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Syria: Population must be protected from violent attacks by security forces

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) today reiterates its call on the United Nations Security Council to take robust measures to end the ongoing attacks on the Syrian population by members of the security and armed forces. The attacks have resulted in gross human rights violations amounting to crimes under international law.

More than 700 people have reportedly been unlawfully killed and hundreds subjected to enforced disappearances since the Syrian authorities began their crackdown on 15 March in Daraa, Homs, Baniyas and other cities. The number of persons arbitrarily detained is in the thousands.

The UN Security Council should address the situation as matter of urgency, with a view to halting the attacks and holding the perpetrators to account, including by referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

"The Syrian government is using armed forces and tanks to indiscriminately shell cities, effectively imposing a siege on the population, in order to counter largely peaceful protests," said Wilder Tayler, ICJ Secretary General. *"The UN Security Council should, as a matter of urgency, consider effective options at its disposal, including under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to protect the Syrian population and end the ongoing gross human rights violations and hold those responsible to account."*

The human rights and humanitarian situation has further deteriorated during the last two weeks when the Syrian regime imposed a military siege on Daraa and sent troops and tanks to Homs, Baniyas and other cities to quash protests. The ICJ continues to receive credible reports indicating that bodies have been left in the streets for days and the injured blocked from accessing medical facilities. In addition, a number people trying to leave the country have been tracked down and prevented from doing so by security services at the borders.

Syria has prevented UN humanitarian mission from gaining access to Daraa. On 29 April, the UN Human Rights Council mandated a fact-finding mission to investigate the human rights situation in Syria.

"The Syrian authorities must comply with their legal obligations under international law and allow UN humanitarian missions access to Syria," said Wilder Tayler. *" They must also fully cooperate with the UN-led fact finding mission provided for by the Human Rights Council resolution S-16/1,"* he concluded.

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The ICJ is an international non-governmental organisation comprising sixty of the world's most eminent jurists and has a worldwide network of national sections and affiliated organisations

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