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Nobel Peace Prize winner appeals against attacking Syria

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Aug. 29, 2013 NCR Today

On Sunday, Nobel Peace Prize winner Mairead Maguire appealed to UK Foreign Secretary William Hague and M. Laurent Fabius, France's Foreign Minister, to stop calling for military action against Syria. She said military action will only lead to more violence and bloodshed for the people of the Middle East.

Maguire said in a news release [1]:

> Arming rebels and authorizing military action by USA/NATO forces will not solve the problem facing Syria, but indeed could lead to the death of thousands of Syrians, the breaking-up of Syria, and it falling under the control of violent fundamentalist jihadist forces. It will mean the further fleeing of Syrians into surrounding countries which will themselves become destabilised. The entire Middle East will become unstable and violence will spiral out of control.
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> Contrary to some foreign governments current policies of arming the rebels and pushing for military intervention, the people of Syria are calling out for peace and reconciliation and a political solution to the crisis, which continues to be enflamed by outside forces with thousands of foreign fighters funded and supported by outside countries for their own political ends.
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> Having visited Syria in May, 2013, after leading a 16 person delegation I returned convinced that the civil community, with groups such as Mussalaha, who are working on the ground building peace and reconciliation, can solve their own problems if their plea for outsiders to remain out of the conflict is honoured by the international community.
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> During our visit we met with all sections of the community, most of whom are sick of violence and death and want peace and reconciliation and a political solution. We met with the Syrian Prime Minister and 7 other government ministers, and we were assured that the Government did not use sarin gas on its own people, and they invited the UN to send in inspectors to see what was happening.
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> Currently there is an International Commission of Inquiry on Chemical Weapons in Damascus staying at Four Seasons Hotel, which is less than ten minutes from the areas where the chemical weapons were allegedly used. The western media, particularly vocal being the British and French Foreign Ministers, are accusing President Assad of using chemical weapons on his own people but have no proof of this accusation, rather some things point to rebels as the ones who used such weapons.
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> The question must be asked, what would it benefit Assad to use sarin gas in the vicinity of visiting international UN inspectors and in his own environment and neighbourhood where it would affect his soldiers, etc? Personally, I do not believe the latest accusations against the Assad government

using sarin gas, and in order that the world can hear the truth, I would appeal to the International Commission of Inquiry to go into the areas in question immediately and report as quickly as possible. In the meantime I appeal to the Foreign Ministers of Britain and France to encourage, as the Syrian people wish, dialogue and negotiation as a way forward. We all remember the fear, panic and lies spun by the British and American governments, and others that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and it was not true. Let us learn the lesson of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya where so many millions have been killed in invasions and war, and many continue to die in violence. Violence is not the answer, let's end this 'war on terror' and give nonviolence and peace a chance.

Maguire's appeal is accompanied on warisacrime.org by a report on Maguire's May visit to Syria in which she led a 16-member delegation representing eight countries. The delegation traveled to Syria at the invitation of Mussahala Reconciliation Movement, headed by Mother Agnes-Mariam, superior of St. James Monastery, and supported by Catholic Patriarch Gregory III Laham.

Maguire said her delegation visited refugee camps and affected communities and met religious leaders, combatants, government representatives, opposition delegations and many others, perpetrators as well as victims, in Lebanon and Syria. The following summary of the delegation's findings from their 10-day tour provides an important context to the current clamor for military from some Western countries, including the United States:

AN OVERVIEW:
Following many authorized reports in the mainstream Medias and our own evidences I can stress that the Syrian State and its population are under a proxy war led by foreign countries and directly financed and backed mainly by Qatar who has imposed its views on the Arab League. Turkey, a part of the Lebanese opposition and some of the Jordan authorities offer a safe haven to a diversity of jihadist groups, each with its own agenda, recruited from many countries. Bands of jihadists armed and financed from foreign countries invade Syria through Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon porous frontiers in an effort to destabilize Syria. There are an estimated 50,000 foreign jihadist fighters terrorizing Syria. Those death squads are destroying systematically the Syrian State infrastructures (Electricity, Oil, Gas and water plants, High Tension Pylons, hospitals, schools, public buildings, cultural heritage sites and even religious sanctuaries). Moreover the country is submerged by snipers, bombers, agitators, bandits. They use aggression and Sharia rules and hijack the freedom and dignity of the Syrian population. They torture and kill those who refuse to join them. They have strange religious beliefs which make them feel comfortable even perpetrating the cruelest acts like killing and torture of their opponents. It is well documented that many of those terrorists are permanently under stimulant like Captagon. The general lack of security unlashes the terrible phenomenon of abduction for ransoms or for political pressure. Thousands of innocents are missing, among them the two Bishops, Youhanna Ibrahim and Paul Yazigi, many priests and Imams.

UN and EU economic sanctions as well as a severe embargo are pushing Syria to the edge of social collapse. Unfortunately the international media network is ignoring those realities and is bent on demonizing, lying, destabilizing the country and fuelling more violence and contradiction.

In summary: the war in Syria is not as depicted a civil war but a proxy war with serious breaches of International laws and the Humanitarian International laws.. The protection of the foreign fighters

by some foreign countries among the most powerful gives them a kind of an unaccountability that pushes them with impunity to all kind of cruel deeds against innocent civilians. Even war conventions are not respected incurring in many war crimes and, even, crimes against Humanity.

CONCLUSION:
During our visit to Syria, our delegation was met with great kindness by everyone and I offer to each one who facilitated or hosted our Delegation my most sincere feelings of gratitude. We witnessed that the Syrian people have suffered very deeply and continue to do so. The entire population of 23 million people are under tremendous threat of continued infiltration by foreign terrorists. Many are still stunned by the horrors and suddenness of all this violence and worried their country will be attacked and divided by outside forces, and are all too aware that geopolitical forces are at work to destabilize Syria for political control, oil and resources. One Druze leader said 'if westerns want our Oil ? both Lebanon and Syria have oil reserves ? let us negotiate for it, but do not destroy our country to take it'. In Syria memories of next door Iraq's destruction by US/UK/NATO forces are fresh in people's minds, including in the minds of the one and a half million Iraqis who fled Iraqi's conflict, including many Christians, and were given refuge in Syria by the Syrian Government.

The greatest hope we took was from Mussalaha, a non political movement from all sections of Syrian society, who have working teams throughout Syria and is proceeding through dialogue to build peace and reconciliation. Mussalaha mediates between armed gunmen and security forces, helps to get the release of many people who have been abducted, and brings together all parties to the conflict for dialogue and practical solutions. . .

This great civil community movement, building a peace process and National Reconciliation from the ground up, will, if given space, time, and non-interference from outside, help bring Peace to Syria. They recognize that there must be an unconditional, all inclusive political solution, with compromises and they are confident this is happening at many levels of society and is the only way forward for Syrian peace.

I support this National Reconciliation process which, many Syrian believe, is the only way to bring peace to Syria and the entire Middle East. I am myself committed to this peaceful process and hope that the international community, the religious and political leaders as well as any person of good will will help Syria to bypass violence and prejudice and anchor in a new era of Social peace and prosperity. This cradle of civilizations where Syria occupies the heart is an enormous spiritual heritage for humanity, let us strive to establish a non war zone and proclaim it an OASIS of Peace for the Human Family.

For more on Maguire's work, go to peacepeople.com [2].

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Links:
[1] http://warisacrime.org/content/appeal-against-attacking-syria
[2] http://www.peacepeople.com/