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Human Rights Now

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*Human Rights Now(HRN) is a Japan based international human rights NGO with
ECOSOC special consultative status.*

HRN dedicates for promotion and protection of human rights of people in the world.

Statement: Human Rights Now urges the immediate cessation of the use of chemical and biological weapons in Syria and the immediate resolution of the facts, and it states its utmost concern with the plan to intervene with military or similar action by the US.

1. Human Rights Now (HRN), a Tokyo based international human rights NGO, would like to express its utmost concern with the apparent use of chemical and biological weapons in Syria.

On August 21, a chemical and biological weapons attack occurred near Damascus, Syria, killing many citizens.

On August 24, 2013, the international medical humanitarian organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported on their website that three MSF-supported hospitals in Syria's Damascus governorate reported to them that they received approximately 3,600 patients with neurotoxic symptoms on the morning of Wednesday, August 21, 2013. Of these patients, 355 reportedly died. The patients were treated with MSF-supplied atropine, a drug used to treat neurotoxic symptoms. Dr. Janssens, a representative, said that “MSF can neither scientifically confirm the cause of these symptoms nor establish who is responsible for the attack. However, the reported symptoms of the patients, in addition to the epidemiological pattern of the events—characterized by the massive influx of patients in a short period of time, the origin of the patients, and the contamination of medical and first aid workers—strongly indicate mass exposure to a neurotoxic agent.”

The use of chemical weapons is atrocious and inhumane, and it constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law, which absolutely prohibits the use of chemical and

biological weapons. HRN urges all parties involved in their use to immediately and completely stop and never repeat the use of chemical and biological weapons.

2. On August 19, UN inspectors, led by Ake Sellstrom and 20 chemical weapons experts, began to investigate allegations of a suspected chemical weapon attack near Damascus.

Both the Syrian government and anti-government groups agreed to allow UN inspectors to conduct their investigation, but after their work began, the UN team was subjected to unidentified sniper attacks that hit a vehicle in their convoy, blocking a safe and fair investigation.

HRN urges all people concerned to ensure a safe investigation without interruption.

UN inspectors are still allowed to enter areas of suspected chemical weapons attack, for example in Aleppo, but they must also be able investigate near Damascus. In addition, the UN Commission of Inquiry led by Pablo Pinheir should investigate too.

HRN urges all people concerned to cooperate with UN team in conducting a fair investigation without interruption.

3. In response to the August 21st incident, the US, UK and France concluded that the present Syrian government used chemical weapons, and they proposed intervention in Syria with military action. On August 29, the UK Parliament voted against such action, and the Prime Minister conceded to the vote; but the US and France still contemplate military action.

However, we are compelled to state our utmost concern that such military action would ignore the Security Council and be conducted without a Security Council resolution authorizing it. It goes without saying that the 1945 Charter of the UN regards military action without the approval of the Security Council illegal as a rule. Even taking into account the seriousness of the situation, we cannot admit the illegal use of armed force without first achieving a consensus in the international community.

In addition, without having waited for the results of the UN inspection team's investigation, the decisions that the present Syrian government used chemical weapons and that military intervention should be conducted were made too hastily. Because the US, UK and France have not released any evidence that the present Syrian government used chemical weapons, it is impossible for the world community to validate or make a decision on the issue transparently.

4. Since the start of Syrian conflict, HRN has severely criticized the present Syrian government for violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. HRN has also urged all parties concerned to stop violating human rights immediately, and the UN Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court for a solution to the Syrian crisis.

At the same time, some of the antigovernment groups have also been violating international human rights law and international humanitarian law by conducting such things as executions, torture and looting.

It is extremely regrettable for us that the world community has not yet established the facts of the situation under international rules nor achieved a consensus to settle the conflict.

HRN urges all parties concerned to solve the situation in line with international law and to immediately stop violating human rights and international humanitarian law.

In addition, in order to end the civil war, rather than intervening in the conflict for one side or another, we should establish rules to not give weapons or military aid to either side.

For this purpose, the Security Council should hold an emergency meeting to resolve the situation based on the UN Charter and with international consensus.