

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

10 November 2011
Index: PRE 01/567/2011

Arab League must press Syria to allow human rights monitors

The Arab League must press Syria to allow entry for independent human rights monitors, Amnesty International said today, as killings and arrests continue in Syria in defiance of an agreement to end the violence.

More than 100 people are reported to have been killed since Syria announced last week that it would abide by the action plan it agreed with the Arab League on 30 October. The majority of those killed appear to have been unarmed protesters and bystanders shot by the security forces and army.

The Syrian military continue to be seen in the city of Homs, and, according to media reports, shelling of residential areas of the city has continued after the government signed up to the action plan.

“Killings and arrests of unarmed protesters and others continue to be reported on a daily basis, making a mockery of Syria’s promises to the Arab League,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Acting Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

Qatar has called for an emergency ministerial meeting on Syria this Saturday, to address what it has described as the Syrian authorities’ failure to abide by its obligations under the plan.

As part of the plan, Syria agreed to halt “all acts of violence from any source”, release “all those who are detained because of the current events” and grant “field access” to the Arab League and “Arab and international media”.

Amnesty International today wrote to the Arab League, formally requesting it to also help secure access for human rights monitors including Amnesty International and those of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“The Arab League’s action plan is a very positive step and, if implemented, could help bring an end to the relentless toll of unlawful killings and detentions we have been documenting in recent months,” said Philip Luther.

“However, Syria’s flouting of the terms of the agreement should persuade the Arab League that it needs to take further steps. Securing access for human rights monitors would be a very practical way for the League to help expose continuing abuses.”

Amnesty International has also asked the Arab League to join the call for the UN Security Council to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court, impose an arms embargo, and freeze the assets abroad of President Bashar al-Assad and his top associates.

On 5 November, the Syrian government announced the release of 553 detainees “who were involved in the events but whose hands were not stained with blood”. However, arrests of protesters and perceived supporters of the protests are continuing.

More than 3,000 people are reported to have been killed since March, many in and around

protests and during security operations against residential areas. Amnesty International believes that abuses committed in Syria in this period include crimes against humanity, as they appear to be part of a widespread, as well as systematic, attack on the civilian population.

Meanwhile, there have been increasing reports of deaths of members of the army and security forces in recent weeks. Many have allegedly been killed in clashes with the Free Syrian Army, formed in July and composed in part of defected army personnel, and others who have taken up arms with the stated intention of protecting their neighbourhoods.

Public Document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK
www.amnesty.org