

UN General Assembly Should Condemn the Violence in Syria

November 21, 2011

To: All Member States of the UN General Assembly

Dear Ambassador,

On October 20 a number of our organizations wrote to you to urge the UN General Assembly to demand an end to the government-sponsored violence in Syria. A lot has happened since. On November 2, Syria pledged to abide by the Arab League peace plan and cease the violence, withdraw its troops from cities, release prisoners, and allow in independent journalists and human rights monitors.

These pledges have not been fulfilled. Instead, according to human rights groups, more than 370 Syrians and counting have been killed since November 2 alone. As a result, the Arab League voted to suspend Syria's membership last week, and most recently gave Syria three days to end the "bloody repression" and allow in a monitoring mission.

As you know, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has raised "credible allegations of crimes against humanity in Syria," and according to the UN, since March, more than 3,500 people have been killed, including at least 187 children, while thousands more have been arrested, detained, forcibly disappeared, and tortured.

On November 17 a large and diverse group of countries, including many from the region, answered our call by tabling in the Third Committee of the General Assembly a resolution condemning the systematic human rights violations by the Syrian authorities. The text calls for an end to the widespread abuses by the Syrian security apparatus and for the implementation of the plan of action of the Arab League, as well as cooperation with the UN commission of inquiry.

We urge you to support this resolution and demonstrate that the world will not simply stand idle while ordinary Syrians are being killed, arbitrarily detained, and tortured.

We are aware that abuses in Syria are also being addressed by the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). Unfortunately, given the Syrian government's refusal to heed the calls of the HRC and cooperate with the commission of inquiry it established, we are convinced that the UN General Assembly, the parent body of the HRC, needs to step in. This was made all the more necessary by the exercise of their veto rights by two permanent members of the Security Council to block action by a majority.

This resolution provides the General Assembly with a critical opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the midst of a human rights emergency, and support the valuable efforts of the Arab League to finally end the bloodshed.

Regards,

1. African Center for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. African Democracy Forum (ADF)
3. Amnesty International
4. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
5. Avaaz
6. Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights
7. Cairo Institute of Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
8. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
9. Conectas Direitos Humanos
10. East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
11. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
12. Human Rights & Democracy Media Center “SHAMS” / Palestine
13. Human Rights Watch
14. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
15. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
16. Reporters sans frontières / Reporters Without Borders

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