

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Syria: Amnesty International calls on the Human Rights Council to keep Syria under review in the Universal Periodic Review due to the extraordinary circumstances that prevail in the country

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Syria

During the review of Syria in October 2011, the authorities accepted recommendations to guarantee the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and assembly,¹ to end conflict and violence and find a peaceful political solution to the situation in the country,² and to investigate alleged cases of violence and deaths, bringing those responsible to justice.³ These commitments appear cynical and insincere, given the situation that prevailed in Syria in October 2011 and that which prevails today.

Amnesty International has repeatedly maintained that some of the human rights violations being committed by the Syrian authorities in their crackdown on pro-reform protests amount to crimes against humanity. The findings of the UN Commission of Inquiry, released on 22 February, coincide with our own and further show that violations have been carried out with the apparent knowledge and consent of commanding officers and senior members of the Syrian government.⁴

Amnesty International has received the names of more than 6,990 people who have been killed or died in connection with the protests since mid-March 2011. This figure increases daily. Amnesty International is certain that many have been shot by security forces. Thousands have been arrested, and many have reportedly been held incommunicado and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Over 280 people are reported to have died in custody under highly suspicious circumstances. These and other human rights violations are being committed with absolute impunity. More recently the Syrian security forces have used tanks, helicopters, mortars, rockets and artillery fire to attack civilian areas.

Amnesty International urges the Council to apply paragraph 37 of the annex to Council Resolution 5/1 to keep Syria under review in the UPR due to the extraordinary circumstances that prevail in the country.⁵ To treat the adoption of the UPR outcome for Syria as business as usual will make a mockery of the UPR. Amnesty International also urges the Council to schedule a special UPR examination of Syria to follow-up on the review carried out in October 2011.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Syria on 15 March during its 19th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the review through its submission on Syria, submitted in March 2011: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE24/034/2011/en>

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¹ A/HRC/19/11, recommendations 100.42 (Russia) and 100.43 (Netherlands).

² Ibid., recommendations 100.13 (Cuba), 100.16 (Ecuador), 100.21 (Vietnam) and 100.25 (Sudan).

³ Ibid., recommendation 100.39 (Russia).

⁴ A/HRC/19/69.

⁵ Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council, Resolution 5/1, 18 June 2006.