

Amnesty International

MONTHLY ACTION

ACTIVISM TEAM, Amnesty International UK
HRAC, 17-25 New Inn Yard, London EC2A 3EA



March 2016

Syria:

MARKING THE 5th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UPRISING – 15 MARCH

Help ensure human rights benchmarks are effectively addressed in the Syria ‘peace process’.

UN-facilitated talks between the Syrian authorities and opposition groups are due to re-start in late February/early March and last for several months. The lead-up to the talks has seen international attention on sieges in Syria, due in part to increased campaigning on this issue and the media focus on the situation in Madaya. There is now an opportunity to urge the UK government, who are a key participant of the Geneva talks, to prioritise key human rights benchmarks for progress, as per UN Security Council resolution 2254, which specifies humanitarian access and ending attacks against civilians as well as for parties to *“immediately comply with their obligations under international law.”*

What you can do to help reduce the suffering in Syria:

Contact your MP and ask them to write to the Foreign Secretary, Phillip Hammond, to ensure the UK champions human rights benchmarks at the Syria talks and lobbies parties to the conflict to:

- 1. End unlawful attacks against civilians and civilian objects:** all parties to the conflict must be made to end all direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks;
- 2. Lift the sieges:** parties to the conflict must be made to stop blocking or restricting the delivery of food, medical aid, and other life-saving supplies;
- 3. Allow unfettered humanitarian access:** all parties must be made to provide unfettered access to the UN and its implementing partners;
- 4. Release those detained and abducted solely for exercising their human rights:** parties to the conflict must be made to release all those held solely for exercising their human rights or perceived opposition to the ruling party;
- 5. Ensure effective participation of women and civil society in peace talks:** delegations to the peace talks must ensure that sufficient female delegates are present, that they can participate effectively and fully and that women's perspectives are represented; Syrian civil society must also be able to contribute.
- 6. End impunity:** independent monitors, such as the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, must be given unfettered access to the country, including to all places of detention. The UK government should further work with partners to accept a shared responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law committed in Syria, in particular by seeking to exercise universal jurisdiction to bring suspected perpetrators to justice before national courts.

Find your MP here <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/mps/>

MONTHLY ACTION

Background Information

Syria: MARKING THE 5th ANNIVERSARY OF THE UPRISING – 15 MARCH

5 years since the start of the crisis, Syria has become the epicentre of the world's worst human rights & humanitarian catastrophe. Violence and insecurity, targeted and indiscriminate attacks against civilians, mass arrests and widespread torture in detention facilities, deliberate denial of assistance, and the collapse of services have prompted over 4.6 million people to flee the country and 7 million more to abandon their homes inside Syria.

UN Security Council members, those responsible for international peace and security, of which France, the UK, the US, China and Russia are permanent members, are not doing enough to end the crisis and some of them are actively fuelling it. A number of UN Security Council Resolutions to provide humanitarian relief and protect civilians have been passed and ignored, as a divided international community has turned the country into a proxy battleground for competing regional and global interests. The same governments and others continue to provide arms, ammunition and other forms of support to various parties to the conflict, or are directly intervening militarily.

A new round of negotiations and increased political movement are a glimmer of hope to push for policy changes which could improve Syrian lives. But decision-makers won't feel the pressure to act if we remain silent. 5 years on, Syrian lives must take priority over political interests. Is the UK government standing #WithSyria?

The #withSyria coalition includes agencies from across global civil society, including Amnesty International, CAFOD, Care International, Christian Aid, Doctors of the World, FIDH, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Save the Children, The International Rescue Committee, War Child, and World Vision.

Social media & solidarity action

NGO partners are taking action using a dove symbol to express hope & solidarity. They will post their pictures on social media using the hashtag **#withSyria**. You can too and be as creative as you want. Pictures will automatically appear on our coalition website www.withsyria.com if you use the hashtag (goes live on 6 March)



New AIUK Syria Website

On March 10, we will launch The Syria 360 website – check it out at www.360syria.com and please share it with contacts & on social media.

#360syria

GOT QUERIES OR WANT TO DO MORE?

For queries about this action and for updates please

contact: **Kristyan Benedict** at

Kristyan.benedict@amnesty.org.uk

07979 695 275

Twitter: @KreaseChan