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G20: World leaders must not squander chance to save lives in Syria

Easing the suffering of millions of civilians affected by Syria's ongoing armed conflict must be a top priority for world leaders meeting at the G20 Summit in St Petersburg, Amnesty International said today.

The G20 is made up of some of the world's wealthiest countries and includes states with strong ties to each of the sides in Syria's armed conflict.

"Working together, these powerful countries can and must come up with a plan of action to ease the current humanitarian crisis," said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

Although Syria is not on the official agenda of the two-day summit hosted by Russia, it is expected to feature prominently in the talks as the USA and other nations consider launching a military intervention against the Syrian government following [allegations it used internationally banned chemical weapons](#).

"Millions of people have already been displaced in Syria or have fled abroad, creating a humanitarian crisis on a scale not seen in recent history. G20 leaders must not squander this opportunity to work together to try and prevent yet further escalation of this appalling crisis," said Shetty.

Since the G20 includes all five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, the current conference could be used as a stepping stone to action at that level. Russia, the current G20 host, and China have blocked three previous UN Security Council resolutions calling for the referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

"The Syrian crisis has put the global governance system to the ultimate test. The G20 and UN Security Council must now prove they are equipped to deal with the challenges we are facing," said Shetty.

"Future generations will hold us to account for the failures of today."

Amnesty International called on G20 leaders to:

- **Take urgent steps to ease the dire humanitarian situation inside the country.** They should ensure that all parties to the armed conflict in Syria allow unfettered access to humanitarian organizations and agencies so the civilian population receives needed assistance, without discrimination. In the case of the Syrian government, this includes granting cross-border access, as well as cross-line access.
- **Step up efforts to assist refugees,** to ease the strain on Syria's neighbours in order to assist and protect the more than 2 million men, women and children who have fled the conflict. All countries hosting asylum-seekers and refugees from Syria must ensure that their borders stay open to all persons fleeing the conflict in Syria, and that none are forcibly returned.
- **Accept a shared responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes against humanity and**

other crimes under international law committed in Syria. This includes using the principle of universal jurisdiction to bring those responsible to justice before national courts in fair trials, without recourse to the death penalty. Amnesty International also believes that the situation in Syria should be referred to the ICC.