

14 June 2012

To: All UN Security Council Permanent Representatives

Dear Ambassador,

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.

On the issue of women, peace and security alone, the obligations of the Security Council and United Nations Member states are clear. Resolution 1325 (2000), in conjunction with resolutions regarding Protection of Civilians, Children and Armed Conflict, and international obligations regarding human rights, must result in action for the Syrian people. The tools and framework of the Council are intended to ensure the prevention of exactly this type of bloodshed and horrific violence, and to bring about a truly peaceful solution with the active engagement of Syrian women and men.

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.

Ambassador, the people of Syria have endured more than a year of brutal attacks, a time during which the Council was largely unable to come decisively to their aid. Over the last few weeks, despite the work of the Joint Special Envoy and the establishment of UNSMIS, the situation continues to deteriorate. As

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said on 7 June following the Council's deliberations on Syria, bolder action is needed.

We urge you, in your capacity as a Security Council member and as a United Nations Member State, to ensure that you not abandon this population to the fate that so many others have faced in conflict. We look forward to your rapid action on the points above.

Yours Sincerely,

Sarah Taylor
EXECUTIVE COORDINATOR
NGO WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

ON BEHALF OF:

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
CONSORTIUM ON GENDER, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS
GLOBAL ACTION TO PREVENT WAR
GLOBAL JUSTICE CENTER
HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH
INTERNATIONAL ACTION NETWORK ON SMALL ARMS
REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION
WOMEN'S ACTION FOR NEW DIRECTIONS
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

CC: Permanent Missions to the United Nations
H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations Joint Special Envoy Kofi Annan
H.E. Mr. Nabil Elaraby, Secretary General, League of Arab States
Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Mr. B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs