



Syria

27 April 2011

Massacre of peaceful protesters in Syria : the International Community must act urgently

Bahrain and Yemen's victims not to be forgotten!

While negotiations are underway among the members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) about a possible statement on Syria, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) has decided to convene a Special Session on the human rights situation in Syria on April 29, 2011. " At last, the International Community seems to be willing to consider its responsibilities towards Syrian victims" stated Souhayr Belhassen, President of the International Federation for Human Rights.

The situation in Syria has taken a turn for the worse in an unprecedented way since the beginning of the protests. According to FIDH and its member organisation in Syria, the Damascus Center for Human Rights Studies (DCHRS), it has become obvious that international crimes - that fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) - are being perpetrated by the Syrian authorities that fully justifies the awakening of the International community. However violent crackdown against protesters by army and security forces is not a Syrian exception. Bahrain and Yemen are also the scene of fierce repressions. "It is highly regrettable that Bahrain's and Yemeni victims are still waiting for such consideration by the members of the Human rights Council. A selective approach cannot be a sustainable solution in any case" Souhayr Belhassen added.

Facing a peaceful protest movement since March 16, 2011 the Syrian authorities have responded to these calls for reforms with increased violence. As the protests have spread, the response of the security forces has hardened, leading up to the deployment of tanks in several cities (Deraa, Homs, Jabla, Douma, Banyas etc.). The use of live ammunition by security forces against demonstrators has led to the deaths of around 400 people since mid-March and hundreds are missing and more than 1700 have been detained over the last three days(1).

The gap between the official stance claiming the adoption of long awaited reforms including the lift of the state of emergency and issuance of a law on peaceful demonstrations and the systematic and violent repression on the ground is more blatant than ever. The International community must strongly condemn the gross and systematic violation of human rights by the Syrian authorities and urge them to put an immediate end to the violence. An independent international commission of inquiry must also be urgently set up in order to investigate all alleged violations of international human rights law and identify the alleged perpetrators. Those responsible should be brought to justice. The UN Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the ICC and take other appropriate measures, such as individual sanctions to halt massive targeting of civilians by the authorities.

FIDH welcomes the Special Session of the UN Human Rights Council. However "it cannot be the only answer to the very serious and deadly crackdown on Syrian protests. We hope that the UNSC member States will take urgent and

appropriate decisions under their responsibility to protect. The UNSC must take the lead by contributing to put an end to the widespread acts of violence against civilians" said Radwan Ziadeh, Director of DCHRS.

(1) See also the joint press release of the AOHR-S, DAD, NOHRS, MAF and CDF, Syria : the lift of the State of emergency and the ongoing arbitrary arrests, April 25, 2011 (in Arabic)

<http://www.fidh.org/Massacre-of-peaceful-protesters-in-Syria-the>