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Arab League vote to suspend Syria puts pressure on Security Council to act

The Arab League's decision to suspend Syria must spur the UN Security Council into action, Amnesty International said today.

At an emergency meeting in Cairo today, 18 out of 22 member states voted in favour of suspending Syria's membership of the regional organization with effect from Wednesday if the government continued to breach the terms of the Arab League's action plan.

"This decision sends a clear signal from the Arab League that the gross human rights violations that continue to be committed against mainly peaceful protesters in Syria must stop," said Philip Luther, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Director.

"Now that the Arab League has taken decisive action, it is time for the UN Security Council to finally step up to the plate and deliver an effective international response to Syria's human rights crisis."

"The question is whether those countries who have been blocking effective international action on Syria - in particular Russia and China - will recognize how isolated they have become by giving support to a Syrian regime which Amnesty International considers to have been committing crimes against humanity."

Amnesty International called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, impose an arms embargo, and freeze the assets abroad of President Bashar al-Assad and his top associates.

On 5 October Russia and China used their vetoes to block the passing of a UN Security Council resolution which condemned Syria's crackdown on protesters and left open the possibility of sanctions.

More than 100 people are reported to have been killed since Syria announced last week that it would abide by the action plan it agreed with the Arab League on 30 October. The majority of those killed appear to have been unarmed protesters and bystanders shot by the security forces and army.

Public Document

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