

Arab League lifting its sanctions

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In a pure Sarkozy-style reflex, the French press celebrated the agreement inked between the Arab League and Syria as a concession made by Bashar al-Assad. Similarly, two days earlier, it had applauded the Russian draft resolution submitted to the Security Council as a retreat by Vladimir Putin.

In reality, the Russian draft is a copy of the text put forward by Russian-Chinese before the veto, while the Arab League Protocol takes up the same proposal made by Syria before the sanctions. Neither the Russians nor the Syrians have lost an inch of ground. It is rather the Western powers that are now willing to consider a text they rejected yesterday, and the Arab League that is willing to lift its sanctions and to sign a protocol it wouldn't even hear of so far.

The Gulf press is no exception. It also defines the signing of this Protocol as a victory for the Gulf Cooperation Council (whose crowned heads are currently meeting in Riyadh) and attributes the "Syrian shift" to Russian pressure.

The Beirut *Daily Star* gives a rundown of the Syrian economic crisis: the pound has lost 25% of its value, and the GNP fell by 20%. However, it fails to mention the even more disastrous impact of the crisis on some coastal states, including Jordan. Having praised the devastating effects of economic sanctions against Damascus, many journalists are now at a loss to explain why the Arab League has suddenly backtracked.

The main event is not the green light given to foreign observers - they are already inside the country - but the lifting of economic sanctions.



Dans la zone de Djebel al-Zawiyah, au milieu des montagnes syriennes, les villageois organisent la résistance, aidés par l'Armée libre de Syrie (ALS).

La guerre de l'ombre des combattants libres de Syrie



EDITH BOUVIER
 Journaliste indépendante
 DÉPUTÉE GÉNÉRALISTE À DJEBEL AL-ZAWIYAH
 (250 kilomètres au nord de Damas)

Un appel en français parvient récemment dans la nuit. Un homme vient d'Irak. Il a perdu l'abandon. Une collecte de sang s'organise dans l'impression à Thibault. L'homme est un des officiers de l'Armée syrienne libre de Djebel al-Zawiyah. Il était en mission de reconnaissance pour une future attaque dans une ville voisine lorsqu'il s'est fait tirer dessus au cours de la nuit, plusieurs hommes vont se lever pour lui rendre leur sang. Mais, à l'aube, ils l'ont abandonné à son destin.

Depuis, j'ai été dérangé. L'Armée libre de Syrie (ALS) contrôle la zone de Djebel al-Zawiyah. Petit à petit, ses troupes s'élargissent. Chaque jour, des soldats de l'Armée syrienne descendent les routes pour rejoindre ceux de l'Armée libre ou, tout au moins, en obtenir la permission. « On se connaît tous dans les villages de la région. Soit, des soldats nous empêchent passivement de le faire à quatre des forces du régime. On regarde des attaques pour connaître leurs dépôts et on assiste de la partie quand de s'élargir parce que, quand leur responsabilité s'aggrave, ils s'abaissent pas à leur tête devant ». Yusuf Yabrouh a tout juste 35 ans. Il a

L'Armée libre syrienne monte en puissance pour aider la population à renverser le président Bachar el-Assad. Ils seraient désormais près de 20 000 hommes en armes, dont beaucoup de déserteurs. Devant le risque de conflit généralisé, le régime de Damas a formellement accepté hier le plan de sortie de crise de la Ligue arabe.

quitté ses postes dans les services secrets pour rejoindre l'opposition au soir dernier. Depuis, il a pris du poids. La révolution syrienne est généralement un combat d'été devenu capital et consolider les actions des différents groupes de l'Armée libre de Djebel al-Zawiyah.

Un poste stratégique et qui a bien fait réfléchir la vie à l'armée. Depuis plusieurs mois, on finit et on est cinq ans dans le terrain. Il ne peut pas être rejointe la zone libre doit découvrir mais continuer de se creuser et de maintenir sa maîtrise brève respect. « C'est le jeu de la liberté, je le sais bien. Mais c'est pour nos enfants que c'est le plus difficile. Ils doivent rester en sécurité tout le temps. Un jour par là, notre mission se finit, j'ai tellement peur », confie un kurde. Sa petite fille l'attend sur sa promesse, elle le sait. Toute deux sourient. Mais l'angoisse se lit sur le visage de la jeune femme.

Exploits faits maison
 Difficile de savoir précisément combien de combattants ont rejoint la vie dans cette lutte. Chaque jour on progresse, les forces syriennes tentent de pointer la zone chaque jour est presque, de jours, certains familles placent leurs armes. En face, le pouvoir ne reconnaît la mort que de 1 000 de ses soldats. Un chiffre sensiblement inférieur aux combattants libres. Selon eux, Bachar el-Assad aurait tout intérêt à commencer ses pertes afin de limiter les échecs.

Dans son effort pour essayer la constitution, Damas a formellement signé hier une loi relative de paix de la Ligue arabe. Le vice-ministre syrien des Affaires étrangères, Fawzi Madahat, a été dépêché au Caire dans ce but. Le plan de sortie de crise prévoit le retrait des soldats syriens dans les villes de Syrie, la libération de milliers de prisonniers politiques, l'ouverture d'un dialogue avec l'opposition et l'envoi d'observateurs pour contrôler le processus de l'ensemble du processus. Mais plusieurs initiatives de ce type ont déjà échoué face au double jeu du régime syrien. Au moment de la signature, hier, des centaines de partisans de Bachar el-Assad étaient rassemblés dans les rues de la capitale pour dénoncer les sanctions imposées par la Ligue arabe.

La veille au soir, un autre signe d'apaisement avait été donné par le pouvoir avec la libération de la diplomate américaine-syrienne Hanna Ghazwan, incarcérée depuis deux semaines. Cette libération de 31 ans était très inquiète car « affaibli le sentiment national », a été un message clair qui est à changer le statut de

« C'est un développement ? C'est un « succès » les différentes confessions ». Elle était de trois à quatre ans de prison.

« Mais de ce qui précède, on dit, pour ce genre de mission, on dit que c'est un régime compliqué. Mais on dit que c'est l'armée d'un pays qui. Quelques RPG, des armes et des sacs de balles pour l'entraînement. « On n'a pas encore la force de lui aller. Pour le moment, on ne peut pas vraiment agir, on a vu par nos contacts, ils ont pris de 400 000 et nous, on a pris 20 000, qui vendent tout qu'on a vu ? On a fait notre ouvrage et notre volonté. Cela ne peut pas être fait, sans nous alors. L'homme démissionne sa veste en noir et enfle par-dessus un gilet de camouflage. Il y a déjà deux semaines. « Je fais maison. C'est notre petite touche personnelle dans cette guerre. Vous savez le jeune homme là-bas, l'âge moyen de l'armée ? C'est lui qui nous fabrique tout ça. Et c'est ce qui le fait être expérimenté », nous dit encore Mustafa au défilé.

Des armes achetées en Irak
 Abu Al-Mundhir inspecte un parapluie à Damas. Quand la guerre a commencé, il est allé rendre chez lui dans le Nord, puis il s'est dévoué à combattre avec l'opposition. « Il faut trouver des armes pour protéger nos citoyens à partir de produits de qualité, des ingrédients qu'on n'aurait pas eu si ce n'est pas, explique-t-il en sortant un sac en plastique rempli de munitions. C'est de la poudre, j'ai vu par les journaux d'Irak. Depuis qu'on a enrichi le sol à notre manière. On a appris tout ce qui concerne les informations, on reçoit comment les avions fabriquent des engins explosifs qu'ils cachent sur le bord des routes. On fait parfois un peu d'acier. De grosses boîtes en métal contenant des explosifs sont cachées sur tous les axes autour de Djebel al-Zawiyah. On s'efforce toujours, il n'y a plus qu'à attendre la destruction.

« Les soldats, l'armée n'est pas encore. Les hommes pleurent en regardant la ville d'Al-Latayn sur un des soldats du régime approcher, ils ont peur de la guerre. Tous les combattants sont sur le bord de la zone, les femmes servent les munitions qu'elles avaient cachées derrière une armoire. Les combattants libres rejoignent le sommet d'une colline, plusieurs d'entre eux sont blessés. On voit les coups qui s'échangent. L'ennemi s'arrête derrière un mur et tire quelques rafales sur la position ennemie, à plusieurs centaines de mètres de là. « Il faut qu'ils sachent qu'on se battra jusqu'au bout. On a le peu pour le moment, on fait ce que nous sommes, on est prêts, pour qu'on ait le grand bien dans un pays démocratique et libre », déclare Mustafa, l'homme fort et l'homme de la ville, un homme qui s'occupe de la sécurité de la ville. L'opposition est forte. En face, l'armée syrienne, on sent les chars se rapprocher, puis tirer. Pendant plusieurs heures. « Certains disent qu'on est libérée par des pays étrangers, qu'on fait venir les armes par la frontière turque », dit Mustafa. Mais il n'est pas sûr, mais nous sommes prêts qu'on se battra jusqu'à la dernière minute, il a dit.

« Seule frontière par laquelle le « bataillon des combattants » de Djebel al-Zawiyah parvient à se battre des armes, celle de l'Irak. « Des groupes semblent vouloir rendre des RPG à l'opposition et des munitions. Le problème, c'est que ce n'est pas comme dans un magasin, on ne peut pas acheter, et tout ce que les armes sont envoyées, elles sont livrées. En plus, les jets ont explosé au dernier moment », précise le chef d'unité le plus avancé, ce sont les soldats de Bachar el-Assad eux-mêmes qui fournissent un grand nombre de ces armes. Les soldats dans l'armée ne sont plus prêts à accepter qu'on ait et il est devenu facile d'acheter des armes à des soldats conscients de l'irréversibilité des décisions du régime - même à ceux qui n'ont pas déserté.

Positionnés devant une école
 Au lever du soleil, les combats reprennent, un peu plus loin, dans le village de Bakhta. L'effort pour le « bataillon des combattants » de Djebel al-Zawiyah s'organise. Les téléphones portables sont coupés depuis plus d'une semaine et trop peu disposent d'un téléphone fixe. Pendant plusieurs heures, les messages s'échangent dans les positions et regardent les chars de l'armée positionnés devant une école. Un homme est blessé, mais un soldat des forces de Bachar el-Assad est arrêté - qui plus est un membre des « combattants », les soldats du régime. « On va essayer l'attitude pour obtenir des informations sur la localisation des armes et le nombre de soldats en face. Une fois qu'on aura renseigné, on négociera avec le famille pour le libérer. C'est comme ça qu'on récupère l'argent pour acheter des armes », explique Mustafa - l'homme fort de la zone. Cela fait neuf jours que la Syrie n'est à l'arrêt. On est sûr que le régime ne nous laissera rien. « On va attendre que pour nous soit un acte, mais les Français ? » s'empare soudain le chef rebelle, appuyé sur sa kalachnikov. A la fin de la journée, tous les hommes se rassemblent pour dîner. Ils rient, plaisantent comme d'habitude mais pas les fois qu'ils ont continué de vivre Djebel al-Zawiyah. Et comme pour compter leurs pertes. ■



Libération (France)



Image extraite d'une vidéo sur YouTube, jeudi, montrant de présumés soldats syriens et leurs victimes près de Homs. PHOTO YOUTUBE AFP

La fausse ouverture de Damas pour gagner du temps

Le pouvoir de Bachar al-Assad a accepté d'accueillir des observateurs arabes. L'opposition dénonce une énième manœuvre diplomatique.

Par JEAN-PIERRE PERRON

Sans doute sous la pression de Moscou, Damas a finalement accepté la venue d'observateurs arabes dans le cadre du plan de sortie de crise mis au point par la Ligue arabe.

Le vice-ministre syrien des Affaires étrangères, Fayçal al-Maqdad, a signé hier au Caire le document permettant aux délégués de l'organisation de se rendre en Syrie.

Une première mission, composée d'observateurs de la sécurité, du droit et de l'administration, doit se rendre en décembre à Damas sous trois jours. Des équipes incluant des experts des droits de l'homme pourraient suivre. La France a réchauffé l'atmosphère que les observateurs

arabes puis ont rempli leur mission «de plus rapidement possible sur le terrain».

«CÉPTIQUE». Le plan de la Ligue arabe prévoit aussi la libération des détenus arrêtés depuis le début du soulèvement, le départ des

RÉCIT forces armées des villes et l'ouverture du pays à la presse étrangère. Mais entre la signature de l'accord et sa mise en application, le chemin risque d'être long. Damas cherche avant tout à gagner du temps. Le Conseil national syrien (CNS, qui regroupe la majorité des courants d'opposition) a réagi en accusant le régime de n'avoir «aucune intention d'appliquer une quelconque initiative». «Le régime veut simplement empêcher que le dossier syrien soit soulevé devant le Con-

seil et avant des Nations unies», a déclaré à Tunis Burhan Ghalioun, chef du CNS, lors d'une conférence de presse. «Je suis très sceptique quant au respect par le régime syrien des engagements prévus dans ce document, parce qu'il continue de ségré-

«Si le régime poursuit sa répression violente, le CNS fera appel à des forces de dissuasion arabes.»

Burhan Ghalioun, chef du Conseil national syrien

gérer. Il doute de sa crédibilité», a renchéri un autre membre du CNS et vétéran de l'opposition, Abdallah al-Arabi. Un scepticisme d'autant plus légitime que la Ligue arabe apparaît peu à même de camper sur une position ferme à l'égard de Damas. Elle «n'a pas été capable

d'appliquer les sanctions imposées à la Syrie, notamment le pays des armes», a ajouté Al-Arabi.

La «ouverture» de Damas n'a pas empêché hier soir sa condamnation par l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU avec une résolution dénonçant les exactions arbitraires,

l'usage excessif de la force, la persécution et l'assassinat de manifestants et de défenseurs des droits de l'homme, a été votée par une majorité de 133 pays pour, 11 contre et 43 abstentions, soit une dizaine de vote de plus que lors d'une précédente résolution le mois dernier. L'ambassadeur syrien à l'ONU, Bachar Jaafari, a aussitôt qualifié la résolution, qui confirme l'absence d'impunité internationale croissante

de Damas, de complot «démagogique» contre son pays. Cette condamnation a été adoptée alors que les 15 pays du Conseil de sécurité ont entamé des négociations sur un projet de résolution proposé par Moscou. Actuellement, le projet est bloqué. Les pays occidentaux jugent déséquilibré le fait qu'il mette sur un même pied la violence causée par l'opposition et celle provenant des autorités syriennes. C'est pour renforcer son projet de résolution que Moscou a semblé s'efforcer de faire pression sur le régime de Bachar al-Assad, afin qu'il accepte la venue d'observateurs arabes, montrant ainsi qu'il était ouvert à des compromis.

Hier soir, la Russie se félicitait d'ailleurs de cette accoutance par son allié, estimant que cela pourrait aider à stabiliser la situation. À l'inverse, les pays occidentaux, par leurs ambassadeurs à l'ONU, se sont montrés circonspects sur les intentions syriennes. S'ils ont fait savoir que l'engagement de Damas serait pris en compte lors des négociations, ils ont exprimé des doutes sur le fait qu'il serait suivi d'effet. «Tout dépend de la mise en œuvre», a souligné l'ambassadeur britannique, Mark Lyall Grant.

«C'EST ARABISME». Pour le moment, les rapports de force entre le régime syrien et l'opposition demeurent bloqués, d'où l'impression d'un interminable cercle vicieux. Une situation que l'opposition a prise en compte et qui explique l'appel lancé, hier également, par Burhan Ghalioun, en faveur de l'intervention des forces arabes. «Si le régime poursuit sa répression violente, le CNS fera appel à des forces de dissuasion arabes. Nous avons besoin d'un usage de la force d'une manière libre et dans des zones précises», a-t-il déclaré, reprenant une demande formulée depuis plusieurs mois par nombre de manifestants. Dans une claire allusion à l'intervention étrangère, le chef du CNS a comparé la «violence syrienne» à «une femme enceinte qui n'arrive pas à accoucher naturellement» et pour laquelle «une césarienne s'avère nécessaire pour sauver le bébé».

Sur le terrain, où le chiffre de 5 000 morts semble à présent largement dépassé, les affrontements sanglants entre l'armée régulière et les déserteurs se sont multipliés ces derniers semaines, notamment à Idlib, Homs (centre) et Deraa (sud), trois hauts lieux de la contestation. Selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme, entre 60 et 70 déserteurs ont péri sous les tirs de mitrailleuses en tentant de fuir leurs postes dans les localités de Kamra et Kafr Awk. ←

REPÈRES

«Un point de non-retour a été dépassé entre protestataires et autorités. Nous n'allons pas voir la fin des morts.»

Julien Barnes-Dacey de Control Risks, à Londres

L'ARMÉE SYRIENNE LIBRE

De plus en plus de déserteurs de l'armée syrienne tentent de rejoindre la lutte armée, qui compte à présent plusieurs milliers de membres, d'anciens soldats mais aussi des civils.

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C'est le nombre d'enfants tués depuis le début du soulèvement en Syrie au mois de mars, selon Amnesty International.

«Nous militons pour [les Syriens] au moment où d'autres pays arabes cherchent à ce criminel [Al-Assad] un exil.»

Burhan Ghalioun, chef du Conseil national syrien, hier à Tunis

Le Parisien – Aujourd’hui en France

PROCHE-ORIENT

L'ONU accentue la pression sur la Syrie

Faute de résolution du Conseil de sécurité, l'assemblée générale de l'ONU a condamné hier par un vote la situation des droits de l'homme en Syrie, où les violences et la répression des manifestations par le régime de Bachar Al-Assad ont déjà fait plus de 5 000 morts. La résolution a été adoptée par une large majorité de 133 pays pour, 11 contre et 43 abstentions. L'ambassadeur syrien à l'ONU, Bachar Jaafari, l'a qualifié de complot « démoniaque » contre son pays.

Cette condamnation intervient alors que les 15 membres du Conseil de sécurité ont entamé des négociations sur un projet de résolution proposé jeudi par la Russie qui se contente de condamner la violence en Syrie provenant des deux parties. Un projet qualifié d'« inacceptable » et de « déséquilibré » par l'ambassadeur de France à l'ONU, Gérard Araud, car « il renvoie dos à dos les deux parties » : l'opposition qui tente de manifester pacifiquement et les autorités syriennes qui font

délibérément tirer sur les manifestants. Selon l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme, des dizaines de déserteurs (60 à 70) de l'armée syrienne auraient d'ailleurs été tués à la mitrailleuse alors qu'ils tentaient de fuir leurs postes dans le nord-ouest du pays. Dans son rapport, M^{me} Pillay, la haut-commissaire aux droits de l'homme de l'ONU, avait évoqué plusieurs cas où des militaires avaient reçu l'ordre de tirer sur leurs camarades qui refusaient d'ouvrir le feu sur la foule !

Des observateurs en échange de la levée des sanctions

La Syrie a accepté hier l'idée de la Ligue arabe d'envoyer des observateurs en Syrie en échange de la levée des sanctions à son encontre. Une acceptation jugée cependant par l'opposition comme une « manœuvre » des autorités syriennes pour gagner du temps. Et repousser encore l'éventuelle adoption d'une résolution du Conseil de sécurité plus contraignante. B.F.

La Tribune de Genève (Suisse / Switzerland)

Syrie

Damas invite d'un côté, intimide de l'autre

Le régime syrien ouvre la porte aux observateurs arabes. Mais à la frontière, il joue à la démonstration militaire

Cathy Macherel

Y aura-t-il enfin un répit sur le front des violences en Syrie grâce à l'arrivée d'observateurs sur le terrain? Après des semaines de stratégie consistant à brouiller les cartes sur le sujet, Damas a finalement signé hier avec la Ligue arabe un document autorisant la venue d'observateurs arabes. Damas avait déjà accepté ce plan «sans réserves», mais sans jamais le ratifier.

A Damas, le chef de la diplomatie syrienne Walid Mouallem a salué hier cette signature, assurant que les observateurs de la Ligue arabe étaient «les bienvenus» en Syrie. Il a ajouté que de «nombreux pays dans le monde ne voulant pas reconnaître jusqu'ici la présence de groupes terroristes en Syrie verront qu'ils sont bien présents».



Manifestation contre le régime syrien. Les observateurs auront accès aux «points chauds» mais pas aux «points militaires sensibles».

Les douces pressions de Moscou en fin de semaine dernière (avec un projet de résolution très modéré devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU) ne sont peut-être pas étrangères à cette concession du régime syrien, qui a jusqu'ici tout fait pour ne pas laisser les observateurs entrer sur son territoire.

Accès aux «points chauds»
Reste à savoir si Damas tiendra l'accord. «Le régime manœuvre pour empêcher que le dossier sy-

rien soit soumis devant le Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies. Ils n'ont aucune intention d'appliquer une quelconque initiative», a déclaré hier à Tunis Burhan Ghalioun, le chef du Conseil national syrien regroupant plusieurs courants d'opposition.

Selon l'accord, une première délégation d'observateurs de la sécurité, du droit et de l'administration devrait se rendre en Syrie d'ici à trois jours. Des équipes composées de militants des droits de l'homme devraient suivre. Le

texte présente toutefois une nuance de taille: les observateurs auront accès aux «points chauds» mais pas aux «points militaires sensibles». Ce qui pourrait bien laisser une marge de manœuvre confortable à Damas.

Ogives à la frontière?

Sur le papier, le régime de Bachar el-Assad entrouvre donc un peu la porte mais il blinderait par ailleurs ses frontières sur le plan militaire, selon des sources russes relayées par le renseignement français. Vingt et un lanceurs de missiles, dont cinq lanceurs de Scud D munis d'ogives chimiques, auraient été déployés dans le nord de la Syrie, face à la localité turque de Hatay (Alexandrette). Manœuvres d'intimidation? Ils auraient été installés en plein jour pour être bien vus par des satellites espions occidentaux et de l'armée turque, selon cette même source.

La Turquie, en tout cas, s'en inquiète. Elle a convoqué la semaine dernière son Conseil militaire suprême pour un examen de la situation. La mise en alerte maximale d'unités de l'armée de l'air et de la Marine le long des frontières a été préconisée.

Süddeutsche Zeitung (Allemagne / Germany)

Damaskus gibt nach

Syrien lässt Beobachter der Arabischen Liga einreisen

Von Tomas Avenarius

Kairo – Syrien gibt dem internationalen Druck nach und lässt Beobachter der Arabischen Liga ins Land. Sie sollen sich ein Bild machen von den blutigen Unruhen, die Syrien erschüttern. Die Mission ist Teil eines Friedensplans der arabischen Staaten, den seit neun Monaten andauernden Konflikt zwischen dem Regime und seinen Gegnern zu beenden. Die Liga hat die Mitgliedschaft Syriens wegen seines Widerstands gegen den seit langem vorliegenden Friedensplan suspendiert und Sanktionen beschlossen. Wegen der Einreiseperrre für die Beobachter hatte die Liga Präsident Baschar al-Assad ultimativ damit gedroht, sich an den Sicherheitsrat der Vereinten Nationen (UN) zu wenden.

Seit Beginn der Proteste sind nach UN-Angaben 5000 Menschen ums Leben gekommen. Das Assad-Regime macht militante Islamisten für die Gewalt verantwortlich und spricht von 1200 getöteten Sicherheitskräften. Damaskus beschuldigt den Westen und arabische Staaten wie Katar oder Saudi-Arabien, die Regimegegner zu finanzieren. Zudem schürten „bewaffnete Banden“ die Unruhen. Syriens Außenminister Walid al-Mualim sagte: „Die Beobachter werden kommen und sehen, dass es diese Banden gibt. Wir müssen keine Angst haben.“

Formell hatte Damaskus dem Friedensplan im November zugestimmt. Syrien hat aber immer wieder dagegen verstoßen. Die Liga-Beobachtermission soll nun die Umsetzung der Friedensmaßnahmen überwachen. Syriens Vizeaußenminister Faisal Miqdad unterzeichnete die Vereinbarung am Sitz der Arabischen Liga in Kairo. Eine Vorausmission werde innerhalb von 72 Stunden im Land eintreffen, sagte Liga-Generalsekretär Nabil el-Arabi. Dann wird sich zeigen, ob die Liga-Vertreter Zugang zu den umkämpften Städten bekommen oder sich das Regime mit der Sicherheitslage herauszureden versucht. Assads Truppen kontrollieren die Lage in den Städten Homs, Hama, Daraa und in der Provinz Idlib nur noch in Teilen. In der Protesthochburg Homs sind ganze Stadtviertel in der Hand der Protestierenden.

Vor der Unterzeichnung soll Syrien auf Änderungen am Dokument bestanden haben. Die Vorausdelegation soll nur aus Sicherheits-, Rechts- und Verwaltungsexperten bestehen. Beobachter zur Beurteilung der Menschenrechtslage sollen erst später einreisen. Zudem sollen die Beobachter keine sensiblen militärischen Anlagen besuchen dürfen. Da das Assad-Regime den Kampf gegen die Regimegegner vor allem mit seiner Ar-

mee führt, könnte dies die Arbeit der Mission stark behindern.

Damaskus hatte sich wochenlang gegen die Beobachtermission gesperrt, obwohl die USA, die EU und die Arabische Liga seit Wochen den Druck auf das Assad-Regime immer weiter erhöht hatten. Außenminister Mualim sagte, seine Regierung sei mit der Unterzeichnung einer Empfehlung Moskaus gefolgt. Russland und China stürzten Syrien im Sicherheitsrat den Rücken. Sie verhindern, dass der Rat das Vorgehen der Armee gegen die Regimegegner verurteilt. Moskau hat zudem einen eigenen Resolutionsentwurf vorgelegt. Darin wird Assad zu größerer Kompromissbereitschaft aufgefordert.

Das Verhältnis Syriens zur Arabischen Liga ist zudem dadurch belastet, dass der kleine Golfstaat Katar derzeit den Vorsitz der Organisation führt. Vizeaußenminister Miqdad hatte der Süddeutschen Zeitung vergangene Woche in Damaskus gesagt, der wahre Grund, Damaskus zu isolieren, sei Syriens Position im Palästina-Konflikt. „Wir befinden uns in einem Krieg mit bekannten Kräften. Bestimmte arabische Staaten, die demokratisch nicht legitimiert sind, unterstützen diese Kräfte nun.“ Gemeint waren Katar und Saudi-Arabien. „Und der Impuls hinter den Entscheidungen der Arabischen Liga ist die Umsetzung der westlichen Agenda.“ (Seite 4)



5000 Menschen haben nach UN-Angaben bei den Protesten in Syrien ihr Leben verloren: Regimegegner zeigen Bilder von Toten. Foto: Reuters

Tageszeitung (Allemagne / Germany)

Arabische Beobachter für Syrien

SYRIEN Damaskus gibt russischem Druck nach: Vorausmission der Liga soll in 72 Stunden eintreffen. Noch aber schießen die Schergen des Regimes weiter

VON GEORG BALTISSEN

BERLIN taz | Die Regierung in Damaskus hat der Entsendung einer Beobachtermission der Arabischen Liga zugestimmt. Nach wochenlangem Hin und Her unterzeichnete der stellvertretende Außenminister Syriens, Faisal al-Makdad, am Montag am Sitz der Arabischen Liga in Kairo ein entsprechendes Protokoll. Aufgabe der Beobachtermission soll es sein, die Umsetzung eines Abkommens zu überwachen, das ein Ende des Blutvergießens und der Gewalt im Lande vorsieht. Seit Beginn des Aufstands vor neun Monaten sind nach UN-Angaben mehr als 5.000 Menschen in Syrien ums Leben gekommen.

Syriens Außenminister Walid al-Muallim räumte auf einer gleichzeitigen Pressekonferenz in Damaskus ein, dass die syrische Zustimmung auf russischen Druck hin erfolgt sei. „Russlands Haltung ist sehr klar“, sagte er. „Russland hat Syrien geraten, das Protokoll zu unterzeichnen, und das haben wir auch getan.“

Al-Muallim erklärte gestern zudem, die Arabische Liga habe einigen Änderungen an dem Do-



Regimegegner in Idlib mokieren sich mit dieser Verkleidung über die Unterstützer des Assad-Clans Foto: Reuters

kument zugestimmt, die seine Regierung gefordert habe. Dem Vernehmen nach sollen sich die arabischen Beobachter mit den lokalen Behörden abstimmen. Binnen 72 Stunden soll eine Vorausmission eintreffen, wie die Liga erklärte. Ihr gehören demnach Sicherheits-, Rechts- und Verwaltungsexperten an. Beobachter zur Beurteilung der Menschenrechtsslage sollen erst später nach Syrien reisen.

Am Samstag hatte der Vorsitzende des Komitees der Arabischen Liga für Syrien und Premier von Katar, Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani, damit gedroht, den UN-Sicherheitsrat einzuschalten, wenn Syrien dem arabischen Friedensplan nicht bis spätestens Mittwoch zustimme. Grundsätzlich hatte die syrische

„Russland hat Syrien geraten, das Protokoll zu unterzeichnen, und das haben wir getan“

WALID AL-MUALLIM, AUSSENMINISTER

Führung bereits Anfang November dem Krisenplan zugestimmt, seine Umsetzung aber durch neue Bedingungen und Vorgaben verhindert. Muallim sagte gestern, er erwarte, dass die Beobachter sich davon überzeugen könnten, dass seine Regierung einen Aufstand von bewaffneten Banditenbanden niederschlagen müsse. Dies ist die offizielle Sprachregelung für die Proteste.

Der Plan der Arabischen Liga sieht vor, dass das Regime alle

Personen auf freien Fuß setzt, die seit Beginn der Proteste inhaftiert worden sind. Nach Angaben des UN-Menschenrechtsrats handelt es sich um tausende Personen. Armee und Milizen des Regimes sollen aus den Städten und Dörfern abziehen und in die Kasernen zurückkehren. Zudem solle das Regime internationale Medien ins Land lassen.

Gestern Nachmittag jubelten Anhänger im Zentrum von Damaskus ihrem Idol Baschar al-Assad zu und ließen die Verbündeten Russland, China, Iran und die Hisbollah hochleben. Zeitgleich wurden in den syrischen Städten Deraa und Deir es-Zor erneut sechs Menschen bei Demonstrationen erschossen. Damit stieg die Zahl der seit Freitag Getöteten auf über 30.

De Pers (Pays-Bas / Nederlands)

Arabische Liga en Syrië sluiten deal

#KomErMaarIn

Syrië laat waarnemers van de Arabische Liga toe.

Redactie buitenland

Amsterdam



Eerder wilde de Syrische president Bashar al-Assad geen waarnemers van de Arabische Liga in zijn land. Maar nu heeft hij tóch een vredesprotocol ondertekend met de Liga, waarin staat dat internationale waarnemers welkom zijn, hoewel ze geen toestemming hebben om op bepaalde 'gevoelige militaire locaties' rond te neuzen. In het akkoord staat ook dat Syrië troepen terug gaat trekken uit stadscentra, geweld tegen betogers stopt en politieke gevangenen zal vrijlaten. Het plan moet een einde maken aan de opstand in Syrië, die al negen maanden duurt.

Tegenstanders van Assad zeggen dat het regime het akkoord alleen maar heeft getekend om tijd te winnen. De Liga had de Syrische regering tot morgen gegeven om de overeenkomst te ondertekenen en dreigde, wanneer Assad niet zou tekenen, de zaak over te dragen aan de VN Veiligheidsraad. Omdat Syrië eerder weigerde mee te werken aan het akkoord, schorste de Arabische Liga het land en kondigde het sancties aan tegen het regime van Assad, dat de opstand in het land tot nu toe keihard neersloeg.

De Morgen (Belgique / Belgium)

Syrië laat dan toch waarnemers van de Arabische Liga toe

BRUSSEL • Het Syrische regime heeft gisteren een overeenkomst ondertekend met de Arabische Liga, waarin is afgesproken dat het land waarnemers van de Liga zal toelaten. De beslissing volgt op maanden van toenemende druk uit de Arabische wereld en de internationale gemeenschap.

VOOR DE WERELD

"Het onderbreken van de provocatie het begin van samenwerking tussen de Arabische Liga en erin", zei de Syrische minister van Buitenlandse Zaken Waheed Maallem.

Volgens het akkoord zullen er'n honderd waarnemers de kuststad maanaf naar

Syrië afreizen. Zij zijn volgens al-Maallem "vrij in hun beweging", maar zullen wel veiliggesteld worden van overheidsgrenzen. De missie is voor een maand. De waarnemers moeten berichten op Damascus' gebied in dat het trouwen uit de media af terug trekken.

Syrië stelde begin november af te met een vredesplan van de Arabische Liga om waarnemers toe te laten, die worden grenzen vrij te laten en het leger terug te trekken uit de steden. Het geweld ging snablen erin overzamerd door. Dit gebreke ondanks midde economische sancties van de Liga, die Syrië ook van de naam aan vergaderingen schreef.

De beslissing van Damascus om nu toch waarnemers toe te laten, komt naar de Arabische Liga afregele de VN-veiligheids-

raad om in de te vragen als Syrië niet voor samenwerking met waarnemers met het plan. Syrië wilt zelf actie in akkoord nog te ontlopen, toen Bashar en China in de VN veiligheidsraad hun veto uitdrukten over een resolutie die het geweld van de Syrische overheid veroordeelde. Maar eind vorig week deed Rusland pleidooi met een nieuwe conceptresolutie rondgaan.

Nog geen VN-sancties

Deze resolutie is zwakker en voornamelijk het gebied van geweld "naast alle partijen, inclusief de oppositie" genoemd van de Syrische autoriteiten", maar geeft een belangrijke verandering aan in de houding van Bashar, die China gaf gisteren aan de resolutie te steunen.

Waarnemer zijn voorbereiding met aan de rijk, maar Damascus vanuit werkdag dat dit verandert als de Arabische Liga naar de VN-veiligheidsraad gaat. In de kern dat Damascus een nieuwe strategie over- len, is nu aanzienlijk kleiner.

Totend een Syrische delegatie het akkoord groten de Cairo-terade, schoten veiligheidszweepen volgden activiteiten. Bij mensen dood, waaronder twee kinderen.

Baaiten vanuit de oppositie waren dan ook overwegend afgevoerd. "Het regime heeft nu iets onderbrekend dat het niet kan uitvoeren", zei een activist in Syrië tegen het Amerikaanse persbureau Associated Press. Als het regime naar twopen terug trede, zullen direct weer enorme demonstraties plaatsvinden, en de activist. De leider van de belangrijkste oppositie-

groep, de Syrische Nationale Raad, zei dat Damascus slechts tijd probeerde te winnen. Sommige activisten hopen echter dat de aanwezigheid van waarnemers grotere demonstraties mogelijk zal maken.

Gisteren werd ook bekend dat Raan Ghazwan, een bekende kritische blogger, op bericht is vrijgelaten. Ghazwan werkt bij het Syrische Centrum voor Media en Vrijheid, waar ze arrestaties en misda den door de Syrische autoriteiten documenteert. Ze werd twee weken eerder door de Syrische autoriteiten opgepakt. Sinds het begin van de opstanden zijn tientallen bloggers en activisten voor perennierend gearresteerd.

In Syrië zijn volgens de Verenigde Staten ruim 5.000 mensen omgekomen sinds het begin van de strijd.

PHOTO: AP/WIDEWORLD

The Irish Times (Irlande / Ireland)

Army deserters shot dead in Syria

MICHAEL JANSEN

DOZENS OF Syrian army deserters were shot dead yesterday as they tried to flee their base and defect to join the nine-month revolt against President Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The British-based group, citing witnesses who survived the attack, said Syrian forces attacked the defectors with machine-gun fire.

One of the survivors said some 60 to 70 deserters were killed.

Meanwhile, violence continued for a fourth day in central Cairo, where troops briefly cleared Tahrir Square of democracy activists camped out since November 25th in protest at the military's appointment of Egyptian prime minister Kamal Ganzouri.

The protesters returned, forcing troops to retreat behind barricades built across streets leading from Tahrir Square to parliament, the cabinet offices and

the interior ministry.

The health ministry said three people had been killed, raising the toll since Friday to at least 14 dead and 700 wounded. A doctor at a field clinic in the square said six had died.

US secretary of state Hillary Clinton urged Egypt's security apparatus to "respect and protect the universal rights of all Egyptians" and called on protesters to "refrain from acts of violence".

UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon expressed alarm at the "excessive use of force by the security forces."

Gen Adel Emara, a member of the ruling military council, said that intelligence had uncovered a plot to burn parliament and "topple the state". He argued that troops had shown "restraint" in dealing with protesters.

However, Egyptians and foreign observers have been horrified at video showing soldiers beating and kicking a young woman stripped to her bra and jeans.

ABC (Espagne / Spain)

AYER, 40 MUERTOS EN SIRIA

Damasco acepta el envío de observadores de la Liga Árabe

DANIEL IRIARTE

Tras varias semanas de negativas, el gobierno sirio aceptó ayer el envío de observadores de la Liga Árabe, con el fin de poner freno a la violencia en el país, que se ha cobrado ya un mínimo de 5.000 vidas, según las Naciones Unidas. Ayer, en otra jornada de represión, el balance de civiles muertos ascendió al menos a 40, según el Observatorio Sirio de Derechos Humanos.

El documento firmado ayer en El Cairo permitirá la llegada en los próximos días de varios centenares de profesionales de todo tipo —desde médicos a juristas— que actuarán como observadores. Se espera que esto reduzca el nivel de represión de las autoridades sirias.

«Hay muchos países que no quieren admitir la presencia de grupos armados terroristas en Siria», afirmó el ministro sirio de Exteriores, quien expresó su confianza en que la misión observadora «confirmará» que estos grupos están presentes” en Siria.

El Mundo (Espagne / Spain)

Matar ante los ojos de los observadores

El régimen sirio acepta que haya 'testigos' árabes, aunque continúa la represión

IVIER ESPINOSA
Corresponsal de Oriente Próximo

Siria aceptó ayer la entrada en el país de observadores árabes, una de las exigencias del plan de mediación apadrinado por la Liga Árabe, en un gesto que el propio ministro de Asuntos Exteriores sirio, Walid al Moallem, reconoció que se debía en gran parte a las reconocidas acciones de su principal aliado, Rusia.

El Ejecutivo ruso cambió suddenly habitual en los últimos meses al presentar un proyecto de resolución en Naciones Unidas en el que criticaba al «uso excesivo de la fuerza» por parte del régimen sirio.

Moallem negó que la posición rusa haya dado un giro y dijo que «hay una coordinación directa con los dirigentes rusos. Nos acordamos firmar y lo hemos hecho». El portavoz sirio añadió que «los observadores vendrán a ver con sus

propios ojos que hay grupos terroristas que están organizando sabotajes y matando a la gente».

Los delegados de la Liga Árabe son sólo una parte del plan diseñado por el organismo regional que incluye la retirada del ejército de las ciudades, negociaciones con la oposición y la concesión de visas para que periodistas y activistas pro derechos humanos puedan trabajar en el país.

Un opositor sirio citado por la agencia Ap resumió la importancia de que las autoridades acepten tales medidas. «Ellas firmarán algo que no pueden cumplir. Si reafirman el ejército, se organizarán manifestaciones, irán miles en el país y eso llevarán la crisis a otro nivel del régimen», señaló.

La principal coalición de opositores al presidente Bashar Assad, el Consejo Nacional Sirio, liderado por Burhan Ghalioun, desmintió la firma de dicho documento y dijo



Un rival del bastión sirio, bajo un cartel de Assad en Damasco. AP

que «el régimen está maniobrando para ganar tiempo. El mismo pacto estipula que los observadores no sólo podrán permanecer en el país un máximo de dos meses».

Al mismo tiempo que Damasco rubricaba su firma en el acuerdo

con la Liga Árabe, la oposición alertaba sobre una posible ofensiva en la zona de Jabal Zawiya, en el norte del país, donde el Observatorio Sirio para los Derechos Humanos (OSDH) estimó que habían muerto docenas de miembros del llama-

do Ejército Libre de Siria. Un suceso viviente citado por dicho grupo dijo que las víctimas podrían alcanzar los 70.

Los opositores llevaban al menos dos jornadas de nutridos ataques indiscriminados de la artillería en esa región, que se comenzaron durante semanas por combatir uno de los principales bastiones de la insurgencia, que lo llamaba el «país» o territorio liberado del país.

Allí los rebeldes controlaban una veintena de aldeas incluidas Kam Safra, que oficiales como su capitán de facto, el OSMH dijo que se registrarían violentos combates tanto en Kam Safra como en Kfar Awid, otro reducido donde resistían decenas de desertores.

En varios videos colgados en YouTube puede verse un gran número de civiles sirios de la misma zona huidos a la región más recóncita de esas montañas, viviendo con sus hijos al raso entre rocas en un momento en que las temperaturas nocturnas son ya definitivamente soportables.

El jefe más conocido de esa zona, Abu Mujaidin, estimaba que sus fuerzas podían superar el número de hombres, pero con el resultado del que dispusieron «coñe» huido básicamente por ser malheridos de armas ligeras y según cabe esperar que «difícilmente podrán formar una acción táctica en la que se utilizarían blindados o artillería en el campo».

Publico (Portugal)

Síria aceita entrada no país de observadores da Liga Árabe para verificarem plano de paz

Dulce Furtado

A primeira equipa de observadores entra no país até quinta-feira, no primeiro compromisso assinado pelo regime de Damasco

● O regime sírio comprometeu-se ontem formalmente com a iniciativa de pacificação proposta pela Liga Árabe para o país, aceitando receber observadores ainda esta semana no âmbito de um protocolo alargado de “protecção dos civis”, ao fim de nove meses de conflito violento que ultrapassou já as 5000 vítimas mortais.

Este acordo, que inclui ainda a retirada dos militares das cidades, foi assinado no Cairo pelo ministro adjunto sírio dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Faisal Mekdad, sendo esperada a chegada à Síria de uma primeira delegação de observadores dentro de dois a três dias - composta por peritos “de segurança, direito e administração”, a que se seguirão equipas incluindo especialistas em direitos humanos, segundo o vice-secretário-geral da Liga Árabe, Samir Seif al-Yazal.

Opositores sírios reagiram acusando o Presidente, Bashar al-Assad, de um truque, dizendo que este não tem qualquer intenção de honrar o acordo.

“A assinatura é uma mentira com o objectivo de ganhar tempo e de desencorajar a Liga de recorrer às Nações Unidas”, disse à Reuters Burhan Ghalioun, do Conselho Nacional Sírio, na Tunísia. Um outro activista, a viver na Síria, declarou que o regime tinha “assinado algo que não pode cumprir”. Se o Governo retirar as forças militares das ruas, vai haver enormes manifestações, “o que levará à queda do regime”, opinou, citado pelo diário britânico *The Guardian*.

O regime de Damasco já concor-



Assad: oposição diz que líder sírio quer ganhar tempo

dara, no início de Novembro, com a proposta apresentada pela Liga Árabe, mas jamais os aplicou no terreno, o que levou à sua suspensão da organização e a um intensificar da pressão internacional.

A decisão de finalmente firmar o acordo foi tomada após Damasco ter ouvido Moscovo. “Eles aconselharam-nos a assinar e nós seguimos esse conselho”, explicou ainda o chefe da diplomacia da Síria.

Moscovo, tradicional aliado da Síria, intensificou recentemente as críticas à vaga de repressão levada a cabo pelo regime de Assad contra o movimento de contestação no país, tendo mesmo falado pela primeira vez em “força desproporcionada usada pelas autoridades” numa proposta de resolução posta a circular no final da semana passada entre os membros do Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas.

Nela, a Rússia instava ambas as partes a cessarem as hostilidades, mas sublinhava também que Assad deverá “pôr fim à repressão daqueles que usam os seus direitos de liberdade de expressão, reunião pacífica e associação”.

A iniciativa pede às autoridades sírias que retirem todos os soldados e tanques das cidades revoltosas, que libertem milhares de pessoas detidas ao longo destes nove meses - desde que eclodiram as primeiras manifestações, em meados de Março, então pedindo uma melhoria das condições de vida e libertação de prisioneiros -, a dialogar com a oposição e permitir observadores e jornalistas estrangeiros no país.

Ontem registou-se mais violência: dezenas de desertores do Exército foram mortos a tiro, quando tentavam sair da sua base; segundo um dos sobreviventes, terão morrido 60 a 70 desertores. Muitos militares que desertam têm-se juntado à rebelião armada que surgiu paralelamente aos protestos pacíficos.

Foi entretanto libertada uma *blogger*, Razan Ghazzawi, que tinha sido detida na semana passada por “fomentar a tensão sectária” e “espalhar informações falsas”.

As autoridades mantêm, no entanto, a intenção de acusar Ghazzawi, uma das raras *blogger*s que escreve com o seu nome verdadeiro, pelos crimes, que implicam uma pena de até 15 anos de prisão. **com M.J.G.**

Wall Street Journal (USA)

Syria Accepts Monitors As Fighters Organize

BY NOUR MALAS
AND MARGARET COKER

An armed insurgency fighting President Bashar al-Assad's forces in Syria has spread beyond the country's violence-stricken center, said residents and activists, as villagers set up battalions as part of greater efforts by government opponents to increase their military preparedness.

As the fight against the government escalates, Damascus on Monday signed an Arab League protocol in Cairo, agreeing to allow monitors to inspect the hot spots of the conflict, including besieged towns, and enforce a pact that called for an end to violence from all sides in Syria.

The growth of the armed insurgency complicates the proposed cease-fire, with compliance less likely by a government that argues it is facing an armed insurgency, or by a rebel force that lacks a central command.

Syria's crisis started in March as a largely peaceful protest movement against vastly more powerful state security forces.

That imbalance appears to be shifting. Some Syrians fighting the government have acquired heavier weapons—including midrange Grad rockets, which were used against the military in at least one battle—and have become better organized, residents and activists say.

Foreign Minister Walid Moallem described the observers mission as an opportunity to prove Syria was battling terrorists.

Syria's agreement to admit monitors followed more than a month of

wrangling with the pan-Arab body over the terms of the deal.

Many Syrians say even if the Assad regime follows through on its pledge—which under the terms of the deal includes pulling its military from cities—its measures won't be enough to change the tide of violence.

The Syrian conflict has become the bloodiest of the prodemocracy uprisings of the so-called Arab Spring, with over 5,000 killed so far, according to the United Nations.

On Monday, activists reported at least 40 civilians were killed by security forces and at least three government soldiers killed by defected troops in a northwestern town.

Many Syrians say that even if the Assad regime follows through on its pledge, its measures won't be enough to change the tide of violence.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a U.K.-based dissident group, said another 60 to 70 army deserters were gunned down as they tried to flee their military posts in the northwestern Idlib province, where activists say hundreds of soldiers have defected in recent weeks.

Defected soldiers and other armed fighters have fought daily, hourslong battles with the military this past week, and at least three

dozen government soldiers have been reported killed since Thursday, according to reports by Syrian rights groups.

Reported military casualties have risen sharply this month, and the so far lightly armed dissident soldiers have been capturing tanks and armored carriers in intense battles with the army, defected soldiers say.

"There is now an insurgency on the ground," said Peter Harling, a Damascus-based project director with the International Crisis Group. "There are civil-war dynamics that are getting clearly out of hand in central Syria."

Residents describe villagers and families taking up arms, including in Kurdish northeastern regions, restive towns surrounding Damascus, and villages of the Houran region in the country's south.

"People are setting up their battalions everywhere," said a resident of Idlib, a city in the province of the same name.

In the villages surrounding Idlib, activists report Free Syrian Army soldiers setting up checkpoints within hundreds of meters of government military checkpoints, with the soldiers from the opposing camps manning their respective swaths of territory.

In the southern province of De-
raa, an early hub of military defectors, activists say a resurgence in fighting over the past two weeks appears to indicate that dissident soldiers are at least temporarily holding some ground.

—Marc Champion in Istanbul
contributed to this article.

The Washington Post (USA)

Syria says it will allow outside monitors

Opposition activists express skepticism after news of deal

BY ALICE FORDHAM

BEIRUT — Bowing to international pressure, including from longtime ally Russia, Syria on Monday accepted an Arab League plan to allow international monitors into the country to observe a situation that anti-government activists call a bloody crackdown on dissent.

Syria has agreed to implement a proposal signed last month by permitting an initial group of monitors to enter within 72 hours and discussing plans for a total of 500 observers to operate across the country.

The agreement comes as Syria's international isolation deepens amid attempts to suppress a nine-month-old uprising, which, according to United Nations estimates, has left at least 5,000 people dead. On Monday, activists reported that more than 70 soldiers were shot near the northwestern city of Idlib while trying to defect, though it was not possible to verify the figure.

President Obama and other Western leaders have called for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down. Most Arab countries have pulled together in an unusual show of unity to condemn the actions of the Syrian authorities, and the Arab League last week proposed referring the Syrian issue to the U.N. Security Council.



Western leaders want Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down.

Meanwhile, Russia, an ally that could previously be relied upon to veto any U.N. resolutions against Syria, last week advised Syrian leaders to implement the Arab League proposal and suggested a Security Council resolution that refers to “disproportionate use of force” by Assad's troops.

Anti-government activists greeted the news of the deal with “extreme skepticism,” said opposition member Yaser Tabbara, at a meeting in Tunisia of the Syrian National Council, an umbrella opposition group trying to position itself as a transitional ruling body.

Tabbara said the Syrian government was well known for reneging on agreements, and the opposition group's leader, Burhan Ghalioun, told reporters, “This is just a ploy. They have no intention of implementing any initiative.” He also called for Arab League and U.N. military action in Syria to establish safe zones.

fordhama@washpost.com

The Washington Times (USA)

MIDDLE EAST

Syria signs initiative to let in Arab observers

Pressure over crackdown spurs move

By **BASSEM MROUE**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT | Syria signed an Arab League initiative Monday that will allow Arab observers into the country, Syria's foreign minister said, as part of an effort to end the nation's increasingly bloody 9-month-old crisis.

Up to now, Damascus balked at signing the deal. The regime's final acceptance of it was a response to mounting international pressure to end a bloody crackdown that the U.N. says has killed at least 5,000 people and shows signs of descending into civil war.

Syria also appears to prefer to give Arab nations a chance to end a crisis instead of inviting wider international involvement.

"The signing of the protocol is the beginning of cooperation between us and the Arab League, and we will welcome the Arab League observers," Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem told reporters in Damascus.

He said the observers will have a one-month mandate that can be extended by another month if both sides agree. The observers will be "free" in their movements and "under the protection of the Syrian government," he said, but will not be allowed to visit sensitive military sites.

Last month, Syria agreed to an Arab League plan to end the crisis. It called for removing Syrian forces and heavy weapons from city streets, starting talks with opposition leaders and allowing human rights workers and journalists into the country, along with Arab League observers.

Despite its agreement, Syria then posed conditions that made implementation impossible.

A Syrian-based anti-regime activist who identifies himself as Abu Hamza said that now the Syrian regime "has signed something that they cannot implement." He said if the government withdraws the military from the streets, huge demonstrations will take place throughout the country.

"This will automatically lead to the downfall of the regime," Abu Hamza said, declining to give his real name for fear of retribution.

As the agreement was signed, security forces fatally shot at least three people in the southern province of Daraa and a demonstration in Damascus' central neighborhood of Midan, where a child was wounded, accord-

ARAB PROTESTS AT A GLANCE

A summary of political unrest Monday in the Arab world:

EGYPT

Hundreds of Egyptian soldiers in riot gear swept through Cairo's Tahrir Square and opened fire on protesters demanding an immediate end to military rule.

BAHRAIN

Opposition groups urged the government to embark on "serious" dialogue to end the Gulf kingdom's crisis, condemning a harsh crackdown on sporadic but defiant Shiite protests.

MOROCCO

The powerful Islamist group al-Adl wal-Ihsane (Justice and Charity) said it is suspending its support for the country's pro-democracy movement, dealing a severe blow to the group that once put tens of thousands of people on the streets.

SYRIA

Authorities released a U.S.-born blogger and press freedom campaigner who was arrested at the border while on her way to attend a conference in Jordan.

SAUDI ARABIA

Leaders of wealthy Gulf Arab states gathered in Riyadh for the opening of their annual summit, against a backdrop of regional turmoil and growing fears of Iran.

Source: Agence France-Press, Associated Press

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

ing to the British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

Three soldiers also were killed in a clash between troops and army defectors in the northern town of Maaret al-Numan, the observatory said.

Another activist group said Monday's death toll throughout Syria was 14.

The Arab League had given Syria until Wednesday to sign the agreement, warning that if Damascus did not, the League would likely turn to the U.N. Security Council for action to try to end President Bashar Assad's crackdown.

The agreement was signed at the Arab League's Cairo headquarters after the 22-member bloc accepted amendments demanded by Syria, Mr. al-Moallem said. He did not say what they were.

Jerusalem Post (Palestine occupée / Occupied Palestine)

Syria to allow Arab League monitors into hot spots

Opposition dismisses move as stalling tactic • Reports say over 60 army deserters killed by comrades • UN condemns 'systematic human rights violations'

• By OREN KESSLER and Reuters

Syria's government agreed Monday to let foreigners monitor its compliance with an Arab League peace agreement. But opposition figures were skeptical the government had any intention of enacting the reforms they have demanded throughout their nine-month revolt.

The main opposition to President Bashar Assad dismissed the government's apparent acquiescence as a further stalling tactic. Syria's foreign minister said he had wrung concessions from the Arab League, noting that the monitors would initially have access for just a month.

Assad's key ally, Iran, said the agreement – accepted at Russia's urging – was "acceptable," if not ideal.

Also Monday, the UN General Assembly condemned Syria for its crackdown in a vote that highlighted Damascus' growing isolation at the world body. The 193-nation body's vote came a month after the assembly's human rights committee approved the draft resolution with strong Western

and Arab backing.

In Monday's vote on the same resolution, which was drafted by Britain, France and Germany, 133 countries voted in favor, 11 against and 43 abstained. The resolution says the committee "strongly condemns the continued grave and systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities, such as arbitrary executions, excessive use of force and the persecution and killing of protesters and human rights defenders."

A rich history of undelivered promises, Page 2

As the violence continued on Monday, with several people reported killed, the Arab League said it was not ready to lift economic sanctions it had imposed so as to cut short Syrian prevarication. The league said, however, that an advance party would reach Damascus this week to prepare a mission to monitor compliance with an agreement that calls for the

government to withdraw troops from cities where protests have been held, free political prisoners and open a dialogue with regime opponents.

Insisting that Syria had not been forced into submission, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said he had won several unspecified modifications before signing.

"If we hadn't inserted these modifications at the heart of the protocol, we would not have signed it, whatever the warnings and threats," he told a news conference in Damascus.

The exiled leader of the opposition Syrian National Council lambasted the deal.

"Syria's signature of the Arab League agreement is a lie aimed at winning time and preventing the league from resorting to the United Nations," Burhan Ghalioun, chairman of the council, told reporters in Tunisia.

Syria broadly agreed last month to the Arab League initiative to defuse a violent confrontation that has left more

See SYRIA, Page 10

SYRIA

Continued from Page 1

than 5,000 people dead. Damascus reports losing over 1,100 of its security forces to foreign-backed "armed terrorist gangs." After Syria balked at signing the protocol on monitors last month, Arab foreign ministers voted to impose sanctions on Damascus and threatened last week to take their proposal to the UN Security Council – a move that could expose Damascus to wider international action.

Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby said sanctions had not been lifted and that an Arab foreign ministers' meeting planned later this week to discuss action against Damascus had been "postponed indefinitely." Moualem told journalists that Syria had not requested an end to the sanctions.

"If they think the sanctions will affect Syria's resistance, then they are dreaming and we won't beg anyone," he said, adding that Damascus had agreed to sign the deal on the advice of its long-time ally Russia.

Moscow lauded the deal as a chance to bring stability to Syria.

"We believe that the document signed in Cairo gives an opportunity to... provide safety for the Syrian people and stabilize the situation," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement, according to the Interfax news agency.

Syria said it would allow observers to enter flashpoint provinces under its protection, but that the deal required Syria and the Arab League to agree on responses to any proposals by the monitors.

"The Arab League delegation's reports will be sent to me and the league's secretary-general at the same time, and he and I will discuss them before any other action is taken," the

foreign minister said. "That is the text after Syria's modifications."

Areas such as southern Deraa, central Homs and northern Idlib have become centers of armed rebellion, with dozens of protesters, rebels and security forces killed each week.

The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said three people were killed on Monday by security forces' fire in the Deraa province and that three soldiers died in fighting with armed rebels in the Idlib province.

Late Monday, the group said "dozens" of troops had been shot dead by their comrades while trying to flee their base and defect. Citing witnesses who survived the attack, the group said Syrian forces attacked the defectors with machinegun fire. One of the survivors said some 60 to 70 deserters were killed.

Syria's state news agency said security forces in Idlib killed at least one and wounded several other "terrorists." •

SUDANESE

Continued from Page 1

Netanyahu visiting South Sudan, but security considerations may make that stop impossible. The African countries to which Israel is reaching out face significant challenges from radical Islamic terrorists.

Israel recognized South Sudan a day after it declared independence in July, with Netanyahu calling Kiir and offering Jerusalem's expertise in developing the fledgling country's infrastructure, communications network and agriculture.

The South Sudanese leader also plans to meet with President Shimon Peres, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and Defense Minister Ehud Barak.

Kiir is expected to visit Yad

Daily Star (Liban / Lebanon)

Syria signs deal on deadliest day

Over 70 army deserters, 31 civilians reported killed 3 days before monitors due to arrive

BEIRUT: Syria's government, facing sanctions for killing thousands of protesters, agreed Monday to let Arab League peace agreement include a permanent political dialogue.

The main opposition to President Bashar Assad dismissed it as further stalling tactics on agreement which Damascus said was proposed by advice from Russia, a rare, powerful ally, which has shown signs of losing patience. Syria's foreign minister also said he had wrong conversations from the League, noting that the monitors would, probably, have access for just a month.

In an Assad's key partner in a region where Syria's 14-month-old "Arab Spring" sparking risks sparking a

complex balance of power, said it found through government to let in observers from the Arab League "acceptable," if not ideal.

As the violence continued Monday, with 31 protesters more than 70 army deserters reported killed, the Arab League said it was not ready to lift economic sanctions it imposed in our short Syrian protestations.

However, an advance party would reach Damascus this week.

Editorial PAGE 7

It would prepare a mission to monitor compliance with an agreement that calls for troops to withdraw from cities where protests have been held, to free political prisoners and to open a dialogue with opponents, most of whom are set on following the example of Libya and others in ending decades of one-man rule.

In an Assad's key partner in a region where Syria's 14-month-old "Arab Spring" sparking risks sparking a

later World al-Moallem said that he had won several unspecified modifications before signing.

"We had to insert the modifications at the heart of the protocol, we would not have signed it, whatever the war signs and threats," he told a news conference in Damascus.

The remarks were broadcast on Syrian television. Most foreign media have mostly been barred from Syria this year.

The ex-leader of the opposition Syria National Council lambasted the deal. "Syria's signature of the Arab League agreement is a lie aimed at winning time and preventing the League from reacting to the United Nations," Barbara Chabot told reporters in Brussels.

"While many Arab League members take little notice beyond public opinion polls, Assad, the governing authority in the situation in Syria and a world leader in the region, has already driven by invading

TOP PAGE 8



The top, right, stands in Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Fakh al-Moallem, left, in Cairo.

Syria signs deal on deadliest day

FROM PAGE 1

between Shiite, non-Arab Iran and Sunni Muslim Arab powers like Saudi Arabia. Syria broadly agreed last month to the Arab League initiative to defuse a violent confrontation that has left more than 5,000 people dead. Damascus reports losing over 1,100 of its security forces to foreign-backed "armed terrorist gangs."

After Syria balked at signing the protocol on monitors last month, Arab foreign ministers voted to impose sanctions on Damascus and threaten it to ask to take their proposal to the U.N. Security Council — a move that could expose Damascus to wider international action.

Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Elaraby said that sanctions had not been lifted, and said that an Arab foreign ministers meeting planned later this week to discuss action against Damascus had been "postponed indefinitely."

Moallem told journalists that Syria had not requested an end to the sanctions. "If they think the sanctions will affect Syria's resistance then they are dreaming, and we won't beg anyone," he said.

He said Damascus agreed to sign the deal on the advice of Russia, its longtime ally and arms supplier.

Moscow took a step closer to the Western position last Thursday with a surprise draft resolution at the United Nations which stepped up its criticism of the floods had in Syria.

Western countries complained the text was still too weak but the move may offer more opportunity for international measures, although foreign powers deny plans for intervention.

Elaraby said an advance team led by a top Arab League official would head to Syria in two or three days to prepare for the arrival of monitors, which would include journalists and security officials.

Syria said it would allow observers to enter flashpoint provinces under its protection, but that the deal requires Syria and the Arab League to agree on responses in any proposals by the monitors, who will initially be allowed entry for one month.

"The Arab League delegation reports will be sent to me and the league's secretary-general at the same time, and he and I will discuss them before any other action is taken," Moallem said. "That is the text after Syria's modifications."

Areas such as eastern Deraa, central Hama and northern Idlib have become centers of armed rebellion with dozens of protesters, rebels and security forces killed each week.

Dozens of Syrian army deserters were killed by machine-gun fire as they tried to flee their posts in northwestern Idlib province Monday, a rights group said.

In a statement sent to AFP in Niamey, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said between 60 and 70 deserters had been gunned down as they abandoned their positions in the Idlib towns of Kanafra and Kafr Awad.

The opposition Local Coordination Committees reported a death toll of 31 people Monday. A statement by the group sent to The Daily Star said the killings took place in Idlib, Sarafqa, Damascus, Deraa, Hama, Homs and Dair al-Zour. — Reuters, AFP, with The Daily Star

Daily Star (Liban / Lebanon)

Lebanese leaders divided over Syrian-Arab League deal

BEIRUT: Lebanese political figures were divided Monday over the potential consequences of Syria's approval of the Arab League's plan, under which Arab observers will visit the country.

President Michel Sleiman welcomed Syria's approval saying it will pave the way for stability in the country.

The president added he was "comfortable" with Syria's decision and hoped that Syria's ratification of the Arab road map would help solve the unrest that has shaken Lebanon's biggest neighbor since mid-March.

But Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea said the step was insufficient, arguing that the situation in Syria can no longer be solved through protocols.

"I am not optimistic about the

agreement by Syria to accept Arab observers because the developments in Syria have stopped the signing of an agreement and people now want regime change," said Geagea.

In an interview with Radio Orient, Geagea said that regardless of whether Damascus cooperates with the team of Arab observers, the Syrian regime's fall was inevitable.

"Cooperation with the Arab mission requires the implementation of Arab conditions like releasing all prisoners and allowing Syrians to freely express their opinions and hold demonstrations, which will ultimately lead to a greater number of people demonstrating [against the regime]," Geagea added.

In a news conference Monday, Sys-

ian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem said that Damascus only signed the protocol after the league agreed to 70 percent of the changes proposed by the Syrian government.

Geagea called on the Lebanese government to take an official stance against the frequent incursions of the Syrian army into Lebanese territories. "There will be negative repercussions in Lebanon as a result of these incursions ... but the situation depends on the stance of the Lebanese government," said Geagea.

But Marada Movement leader MP Sleiman Franjeh had a different view, arguing Monday that the conspiracy against Syria had reached an end.

"The countdown for the end of the

conspiracy against Syria has begun and the government is here to stay and it's in fact under the leadership of President Bashar Assad," said Franjeh.

In an interview with a local radio station, Franjeh said that Damascus signed the protocol based on its national interest. "Syria signed the Arab protocol on its own terms and not according to anybody else's conditions," Franjeh added.

Hours after Damascus' approval of the protocol, the league's chief, Nabul Elaraby, said the observer team would head to Syria within two days.

In a report last week, the U.N. said the number of those killed in the violent crackdown on protesters in Syria has exceeded 5,000. — *The Daily Star*

Daily Star (Liban / Lebanon)

Syria's economy is nearing the brink

In recent weeks the crisis in Syria has risen to a new pitch. Arab League sanctions have left the country isolated and President Bashar Assad is now facing internal and external challenges to his rule.

This turn of events has led some to speculate that the regime is close to collapse. This prediction is probably premature and the event that will conclusively shift the balance of power against Assad has yet to happen. However, what is clear is that fractures have emerged in Syria's economy since the uprising began last March, and they have already begun to pose serious problems that will be hard to reverse.

Syria's economy is contracting rapidly. It is estimated that since the protests began, the country's gross domestic product has shrunk by as much as 20 percent. Revenues from oil and tourism, two important sources of foreign income, have almost disappeared. Recent Arab League sanctions have closed the trading route between Turkey and the rest of the region, cutting customs revenues.

The Syrian Central Bank has not reported its figures since May, which suggests there is a problem. In March, the government had around \$18 billion in foreign currency reserves. It is believed that as much as \$5 billion of this has been spent since then. The Arab League's blacklisting of the Central Bank will complicate its operations and impede the transaction of aid money into the country.

As the Central Bank's currency reserves are depleted, it will become trickier for the government to support the Syrian pound at the official rate of 47 pounds to \$1. On the black market the value of the pound against the U.S. dollar has fallen to 62 pounds to \$1, which means that Syrians have lost some 25 percent of their spending power. Imported goods have suddenly become very expensive and life in Syria is becoming difficult for ordinary people. There are shortages of baby milk and heating oil across the country, including in Damascus.

This fall in the value of the pound has led Syrians to offload their currency. This has been complicated by the sanctions and financial pressure imposed on Syria. The United States has put pressure on Lebanese banks, which have served the Syrian market for decades, not to open new accounts for Syrian citizens. The aim, presumably, is to block transactions in and out of the country. However, there are still loopholes. The money-changing kiosks of Beirut have been doing a brisk business with Syrians. Businessmen who are still exporting goods into Syria say that it is

still possible to transact in some Gulf currencies, although this method is unlikely to stay open for long.

The Syrian government's management of the economy since the uprising started is confused and seems to be driven by panic. During the last decade the government had gradually lifted subsidies on basic goods as part of its reform program, to create a stronger free market. Following the start of the uprising, it quickly restored some of these subsidies in a bid to quell the

Since protests began, the country's GDP has shrunk by as much as 20 percent

protests. Public workers' salaries were increased by 30 percent. However, Economy Minister Nidal al-Shaar recently said that the cost of these subsidies was unsustainable.

So what effect will the country's economic problems have on the political situation? Disruption of daily life due to economic problems may per-

suade Syrians who have remained neutral that the situation is untenable, forcing them to take to the streets. The salaries of government workers were already meager and are now smaller due to the weakening of the pound. This could add to the mood of revolt.

There have been reports that the military has not been able to pay some of its soldiers due to a lack of funds. If true this is obviously a problem for the regime as the army has largely remained stable, despite the stream of desertions. However, it should be remembered that much of Syria's military consists of conscripts who are paid very little in the first place. Support for the regime among the military rank and file is not fueled by good pay and conditions, but rather by ideology or a fear of punishment if they are caught deserting.

Where can the Syrian government turn to for financial aid? Its last remaining allies of significance are Russia and Iran. Iran has its own economic problems but presumably would be willing to provide assistance to Syria due to its strategic importance. However, the sanctions on both

countries must mean that transacting money into Syria will become increasingly challenging. Russia is a possible source of aid but it appears to be less dedicated to Bashar Assad's survival.

In the long term, if the Syrian regime endures, the restoration of the country's economy will be difficult to achieve. It's likely that for as long as Assad remains president, Syria will continue to face economic sanctions. Confidence has been deeply shaken by the uprising of 2011 and it will be hard to convince foreign investors to return.

It is also unlikely the regime will ever be able to implement reform that can unleash the country's economic potential. Bureaucracy, corruption and the monopolies of senior figures such as the president's cousin, Rami Makhlouf, will remain. As long as these problems continue, so will the protests against the Assad regime.

Christian Henderson is director of Dunin Consultants, a London-based market research and risk advisory consultancy focusing on the greater Middle East region. He wrote this commentary for THE DAILY STAR.



Damas accepte la venue d'observateurs arabes

Révolte L'opposition souhaite l'intervention de forces de dissuasion arabes, alors qu'une centaine de personnes ont trouvé la mort hier

La Syrie a formellement accepté hier, après une volte-face, la venue d'observateurs arabes dans le pays, après avoir refusé pendant plus d'un mois l'opposition, craignant une intervention étrangère.

Les représentants syriens des Affaires étrangères, Fayçal al-Maqdissi, a été officiellement invité à Damas, le chef de la diplomatie Walid Mouallem a déclaré que les observateurs arabes étaient « les bienvenus » en Syrie, ajoutant que « cet accord sera renouvelé dans un délai de dix jours ».

De même, les observateurs pourront accéder à des postes dans les zones militaires, un accord que son ministre des Affaires étrangères, Walid Mouallem, a déclaré que le pays a fait depuis la ratification de 5000 autres, selon l'ONU, mais Damas attribue les violations à des groupes terroristes armés. « Des rebelles ont commis des crimes de guerre », a déclaré Mouallem.

Le secrétaire général de la Ligue Arabe, el-Arabi, a annoncé que le pays a accepté de participer à des groupes de médiation en Syrie. Il a déclaré que le pays a accepté de participer à des groupes de médiation en Syrie. Il a déclaré que le pays a accepté de participer à des groupes de médiation en Syrie.



Une manifestation contre le régime de Damas.

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Le pays a accepté l'Observatoire syrien des droits de l'homme (OSDH). A Damas, les forces de sécurité ont ouvert le feu sur des manifestants dans le quartier historique de Midana, tuant au moins sept personnes et blessant un autre. L'OSDH et les comités locaux de coordination (LCC), qui représentent la communauté arabe, ont appelé à une intervention internationale pour mettre fin à la violence. Les forces de sécurité ont ouvert le feu sur des manifestants dans le quartier historique de Midana, tuant au moins sept personnes et blessant un autre.

Pendant ce temps, des milliers de partisans du président Bachar el-Assad se sont rassemblés hier soir sur une grande place de Damas pour dénoncer les manifestations à l'échelle internationale. Les grands dirigeants syriens, dont le président Assad, ont déclaré que le régime de Damas était prêt à accepter la venue d'observateurs arabes.

(Sources : agences et médias)

La blogueuse Razan Ghazzawi libérée sous caution

La blogueuse syrienne Razan Ghazzawi a été libérée sous caution après avoir été détenue pendant plusieurs semaines. Elle a été relâchée après avoir été détenue pendant plusieurs semaines.

Le chef du CNS a souligné que le régime de Damas a accepté de participer à des groupes de médiation en Syrie. Il a déclaré que le pays a accepté de participer à des groupes de médiation en Syrie.

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Gulf News (EAU / UAE)

Advance observer team for Syria within three days

No immediate plan to lift sanctions, League says

Gulf News Report

Dubai Arab League Secretary-General Nabeel Al Arabi said yesterday that an advance team of observers would head to Damascus within 72 hours, after Syria inked a deal to end nine months of bloodshed.

“Within two or three days, an advance team of observers headed by Arab League Assistant Secretary-General Samir Saif Al Yazal, including security, legal and administrative observers, will be sent,” Al Arabi told reporters.

Other teams would follow, he said, adding that each team would comprise 10 observers specialised in human rights, legal and security issues.

Arabi was speaking at a joint news conference at the League’s headquarters in Cairo with Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Al Maqdad who earlier signed a document agreeing to allow observers into Syria.

However, the executive head of the League said after the signing of a protocol on foreign observers there was no immediate plan to lift sanctions that were imposed when Damascus at first refused to allow outside monitors. Al Arabi said observers would first determine whether Syria’s government was complying with the terms of the agreement.

“The protocol is a mechanism to go to Syria and move freely to ensure the implementation of the Arab initiative on Syria. What counts is good faith in im-

GROUP’S CLAIM

DESERTERS SHOT DEAD

Dozens of Syrian army deserters were killed by machinegun fire as they tried to flee their military posts in northwestern Idlib province yesterday, a rights group said.

In a statement sent to AFP in Nicosia, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said between 60 and 70 deserters were gunned down as they abandoned their positions in the Idlib towns of Kansafra and Kafr Awid.

The Observatory reported earlier that security forces shot dead at least six civilians yesterday.

— AFP

plementation,” Al Arabi said.

President Bashar Al Assad’s administration broadly agreed last month to the Arab League peace initiative aimed at defusing a violent confrontation that has left more than 5,000 dead. But a refusal to let in outside observers had prompted other Arab states to impose sanctions.

Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Al Mua’alem said Damascus fully expected the observer mission to vindicate its contention that the unrest rocking the country since March was the work of armed rebels, not peaceful protesters as maintained by western governments and human rights watchdogs.

See also Page 10

Gulf News (EAU / UAE)



Lost childhood

People take pictures of posters during a protest against Syria's President Bashar Al Assad in Daria near Damascus. The poster reads: 'The children of Moadamieh and Daria are mourning their childhood.'

Arab protocol signed on Russian advice – Syria

DAMASCUS AIMS TO END NINE MONTHS OF UNREST WHICH KILLED THOUSANDS

Beirut (Reuters & AP) Syria signed up to an Arab peace deal aimed at ending nine months of unrest after Russia advised it to ratify the plan. Foreign Minister Walid Al Mua'alem said yesterday.

"They advised us to sign the protocol and we followed their advice," Al Mua'alem told a televised news conference.

Moscow, a long-time ally of Damascus, stepped up its criticism of President Bashar Al Assad's crackdown on protests in a draft resolution presented to the UN Security Council last week. The deal will allow Arab observers into the country as part of a peace deal that aims to end the nation's increasingly bloody nine-month-old crisis, Syria's foreign minister said.

Damascus had previously balked at signing the

MISSION TEAM 100 NAMES ON LIST

Arab League chief Nabeel Al Arabi said yesterday that an advance team of observers will head to Damascus within 72 hours.

Al Arabi said the agreement becomes effective from the moment it was signed, adding that the mission will last "one month" and can be renewed. "The Arab League has a list of 100 names of observers from Arab, non-governmental organisations and representatives of Arab countries ... [and] this number will be increased at a later date," he added.

The mission, he said, will allow the observers to move around Syria freely to monitor the situation and draft reports.

— AFP

deal, and the regime's final acceptance of it was likely in response to mounting international pressure on it to end a bloody crackdown that the UN says has killed at least 5,000 people.

"The signing of the protocol is the beginning of cooperation between us and the Arab League and we will

welcome the Arab League observers," Al Mua'alem told reporters in Damascus.

The agreement was signed at the Arab League's Cairo headquarters after the 22-member bloc accepted amendments demanded by Syria, Al Mua'alem said. An Arab League official in Cairo, speaking on condi-

tion of anonymity because he was not authorised to brief the media, confirmed that Syria's deputy foreign minister, Faisal Mekdad, had signed the deal.

Many regime opponents have in the past accused Al Assad of waffling on the deal as a way to gain time as he continues his crackdown, and have expressed scepticism that the regime will cooperate even after signing the initiative.

Al Mua'alem, however, said Syria will deal with the mission with "all seriousness, professionalism and objectivity", adding he will be coordinating "on a daily basis" with Arab League Secretary-General Nabeel Al Arabi.

The Arab League plan calls for Syria to halt its crackdown, hold talks with the opposition and allow in

Arab observers to ensure compliance with the deal. It does not call for foreign military intervention, as in Libya.

The 22-member League already has suspended Syria's membership and imposed sanctions, but it has been divided over whether to seek the help of the wider international community beyond the Arab world.

Asked whether Arab sanctions would be lifted, Al Mua'alem said: "The Arabs imposed these sanctions, and they should be lifted, but we will leave it up to them..."

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The National (EAU / UAE)

Syria agrees to Arab observers

Accord signed

Teams from Arab League to be on the streets by Friday

Phil Sands

Foreign Correspondent

DAMASCUS // Syria finally agreed yesterday to let Arab League observers into the country to monitor a peace deal in which it pledged to stop violence against demonstrators, pull troops out of cities and free thousands of political prisoners.

Faisal Al Masqad, Syria's deputy foreign minister, signed the accord in Cairo after six weeks of prevarication by Damascus in which the league imposed unprecedented economic sanctions for non-compliance and threatened to take Syria to the United Nations Security Council.

After the signing, the Arab League secretary general Nabil Elaraby said an advance team of monitors would be in place by Friday, a key time for protests and confrontation between demonstrators and security forces.

"The protocol is a mechanism to go to Syria and move freely to ensure the implementation of the Arab initiative on Syria. What counts is good faith in implementation," Mr Elaraby said.

Experts specialising in human rights and legal and security matters, and journalists, would follow the advance delegation in.

The Arab League said it would continue "within days" plans to meet Syrian opposition groups and invite the regime to open talks on a transition to democracy.

Observers are 'free to move' in Syria

4 Syria, from page 1

Two formal talks have taken place between the regime and opposition forces, which has raised hopes for an agreement which would allow a cease-fire against protesters' demands.

In Damascus, the Syrian Foreign Minister, Walid Muallim, said the agreement would be "substantive and comprehensive" in dealing with the protesters' demands.

The Arab League team would be "free to move" in areas of conflict, in coordination with and under the protection of the Syrian authorities, he said, but would not be allowed to enter military bases.

Mu Muallim said the Arab League team would conduct official talks in the region of President Bashar Al Assad's forces, a statement up- rising, and finally suppressing a largely peaceful popular uprising demanding civil rights from their authoritarian rulers.

"We welcome every sincere Arab effort to resolve the crisis and the observers will see that there are armed terrorist groups seeking to harm and kill people," he said.

At the opening of the annual Gulf Cooperation Council conference yesterday in Riyadh, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia called on the bloc to ensure that "the blood stops flowing" in Syria.

According to the latest United Nations report, more than 2,000 civilians and defectors, soldiers have been killed by Syrian security forces since a pro-democracy uprising began more than nine months ago.



From left: Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, and other officials at a meeting in Cairo yesterday to allow observers to move in Syria. (Reuters/Associated Press)

Opposition groups immediately warned that the regime was trying to buy time and prevent a resolution of the US Security Council. As the announcement about the agreement was being made, activists said at least six people had been killed or wounded by security forces, including a 16-year-old girl, who in the Hama region.

At the same time, the UN Security Council is expected to pass a resolution on the 17-year-old killed on Sunday. Ban Ki-moon, the head of the Arab League, said the deal would be "substantive and comprehensive" in dealing with the protesters' demands.

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Saudi Gazette (Arabie saoudite / Saudi Arabia)

Syria to allow AL observers

CAIRO – Syria agreed Monday to let Arab League observers into the country to monitor implementation of a deal it agreed to last month to pull troops from protest-hit towns, free political prisoners and start talking to dissidents.

Arab League Secretary General Nabil Al-Arabi said that an advance team of observers would head to Damascus within 72 hours.

“Within two or three days, an advance team of observers headed by Arab League Assistant Secretary General Samir Seif Al-Yazal, including security, legal and administrative observers, will be sent,” Al-Arabi told reporters.

Other teams will follow, he said, adding that each team will comprise 10 observers specialized in human rights, legal and

security issues.

Al-Arabi was speaking at a joint news conference at League headquarters in Cairo with Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Al-Maqdad who earlier signed a document agreeing to allow observers into Syria.

Al-Arabi said the agreement becomes effective from the moment it was signed, adding that the mission would last “one month” and can be renewed.

“The Arab League has a list of 100 names of observers from Arab, non-governmental organizations and representatives of Arab countries... (and) this number will be increased at a later date,” he added.

He also called on all parties concerned to make a show of “goodwill” in order to implement the agreement.

The mission, he said, will al-

low the observers to move around Syria freely to monitor the situation and draft reports.

“The protocol is nothing but an Arab mechanism to go to Syria and move freely in various areas to confirm the implementation of the Arab plan to which the Syrian government had previously agreed,” he said.

The plan, endorsed by Syria on November 2, calls for a complete halt to the violence, the release of those detained as a result of recent events and the complete withdrawal of military presence from towns and residential districts.

The dispatch of observers to monitor the situation and allowing Arab and international media to enter Syria and move freely throughout the country are among its key points. – Agencies

Today's Zaman (Turquie / Turkey)

Syria signs Arab League deal to allow observers

➤ Syria signed an Arab League initiative on Monday that will allow Arab observers into the country as part of peace deal that aims to end the nation's increasingly bloody 9-month-old crisis, Syria's foreign minister said. Damascus had previously balked at signing the deal, and the regime's final acceptance of it was likely in response to mounting international pressure on it to end a bloody crackdown that the UN says has killed at least 5,000 people. Syria also appears to prefer to give Arabs a chance to end a crisis that has grown increasingly violent, fueling fears that the country could slip into civil war.

"The signing of the protocol is the beginning of cooperation between us and the Arab League and we will welcome the Arab League observers," Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem told reporters in Damascus.

He said that the observers will have a one-month mandate that can be extended by another month if both sides agree. The observers will be "free" in their movements and "under the protection of the Syrian government," he said, but will not be allowed to visit sensitive military sites. The Arab League had given Syria until Wednesday to sign the agreement, warning that if Damascus did not, the League would likely turn to the UN Security Council for action to try to end the President Bashar al-Assad's crackdown on the popular uprising that the UN says has killed at least 5,000 people. The agreement was signed at the Arab League's Cairo headquarters after the 22-member bloc accepted amendments demanded by Syria, al-Moallem said. An Arab League official in Cairo, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media, confirmed that Syria's deputy foreign minister, Faisal Mekdad, had signed the deal. **Beirut AP**

Global Times (China / China)

► Sovereignty protection in the protocol: FM

Syria signs Arab League deal

Syria has signed a protocol to allow Arab observers into the country as part of an Arab peace plan aiming to end the nine-month-old crisis in the country, Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem announced yesterday.

Speaking at a conference in Damascus, Moallem confirmed the agreement was signed in Cairo after the Arab League accepted amendments demanded by Syria, AFP reported. It said Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal al-Maqdad and Arab League Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Ben Helli indeed the document at League headquarters.

"Signing the protocol is the start of cooperation with the Arab League and we will welcome the observers' mission," AFP quoted Moallem as saying.

He said the observers will have a one-month mandate that

can be extended another month if both sides agree.

The announcement came just two days after the Arab ministerial committee meeting in Qatar, in which the 22-member bloc said they may seek UN Security Council backing for their proposals if Syria refuses to link the deal before Wednesday.

The Arab League proposal urges Damascus to end its crackdown, hold talks with opposition leaders and allow Arab observers into the country to ensure compliance with the agreement.

The decision by Damascus to allow Arab League observers to head to Syria and monitor the country's situation is a natural choice for the Syrian government, Li Weijian, director of the Research Center of West Asian and African Studies

at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, told the Global Times.

"There are many reports of the Syrian government's crackdown on protesters and civilian casualties, but we don't know if there were excessively violent acts by opposition forces and even terrorists that could have aggravated the confrontation," Li said. "So if the Arab League could monitor the situation objectively and tell the world what's really happening in Syria, they might help to reduce the mounting pressure Damascus faces from the international community."

Meanwhile, Syria emphasized its sovereignty is protected in the deal, as the country has consistently rejected the view of Western powers the protests have been overwhelmingly peaceful, according to

AFP.

By signing the deal, Moallem said the agreement "protects existing structures and bans countries from interfering." He said the country "expected the observer mission to vindicate the regime's position that the government has been battling an armed rebellion."

He also pointed out the government is trying to portray the war in a different light.

"Syrian President Bashar al-Assad at the moment also insists Syria's major armed forces and defectors in the army were mainly Sunnis, meaning that it was religion and not politics behind the acts. So Assad is confident that the arrival of Arab League monitors will not lead to large scale military defections," Li said.

Global Times - Agencies