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The UN Security Council has the responsibility to take action to end the bloodshed in Syria

We urge the UN Security Council member States to refer the situation before the International Criminal Court and to prevent the flow of arms into Syria

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), alarmed by escalating violence in Syria, calls on the UN Security Council to immediately reopen discussion on the matter and take firm and decisive action to end the bloodshed and protect the Syrian people.

<http://www.fidh.org/The-UN-Security-Council-has-the>



FIDH - Worldwide Human Rights Movement

On February 20th 2012, Syrian forces continued to bombard the city of Homs, ignoring calls from the International Committee of the Red Cross for a two-hour daily truce to facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid to civilians trapped by the unremitting violence. It is reported that the government would be bolstering its forces outside Homs, apparently to storm the city after 18 straight days of siege, thus increasing the already absolutely alarming civilian casualties in the city as well as in the other parts of the country. FIDH has repeatedly condemned the bombing of residential areas and homes, and recalled that the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations amounts to crimes against humanity.

In addition to large-scale attacks, the Syrian regime has also been targeting human rights defenders, who are increasingly facing systematic arrest, detention and acts of torture and ill-treatment. On February 16, 2012, state security forces stormed into the offices of the Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM - a prominent Syrian human rights organization) in Sabea Bahrat in downtown Damascus and arrested everyone inside, notably SCM Director, Mr. Mazen Darwich. After shutting down the offices, the armed patrol blindfolded the human rights defenders and took them to an unknown destination [1]. FIDH is deeply concerned by the arrest of these prominent human rights defenders and fears for their physical and psychological safety, as reports of torture and ill-treatment in Syrian detention centres continue to surface.

It is clear that since China and Russia vetoed the February 4th UN Security Council resolution on Syria, the Syrian regime has escalated its violent assault against its people, and the continued flow of arms into the country has further militarized the conflict. The Security Council must recognize that its failure to reach agreement is fuelling the violence in Syria, and allowing for the death and suffering of innocent civilians.

In light of the horrifying situation in Syria that has now dragged on for over 11 months, the international community has called for immediate action to end the violence, exemplified by the February 14th UN General Assembly resolution that was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the world's countries. The Security Council must heed those calls and comply with its responsibility to uphold international peace and security by reaching consensus for a strong resolution condemning the violence and ensuring the end of the bloodshed in Syria.

In particular, FIDH calls on the Security Council to:

- demand the government of Syria to immediately put an end to all human rights violations and attacks against civilians;
- call on all parties in Syria to renounce violence and to stop all violent attacks or reprisals immediately;
- demand the release of all political prisoners and persons detained arbitrarily owing to the recent incidents;
- call on the government of Syria to guarantee the right to peaceful demonstration;
- call upon the Syrian authorities to allow safe and unhindered access to humanitarian organizations, human rights organizations, and national and international media;
- call on all members states to take necessary steps to prevent the flow of arms into Syria;
- refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, to ensure that those responsible for serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity are brought to justice.

[1] See Press Releases by the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (joint programme of the FIDH with the World Organisation Against Torture - OMCT), February 16 and 22, 2012.