



Date : Tuesday 2 August 2011

Syria: Open letter to the members of the UN Security Council

<http://www.fidh.org/Open-letter-to-members-of-the-UN>

FIDH - Worldwide Human Rights Movement

Attn members of the UN Security Council

Damascus, New-York, Paris, August 2, 2011

Re. Situation in Syria

Excellencies,

FIDH and its Syrian member and partner organisations are deeply concerned about the ongoing repression in Syria, the increasing level of violence reported on a national scale, the deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in some targeted areas, and the blackout on the human rights violations committed by the Syrian authorities, as the latter continue to refuse territorial access to independent human rights NGOs, foreign journalists, and UN bodies such as the Fact finding mission on the situation in Syria mandated by the Human Rights Council of the United Nations.

These crimes may amount to crimes against humanity, yet, members of the UN Security Council have so far failed to react in line with their mandate under chapter VII of the UN Charter and in application of their Responsibility to Protect.

Since the beginning of the uprising in Syria in March 2011, FIDH and its Syrian member and partner organisations have received a considerable amount of information on the commission of extra-judicial killings, the systematic use of violence by governmental forces, mass arrests, abductions, enforced disappearances and detention of civilians, acts of torture, degrading or inhumane treatments, repression of the freedom of peaceful assembly and violations of the right to freedom of information, in particular by targeting the media and human rights defenders [\[1\]](#), military operations and actions undertaken to besiege cities, and practices amounting to collective punishment and to the deprivation of food, water, and medical supplies, as well as the restriction and denial of access to hospitals. A compilation of this information released last week, has been sent to your attention. [\[2\]](#)

The UN High Commissioner for Human rights, the UN Human Rights Council, and the UN Secretary General have all called the Syrian authorities to put an end to the repression, but this has not had an impact on the situation. On July 22, United Nations watchdogs, Francis Deng, the UN Special Adviser of the Secretary General on the prevention of Genocide and Edward Luck, the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect alerted that crimes against humanity may have been committed and continue to be committed.

Yet, in spite of these repeated calls, the repression continues to unfold before our eyes. Over the past few days, between July 31st and August 1st, the repression in Syria reached a higher degree of gravity. In the city of Hama alone, on July 31st, more than 100 people were killed as the Syrian authorities reportedly used heavy artillery, such as tanks, to bomb houses and civil infrastructures. On August 1st, the first day of Ramadan, at least 41 civilians died in several cities and villages across Syria including Hama, Arbeen, Moadamieh, Daraa, Al-Bokamal, Der Al Zour, and Homs. The use of lethal weapons by Syrian forces and raids of arbitrary arrests [\[3\]](#) as well as with further allegations of torture were also reported.

As the death toll since the beginning of the uprising comes close to 2000 deaths, the Syrian authorities continue to open fire on the civilian population, while several villages and cities across Syria are still besieged by the Syrian army, causing the civilian population to remain in urgent need of food and medical care. The nature of the violations under way allow us to conclude that crimes against humanity under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal court

are being perpetrated by the Syrian authorities.

We thus call upon members of the United Nations Security Council to intervene urgently in application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, as well as of their Responsibility to Protect, which world leaders affirmed at the World Summit of 2005, in order to prevent the commission of further crimes, protect the civilian population and prosecute those responsible, in adopting a resolution which, inter alia,

- Calls upon the Syrian government to
 - Immediately put an end to the use of force and violence against the civilian population, and to put an end to the perpetration of human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law;
 - Release all the individuals arrested and detained since the beginning of the uprising;
 - Respect in all circumstances the right to peaceful assembly;
 - Ensure the safe passage of humanitarian and medical supplies, and humanitarian agencies and workers, into the country;
 - Enable unrestricted access, including to all places of detention, to Syrian and international human rights monitors, notably the mission dispatched by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in application of the UN Human Rights Council resolution A/HRC/RES/S-16/1 of 29 April 2011;
- Decides to refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, in application of Article 13b of the Rome Statute;
- Establishes an embargo to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related material to Syria or through Syrian officials;
- Establishes a list of individuals and authorities responsible for these violations and their submission to a travel ban and the freezing of their financial assets and economic resources.

Thanking you for your attention, we trust that you will react promptly. I remain,

Sincerely Yours,

Souhayr Belhassen, FIDH President

[1] See in that regard the Urgent Interventions issued since March 2011 by the Observatory for the Protection of human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of FIDH and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)

[2] See report of FIDH, DCHRS and a coalition of 7 Syrian Human rights organisations, released on July 28 2011
<http://www.fidh.org/Bashar-Al-Assad...>

[3] On July 30th, over 195 civilians were subjected to arbitrary arrests, notably in Kanaker, Al-Bab, Lattakia and Al-Raqqa. Since then, at least 160 other civilians have allegedly been arrested across Syria.