

AI Index: PRE 01/286/2011
06 June 2011

UN urged to act following deadly weekend in Syria

Amnesty International has condemned Syrian authorities' brutal treatment of protesters following one of the bloodiest weekends in months of pro-reform demonstrations, with more than 120 people reportedly shot dead.

The call came ahead of a key UN Security Council vote expected this week on the violent repression in Syria.

"As the death toll in Syria reaches staggering new heights, it is imperative that the UN Security Council - which has so far been silent on this issue - votes to condemn the killings," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"It must also take decisive action and refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Those responsible for the brutal crackdown of pro-reform protesters must no longer be allowed to get away with murder," he added.

Amnesty International has the names of 54 people reported to have been shot dead by the security forces on Saturday and Sunday. In the north-western town of Jisr al-Shughur, 43 people were killed on Saturday, including some attending a funeral procession.

A number of soldiers were also reportedly killed, but it is unclear in what circumstances.

On Friday, at least 69 people, were killed in the central town of Hama when security forces opened fire on "Children's Friday" protests in honour of the dozens of children killed in the recent unrest.

Friday's nationwide protests took place in some 200 locations and may have had the largest numbers of protesters to date.

The protests were galvanized by the brutal death of 13-year-old Hamza al-Khateeb, who died in incommunicado detention as an apparent result of torture.

Since street protests demanding reform began in February, Syrian security forces have waged a campaign of violence against the protesters.

Amnesty International has the names of 986 people reported to have been killed by the Syrian security forces during the past 11 weeks. Thousands have been arrested, with many held of them held incommunicado.

Reports of torture in custody have been widespread and Amnesty International has the names of 17 people who appear to have died as a result of such treatment.