



Syria

17 June 2011

Killing of civilians and humanitarian crisis on Syrian Turkish border

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS) are deeply concerned about the violent crackdown on inhabitants around Syrian Turkish border. According to local sources, in the last few days, more than 130 persons died, 100 were wounded and over 2000 were arbitrarily arrested in the village of Jisr al-Shoghour and around the city of Idleb.

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating, as Syrian authorities further isolate the population by regularly interrupting communications networks. Electricity and water supplies have been interrupted in some cities around Idleb, among other towns in Syria. More than 8000 Syrians have already fled Syria to find refuge in Turkey, and many more are waiting on the Turkish border to escape the violent repression and collective punishment inflicted by the Syrian authorities.

On June 3, 2011, the city of Jisr al-Shoghour answered the call issued by inhabitants of Hama to demonstrate, and thousands of Syrians took to the streets. Over 150 military tanks and 1000 soldiers positioned themselves around the city. Fifteen helicopters accompanied the ground troops to execute a military operation. Following the raid, dozens of demonstrators were allegedly killed and some houses were demolished.

According to the information received, armed gangs in plain clothes and the Syrian forces, namely two brigades of the army (brigade 17 and brigade 4, under the control of Maher al-Assad), fired live ammunition on demonstrators. and two officers and some soldiers refused to follow these orders and a number of them left the army to join civilians. The "moukhabarat" (secret police) allegedly opened fire on 30 of these soldiers.

Between June 3 and June 6, at least 70 civilians died in the governorate of Idleb, according to DCHRS, and between June 6 and June 10, 60 peaceful protesters died in Der al-Zour, Maaret al-Noaman and Jisr al-Shoghour, according to eyewitnesses. It was also reported by local sources that about 2000 individuals are currently arbitrarily detained by Syrian forces in the region. The repression continues to this day as the Syrian army has furthermore announced a larger and harsher military operation in the near future. The army justified this military operation by asserting the presence of armed groups across the region who supposedly try to take control over the province.

The Syrian army currently besieges at least four villages around the Turkish border (Jisr al-Shoghour, Marat al-Nooman, Der al-Zour, and Jabel al-zawiya) and a few other towns across Syria. For more than ten days, some of these towns have had no access to water, electricity, nor medical supplies. Demonstrators are subjected to constant acts of intimidation and threats, and wounded civilians are dissuaded from requiring medical care in hospitals.

In some cases the Syrian authorities refused humanitarian assistance to the wounded (including many children), and to other civilians in need of medical treatment. According to the information received, hospitals around Idleb have notably witnessed abductions of some of the wounded and some patients have been killed by gunshot by the Syrian authorities while in their hospital bed.

FIDH recalls that while the lives of thousands of civilians are endangered by this situation, the Syrian authorities continue to refuse territorial access to independent human rights NGOs as well as UN bodies and foreign journalists. This position seems to merely aim at masking the grave human rights violations committed in Syria today.

In light of the abusive use of force and of the intensified crackdown by the Syrian authorities since March 15, FIDH and DCHRS consider that international crimes are being perpetrated by the Syrian authorities. These crimes fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC). FIDH and DCHRS reiterate their call to the international community, in particular to the UN Security Council and the Arab League, to take immediate action to urge the Syrian authorities to put an end to the crimes committed against civilians, and to undertake all efforts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for these crimes.

<http://www.fidh.org/Killing-of-civilians-and-humanitarian-crisis-on>