

AI Index: PRE 01/542/2011
22 October 2011

UN Security Council resolution on Yemen falls short

The UN Security Council's condemnation of the ongoing grave human rights violations in Yemen is welcome, but any call for accountability is doomed to fail if officials are granted immunity from investigation for abuses, Amnesty International said today.

The Council's resolution, adopted yesterday, calls for the signature and implementation of a power-transfer deal on the basis of the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative (GCC) which appears to shield President Ali Abdullah Saleh and his inner circle from any possibility of being investigated or brought to trial.

Such immunity would obstruct justice for hundreds of deaths during months of protest in Yemen, as well as a past string of serious human rights violations, including extra-judicial executions and torture.

“The UN Security Council’s efforts and those of the GCC to break the impasse and end the current torment in Yemen are to be lauded, but President Saleh must not be given immunity as a prize for stepping down,” said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International’s Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“If he and others are given legal immunity it would be a gross betrayal for the many victims of human rights violations under his rule, who still demand reparations and for all those responsible to be brought to justice.”

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the GCC to remove the immunity clause from its transition proposal.

The UN Security Council's references to such a deal must under no circumstance be interpreted to give immunity to anyone, regardless of rank or affiliation, the organization said.

Long before this year's pro-reform protests, the Yemeni government has been responsible for serious human rights violations, including extra-judicial executions, torture and enforced disappearances.

More than 200 protesters have been killed in the crackdown on pro-reform protests that began last February, and attacks on protesters continued in the capital Sana'a over the past week.

The Security Council's resolution urges Yemeni authorities to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law and to “allow the people of Yemen to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

This would include ending attacks against civilians by the security forces and upholding Yemenis' freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly.

In a report published earlier this year, Moment of Truth for Yemen, Amnesty International called on the

international community to play a more active role if Yemenis are to receive accountability for human rights violations.