

December 18, 2011

**Joint call by Civil Society to the United Nations Security Council:
Urgent action needed to provide protection to civilians in Syria and to ensure accountability**

Press Statement

While the undersigned organizations recognize the draft resolution condemning Syria currently being discussed by the Security Council, the current text does not adequately address the severity of the situation on the ground and fails to support international accountability for crimes committed by the government of Syria. The undersigned civil society organizations from around the world call on the United Nations (UN) Security Council to hold an emergency meeting to adopt a resolution ensuring protection for victims of human rights violations in Syria and accountability for potential crimes, including crimes against humanity, committed by the Syrian authorities.

In particular, we call on the Security Council to pass a resolution that will:

- Condemn and call for an immediate end to all attacks against civilians, including within the context of peaceful protests;
- Demand that the Syrian authorities abide by the UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions, and the efforts of the League of Arab States (LAS) to end all acts of violence, release all political prisoners, remove the military from civilian populated areas, and grant access to independent observers and international media;
- Immediately refer Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for potential crimes against humanity, as highlighted in the report of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria presented on to the Human Rights Council on 2 December, which documented widespread and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms committed by the Syrian government;
- Demand the immediate cooperation of Syria with the LAS, as well as relevant humanitarian organizations, including granting them full access to its territory;
- Require states to suspend all military sales and assistance to Syria, as there is a clear risk that they will be used in the commission of serious human rights violations;
- Urge action by all relevant United Nations bodies to ensure the protection of Syrian refugees residing outside of Syria and provide for their humanitarian needs.

Since the beginning of protests in Syria, almost 5,000 individuals have been killed in addition to thousands arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared. The use of torture is rampant and widespread. Cities such as Homs, Deraa, Hama, Idlib and Deir El- Zour remain under complete military siege.

In this context, we are deeply troubled by the continuous failure of the UN Security Council to effectively act on the matter. Since last October, when the Security Council failed to adopt a strong resolution to support efforts to ensure international accountability by the Syrian government for potential crimes against humanity as a result of a veto by Russia and China, and abstentions by South

Africa, India, Brazil, and Lebanon, more than 2,500 more civilians have died in addition to thousands arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared. Unlike what is reflected in the current draft resolution, this period has also marked the failure of the Road Map initiated by LAS to end the bloodshed. The long negotiation process between LAS and the Syrian authorities ended with several obstacles imposed by the Syrian regime that make it highly unlikely that the mission of observers to Syria will take place. This is in addition to the holding of three Special Sessions at the UN Human Rights Council and the establishment of two UN independent inquiry commissions – both denied entry into Syria – which reported the likelihood of crimes against humanity being committed by the Syrian government.

We call on those states that have thus far opposed or failed to fully back international accountability for these crimes to now support efforts by the UN Security Council to ensure such accountability and provide protection to victims of human rights violations in Syria. How many more thousands must fall victim to the Syrian regime before the international community takes action to fulfill its responsibilities?

Signatories:

1. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. African Democracy Forum (ADF)
3. Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights
4. AlKarama, Switzerland
5. Al-Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment & Human Development, Sudan
6. Arab Coalition for Darfur
7. Arab Program for Human Rights Activists
8. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
9. Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC), Hong Kong
10. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, Egypt
11. Assyrian Human Rights Network
12. Bahrain Center for Human Rights BCHR
13. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
14. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
15. Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie
16. Committees for the Defense of Democracy Freedom and Human Rights, Syria
17. Conectas, Brazil
18. Conference of Syrian Kurdish Youths Abroad
19. Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS)
20. The East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
21. Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of the Childhood Condition
22. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
23. Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)
24. Franciscans International, Switzerland
25. Habi Center for Environmental Rights, Egypt
26. Hisham Mubarak Law Center, Egypt
27. Human Rights Organization in Syria (MAF)
28. Instance Marocaine des Droits Humains
29. International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
30. International Services for Human Rights (ISHR)
31. Iraqi Human Rights Organization, Denmark

32. Joint Committee for Migrants in Korea, South Korea
33. Journalists for Human Rights, Sudan
34. Justice for Peace Foundation (JPF), Thailand
35. Korean House for International Solidarity, South Korea
36. Kurdish Committee for Human Rights-Rased, Syria
37. Kurdish organization for the defense of human rights and public freedoms in Syria (DAD)
38. Kurdish Youth Union in Syria
39. Lawyers for Justice in Libya
40. LBH Masyarakat (Community Legal Aid Institute), Indonesia
41. Les Democraties Syriens
42. National Organization for Human Rights, Syria
43. Network for Global Activism, South Korea
44. Palestinian Human Rights Organization, Lebanon
45. SARANGBANG Group for Human Rights, South Korea
46. Shabab: Youth Center for Cultural Change, Sudan
47. Sisters Arab Forum for Human Rights, Yemen
48. Sudan Social Development Organization
49. The Arab Organization for Human Rights, Syria
50. The May 18 Memorial Foundation, South Korea
51. MINBYUN - Lawyers for a Democratic Society, South Korea
52. Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights
53. West Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN)
54. Yemeni Center for Transitional Justice
55. World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)
56. Interregional non-governmental organization "Committee Against Torture," Russia
57. Human Rights First Society, Saudi Arabia
58. Emirates Center for Human Rights
59. The Sahrawi Association of Victims of Grave Human Rights Violations Committed by the Moroccan State, Western Sahara
60. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
61. Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms
62. International Federation for Human Rights