

## Remarks to the press by First Deputy Permanent Representative Dmitry Polyanskiy regarding the initiative to establish "Board of Inquiry" for Northwest Syria

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### VIDEO

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**Q.:** How would you comment on the decision to establish the "Board of Inquiry"?

**A.:** We were very amazed and we regret this step, frankly speaking. I know that there will be an official communication from Moscow in this regard, so I will not go into much detail, but we think that it was a mistake. And we regret that there was a pressure on the Secretary-General from some countries that really do not want to bring peace to Syria. Ambassador Nebenzia expressed our position in detail during the last meeting of the Security Council. We thought that it was quite reasonable and clear, but somehow there was a pressure. We still need to know the details. I myself saw this statement in the morning and it came a little bit unexpected, I would not conceal this.

**Q.:** So the investigation has not arrived to find the results, has it?

**A.:** It depends on whether he has the prerogatives to set up this Board or not. We have a lot of doubt and questions as to whether he has such rights. Not in case of the investigation. We know there have been investigations before and we gave our assessment to such investigations – there is a lot of fake news about this, a lot of fake situations like the recent ones. So we doubt very much that this is for the sake of investigation, this is for the sake of blaming Syria and Russia for the things that we do not do. It's again about the notorious White Helmets – we exposed them several times. Well, it is like Alice in *Nowhereland*, you know.

**Q.:** Ambassador, what do you suggest to be done to clear out the truth?

**A.:** We suggest not to invent artificial reality, to judge by facts. We really cited facts and concrete information about what has and has not happened. We think that the sources of such information should be trustworthy, located on the ground. It should not be people sitting somewhere far away. Again, we have several times in detail exposed the "White Helmets", we explained why we do not trust this organization. We think that evidence should be taken on the ground. Statement by our Ministry of Defense indicated concrete information about the claims that were made. But if we invent the truth all the time, invent fake news – I do not know whether it will help reach settlement or not. It is a decisive moment for Syria. We are on the eve of launch of Constitutional Committee. Of course, there are a lot of forces that are not interested in peace in Syria, that just want to keep pressure on the legitimate Syrian government and want to undermine any settlement-aimed efforts. We are afraid that this might be one of such attempts.

**Q.:** Is Russia is going to cooperate within the investigation?

**A.:** We are going to find out, whether the UN Secretary-General has legal reasons to set up this board first and foremost. It is very difficult to comment at this time. Again I advise that all of you should wait a little bit because there will be an official communication from the Russian Foreign Ministry. It is being prepared right now. So I will not go into further details, but the tone will be, as I reflected to you.

**Q.:** Will this Board's work and investigation impede any forward movement on the Constitutional Committee and efforts to end the Syrian conflict?

**A.:** If it is invented to do this, of course it will impede this movement, of course it will help those who do not want peace Syria and do not want peaceful settlement. This might be a very deplorable development. We need to find it out and understand better.

**Q.:** The Secretary-General said that under Article 97 of the UN Charter he had the mandate to call for this internal board. How do you see it?

**A.:** This article is about the fact that he is the superior administrative officer of the United Nations. So I do not know. I do not see any direct indications there for setting up of any boards.

**Q.:** Ambassador, a question on the DPRK. They are accused again of violating the Security Council resolution on ballistic missiles. Do you think the Council should take any action?

**A.:** We still have very little information. Was it a ballistic missile or not? What launch was that? How many missiles were launched? We try to base our position on trustworthy resources and on the information that can be verified. I think that there will be a discussion. We will exchange information, we will listen to our colleagues. But I do not think that we should rush to any conclusions through this.

**Q.:** Thank you. I have a follow-up one on Iran. What do you think the Americans are trying to achieve by sanctioning Foreign Minister Zarif?

**A.:** Sometimes it is difficult to get into the heads of the Americans. If I could do this, my comments would be more interesting to you, but it remains an enigma. It is said sometimes that a woman's mind is a mystery. Well, same with the Americans. Their mind is also quite, you know, mysterious.

**Q.:** Ambassador, can I ask you about the tensions in the Persian Gulf? There is a proposal by the UK to have an international naval force there. What is the position of Russia on this? Do you think this is a good idea?

**A.:** We think that there should be some de-escalation of the situation. We presented our strategy. I do not know whether you are aware of this or not. It was distributed as an official document of the Security Council and I encourage all of you to read it. You will find a lot of answers in this strategy. You will not find anything about the British initiative. The strategy is much deeper and more thoughtful than this.

**Q.:** What is Russia doing to save the Iran nuclear deal?

**A.:** Everything that is possible.

**Q.:** Name five things.

**A.:** I will not be naming them for a simple reason: this is action that depends not only on Russia. But Russia is doing everything: we stick to our agreements and to our promises. I do not think anyone can reproach Russia for not doing enough. Maybe you should ask the same question to the Americans. Could they name a single thing they do to save this deal?

**Q.:** The US has just announced that it will extend waivers for Russia to help Iran with its non-military nuclear program. Do you have any comments?

**A.:** We do not need any waivers to cooperate with Iran. Both Russia and Iran are independent countries. We do not need to ask anyone for authorization. It is up to the U.S. To waive or not to waive – that is the question.