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UN Security Council Syria statement ‘completely inadequate’

The UN Security Council’s response to the recent bloodshed in Syria is deeply inadequate, Amnesty International said today, after the council released a statement condemning the Syrian government’s deadly crackdown on protesters.

The UN statement called for an end to violence and said it “condemned the widespread violation of human rights by the Syrian authorities”, but fell short of taking decisive action. The call was issued as a presidential statement, which is not legally binding.

“The UN’s response is completely inadequate. After more than four months of violent crackdown on predominantly peaceful dissent in Syria, it is deeply disappointing that the best the Security Council can come up with is a limp statement that is not legally binding and does not refer the situation to the International Criminal Court”, said Jose Luis Diaz, Amnesty International’s representative to the UN.

“President Assad has allowed his security forces to carry out another bloody attack on civilians, with dozens killed in the city of Hama in recent days. It’s crucial that a UN Human Rights Council fact-finding mission to Syria is able to investigate the situation as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the Security Council has also failed to provide support for such a mission”, he said.

The Syrian authorities have so far not allowed the UN fact-finding delegation into the country.

““The UN must act now, with a firm and legally binding position. At the very least, its position must include imposing an arms embargo, freezing the assets of President al-Assad and other officials suspected of responsibility for crimes against humanity, and referring the situation to the ICC Prosecutor,” he added.

Amnesty International has received the names of more than 1,500 people believed to have been killed since pro-reform protests began in mid-March.

Many of them are reported to be protesters and local residents shot by live ammunition from the security forces and the army.

Thousands of others have been arrested within the context of the protests, with many being held incommunicado at unknown locations.

Families are reportedly afraid to seek information about the whereabouts of detained relatives and Amnesty International fears they may have been subjected to enforced disappearances. Many are reported to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated in custody, in some cases resulting in death.”

The crimes committed in Syria by government forces amount to crimes against humanity as they appear to be part of a widespread, as well as systematic, attack against the civilian population, Amnesty

International said.

The organisation has repeatedly called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, as it did with Libya's government in February, following the violent repression of protests there.