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Statement on current human rights situation in Syria

Since the Assad administration and antigovernment forces initiated fighting, more than 10,000 deaths in Syria have been reported.¹ Furthermore, on May 25 this year, massacre occurred in the town of Haula, located in central Syria, in which 108 people including 49 children and 34 women were killed according to the United Nations estimates.² Subsequently, civilian deaths continued to increase. For example, in June, another murders occurred in Haffa,³ a town in the northeast, and Kubeiru,⁴ a village in central Syria. The chain of violence in Syria is such that no one can stop it, and the UN officials have recognized the Syrian situation as a civil war.⁵

Human Rights Now, a Tokyo base international human rights NGO, expresses its grave concern over the situation in Syria, and it demands the following the Syrian government as well as the international community:

1. Implement an immediate ceasefire

On March 25 this year, Special Envoy Kofi Annan proposed the six-point proposal requiring the cessation of conflict between the Syrian government and antigovernment forces, which was officially accepted by the Syrian government. . The Security Council in Resolution 2042, adopted on April 15, calls upon the Syrian government to implement the six-point proposal by making it an obligation of the Syrian government under international law. However, a ceasefire has not been achieved since then.

Human Rights Now urges the Syrian government to immediately implement a ceasefire in the conflict.

2. Stop attacking civilians

As mentioned above, the current situation in Syria has been regarded as a civil war. However, even during conflicts, indiscriminate attacks on civilians are not tolerated, and combatants and noncombatants must be strictly distinguished. This is a basic obligation under international humanitarian law which is clearly stipulated in the Geneva Conventions, to which Syria is a party. Also, international human rights law should not be violated even in wartime. Protecting citizens' life and integrity is a basic obligation under international human rights law.

However, as in Haula, many civilians including women and children have been killed,. In a resolution adopted on June 1 this year, the UN Human Rights Council expressed its grave concern over human rights violations committed by the Syrian government.

¹ http://www.emeye.jp/disp/OAA/2012/0613/stockname_0613_005/0/

² <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12210&LangID=E>

³ <http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20120615k0000e030155000c.html>

⁴ <http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20120607k0000e030164000c.html>

⁵ <http://mainichi.jp/select/news/20120613k0000e030204000c.html>

Human Rights Now urges the Syrian government to immediately cease attacks on civilians in conformity with its obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law. It also urges all participants in military action to respect international human rights and humanitarian law.

3. Arms embargo against the Syrian government by the international community

Needless to say, providing weapons worsens a conflict. In the current situation where civilian deaths are increasing, providing weapons will worsen the human rights violations. Human Rights Now urges all UN member states as well as business sectors to immediately stop providing all weapons, ammunition; equipment, training, and personnel for military, security, and police. .

4. Referral to the International Criminal Court to ensure accountability for crimes against humanity

There are strong grounds to allege that war crimes and serious human rights violations, which constitute crimes against humanity, may have been committed in Syria. For instance, as described above, many civilians, including women and children, were killed in Haula, which occurrence many strongly suspect falls under the scope of crimes against humanity defined by the International Criminal Court. Navanethem Pillay, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has pointed out that the murders in Haula can be regarded as crimes against humanity.

Prosecution is required to end impunity and ensure accountability for the series of human rights violations in Syria, (including for the Haula massacre). Human Rights Now requests the UN Security Council to refer Syria's case to the International Criminal Court.