

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	300
Land:	Syrien
Kilde:	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Titel:	Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign and Commonwealth Office Report – Quarterly Updates: Syria
Udgivet:	30. september 2012
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	6. december 2012

[EN](#) | [DE](#)**Source:**

FCO - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Title:

Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report -Quarterly Updates: Syria

Publication date:

30 September 2012

ecoi.net summary: Quarterly updates on the human rights situation [ID 228776]**Countries:**

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original link](#)**Recommended citation:**

FCO - UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report -Quarterly Updates: Syria, 30 September 2012 (available at ecoi.net)
http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/228776/336865_en.html (accessed 23 October 2012)



Human Rights and Democracy: The 2011 Foreign & Commonwealth Office Report -Quarterly Updates: Syria

Quarterly Updates: Syria

Latest Update: 30 September 2012

The past few months has seen a further marked deterioration in the situation in Syria. The number of deaths being reported on a daily basis has increased significantly and first-hand accounts of human rights violations and abuses have risen dramatically. It is estimated that as many as 5,000 people may have been killed during the month of August, 1600 of them during the last week of the month alone. The Syrian regime's increased use of attack aircraft and assault helicopters in urban civilian areas has been a particular cause of concern. It is difficult to give an accurate estimate of the number of those imprisoned and at risk of mistreatment and torture. Most independent observers put the number of prisoners at more than 30,000 but this is disputed by the Syrian regime.

Highlighting the serious human rights concerns in Syria, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution on 28 September. It called on the Syrian Government to meet its responsibility to protect the Syrian population. It expressed deep concern at the escalation of violence in the country and at the growing number of refugees and people forced to leave their homes. The Council agreed to extend the mandate of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria for a further six months.

As an independent body, the UN Commission of Inquiry is invaluable and its reporting over the past 12 months has highlighted gross violations being carried out by the Assad regime against its own civilian population. The latest report, issued on 15 August, has again stated that the Syrian government has manifestly failed in its responsibility to protect its population, and that Syrian forces have committed crimes against humanity with the knowledge of individuals at the highest levels of government. These include arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, torture and sexual violence, systematic attacks against the civilian population (including the killing of peaceful demonstrators) and the persecution of human rights defenders and activists. Particularly disturbing are the reports of the ill-treatment of children, including sexual torture. The UK has repeatedly and publicly condemned the Syrian regime's human rights violations.

The Commission of Inquiry has found that armed opposition groups have also been responsible for human rights abuses in Syria, though these are not of the same gravity, frequency and scale of the violations committed by

government forces and their Shabbiha militia. The UK condemns atrocities committed by armed groups and urges all parties in Syria to respect international human rights norms.

The UK is supporting efforts to gather independent evidence on human rights violations and abuses in Syria that could be used in a future process of accountability.

The recent Commission of Inquiry report included the findings of its special enquiry into the massacre in Al-Houla on 27 May. In carrying out the special enquiry, which was undertaken at the request of the UN Human Rights Council, the Commission conducted interviews with witnesses, examined video recordings and satellite imagery as well as reviewing information from other sources. The Commission identified that government forces and their Shabbiha militia were responsible for the massacre.

On 30 August at the UN Security Council meeting in New York, the British Foreign Secretary made clear that "those responsible for crimes in Syria should be left in no doubt that they will be held accountable" and he has made it clear that the UK will fully support initiatives to bring the situation in Syria to the attention of the International Criminal Court. This was further underlined in his statement to the House of Commons on 3 September <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/news/latest-news/?view=PressS&id=806183482>

Over 290,000 people have now fled Syria and 1.2 million more have been forced to move to other areas within the country. Up to 2.5 million are now thought to be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. The UK has now committed £38.5million to the international humanitarian response, to provide food, medical care, shelter and other essential support to tens of thousands of people affected by the fighting in Syria and refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Iraq.

The UK has been at the forefront of delivering 17 rounds of EU sanctions against the Syrian regime. The measures include asset freezes and travel bans against 155 individuals responsible for violence against the civilian population and supporting or benefitting from the Syrian regime, and those associated with them. A further 52 entities have also been subjected to asset freezes and sanctions also include arms and trade restrictions.

Latest Update: 30 June 2012

Since anti-government protests began in Syria in March 2011, there has been a dramatic rise in reports of gross human rights violations and an escalation in violence. As many as 15,000 people may have died, including 500 children, and thousands of political prisoners are imprisoned and at risk of mistreatment and torture. The UN Secretary-General's report on Children and Armed Conflict on 11 June 2012 accused the Assad regime of using children as young as nine as human shields on tanks to prevent rebel attacks, and said children have also been victims of detention, torture and sexual violence. Rebel forces were also criticised for deploying children on the front line. On 14 June, Amnesty International released a report which it said provided fresh evidence of widespread and systematic human rights violations, including crimes against humanity and war crimes. The report says these crimes are being perpetrated as part of state policy to exact revenge against communities suspected of supporting the opposition and to intimidate people into submission.

The massacre of men, women and children in al-Houlah on 25 May stands out as particularly horrific against a backdrop of ongoing appalling brutality by the Syrian regime being perpetrated across the country. We are deeply concerned by reports from activists suggesting that following tank bombardment, Syrian government forces and "Shabbiha" militia entered the village and killed civilian men, women and children and then burned bodies to hide the evidence. The UN Mission in Syria reported that 108 civilians were killed including 49 children all under the age of ten. A similar atrocity appears to have been committed in al-Qubair where 78 people were killed including women and children. UN monitors attempting to report on these events have been shot at and obstructed.

The Foreign Secretary condemned the massacre in al-Houlah on 27 May and the UN Security Council met in an emergency session to express its unanimous condemnation of the incident. The UK co-sponsored the UN Human Rights Council resolution on 1 June which condemned the al-Houlah massacre, requested the UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate and gather evidence about it and highlighted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' recommendation that the UN Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

As a visible demonstration of our revulsion at this inexcusable attack, the UK along with the US, Canada, Australia, France, Germany and other partners in the EU expelled Syrian diplomats from capitals on 29 May.

In a [statement](#) to parliament on 11 June, Foreign Secretary William Hague condemned "the grotesque crimes which have illuminated to the world the nature of the events in Syria and the conduct of the Assad regime".

The UN Commission of Inquiry investigating human rights in Syria issued its latest report on 26 June. It said rape,

sexual assault and other sexual violence against men, women and children have continued to take place and occurred in two distinct circumstances. The first is during the searches of houses as Government forces entered towns and villages; the second, during interrogations in detention.

Over 90,000 people have fled Syria and 500,000 more have been forced to move to other areas within the country. Up to one million people are now thought to be in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, according to the UN. We have now committed £8.5m in funding for the global humanitarian response in Syria and the region.

We hope to expand the range of programmes in support of accountability mechanisms and have issued a call for proposals from human rights specialist organisations (domestic and international) to ensure that alleged human rights violations, abuses and international crimes are recorded and those responsible are held to account and to maintain support for international processes in the UN.

The UK has been at the forefront of delivering 16 rounds of EU sanctions against the Syrian regime subjecting a total of 129 individuals and 49 entities to asset freezes and travel bans. The sanctions also include arms and trade restrictions.

We will continue our efforts in the UN, in the EU, with our other partners, including Russia and China, and with Kofi Annan and his team to bring a lasting resolution to the terrible violence in Syria.

Quarter One Update: 31 March 2012

The human rights situation in Syria continued to deteriorate in the first three months of 2012. After a year of brutal repression of anti-regime protests, the UN estimated in March that more than 9,000 people, including over 380 children, had been killed. Throughout the uprising, thousands of Syrians have also been detained. The regime has continued to commit widespread and systematic human rights violations. There have been many credible reports of torture and of rape of men, women and children. On 14 March 2012, Amnesty International released a report alleging that the Syrian authorities used over 31 different torture methods against Syrian detainees, including beatings with whips, braided cables and batons; sexual violence; electric shocks; and shackling prisoners in positions which cause permanent damage.

In February 2012 the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and the UN Human Rights Council-mandated Commission of Inquiry both stated that systematic and widespread human rights violations in Syria might amount to crimes against humanity. The Commission of Inquiry also stated that anti government groups had committed abuses, although not comparable in scale and organisation to those carried out by the State.

In February and March, the Assad regime stepped up its violent crackdowns, using sustained heavy artillery bombardments in a number of Syrian towns, including Homs, Idlib (near the Turkish border) and Zabadani (near the Lebanese border) to try to destroy the opposition movement. Residential areas were shelled indiscriminately, leading to hundreds of deaths, widespread destruction and increasing humanitarian need.

The UK held the presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC) in March. While in that role we led efforts to agree the 21 March UNSC Presidential Statement on Syria. In the statement, the Security Council unanimously expressed its grave concern over the deteriorating situation in Syria and its full support for the efforts of Joint UN/Arab League/ Envoy Kofi Annan, including: to stop the violence; negotiate a political transition process; ensure the release of those who have been arbitrarily detained; safeguard Syrians' rights to free movement; and to respect the right to freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed in Syria.

In a [speech](#) to parliament on 6 February, Foreign Secretary William Hague underlined that the UK intends to hold those responsible for human rights violations in Syria to account for their actions. The UK continued to support the work of the UN's Commission of Inquiry, including by working to ensure the extension of its mandate at the Human Rights Council in March. We have also worked with international partners to develop accountability mechanisms to deal with cases of human rights violations and abuses. The UN Human Rights Council's urgent high-level meeting in Geneva in March 2012 discussed the grave human rights situation in Syria and called for a new focus on accountability through the mapping of casualty figures and reports of human rights violations. The Council's resolution requested that the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights take responsibility for the secure storage of evidence and information gathered by the Commission of Inquiry for use in a future accountability process.

The UK also helped directly to document human rights violations, abuses and atrocities. In February 2012 the UK sent a mission of lawyers and forensic investigators to the region to gather evidence on human rights violations and abuses committed in Syria. We will pass this information to the Commission of Inquiry and the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights to ensure that this work helps to bring about a day of reckoning for perpetrators.

Working closely with our international partners, the UK pushed for further EU sanctions on Syria to increase the economic and political pressure on Assad's regime. Between January and March, the EU: Froze the assets of an additional 11 entities including Syrian banks and petroleum companies, bringing the total to 41 entities; Froze the assets and imposed a travel ban on an additional 41 individuals including military officials and Assad family members, bringing the total to 125 individuals; and banned Syrian Government access to gold and precious metals markets.

We will continue to push for tougher sanctions on Syria and encourage our non-EU partners to impose their own restrictive measures to squeeze the finances of the regime.

published on  European Country of Origin Information Network