

## **Response to Violence in Syria: Why the UN Security Council Presidential Statement Matters**

Citizens for Global Solutions Lara Yeo 5 August 2011 (...) On Wednesday the Security Council released a

[presidential statement](#)

concerning Syria by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri of India, who is the acting President of the Council this month. The statement calls upon Syrian President Bashar al-Assad

[to implement democratic reforms](#)

, demanding a peaceful Syrian-led transformation of government from one that perpetrates crimes against humanity to one that respects and protects fundamental rights and freedoms, such as the freedoms of expression and assembly.

The statement is the first formal UN document to condemn the violence and gross human rights violations that have occurred in Syria since March. (...)

(...) This is an important first step towards substantive UN action in Syria and comes after months of pressure from the international community.

However, a presidential statement is not a legally binding document and does not contain accountability measures or repercussions. Basically, it does not contain a blueprint for action. Security Council resolutions, on the other hand, are legally binding UN documents that hold criminal leaders accountable. For example, a resolution referring Assad to the International Criminal Court (ICC) would lead to the ICC taking action and issuing an arrest warrant. This sort of action will only come out of a resolution, not a presidential statement. Tyrannical rulers such as Assad are unlikely to respond to a statement, but are unable to ignore the passage of a resolution when it directly implicates their actions in the international legal system. (...)

(...) Citizens for Global Solutions urges the Security Council member states in opposition to a resolution on Syria to seriously consider the

[responsibility to protect](#)

civilians in cases where the government has failed to do so, and the

[responsibility not to veto](#)

Security Council resolutions in cases of humanitarian crises. As China and Russia have threatened to use their veto power in the past, we hope the U.S. will continue to push for a resolution regardless of the threat of veto by China or Russia, and work with other members of the opposition including India and South Africa to secure their support.

While the statement is a step in the right direction, we still need the resolution. Citizens for Global Solutions remains

[one voice of many](#)

calling on the Security Council to pass a resolution on Syria as soon as possible that refers President Bashar al-Assad to the ICC.

The Syrian people need the international community to demand justice and humanitarian assistance for them. Assad and his government have clearly demonstrated that they have no respect for the political will and fundamental rights of the Syrian people. The violence must end and the Assad regime must be held accountable. For this to happen, the UN Security Council must pass a resolution. (...)

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