

IBSA: Push Syria to end bloodshed Human Rights Watch 16 October 2011 India, Brazil, and South Africa are not leveraging their rising global influence to help stop the bloodshed in Syria, Human Rights Watch said today. Leaders of the three countries should use their two-day Heads of State and Government Dialogue Forum, hosted by President Jacob Zuma on October 17, 2011, to categorically demand that the Syrian government end its widespread and systematic attacks on antigovernment protesters and activists. Syria should also grant access to UN investigators and human rights monitors, Human Rights Watch said.

The “IBSA” forum in Pretoria brings together India, Brazil and South Africa, all of whom currently hold non-permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council. In August, an IBSA delegation went to Syria and met with the president and foreign minister.

“IBSA leaders shouldn’t sit by and watch as Syria implodes,” said Nadim Houry, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “Their efforts at private dialogue have achieved nothing, and hundreds more Syrians have died in the meantime.” (...)

On the eve of the IBSA summit, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, issued a statement confirming her office’s finding of “credible allegations of crimes against humanity in Syria.” (...)

Rather than relying on what have proven to be unreliable assurances from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, South Africa, India, and Brazil should focus on the facts and information about the widespread abuses ongoing in the country. They should spearhead efforts in the UN General Assembly to ensure that the Syrian government immediately halts all unlawful use of lethal and excessive force against demonstrators.

The IBSA countries should sponsor a General Assembly resolution to call on the Syrian government to end the arbitrary arrest and torture of detainees, account for all those who have been subject to enforced disappearances, cooperate with the UN Commission of Inquiry, and grant access to human rights monitors, humanitarian organizations, and independent journalists. (...)

“By abstaining, India, Brazil, and South Africa have failed the Syrian people and emboldened the Syrian government in its path of violence against them,” Houry said. “Their proclaimed distrust of the Western motives shouldn’t blind them into siding with an abusive government. Syria’s current behavior repudiates the very democratic ideals to which IBSA countries are committed.”

After failing in its efforts to intercede with the Syrian government, Turkey supported the vetoed Security Council resolution and has announced plans to impose sanctions on Syria. The League of Arab States convened an emergency meeting, on October 16, to map out ways “to stop the bloodshed and machine of violence.”

“The IBSA countries should not be the last to wake up to the severity of the crisis facing the Syrian people,” Houry said. “If the IBSA forum is to fulfill its founding goal of providing a credible alternative to the political dominance of the North, it needs to lead on human rights.”

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