

Letter to UN Security Council Permanent Representatives on the situation in Syria NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security

14 June 2012

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security coordinated this letter, which was sent to UN Security Council Permanent Members and signed by ten civil society organizations, including Amnesty International; the Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights; Global Action to Prevent War; the Global Justice Center; Human Rights Watch; International Action Network on Small Arms; Refugees International; Women's Refugee Commission; Women's Action for New Directions; and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

(...) We are writing to demand urgent and effective Security Council action to stop the onslaught of violence against civilians in Syria. As the recent massacres in El Houleh, Homs, Idlib and Latakia demonstrate, civilians – including women and children – are being targeted in this conflict, in flagrant violation of international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

Women are paying a high price in this conflict. They are amongst the civilians being killed by the shelling and bombing of residential areas. They are amongst the protesters who have been arbitrarily detained and injured. They are, as we know from other conflicts, at greater risk of being targeted for sexual violence, and reports indicate that this is the case in Syria. They are amongst the refugees who have fled the shocking violence. Yet, the women of Syria must not be seen simply as victims. Their voices will be crucial in any attempts to find a political, peaceful, and sustainable solution to what is rapidly becoming a civil war. (...)

We direct the Council's attention to its Resolutions 2042 and 2043, which are not being fully implemented. In particular, we wish to highlight SCR 2043's call for Syrian authorities to allow full humanitarian access to all those in need of assistance, in accordance with international law and guiding principles of humanitarian assistance. We again ask the Security Council to impose an arms embargo on Syria; to impose targeted sanctions against Syrian leaders implicated in human rights violations, following a fair and transparent process; and to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

We urge Council Members and other Member States to support neighboring states, including Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan, in keeping their borders open to Syrians fleeing this violence, particularly in ensuring women are afforded necessary protection and services. We call on donor countries to provide humanitarian assistance to these refugees. We call on all relevant international actors to ensure women and women's rights are central to any political solutions negotiated to end this violence.

In the immediate term, the Security Council should include a strong human-rights monitoring component in the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), which must include gender expertise. This component should be well-resourced and equipped to ensure victims of human rights abuses, including women, are protected from retaliation.

(...)

Read the [full letter](#) .