



Joint NGO Statement on the Use of the Veto

Today's use of the veto by Russia and China to block the UN Security Council from referring Syria to the International Criminal Court is a shameful illustration of why voluntary restraint on the use of the veto in mass atrocity situations is essential to the Council's ability to live up to the UN charter's expectations.

The veto has been used four times by Russia and China since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2011, preventing action that could have helped address the human rights tragedy. With, according to the UN, over 150,000 people already killed, war crimes and crimes against humanity continue with impunity. Russia and China's veto of today's resolution shields both the Syrian government and some armed opposition groups from accountability for mass atrocities.

The UN Secretary-General in his 2009 report on the Responsibility to Protect urged the permanent members of the UN Security Council "to refrain from employing or threatening to employ the veto in situations of manifest failure to meet obligations relating to the responsibility to protect, as defined in paragraph 139 of the Summit Outcome, and to reach a mutual understanding to that effect."

Exercising the veto in a mass atrocity situation brings the Security Council into disrepute.

In response to previous vetoes of draft Syria resolutions, the French government has proposed a "code of conduct" by which the permanent members of the Security Council would agree to voluntarily refrain from using the veto in situations of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity.

We call upon the governments of China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, as permanent members of the Security Council, to agree to voluntarily refrain from using their veto in mass atrocity situations. By adopting a "code of conduct", the Security Council can act in a timely manner and may avoid the political paralysis that has contributed to Syria's tragedy.

Signatory organizations

Aegis Trust
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
Global Solutions
Human Rights Watch
International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
International Federation for Human Rights
The World Federalist Movement–Institute for Global Policy