

Syria: Defectors Describe Orders to Shoot Unarmed Protestors Human Rights Watch 9
July 2011

(...) Defectors from

[Syria](#)

's security forces described receiving, and following, orders to shoot on protesters to disperse them, Human Rights Watch said today. Human Rights Watch interviewed eight soldiers and four members of the security agencies who had defected since

[anti-government protests](#)

erupted in March 2011. Those interviewed participated in the government crackdown in Daraa, Izraa, Banyas, Homs, Jisr al-Shughur, Aleppo, and Damascus. The soldiers also reported participating in and witnessing the shooting and injury of dozens of protesters, and the arbitrary arrest and detention of hundreds.

All of the interviewed defectors told Human Rights Watch that their superiors had told them that they were fighting infiltrators (mundaseen), salafists, and terrorists. The defectors said they were surprised to encounter unarmed protesters instead, but still were ordered to fire on them in a number of instances. The defectors also reported that those who refused orders to shoot on protesters ran the risk of being shot themselves. (...)

(...) Under international standards such as the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable to protect life. The UN Code of Conduct for law enforcement officials says that they shall to the best of their capability prevent and rigorously oppose any violations of the law or Code of Conduct.

Human Rights Watch called on the [UN Security Council](#) to condemn the Syrian authorities' systematic violations of human rights, adopt targeted sanctions against officials responsible for the killing and torture of protesters, and impose an embargo on all arms and security equipment to Syria. Russia has opposed a European-led UN Security Council draft resolution, which condemns Syria's government but stops short of imposing sanctions. South Africa, India, and Brazil have refused so far to support the resolution. (...)

(...) Human Rights Watch called on the Syrian government to grant access to Syria to independent observers and allow them to monitor and report on developments in the country freely, and to provide full cooperation and access to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights team tasked to investigate the alleged violations. (...) See full [press release](#) .