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## **Geneva meeting must push for human rights monitoring in Syria**

Foreign ministers gathering in Geneva for talks on Syria have a responsibility to ensure that as violence intensifies and civilian casualties continue to mount, the establishment of a dedicated human rights monitoring presence on the ground is among the top priorities of the international community, Amnesty International said today.

The organization also called on the group not to pursue any policy of issuing amnesty or any other similar measure for crimes under international law as part of any peace plan.

Kofi Annan, the United Nations-Arab League envoy, has invited the foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - China, France, Russia, the UK and the US - to tomorrow's meeting in Geneva, as well as Turkey, Kuwait and Qatar. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Arab League chief Nabil el-Araby are also scheduled to attend, along with Catherine Ashton, the EU's High Representative for Foreign Policy and Security.

"As representatives meet to address the mushrooming crisis in Syria, we are looking to the participants to give attention to the need for a human rights monitoring presence in Syria which could monitor, investigate and publicly report on crimes against humanity, war crimes and human rights abuses by all sides," said Ann Harrison, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director.

"We consider it a major shortcoming of the UN Observer Mission that it lacks a human rights component and therefore has limited ability to investigate and report on potential crimes under international law."

"We believe that having teams deployed on the ground with a sole focus of investigating and reporting on abuses – with a view to eventual prosecution – can help to deter combatants from committing the kinds of crimes under international law we have so far documented since the beginning of the uprising."

Amnesty International said that such monitors should be provided with necessary logistical and other support, including security, so that they can travel to all areas of Syria to monitor and investigate reports of abuses and visit all places of detention.

### **No get-out-of-jail-free card**

The organization added that any "action plan" for peace should not include amnesty or any other similar measure for crimes under international law or gross human rights violations.

"It is UN policy that there should be no amnesty for crimes under international law but we have already seen how this policy was ignored in Yemen - where an immunity law has been enacted - in the interest of a negotiated settlement. Some have pointed to a Yemen-style solution in Syria," said Ann Harrison.

"Stopping the killing must be everyone's priority, but it would be immensely damaging should the international community be tempted to offer those responsible for crimes against humanity or war crimes

a get-out-of-jail-free card."