



INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

Commission internationale de juristes - Comisión Internacional de Juristas

" dedicated since 1952 to the primacy, coherence and implementation of international law and principles that advance human rights "

COMMUNIQUE DE PRESSE – COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

For immediate release

Geneva, 29 April 2011

P
R
E
S
S

R
E
L
E
A
S
E

Syria: Human Rights Council requests establishment of UN-led fact finding mission, international community must continue to act

The United Nations Human Rights Council, the UN's political body charged with the promotion and protection of human rights, today convened a special session on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic. By affirmative vote of 26 of the 47 members, the Council adopted a resolution on the human rights crisis in Syria. While welcoming the content of the resolution, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) expressed regret that the Human Rights Council was unable to adopt a resolution on such a critical situation without consensus. The ICJ had called on the Council to take strong and unanimous action in response to the ongoing gross human rights violations committed by the Syrian security forces, including members of the Presidential guard and pro-regime militia.

Today's resolution of the Human Rights Council includes a request to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to urgently dispatch an independent, UN-led mission to investigate the alleged violations of international human rights law in Syria with a view to establishing accountability and avoiding impunity.

The ICJ called on the Syrian authorities to cooperate fully with the UN-led mission, to provide investigators with all information relevant the mission's mandate and to refrain from any act of intimidation or reprisals against victims and witnesses who seek to cooperate with the mission.

The Human Rights Council's resolution also urges the Syrian Government to put an end immediately to all human rights violations and immediately and unconditionally to release all arbitrarily detained persons, including those detained for political reasons, together with those detained before recent events, such as ICJ Commissioner and 2010 Martin Ennals Award winner Muhannad Al-Hasani.

The international community must urgently intensify its efforts to end the widespread unlawful killings in Syria and to protect the Syrian population from other wide-scale human rights violations. The ICJ has urged all UN institutions, including the Security Council, to consider effective options to ensure the immediate protection of the Syrian population; accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations; and justice for victims.

The ICJ also urged the Human Rights Council to remain seized of the situation in Syria and to be consistent in its approach to all situations. Noting that Syria is seeking election to the Human Rights Council in June, the ICJ emphasised that membership requires a pledge to uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. *"During the course of a special session in February this year, the Human Rights Council concluded that the Libyan Government had repudiated its commitment to human rights as a result of its gross violations of human rights and that Libya should therefore be stripped of its membership rights in the Council"*, said Alex Conte, ICJ Permanent Representative to the United Nations. *"It must act consistently with this approach and not elect Syria to membership*

The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

33, rue des Bains, P.O. Box 91, 1211 Geneva 8, Switzerland

in the Council until there is a satisfactory resolution of the current human rights crisis there”, he concluded.

For more information, please contact Alex Conte, ICJ Permanent Representative to the United Nations, at +41-79-957-2733, or Saïd Benarbia, Middle East & North Africa Legal Adviser, at +41-22-979-3817.