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Agenda items 35 (a), 38, 66 and 111

Prevention of armed conflict: prevention of armed conflict

The situation in the Middle East

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Measures to eliminate international terrorism

**Security Council
Seventy-seventh year**

Identical letters dated 18 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith identical letters dated 18 April 2022 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, Fayssal Mekdad, to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 (a), 38, 66 and 111, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Bassam **Sabbagh**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the identical letters dated 18 April 2022 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

Identical letters from the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

To date, the destruction of the city of Raqqah and the deaths of thousands of its innocent citizens at the hands of the so-called “international coalition forces” led by the United States of America has not received adequate international attention. The destruction and levelling of the city of Raqqah and the killing of thousands of its citizens was and will remain among the most heinous crimes, and the international community was not fully aware of it until recently. We would like to shed light on this humanitarian, legal and political issue, which Member States have not accorded the importance and treatment it deserves. The United States military operation launched by the forces of the illegal so-called “international coalition” against the Syrian city of Raqqah between June and October 2017 led to the almost complete destruction of that city and the deaths of thousands of its civilian residents whose bodies were buried under the rubble.

What must be stressed from the outset is that reports from official United States institutions on what happened in Raqqah have been and will continue to be false in addressing the scale of the disaster. That is especially the case since the data collected and analysed come from United States Government sources that essentially reflect the view of the United States Department of Defense, the party primarily responsible for the crimes of aggression, destruction and targeting occurring in Raqqah, the village of Baghuz, the Euphrates Dam and other Syrian areas. The scale of the damage to infrastructure and public and private property and the sheer number of civilian casualties, particularly in the cities of Raqqah, Ayn al-Arab and Baghuz, all prove that the United States and its allies have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The barbaric military operation conducted by forces of the so-called “international coalition” against the city of Raqqah and its people was predicated on the deliberate and systematic destruction of public and private infrastructure and property in Raqqah and its surroundings. It involved an indiscriminate siege and targeting civilians with crushing air strikes and heavy rocket fire disproportionate to the scale of any threat. There were also ground attacks launched by militias of the so-called “Syrian Democratic Forces” that did not distinguish between Da’esh terrorists and civilians trying to escape the siege imposed by the so-called “international coalition” forces and from the danger all around them.

The same applies to war crimes committed by the so-called “international coalition” forces and “Syrian Democratic Forces” militias in the village of Baghuz in the countryside of the city of Zawr in 2018 and 2019, when the town was completely destroyed in a way that meets the description of a war crime. In particular, we draw attention to the massacre perpetrated by aircraft of that illegal coalition on 18 March 2019 against a convoy of 80 or more residents of that village who were fleeing for their lives when F-15 warplanes dropped two bombs weighing 225 kg and 907 kg that wiped out the convoy, including women and children.

As of November 2020, official United States sources had reported 240 casualties (178 dead and 62 injured) in Raqqah from 38 different incidents caused by United States military operations. Then, those same sources acknowledged that pursuant to field interviews, satellite imagery and coalition strike data, non-governmental organizations and numerous independent reports estimated that there had been 774 verified casualties in Raqqah (744 dead and 30 injured) likely caused by the international coalition from 108 incidents. However, data and figures from other non-governmental organizations appearing in published reports suggest that the real number of civilian casualties from operations by international coalition forces in Raqqah is more than 1,600. Meanwhile, the “Syrian Democratic Forces” militia, which is affiliated with the United States army, has acknowledged that it uncovered 4,118 dead civilians in Raqqah during the operation, plus an additional 1,878 in military uniform.

The first thing to be deduced from this information is that the United States Department of Defense is trying to conceal what really happened. While acknowledging the scale of the terrible destruction caused by United States military operations in Raqqah, which United States forces cannot deny because it is still evident on the ground to this very day, the United States Department of Defense has resorted to manipulating casualty figures. Since it is the military force in control on the ground there, it is in a position to tamper with the sites, evidence and casualty figures. Moreover, the United States military is perpetrating fraud and deceit in its legal characterization of acts and violations committed there by the so-called “international coalition” and its affiliated separatist militias.

As for the destruction of the city of Raqqah, United States official reports indicate that satellite imagery analysis conducted in the aftermath of the battle showed that the level of structural damage in Raqqah was unparalleled in military operations. According to the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, approximately 11,000 buildings were either damaged or destroyed in Raqqah between February and October 2017 – corresponding to approximately 40 buildings destroyed per day. Among the destroyed buildings were 8 hospitals, 29 mosques, more than 40 schools, and 5 universities, and the city’s water irrigation systems were also destroyed. Official United States reports have indicated that “extensive structural damage in Raqqah undermined post-battle governing prospects”. Those reports have also stated that “Raqqah endured the most structural damage by density, and the cumulative effect of coalition strikes significantly contributed to 60 to 80 per cent of the city being uninhabitable”.

My Government believes that the destruction of Raqqah and the killing of thousands of its residents must be addressed within a larger context that is impossible to ignore or be silent about. It is of a piece with the typical conduct of United States forces in aggressive military operations that it has launched and continues to launch in numerous regions and States around the world. United States military operations do not go one day without using unbalanced, disproportionate and excessive force that victimizes and targets civilians. Strikes against civilian targets and public and private infrastructure and property are part of United States military doctrine and practice.

My Government confirms that it will continue to raise the issue of total or partial destruction and deliberate targeting of civilians in Raqqah, the village of Baghuz, the Euphrates Dam and other areas of Syria by the so-called “international coalition forces”. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also reserves the right to call to account all the Governments of States that have joined the so-called “international coalition” for their political, legal, moral and material responsibilities for crimes committed by the military forces that are part of that illegal coalition. They are responsible for the losses and material damage to public and private property and

infrastructure. They must therefore compensate the families of the civilian victims and all those who have been injured and suffered permanent deformities and disabilities as a result of the illegal military operations that have been and continue to be launched by the forces of the United States-led so-called “international coalition” in Raqqah and in many other parts of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In the meantime, my Government will continue to monitor United States practices that threaten the environment in Syria. That includes facilitating and supporting indiscriminate oil extraction by separatist militias associated with the invading United States forces, as well as introducing rotten and infested United States wheat seeds into the north-eastern regions and forcing them on farmers there. My Government formally accuses the United States Government of deliberately engaging in practices that could cause serious short-term and long-term environmental pollution in the north-east of Syria, which amounts to an international environmental crime and a war crime.

I should be grateful if these identical letters could be issued as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 35 (a), 38, 66 and 111, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Fayssal **Mekdad**
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriates
