

Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect

SYRIA AT THE CROSSROADS: UN General Assembly Must Uphold their Responsibility to Protect

21 November 2011 “The UN General Assembly must use tomorrow’s vote to show that the world can no longer be a passive spectator of crimes against humanity in Syria,” said Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P).

Since March more than 3500 people have been killed protesting against the al-Assad regime. Syria now stands at the crossroads between civil war and a peaceful resolution of the conflict as envisioned in the Arab League’s Plan of Action. GCR2P supports the Arab League plan and calls upon all UN member states to support the Syria resolution on Tuesday.

Ms Naomi Kikoler, Director of Policy and Advocacy at GCR2P, said: “This vote is about sending a message to both President al-Assad of Syria and to the UN Security Council - the killing must stop. This vote is about upholding the world’s responsibility to the people of Syria.”

In keeping with United Nations member states’ 2005 commitment to the Responsibility to Protect, the General Assembly has an important role to play in the prevention of mass atrocity crimes. This role becomes critical in situations like Syria where tanks and warships have been unleashed against civilians and the Security Council has failed to act.

Dr Adams acknowledged that the Syrian government has been trying to misconstrue support for R2P and opposition to the Syrian government’s violent crackdown to be tantamount to a call for “regime change” and foreign military intervention in Syria.

Dr Adams said, “R2P is not about regime change, but the Syrian people clearly desire for the Syrian regime to change its behavior, halt the violence and respect their most fundamental human rights. While tanks, troops and even warships have been unleashed against ordinary Syrians, the Security Council has so far failed in its responsibility to protect civilians. Syria has become a stain upon the conscience of the world.”

With each passing day the death toll in Syria rises. “The government is the primary perpetrator of the violence and its brutality has brought the country to the brink of civil war. This could have further catastrophic consequences for civilians” said Ms Kikoler.

“Now is the time for the General Assembly to speak. Failure to do so will only lead to more lives lost. The message must be that the al-Assad regime cannot continue to kill its own people without fear of consequence or sanction,” said Ms Kikoler.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect is also a co-signatory of a letter from Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and a number of other NGOs, including several based in Syria, that has been sent to every member state of the United Nations in anticipation of Tuesday's vote.

Read the [press release](#)