

SA opposes military intervention in Syria

PRETORIA: As the situation in conflict-ridden Syria remains critical, the government of South Africa has raised concerns over what it has labelled "dangerous rhetoric", which points to the possibility of a military intervention in that country.



Pretoria on Thursday, 29 August 2013, said only the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) could mandate the use of military force in conflict situations, only if other measures were deemed insufficient in bringing about a solution.

"Any attack on Syria without UNSC authorisation would constitute a grave violation of international law that would severely undermine international order," the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) said in a statement.

South Africa further said it does not believe that bombing the already suffering people and crumbling infrastructure of Syria will contribute to a sustainable solution.

"The outcome of such an action is unpredictable and will only worsen the conflict. It will ultimately be the people of Syria who pay the price, whilst those participating in the military intervention will return to safety far away from the crisis."

On the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Syrian government against civilians, DIRCO stressed that the incident was still under investigation.

It however condemned the incident, saying the use of chemical could never be justified.

"South Africa believes that the United Nations weapons inspectors should be allowed the time to complete their investigation and announce findings on the use of chemical weapons, whilst no effort should be spared to convene the proposed Geneva II Peace Conference as soon as possible."

The team of inspectors, led by Swedish scientist Dr Åke Sellström, was able to carry out its work without incident following a pause in the investigation on Wednesday, when its convoy was attacked by snipers while heading to the Damascus suburb of Ghouta, where chemical weapons were allegedly used on 21 August.

The team was deployed after Syrian opposition rebels claimed that chemical weapons were used last week in an attack on the outskirts of the Syrian capital of Damascus, killing some 1,300 people, including children.

The five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, China, Britain, France and Russia - met on Wednesday to discuss a Britain-proposed resolution on Syria, which calls for a military response to the use of chemical weapons.

However, they failed to arrive at a consensus on a draft resolution calling for action against Syria.

South Africa encouraged 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 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."

Pretoria said it was deeply concerned about the continuing violence and rapidly deteriorating human rights situation and called on parties to protect and preserve human rights.

About 100 000 people have been killed, and about seven million are in need of humanitarian aid since the start of civil conflicts in March 2011, according to the UN.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>