

UN General Assembly Should Condemn the Violence in Syria

October 20, 2011

To: All Member States of the UN General Assembly

Dear Ambassador,

In light of the Security Council's failure to address the violence by Syria's security forces against their own people, we call on the UN General Assembly urgently to adopt a resolution demanding that the Syrian government immediately halt all unlawful use of lethal and excessive force against demonstrators, end the arbitrary arrest and torture of detainees, account for all those who have been subject to enforced disappearances, cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry established by the UN Human Rights Council, allow the unrestricted deployment of human rights monitors, and grant access to humanitarian organizations and independent journalists.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has raised "credible allegations of crimes against humanity in Syria" and has encouraged the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. The Syrian Government "has consistently used excessive force to crush peaceful protests," Pillay said, denouncing "a devastatingly remorseless toll of human lives." According to the UN, since March, more than 3,000 people have been killed, including at least 187 children, while thousands more have been arrested, detained, forcibly disappeared, and tortured.

On October 4, after seven months of near complete inaction, Russia and China vetoed a Security Council resolution calling on Syria to end the violence against its citizens. India, Brazil, and South Africa abstained from the vote, invoking concerns that the condemnatory resolution might lead to the imposition of sanctions, while claiming to be deeply concerned with the plight of the Syrian people.

It is incumbent upon the General Assembly to take action where the Security Council has failed to do so. Resolution 377A of the UN General Assembly states that "if the Security Council, because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security [...], the General Assembly shall consider the matter immediately."

The General Assembly resolution should also ask the UN Secretary-General to name a special envoy for Syria, as well as refer the upcoming report of the Commission of Inquiry back to the UN Security Council for further consideration.

We believe the time has come for the General Assembly to play its part by making clear the world body will no longer stay silent, while Syrians are the victims of government-orchestrated violence and grave human rights violations.

With highest regards,

1. The African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. The African Democracy Forum (ADF)
3. Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH)
4. Amnesty International
5. Arab Foundation for Civil Society and Human Rights Support, Egypt
6. The Arab Penal Reform Organization (APRO), Egypt
7. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
8. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
9. Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)
10. Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE), Egypt
11. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
12. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
13. Conectas Direitos Humanos
14. Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS), Syria
15. East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)
16. The Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement
17. Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of the Childhood Condition (EFACC)
18. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)
19. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)
20. The Human Rights Center for the Assistance of Prisoners (HRCAP), Egypt
21. Human Rights First Society, Saudi Arabia
22. Human Rights Watch

23. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
24. International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
25. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
26. The Iraqi Human Right Society in Denmark
27. Moroccan Organization for Human Rights
28. Palestinian Human Rights Organization, Lebanon
29. Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms

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