

Syria: Security Council vote will embolden violators Amnesty International 19 July 2012

The failure today of the UN Security Council to deliver better human rights protection for Syrians will embolden those responsible for the crimes and violence wracking the country, Amnesty International said.

Russia and China vetoed on Thursday a UN Security Council resolution that proposed that international envoy Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan be placed under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, which allows the Security Council to authorize a range of diplomatic and economic sanctions against the Syrian government should they fail to stop using heavy weapons and withdraw troops from towns and cities. It was the third time that Russia and China have used their veto power to block Security Council resolutions on Syria.

(...)

“With violence escalating across the country, including in the capital Damascus, and with evidence that members of the Syrian security forces continue to commit crimes against humanity and war crimes, as well as mounting reports of abuses by the armed opposition, the UN Security Council had a crucial opportunity to not only renew the mandate of the UN mission in Syria but to improve and strengthen it,” said Ann Harrison, Deputy Middle East and North Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International.

“But instead, Russia and China once again vetoed a resolution on the situation in Syria, thwarting Security Council action, and highlighting the inability of the Security Council’s members to overcome political differences in the interests of the Syrian people.”

“Today’s veto will further embolden those on all sides of the conflict who are directing and committing abuses and crimes with impunity.”

Amnesty International has called on the Security Council to ensure that the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), whose mandate will expire on Friday, is renewed and strengthened by explicitly including an adequately staffed human rights component, providing the mission with sufficient expertise – including gender and children’s rights experts – and other resources to document and report on crimes against humanity, war crimes and other grave human rights abuses committed by all sides.

(...)

Amnesty International has also repeatedly called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), to freeze the assets of the Syrian President and his associates and to impose an immediate arms embargo aimed at stopping the transfer of arms to the Syrian government.

In addition, Amnesty International calls upon governments considering the supply of arms to opposition fighters to first carry out a rigorous risk assessment based on objective information to ensure that there is not a substantial risk those arms would be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of human rights, including crimes under international law. If there is a

substantial risk of such violations, the transfer must not take place.

The organization has documented sustained human rights violations by Syria's security forces, amounting to crimes against humanity since March 2011. Amnesty International has also documented war crimes committed by the military since the situation developed into a non-international armed conflict.

Although most of the human rights abuses documented by Amnesty International have been committed by the state's security and armed forces, abuses have also been committed by armed opposition groups.

This includes the torture and killing of captured soldiers and members of the shabiha pro-government militias, as well as the abduction and killing of people known or suspected of supporting or working with the government and its security forces and militias.

(...) **Read the [full press release](#) .**