



Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff, South African President Jacob Zuma and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Photo: GCIS

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Leaders of India, Brazil and SA in firing line over stance on Syria

Human Rights Watch, the US pressure group, has slammed statements on Syria issued by the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum after a meeting in Pretoria on Tuesday

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Human Rights Watch, the US pressure group, has slammed statements on Syria issued by the India-Brazil-South Africa (Ibsa) Dialogue Forum after a meeting in Pretoria on Tuesday, saying the forum shied away from pressuring President Bashar al-Assad's government to step down.

South African President [Jacob Zuma](#), Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff met at the presidential guesthouse in Pretoria, where they discussed sustainable development, food security, the global financial crisis and other issues before signing a declaration affirming their stance on these issues.

On Syria, the declaration states: "The leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria. They expressed their grave concern at the current situation in Syria and condemned the persistent violence.

"They expressed their belief that the only solution to the current crisis is through a Syrian-led, all-inclusive, transparent, peaceful political process aimed at effectively addressing the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the population, and at protecting unarmed civilians. The leaders welcomed Ibsa's joint initiatives on Syria."

The forum also called for an immediate end to violence in Syria and respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and said it would consider a visit to Syria by an Ibsa delegation to help expedite the implementation of reforms promised by the Syrian government.

Human Rights Watch said more than 3000 Syrian protesters have been killed since March this year — a

figure that Simon Adams, the former anti-apartheid activist who is now executive director at the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, called "a Sharpeville every five days".

The pressure group also said Ibsa did not even push for Syria to open its borders to UN investigators, human rights monitors, humanitarian actors or independent journalists, instead standing by while the death toll rose daily.

"The Syrian people should not be made to pay the price for Ibsa's concern that Nato overstepped its mandate with regard to Libya," it said.

"India, Brazil and South Africa missed another opportunity to apply meaningful pressure on the Syrian government, while peaceful Syrian protesters continue to be killed almost on a daily basis," said Philippe Bolopion, UN director at Human Rights Watch.

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