



MEDIA RELEASE

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SYRIA VETO COSTS LIVES:

U.N. Security Council Members Must Uphold Their ‘Responsibility to Protect’

Syria stands at a critical juncture between civil war and a potential resolution of the conflict as envisioned in the Arab League’s plan to end the violence. Previous use of the veto at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has cost lives.

By 4 October 2011 approximately 2,700 Syrians had been killed when Russia and China vetoed a UNSC resolution that would have condemned the grave human rights violations and sent a strong, collective message to President Bashar al-Assad that he must halt the bloodshed. The veto prevented action and enabled further killings.

Since then the death toll has doubled. Over 5,400 people have been killed. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) calls upon all UN member states to support the new Syria resolution put forward by Morocco at the UNSC.

“The Syrian government’s crimes against humanity have brought the country to the verge of civil war. Rwanda showed that Security Council delay and inaction in the face of mass atrocities costs lives. We can and must avoid repeating the mistakes of the past”, said General Roméo Dallaire, patron of the GCR2P.

Russia has a critical role to play in resolving the Syrian crisis. But Russia must uphold their 2005 commitment to the Responsibility to Protect and abstain from using their veto as crimes against humanity continue in Syria.

Dr. Simon Adams, Executive Director of the GCR2P said, “The Russian and Syrian governments have misconstrued support for R2P and the Moroccan resolution as a call for ‘regime change’ and military intervention. R2P is not about regime change, but the Syrian people have clearly demonstrated their desire for the al-Assad regime to change their behavior, end their crimes against humanity, and respect their citizens’ most fundamental human rights.”

Hon. Gareth Evans, co-chair of the GCR2P International Advisory Board said, “The al-Assad regime has manifestly failed to exercise its Responsibility to Protect. The international community cannot stand idly by. Another veto will cost lives. Only united action by the Security Council can prevent further catastrophe.”

Yesterday the UNSC debated the Syrian crisis. Meanwhile in Syria an estimated 20 people were killed. Now is not the time for vetoes. Now is the time for the UNSC to act.

EDITORS NOTES (Not for publication):

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Roméo Dallaire, is the former Force Commander of the UN Mission to Rwanda, Canadian Senator, and patron of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

Gareth Evans, Co-Chair, International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, President Emeritus, International Crisis Group, former Australian Foreign Minister, and co-chair of the International Advisory Board of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect.

The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect was created in February 2008 to catalyze action to move the 2005 World Summit agreement on the responsibility to protect populations from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity from principle into practice. See website: www.globalr2p.org/ ###