

**Syria Should Heed Council's Call to End Attacks** Human Rights Watch 4 August 2011 ( ... ) Syria should respond to the United Nations Security Council's condemnation of its use of force against civilians by ending attacks on overwhelmingly peaceful protesters across the country, Human Rights Watch said today.

The Security Council on August 3, 2011, adopted unanimously a presidential statement on Syria. It "condemned the widespread violations of human rights and the use of force against civilians by the Syrian authorities," called on the government "to respect its human rights obligations," and deplored the "lack of progress" in reform.

"The Security Council's unanimous statement shows that Syria can no longer count on even its close allies to support its crackdown on peaceful protesters," said Peggy Hicks, global advocacy director at Human Rights Watch. "President Bashar Assad needs to listen to the council's strong message, and end the attacks by his security forces in Hama and across the country." (...)

The presidential statement also called on Syria "to cooperate fully" with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which has sought to investigate the situation in the country. On April 29, the UN Human Rights Council asked the Office of the High Commissioner to conduct an investigation, but Syria's government has denied the requests of the high commissioner's team for access to the country. (...)

A key sticking point in Security Council discussions over the statement was Syria's claims that "armed gangs" were responsible for the violence. Some countries had proposed language that would have equated violence by Syrian forces with the actions of the protesters by simply calling on "all sides" to stop the violence. Instead, the Security Council explicitly condemned Syrian authorities for "widespread violations of human rights and use of force against civilians," while calling for restraint on all sides. (...)

Lebanon joined in the unanimous adoption of the statement, but immediately thereafter "disassociated" itself from the outcome, a step that does not alter the statement's nature or effect.

Syria will remain on the Security Council's agenda, as the statement also asked the UN secretary-general to provide an update on the situation in Syria within seven days. At that time, the Security Council should look closely at how Syria responded to the presidential statement, and take further steps as needed, Human Rights Watch said. (...)

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