



Radically opposed interpretations of the conflict in Syria were given from the podium of the UN General Assembly on the penultimate day, 30th September, of the annual General Debate. While the Syrian Foreign Minister told the Assembly that the Syrian army was waging a "war against terror", his Icelandic counterpart said that war crimes had been committed and the responsables should be punished.

Walid Al-Moualem, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister of Syria said in his speech that "there is no civil war in Syria, but it is a war against terror that recognizes no values, nor justice, nor equality, and disregards any rights or laws."

Many other speakers disagreed with this view. "We invite the United Nations..to shoulder their responsibilities by taking the appropriate deterrent measures to halt the serious violations of human rights to which the Syrian people are subjected," said Foreign Minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa of Bahrain.

Gunnar Bragi Sveinsson, Foreign Minister of Iceland agreed: "Those responsible must be held accountable and should answer to the International Criminal Court," he said.

While Syria and nuclear proliferation have been high on the agenda, the theme of the high-level debate is a new strategy to combat global ills following the 2015 term of the current Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)).

John Baird, the Foreign Minister of [Canada](#) told the United Nations General Assembly that all efforts to shape a future development agenda must centre on protecting the dignity of human beings, especially those most vulnerable, the "We are not here to achieve results for governments or political leaders," Mr. Baird said.

Pointing to the plights of three girls – a child bride, a victim of rape and sexual violence and a refugee who wants to return home – he added, "We are here to protect and defend these three girls and seven billion other members of the human family."

The high-level debat started on 24 September and ends 1 October; Israel being the last country to address the annual general debate.