Activist Guide

STOP THE BLOODSHED
Repression in Syria
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Repression in Syria

Amnesty International has received the names of almost 2,000 people believed to have been killed since pro-reform protests began in Syria in mid-March of 2011. Many of them are reported to be protesters and local residents shot by live ammunition from the security forces and the army. Thousands of others have been arrested within the context of the protests, with many being held incommunicado at unknown locations.

Families are reportedly afraid to seek information about the whereabouts of detained relatives and Amnesty International fears they may have been subjected to enforced disappearances. Many are reported to have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated in custody, in some cases resulting in death.

Amnesty International believes that the abuses committed in Syria by government forces amount to crimes against humanity as they appear to be part of a widespread, as well as systematic, attack against the civilian population, Amnesty International said.

Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, as it did with the situation in Libya in February of 2011, following the violent repression of protests there.


About Amnesty International

Founded in 1961 and celebrating its 50th Anniversary this year, Amnesty International—a Nobel Peace Prize winner—is now the world’s largest human rights organization, with 3 million members and supporters in more than 150 countries and territories and 500,000 supporters in the United States. Bringing together millions of people around the globe to shine a light on injustice, we strive to protect the rights of all people to live with dignity, free from violence and injustice.

Our global movement of determined and compassionate individuals has mobilized for more than 50 years to free people from prisons and death chambers and institute laws that will protect people from brutality, challenge vicious authorities and combat injustice. Amnesty International investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied by campaigning for human rights worldwide.

**Amnesty International has long called for Syrians to be free to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association.** Discriminatory legislation and practices remain in force against women and the Kurdish minority. Torture and ill-treatment in detention continues to be reported and carried out with impunity. Human rights defenders continue to face arrest, harassment and restrictions on their freedom of movement. Syria retains the death penalty.

For more information, or to join the movement, please visit [www.amnestyusa.org/](http://www.amnestyusa.org/).
Key Actions

1. **Sign & circulate the global action** urging Brazil, South Africa & India to use their influence with the UN Security Council to stop the bloodshed in Syria. Take action online at [http://bit.ly/UNforSyria](http://bit.ly/UNforSyria) or print the petition from this guide (p. 10).

2. **Make your mark on the *Eyes on Syria* Interactive Map.**
   Visit [www.eyesonsyria.org](http://www.eyesonsyria.org) to witness interactive evidence of Amnesty International’s recent report findings on deaths in custody in Syria, and also to mark your activism on the global solidarity map. Take an individual or group solidarity picture or video with a solidarity message and send it to crisis@aiusa.org, together with your location and date to get mapped.

   Use our pre-made signs ([https://bit.ly/syriasigns](https://bit.ly/syriasigns)) or design your own, sticking to our key messages. Get creative and organize a demo or rally to gain visibility and don’t forget to send pictures to map yourself on *Eyes on Syria*. For visibility ideas, see pages 6-7.

Human Rights Messaging & Talking Points

Amnesty International is not calling for so-called regime change in Syria. AI does not take a position on any political party, agenda or ideology in Syria, and is instead, focused on the human rights violations which have followed the crackdown on peaceful protests.

Amnesty International has received the names of almost 2,000 people believed to have been killed since pro-reform protests began in mid-March. Many of them are reported to be protesters and local residents shot by live ammunition from the security forces and the army.

Thousands of others have been arrested within the context of the protests, with many being held incommunicado at unknown locations.

Amnesty International believes that the abuses committed in Syria by government forces amount to crimes against humanity, as they appear to be part of a widespread, as well as systematic, attack against the civilian population.

Individuals responsible for the serious and systematic human rights violations committed against Syrian civilians should be held accountable. Therefore, the UN Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court for investigation.

Furthermore, the UN Security Council should impose an arms embargo on Syria and freeze the assets abroad of the Syrian President and his senior associates.

Amnesty International believes protesters must have the right to organize protests and demonstrate free from intimidation, violence, and the threat of arbitrary detention and prosecution.
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL’S CRISIS RESPONSE TO ABUSES IN SYRIA

Getting involved through an AI perspective

In light of the situation in Syria and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, Amnesty members are encouraged to participate in coordinated actions with other organizations to express solidarity and support for peaceful protestors. In this respect, there are a few points to consider before committing yourself to being involved:

Amnesty International is not calling for so-called regime change in Syria. Amnesty International does not take a position on any political party, agenda or ideology in a particular country, and is not calling for any head of state to step down, or even for a particular political system to be put in place. Instead, AI focuses on the right of human rights defenders, activists and demonstrators to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; on the obligation of all governments to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work free from intimidation, harassment and threats on the obligation of military, security and police forces to refrain from using unnecessary or excessive force against protesters; and on accountability for human rights abuses, whether committed by state or non-state actors.

Please exercise caution when supporting or organizing events in solidarity for peaceful protestors in the Middle East or North Africa and make sure to focus on Amnesty International’s messages and the overall human rights framework when participating.

Amnesty International relies on its independent and impartial research and funding to maintain utmost integrity and credibility in the global human rights movement and beyond. Therefore, Amnesty activists should be particularly careful about sharing any public platform, making joint public statements or jointly organizing events so as not to be seen supporting a particular economic, social, political system or religious ideology or to take sides on a conflict. **Focus on neutrality and human rights.**

Feel encouraged to collaborate with other organizations and diaspora groups, however, please follow these general guidelines on joint events and make sure your action/participation is clearly focused on human rights in Syria (and not on regime change or other non-Amnesty asks). Additionally, please check in with AIUSA’s country specialist for Syria for questions or for more information at syria@aiusa.org or crisis@aiusa.org.

Amnesty International’s Primary Objectives for Syria Crisis

1. Protest the escalating violence and the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria,
2. Show solidarity with peaceful protestors in Syria,
3. Urge the UN Security Council to pass a resolution on Syria that condemns the ongoing violence, refers the situation to the International Criminal Court, and imposes an arms embargo.

STOP THE BLOODSHED: Repression in Syria Activist Guide
Because events on the ground in Syria are moving quickly, please refer to the Human Rights Now Blog and to the AIUSA Syria Country page for updates.

Creating a Visible Public Action

LOCATION: A highly visible/symbolic public space in your community (along commuter route, shopping area, public park, etc)

TIME: Mid-September, ongoing—pick a time when you believe a lot of people will cross your space

SUGGESTED SLOANS: /We Stand in Solidarity with Peaceful Protestors in Syria, Human Rights for Syria, Stop the Bloodshed

- Could be integrated into an already-scheduled local group meeting or event - if feasible, as a hands-on exercise.
- At the end of August Amnesty International is planning to publish new materials on Syria. This new information is likely to generate media interest and will be accompanied by a press release, which could be localized by including information about a local event / action.

Follow these basic steps for any public action:
1. Prior to your event, secure a permit if necessary and alert local media and bloggers
2. Create visual and engage people who pass by. Have them sign your petition
3. Take photos (and videos!) If you use social media, post live updates to Twitter and Facebook. Upload your videos (if any) to YouTube and share with us
4. Fax signed petitions to the embassies of South Africa, Brazil and India
5. Produce a short write up of your event and post to a blog and/or send to crisis@aiusa.org
6. Send your photos and video links with a brief description, including location and date, to crisis@aiusa.org.

OPTIONS: What follows are some basic options. Actions have been designed for only needing a handful of activists and can be adapted (however, please stick to the main messages and asks):

OPTION 1: CONDUCT A PUBLIC STUNT

Possible Setups:
A small group of activists, covered by red color (“bullet holes”, imprints of hands), lie on the ground, symbolizing killed protesters.

Another group of activists can sit around on beach chairs, doing “nothing” (drinking lemonade, read a magazine/book, playing a game on their smart phone, etc.), symbolizing the UN Security Council’s inaction. Activists in the beach chairs can have flags of countries that oppose UN Security Council action attached on pg. 9 (Brazil, South Africa, India).

A group of activists from AI Croatia engaged the public with a stunt at the park. While some lie on the ground, symbolizing killed protestors, others collect signatures, take photos/videos and share action via social media. (July 2011)
OPTION 2: CONDUCT A VIGIL

Possible Setups:
Gather group members in formation to spell out words, or place candles forming words such as “Syria,” “Stop the Bloodshed,” or “Human Rights for Syria.”

Have one group of activists hold large photos of individuals that were killed in the context of the uprising. We have documented many individual cases of people that were killed over the last few months. You can highlight these individual stories, which will be a powerful way to engage the public. Please send an email to crisis@aiusa.org for additional materials or find our most recent Syria reports at http://bit.ly/deadlydetention (Sept 2011) or at http://bit.ly/TellKalakh (July 2011).

At the same time, always remember to have another group of activists engaging the public, collecting signatures, taking photos/videos and sharing via social media.

OPTION 3: RENAME A PUBLIC PLACE

Possible Setups:
Pick the name of a place or city that is currently—or was—under attack in Syria, and rename a public place in your community or on your campus in solidarity (such as Hama, Deir al-Zor, Homs or Tell Kalakh).

Bring Amnesty signs and pictures (it is helpful to create a main sign stating “Welcome to ____” as demonstrated in the picture to the right). Once again, make sure there are activists in charge of engaging the public, taking photos, collecting petition signatures and communicating on social media during the action!
Letters to the Editor

Writing letters to the editor is a great way to further raise awareness about the current situation in Syria with a large audience and to keep human rights at the heart of the dialogue. Please visit www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/syria_oped.pdf for a current example of an op-ed on Syria.

To significantly increase the chances that your letter is printed, please keep the following points in mind:

- Use AI talking points/messages to guide your letter (Page 4), but also use your own words, style & voice as well.
- Try to frame your letter as a response to a recent article, editorial, or event covered by your newspaper.
- Keep your letter concise and to the point. Check your newspaper’s website for guidelines on word count; bear in mind that most newspapers will only accept letters of 150-200 words.
- Make sure to give your contact details, including phone number. (Phone numbers will not be published; editors generally call authors to confirm the validity of the letter before publishing.)
- Include your Amnesty International affiliation at the bottom of your letter if appropriate; however, be aware of mentioning the organization too many times and sounding self-promotional.
- Check with your newspaper’s website to submit your letter via postal mail, fax or email.
- Wrap your letter up by explaining what you think needs to happen now and make a call to action using one of Amnesty International’s 3 key actions (Page 5).
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**On the Web**

**Eyes on Syria Mapping Platform**

an interactive platform that maps and presents research on human rights abuses in Syria, while tracking global Amnesty activism in support of their demands for basic human rights.  
www.eyesonsyria.org

**AIUSA’s Syria Page**

www.amnestyusa.org/syria

**Follow Al Crisis Campaigner @ckoettl for developments at the UN, on-the-ground updates and new actions, and Al Staffer @jpmlynch for coverage of the entire Middle East North Africa Region, including Syria**

**In the AIUSA Section**

**Connect with Regional Offices and Field Organizers**

Call 866-A-REGION to be connected with the Field Organizer for your state who can help you with questions or needs you might have. Or visit AIUSA’s Act Locally Page to find your Regional Office and groups in your area.

**Country Specialists & Co-Groups**

Amnesty International’s work on protecting and promoting human rights in each country is greatly facilitated by a number of member experts who serve as Country Specialists and leaders in Regional Coordination Groups. To contact AIUSA’s Syria Country Specialist, email syria@aiusa.org
Representatives of the governments of Brazil, South Africa and India:

We urge you to work with other members of the UN Security Council to issue a firm and legally binding resolution to help stop the brutal crackdown against predominantly peaceful protests in Syria.

- Since largely peaceful protests began in March, Syrian authorities' have brutally responded to their people’s demands with bullets and bloodshed.
- Amnesty International has received the names of more than 1,500 people believed to have been killed since pro-reform protests began in mid-March. Many of them are reported to be protesters and local residents shot by live ammunition from the security forces and the army.
- The UN Security Council’s response has been completely inadequate and lacks decisive action. It must follow up with a firm and legally binding position (which must include imposing an arms embargo, freezing the assets abroad of the Syrian President and his senior associates and referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court).

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