandate is one month. This does not allow adequate time for administrative preparations, let alone for the Mission to carry out its task. To date, the Mission has actually operated for 23 days. This amount of time is definitely not sufficient, particularly in view of the number of items the Mission must investigate. The Mission needs to remain on the ground for a longer period of time, which would allow it to experience citizens' daily living conditions and monitor all events. It should be noted that similar previous operations lasted for several months or, in some cases, several years.

78. Arab and foreign audiences of certain media organizations have questioned the Mission's credibility because those organizations use the media to distort the facts. It will be difficult to overcome this problem unless there is political and media support for the Mission and its mandate. It is only natural that some negative incidents should occur as it conducts its activities because such incidents occur as a matter of course in similar missions.

79. The Mission arrived in Syria after the imposition of sanctions aimed at compelling to implement what was agreed to in the Protocol. Despite that, the Mission was welcomed by the opposition, loyalists and the Government. Nonetheless, questions remains as to how the Mission should fulfil its mandate. It should be noted that the mandate established for the Mission in the Protocol was changed in response to developments on the ground and the reactions thereto. Some of those were violent reactions by entities that were not mentioned

in the Protocol. All of these developments necessitated an expansion of and a change in the Mission's mandate. The most important point in this regard is the commitment of *all sides* to cease all acts of violence, thereby allowing the Mission to complete its tasks and, ultimately, lay the groundwork for the political process.

80. Should there be agreement to extend its mandate, then the Mission must be provided with communications equipment, means of transportation and all the equipment it requires to carry out its mandate on the ground.

81. On the other hand, ending the Mission's work after such a short period will reverse any progress, even if partial, that has thus far been made. This could perhaps lead to chaos on the ground because all the parties involved in the crisis thus remain unprepared for the political process required to resolve the Syrian crisis.

82. Since its establishment, attitudes towards the Mission have been characterized by insincerity or, more broadly speaking, a lack of seriousness. Before it began carrying out its mandate and even before its members had arrived, the Mission was the target of a vicious campaign directed against the League of Arab States and the Head of the Mission, a campaign that increased in intensity after the observers' deployment. The Mission still lack the political and media support it needs in order to fulfil its mandate. Should its mandate be extended, the goals set out in the Protocol will not be achieved unless such support is provided and the Mission receives the backing it needs to ensure the success of the Arab solution.

X. Recommendations:

83. In view of the above and of the success achieved in executing the provision of the Protocol, which the Syrian Government pledged to implement, I recommend the following:

- The Mission must be provided with administrative and logistic support in order allow it to carry out its tasks. The Mission must also be give the media and political support required to create an appropriate environment that will enable it to fulfil its mandate in the required manner.
- The political process must be accelerated and a national dialogue must be launched. That dialogue should run in parallel with the Mission's work in order to create an environment of confidence that would contributes to the Mission's success and prevent a needless extension of its presence in Syria.

(Signed) Muhammad Ahmad Mustafa **Al-Dabi**
Head of the Mission

Annexes

1. List of observers, their nationalities and their distribution.
2. List of media organizations identified and a list of media organizations that entered Syria, according to the official information.
3. List of the names of observers who declined to complete the Mission.
4. List showing the number, types and distribution of vehicles and the countries that provided them.
