

AI Index: PRE 01/269/2011
26 May 2011

Syria video points to ‘shoot to kill’ policy of security forces

Amnesty International has obtained video footage that points to a “shoot to kill” policy being used by the Syrian security forces to quell reform protests.

The footage, smuggled out of Syria by contacts of Amnesty International, shows protesters shot and beaten by security forces, soldiers conducting a night raid on the ‘Omari mosque in Dera’a and a mass funeral in Izraa.

“These extraordinary images were taken by Syrians who have risked their lives to document the callous attempts of the authorities to terrorize the pro-reform movement from going out onto the streets,” said Philip Luther, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

“Faced with this and other compelling evidence of rampant abuses, President Bashar al-Assad must stop the Syrian security forces shooting unarmed protesters and ensure that perpetrators are held to account for their treatment of fellow Syrians.”

The video includes scenes of:

- The military raiding the ‘Omari mosque, which was being used as a field hospital.
- Soldiers and armed men in plain clothes inside the mosque after their operation, filming bodies on the floor, celebrating and shouting “Take pictures, we killed them, they are traitors”.
- Badly injured, possibly dead, individuals being carried hurriedly away.
- People who appear to have sustained severe head injuries and in some cases to have died as a result.
- Two scenes of uniformed members of the security forces bludgeoning injured men lying on the road.
- Testimony from an ambulance worker who tells of how the army would not let anyone tend to the wounded.

The footage was shot in late March and April in and around the city of Dera’a. It shows the kind of tactics being used by the authorities in their crackdown against protesters, which currently continues in the cities of Baniyas, Homs and elsewhere.

The video also shows large groups of children joining the protests and the funerals of some six people, including a boy and an old man. The security forces have dispersed such funerals with lethal force on a number of occasions.

“Images of unarmed civilians shot in the head help explain why there have been so many fatalities. Together with footage of soldiers celebrating deaths, they document what appears to be a ‘shoot to kill’ policy,” said Philip Luther.

“Other clips showing the bludgeoning of men lying on the ground – one of whom seems to have been already shot and critically injured – highlight the wanton cruelty of the regime’s security apparatus.”

Amnesty International has the names of more than 720 people believed to have been killed by the Syrian security forces during the past two months of unrest sparked by protests throughout the region.

“These videos add to the damning collection of reasons why the UN Security Council must take decisive action and refer Syria to the International Criminal Court over its brutal crackdown against pro-reform protesters,” said Philip Luther.

Accessing the video:

- A B-Roll of footage can be downloaded from <http://tiny.cc/ai-syria-av>
- You can download a webclip from <https://adam.amnesty.org/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=133763>
- You can embed the webclip from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4940Kpmrio>
- If you would like a copy on DVD or broadcast format tape, please contact audiovis@amnesty.org