

Monday, 15 April 2013

Ex-British diplomat new face of Syria opposition in international community



Syrian rebels have hired a former British diplomat to help them raise awareness of their plight internationally with Washington and the United Nations being the main targets, The Independent newspaper reported Sunday.

Carne Ross used to work for the British civil service but left his post in 2004 after accusing the UK government of failing to find a non-military option against the government of Saddam Hussein in the Iraq war a year before.

After leaving his post, Ross founded a non-government organization, Independent Diplomat, which will be representing and assisting the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and opposition forces.

The New York-based NGO will advise the coalition on how to be heard in the United States and in the United Nations.

“The main focus will be at the UN and the continued discussions about Syria,” The Independent quoted him as saying. “Naturally, they [the opposition] are very frustrated at the state of diplomacy over Syria,” the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Washington and its Western allies have been hesitant to give military support to opposition forces, pointing to extremist Islamist elements capable of hijacking and dominating the Syrian uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.

Late 2012, the United States blacklisted the Al-Qaeda-linked group Al-Nusra Front in Syria, a measure that was initially criticized by the opposition.

The NGO head has previously worked to highlight causes of marginalized people whether in Kosovo, Somaliland, Western Sahara or the Occupy Wall Street movement.

“Independent Diplomat works with countries and political groups that are marginalized and cut out of the diplomatic discussion for whatever reason. The basis of our philosophy is legitimate representatives of the people need to be included in the diplomatic discussion. The coalition falls squarely within that definition.”

Like his stance on Iraq, Ross recently said that it was time for international governments to seek new non-violent ways of to intervene in Syria. He cited sanctions, interfering with the Assad regime’s electronic system or disrupting his army’s chain of supply.

The two-year conflict that started as protests against Assad has morphed into a civil war, killing at least 70,000, the UN says.