

AI Index: PRE 01/152/2012  
23 March 2012

## **Syria: Annan mission should report on human rights violations and abuses**

Any UN mission to supervise an end to armed violence in Syria must include as part of its work the monitoring and reporting of human rights violations and abuses, including crimes against humanity, Amnesty International said today.

The call comes after the UN Security Council endorsed, in a Presidential statement on Wednesday, the “six-point plan” proposed by Kofi Annan, Joint Special Envoy for the United Nations and the Arab League on Syria.

Amnesty International is calling on Annan, the UN Security Council and the Arab League to ensure that any UN mission deployed to the country included human rights monitors who would be able to pass vital information to investigators, including at the independent international Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

“It is crucial that human rights monitors are included as part of this effort, to report and document crimes on the ground,” said Jose Luis Diaz, Amnesty International's representative at the United Nations in New York.

“The Syrian government has continued to block the entry of human rights investigators into the country – both from international organizations and from the Commission of Inquiry. This mission is a key opportunity to put that right.”

It is expected that the UN Human Rights Council will today extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry – which has corroborated Amnesty International's findings that crimes against humanity are taking place in Syria – until September.

Amnesty International said that documentation of crimes under international law by monitors was essential to ensure future accountability for those responsible.

Such accountability could be secured by investigations carried out by the International Criminal Court – which Amnesty International has called on the Security Council to make possible – or by national investigations, carried out on the basis of universal jurisdiction, leading to fair trials without the death penalty.

The organization also said there would need to be effective steps taken to protect victims, witnesses and anyone cooperating with monitors.

### **Questions over Syrian government's commitment to six-point plan**

Amnesty International also warned that many of the commitments in the “six-point plan” were similar to those that the Syrian government had agreed with the Arab League in late 2011. Arab League monitors

later concluded that the authorities had failed to implement genuinely its commitments.

As part of the UN-endorsed proposal, the authorities are called on to “intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons”, although it is not clear who will monitor such releases.

The Arab League observers were tasked with “verifying the release of persons detained due to current events”. The head of the mission said they had confirmed the releases of two-thirds of the 7,604 detainees whom the Syrian authorities said they had freed.

But credible reports indicated that other detainees had been hidden from the observers and that many thousands of others remained detained. Local human rights defenders have the names of more than 18,000 people said to be held currently, and estimate that this is less than half the actual total.

Under the six-point plan the Government is also expected to “immediately cease troop movements towards, and end the use of heavy weapons in, population centres, and begin pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres.”

The Arab League monitors also attempted to verify the withdrawal of “all armed elements” from cities and residential areas. But there were other credible reports of armoured fighting vehicles being kept in residential areas, including by being hidden in alleyways or painted white to appear non-military.

“If these six points were to be carried out in good faith by the Syrian government, that would go a significant way to improving the human rights of Syrians,” said Jose Luis Diaz.

“But the Syrian government’s main objective throughout the year-long uprising has appeared to be crushing opposition at almost any cost in human life and dignity. This plan will require a fundamental change of approach.”

Amnesty International has received the names of more than 7,200 people reported to have been killed in the context of the protests and unrest over the past year.