



Security Council

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Identical letters dated 4 March 2021 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

On instructions from my Government, I wish to refer to the letter dated 27 February 2021 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2021/202](#)) and to the letter dated 26 February 2021 that I addressed to you ([S/2021/197](#)). In that connection, and also on instructions from my Government, I should like to inform the Security Council that, on 25 February 2021, the United States of America, in blatant violation of international law, the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant Security Council resolutions, violated the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic when its warplanes bombed positions near the Syrian-Iraqi border in Dayr al-Zawr Governorate.

In response to the aforementioned letter from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America, I should like to remind you that Article 51 of the Charter provides that “[n]othing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security.” The United States of America has claimed that its actions were taken in accordance with that Article. In that connection, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to state the following.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again condemns in the strongest terms the acts of aggression being committed by the United States of America and its allies in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic. Those acts constitute a flagrant violation of international law, the principles of the Charter and the relevant Security Council resolutions, in all of which the Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic.

It is regrettable that the new United States Administration has started its term by taking hostile action against other States in a manner that is contrary to the supposed responsibilities of the United States as a permanent member of the Security Council, the principle organ of the United Nations entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining international peace and security.

Syria categorically rejects the attempts by the United States to justify its act of aggression on the basis of a unilateral and selective interpretation of Article 51, one that distorts the meaning and expands the scope of that Article. Syria would like to



point out that Article 51 was drafted with deliberate care and includes restrictions that must be respected, in order to ensure that its provisions are not manipulated, misconstrued or interpreted in an overly broad manner and exploited to carry out acts of aggression under the pretext of self-defence, as that would spread chaos and ignite wars around the world. Syria would also like to point that the relevant general principle and foundation of international law is found in Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter, which provides that “[a]ll Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”. It would furthermore like to point out that no sanction to use force in Syria can be found in the relevant Security Council resolutions, and that Iraq did not request that force should be used in the Syrian Arab Republic. In addition, it should be remembered that Iraq has denied that the American airstrike was carried out in collaboration or coordination with it. That denial clearly refutes the claims made by the Permanent Representative of the United States that her country had carried out its attack in response to a request for assistance in addressing the terrorist threat posed by certain militias.

On numerous occasions, most recently the informal Security Council meeting that was held on 24 February 2021 at the initiative of the Permanent Mission of Mexico under the theme “Upholding the collective security system of the Charter of the United Nations: the use of force in international law, non-state actors and legitimate self-defence”, many members of the Security Council and the United Nations, including the Syrian Arab Republic, have reaffirmed the importance of respecting the collective security system enshrined in the Charter, which Syria, along with other States, signed at the 1945 San Francisco Conference, and they have reiterated that it is necessary to respect the fundamental principle of refraining from use of force in international relations and to avoid misinterpreting or arbitrarily applying Article 51 and transforming it from a provision concerning self-defence into a basis for aggression and occupation, as well as a threat to international peace and security. Those calls should be heeded by the decision-makers of the United States Administration and allied States.

The Syrian Arab Republic has suffered in recent years because certain Governments have proffered expanded and distorted interpretations of Article 51. In fact, they exploited that Article in order to establish an illegitimate coalition, which has been misleadingly dubbed the “international coalition”, without the approval of the Security Council or the party concerned, namely, the Syrian Government. The United States of America, which leads this coalition for the alleged purpose of combating the terrorism of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), has gone even beyond the stated goal of this illegitimate alliance. The crimes and acts of aggression committed by this coalition have resulted in the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, as acknowledged by the leadership of the United States Army and by other States members of the so-called international coalition. The raids carried out by this coalition have destroyed many civilian installations and infrastructure in Syria, including educational facilities, health-care centres, power plants, bridges and dams. In addition, this coalition has bombed Syrian Arab Army positions, including Jabal Thurdah in Dayr al-Zawr, and allied forces that are fighting the terrorist organization ISIL, in order to perpetuate the American occupation of parts of north-eastern Syria and the Tanf region in the south-east of the country, and to support proxy separatist militias and organizations that have been designated terrorist entities.

The illegal conduct of those States and their manipulation of the Charter has made it possible for the Turkish regime to cite Article 51 as a basis for committing acts of aggression in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic in support of terrorist organizations, including ISIL and the Levant Liberation Organization (Nusrah Front), that have been placed on the lists maintained by the relevant Security Council

committee, and as a pretext for occupying Syrian territory in the northern and north-western parts of the country. All of those actions constitute grave violations of international law, the Charter and Security Council resolutions concerning counter-terrorism. The international community must reject such interpretations and refuse to accept them as justifications for occupation and aggression, as failing to do so would turn the world into a jungle in which there is no place for the United Nations, its Charter and its resolutions, nor for international law and the principle of maintaining peace and security throughout the world.

The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirms that attacks against its sovereignty, including those carried out by the United States, Israel and Turkey, have not and will not succeed in protecting the terrorist organizations and separatist militias that are the partners and proxies of those States, or in distracting the Syrian Arab Army from fighting any remaining terrorists and other proxies. It also reiterates that it will not hesitate to exercise its right to defend its territory, people and sovereignty by all the means sanctioned under the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Syria reaffirms that it will continue to combat terrorism in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, and notes that, in order to implement Security Council resolutions concerning counter-terrorism, close cooperation and coordination with Syria are required to combat terrorism in its territory.

Syria once again calls upon the United States Administration and its allies to stop violating international law and the Charter, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial unity and integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, abandon their policy of undermining security and stability in Syria, refrain from distorting and manipulating the Charter, end their occupation of parts of Syrian territory, halt all acts of aggression and violations, and desist from offering incorrect interpretations of Article 51 of the Charter, of which my country, Syria, is one of the 50 original signatory States.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

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