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Spiralling Syria death toll reports ‘disturbing’

The Syrian government must ensure its security forces end attacks on protesters and others during ongoing unrest, Amnesty International said today amid reports of mass casualties in the town of Dera’a.

“We are deeply disturbed by reports of multiple deaths in Dera’a, with security forces firing at protesters and people coming to the aid of the injured with apparent disregard for human life,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“The Syrian authorities’ response to dissent has been swift and brutal. They must ensure security forces immediately halt use of excessive force and allow peaceful protesters to assemble and demonstrate freely.”

In the last 24 hours, security forces have reportedly killed dozens of people in and around Dera’a, including when they shot at hundreds of youths on the northern edge of the town yesterday afternoon.

Earlier that day, an attack by government forces on a sit-in at the town’s ‘Omari mosque led to the deaths of at least seven people.