

# Comments by the Secretary on Syria

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## Secretary Clinton Interview with Cynthia McFadden of ABC on January 29, 2013

### Interview

**Hillary Rodham Clinton**

Secretary of State

**Washington, DC**

**January 29, 2013**

Selections about Syria

**QUESTION:** To Syria. You've repeatedly said that President Assad needs to go.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Right.

**QUESTION:** Starting two years ago.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Right.

**QUESTION:** And yet 60,000 Syrians are dead and he is still in office.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Right.

**QUESTION:** What does it take for America to intervene?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, I think we have been very actively involved. Until recently there was no credible opposition coalition, and I cannot stress strongly enough how important that is. You cannot even attempt a political solution if you don't have a recognized force to counter the Assad regime. It took them off the hook. It gave the Russians and others who are still either supporting them or on the fence the ability to say, well, there's no opposition. We worked very hard to help stand up such an opposition.

**QUESTION:** But is there a redline, Secretary Clinton?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, the use of chemical weapons, President Obama has said, is a redline. But I think if you look at the Administration's effort on the political front, on the UN front where we still believe that we need to get Security Council action, on the humanitarian front – the President just announced more than \$100 million more in humanitarian aid – we have been very productive players in trying to deal with an extremely complex problem.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Panetta recently told my colleague Martha Raddatz that Assad had chemical weapons ready to go, locked and loaded, ready to go. The redline used to be when he moved those chemical weapons, and now would the U.S. actually permit him to use them?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** No, no. And President Obama has been very clear about that. And I think it's also important to look at this conflict which, yes, has horrifically developed and cost the lives of so many thousands of Syrians. But in all of my discussions with many of the countries in the region and beyond, everyone is facing the same dilemma. It is very hard to train and equip opposition fighters. It is very hard to know who is going to emerge from this, and making the wrong bet could have very severe consequences. So there are certain positions and actions we've taken, and we've also laid down the redline on chemical weapons because that could have far-reaching effects beyond even the street-to-street fighting that is so terrible to watch. And it could also affect other countries.

**QUESTION:** The Administration has been criticized by some for having what has been referred to as an ad hoc foreign policy, a sort of whack-a-mole foreign policy. What is the Obama doctrine as you understand it in regards to foreign policy?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Reassert American leadership politically and economically in the face of a very severe crisis that we inherited and which called into question American leadership. Look for every way you can to bring together coalitions so that, yes, America will and must lead. It is the indispensable nation, but other countries have to step up and start taking responsibility and they are beginning to do that. We saw that certainly in Libya. We're seeing it in other places in Africa and beyond.

Make it clear that while we have to deal with the crises we need to take steps back and figure out more clearly what the consequences of actions that we and others are taking. We've been subject over the last 30 or 40 years to a lot of actions taken by the United States from the Vietnam war to the war in Iraq that have had unintended consequences that have threatened us. We want to be more thoughtful and careful about the interventions that we make.

And finally, don't lose the trend lines. While we are focused on the immediate crises and the longer term challenges, there are a lot of forces at work in the world, whether it is a change in technology which has such profound effects on how we exercise all forms of our power, whether it is women and girls, the roles and rights that they have, and the fact that where they do have equality and dignity, you're likely to have more stable societies and more prosperous economies.

Look at climate change. Don't put your head in the sand. Understand that it's going to have profound effects on our resources and so much else.

So I believe that what we've done is to pioneer the new diplomacy, taking the best and continuing the traditions of, yes, government-to-government negotiations, whether it's a trade treaty or a peace treaty, but also expanding our aperture so that we understand that the United States must tell its story better, must connect with young people better, must stand for our values more strongly. And I think by doing that we've positioned ourselves for leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**QUESTION:** So there's no daylight between the Obama doctrine and the Hillary Clinton doctrine?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, I've been a major part of helping to shape it and to implement it, and I think it will stand the test of time. That doesn't mean that, just like any administration, you don't struggle with these difficult issues. You talked about Syria. It's a really wicked problem, as people say. But we have to take a very large view and put everything into context.

## Secretary Clinton Interview with Michele Kelemen of NPR on January 29, 2013

### Interview

#### **Hillary Rodham Clinton**

Secretary of State

Washington, DC

January 29, 2013

**QUESTION:** I'd like to turn to Syria because your critics describe Syria as this Administration's Rwanda. And I wonder how it weighs on you and what more the U.S. could have done to prevent the deaths of now 60,000 people.

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, it's not a historically accurate analogy. Rwanda was particularly dreadful because it was largely unarmed people being slaughtered in huge numbers in a very short period of time, despite the presence of a UN mission in Rwanda. Syria is much more complex, much more driven by geographic and other differences among the population. You have a well-equipped military going after what started out to be largely unarmed, peaceful protestors, now pockets of armed resistance all over the country.

I think the United States has done a great deal. We are responsible for driving through sanctions against Assad that have really limited his capacity to replenish his coffers and to provide funding needed to keep his military machine going. We have helped to stand up an opposition that was notably absent in the beginning of this conflict. It wasn't like other places where there were preexisting, well-organized entities that stepped into the breach. We've had to work on that. We've become the biggest provider of humanitarian assistance.

And I think there is a lot of concern, not just by the United States but by other countries as well. I mean, we are certainly not alone in being cautious about what more we can do without causing more death and more destruction, and the unintended consequences of helping to foment an even more deadly civil war. No one is in any way satisfied with what the United States or the entire world community has done, which is why we keep pressing for UN action and keep being disappointed and blocked by the Russians.

**QUESTION:** The Russians do continue to block meaningful action. Lakhdar Brahimi, the international envoy, talked about how Syria is breaking up before everyone's eyes. Is there a diplomatic solution, or is this going to be resolved by guys with guns and more radicalized?

**SECRETARY CLINTON:** Well, I had hoped there was. I hammered out an agreement in Geneva last summer, largely negotiating with Sergey Lavrov, the foreign minister of Russia. I thought it was pretty clear what our next steps would be. And certainly from my perspective, the Russians were unwilling to go forward. We had made it our position that we would not open the

door to military action, but we wanted to take political action, economic action through the Security Council. I had reason to believe that we would be going to the Security Council to do that; and unfortunately, once again, the Russians sided with Assad, who knew that if we were able to implement the Geneva agreement that we had negotiated, that that would send a very clear signal that Assad was being isolated even further – a signal to those around him, a signal to his troops, a signal to the region. And I think the Russians decided that they would still support him much to the great loss of the Syrian people.