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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Note verbale dated 30 May 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva addressed to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Further to its previous notes verbales on the prevailing situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mission should like to draw the attention of the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, to a number of facts about the Houla massacre carried out on 25 May 2012 by armed terrorist groups that are funded and supported from abroad. The Syrian Arab Republic should like to share with you the details of these massacres, which took place in Tall Daww (Houla) and Shawmariyah.

1. Hundreds of armed men gathered in the area of the massacre in an organized and orderly manner. They were carrying heavy weapons, including armour-piercing rockets. At the preset zero hour, i.e. 1400 hours on 25 May 2012, they simultaneously attacked the area from three fronts, namely, from Rastan, Talbisah and Qusayr (all towns around Tall Daww).
2. The armed terrorist groups savagely murdered the Al-Abdullah family, comprising Muhammad Abd al-Nabi Abdullah, his wife and six children, and Mr. Ratib al-Ulu and his son.
3. They also massacred the Al-Sayyid family, savagely murdering Arif Muhammad al-Sayyid, Imad Muhammad al-Sayyid, Uqba Muhammad al-Sayyid, and the wife and three children of Arif Ali al-Dahir.
4. These groups also burned people's crops and set fire to houses. Bodies were found that were so badly burned that the victims have yet to be identified.
5. The armed terrorist groups destroyed the national hospital in Tall Daww that serves the families of the area.

6. The area is guarded by five Syrian Arab army posts positioned outside the area where the massacre took place. These posts were attacked by the armed terrorist groups.
7. The Syrian Arab army did its duty of defending itself and innocent, defenceless citizens. It battled with the armed terrorist groups until 2300 hours, at which hour it was able to halt the savage assault. It lost 3 of its best men, and 16 of its soldiers were injured. These men should be added to the list of martyrs in the two terrorist massacres.
8. Syria stresses that it did not deploy any tanks in the area. The Syrian army acted in self-defence, exercised the utmost self-restraint and met the attack with a proportionate response. All the reports that suggest otherwise are nothing but lies. The armed terrorist groups were fully supplied with heavy weapons and went in with the intention to kill. The proof is that the killings were carried out using knives, the hallmark of crimes committed by these terrorist groups, which employ the “Islamic slaughter” method.
9. Children, women and men were assembled in predetermined locations. Had they been killed in bombardments, as has been claimed on satellite channels, they would have been covered with dust or they would at least have had wounds from artillery rounds. However, the images show that the crime was perpetrated in cold blood and at close range.
10. The fact that the terrorist operation was carried out simultaneously on several fronts proves that the terrorist crime against innocent Syrian civilians was planned in advance.
11. It should be noted that the people of this area supported the Syrian Arab army and would praise it in the sight and hearing of the world, which would appear to have cost them their lives in this revenge attack.
12. The armed terrorist groups also attacked the town of Shawmariyah in the province of Homs. They committed a terrible massacre of the families of the town and caused widespread mayhem in an escalation of their crimes and terrorist acts that is often seen in the run-up to Security Council meetings and that were timed to coincide with the visit to Syria of the United Nations Special Envoy to Syria, Kofi Annan. These terrorist groups usually carry out crimes against the Syrian people whenever the Security Council is due to hold a meeting on Syria, or, in this case, before the visit of Mr. Annan to Damascus. The Government of Syria has informed the relevant Human Rights Council mechanisms that these armed terrorist groups consider the blood of the Syrian people a small price to pay in exchange for a few lines in statements made by States that are bent on destroying Syria and on killing the Syrian people on the pretext of defending human rights. Syria has confirmed that the blood of Syrians is being used in this savage manner in order to cast blame on the Syrian authorities in a set of circumstances that has no historical precedent.
13. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has condemned these despicable terrorist crimes in the strongest possible terms. This crime bears all the hallmarks of an appalling crime and of a systematic, premeditated and flagrant violation of human rights. Syria is determined to find the criminals responsible for killing children, to bring them to justice and to ensure that they do not evade punishment. The Government of Syria set up a panel, comprising representatives of the defence, internal affairs and justice ministries, to investigate what happened and submit a report within three days. Syria has declared that it is responsible for protecting its people from murder and terrorism, and it will do everything necessary, within the framework of Syrian law and the State’s international commitments, to save the Syrian people from terrorism that is supported and financed from abroad. In this connection, it refutes all the allegations that have been levelled at it about it killing innocent Syrian citizens.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates should also like to state that on 15 May 2012 terrorist groups affiliated to Al-Qaida carried out a massacre in the Karam al-Lawz quarter of Homs, killing 15 civilians, including a woman and her 4 children. That incident occurred one day before a Security Council meeting.

On 26 May 2012, armed terrorist groups fired six Hawn mortar shells from the Warshah district in the direction of the Zahra' and Hadarah districts of Homs. Janet Mikhail al-Akhras, a civilian, was killed and 10 other civilians were wounded in the attack.

In the province of Dayr al-Zawr, in the district of Muhassan, an armed terrorist group held up a bus that was taking engineers and technicians to work at the Al-Furat Petroleum Company. The group abducted the passengers and took them and the bus away to an undisclosed location. We should add that more than 1,500 Syrian citizens have been abducted and the fate of more than 1,000 of them remains unknown.

On 26 May 2012, an armed terrorist group stole 12 million Syrian pounds and seals from the Hajine office of the Al-Bukamal branch of the Agricultural Bank in the Dayr al-Zawr governorate. The group stormed the office, threatened a cashier and stole the money and seals from the office vault.

In Homs governorate, on 26 May 2012, at a farm in Qusayr in Homs province, the authorities seized a warehouse and a factory which were being used by armed terrorist groups as premises for making bombs. Inside, they found large quantities of primary materials used to make bombs, together with fertilizer, acid, large gas canisters, detonators, bomb-making equipment and explosive charges.

On 26 May 2012, also in Homs, the authorities seized a stolen car containing various weapons, including six Russian rifles, three pump-action rifles, hand grenades, explosive devices, a large quantity of rifle ammunition, a military cartridge pouch, military uniforms and several fake licence plates.

On 26 May 2012, the authorities clashed in Rif Dimashq with an armed terrorist group that was attacking civilians and law enforcement forces in Duma. Several members of the group were arrested and others were killed. The authorities found weapons including primed explosive devices, hand-held weapons and ammunition, and a stolen car belonging to the Rif Dimashq Water Authority.

In the Tall Rif area outside Aleppo, terrorists were preparing to use explosives to carry out a new massacre of Syrians. However, divine providence intervened and the device that they were making blew up in their faces, killing or wounding several of them.

The above is a brief account of all the attacks that were carried out against the Syrian people in just one day. It makes clear, as do all the other incidents that have taken place over the past year, that the problem is not one of "peaceful demonstrations" or of "the people demanding freedom of opinion and expression". The Syrian State is confronting well-trained armed men who have sophisticated weapons and are bent on committing murder, slaughter and acts of terrorism. The Syrian State is responsible for protecting the Syrian people from these men and it will carry out its duties in full, just like any other country in the world that was facing what the Syrian people are facing would do.

What is happening confirms the truth of what Syria is saying about being subjected to terrorist campaigns that are supported and financed from abroad and foisted upon Syria and the Syrian people by certain States. To make matters worse, Syrian martyrs are being used as victims in media campaigns that attribute blame for these crimes to the Syrian Government, which is making every effort to protect its people from terrorism.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic requests that the present note be circulated in the official languages of the United Nations as an official document of the Human Rights Council at its twentieth session.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic takes this opportunity to convey to the President of the Human Rights Council the assurances of its highest consideration.
