*LETTER FROM 145 Arab NGOs to the LAS*

**Withdraw the mission, call for UN action!**

*Your Excellency, Dr. Nabil El Araby*

*Secretary General, League of Arab States*

We the undersigned, representing 145 Arab NGOs from 19 Arab countries, urge the League of Arab States to recognize flaws undermining the mission’s efficacy, to publicly release the monitoring mission’s report ahead of the meeting of the Council of Arab Foreign ministers on January 21, to withdraw the monitoring mission at this meeting given the Syrian regime’s failure to implement the terms of the Arab League protocol and to call for the UN Security Council to take action to address the ongoing violence in Syria.

At the first anniversary of the ‘Arab Spring’, we cannot but remember that it demonstrated to the world that cries for basic freedom and democracy can no longer be silenced with bullets. Yet, the Syrian regime continues to respond to these calls by imposing a brutal crackdown against its own citizens. According to the UN, as of December 12 this had resulted in more than 5000 documented deaths, on top of which at least 400 people have been killed during the first three weeks of the monitoring mission.

Since September, the Arab League has worked within its mandate to bring an end to the Syrian crisis. Failure to respect the Arab road map has led to gradual diplomatic sanctions with the suspension of Syria’s membership and a call to remove Arab ambassadors. Then, 18 members of the League have enforced economic sanctions. Finally in the monitoring mission’s protocol signed with the Syrian government on December 19, Syria pledged to end violence against peaceful protesters, release all detainees related to the protests, withdraw armed elements from cities and residential areas and grant unhindered access to all parts of Syria to Arab and international media and to Arab organizations. Syria also pledged in the agreement to grant Arab League monitors unhindered and independent access to all individuals they wish to interview to verify Syria’s implementation of these measures, including victims, detainees and nongovernmental organizations.

One month after the deployment of the Arab League mission the Syrian government has still not fulfilled these commitments. Instead, the UN has estimated that more than 400 people have been killed since the Arab League mission arrived in Syria, while Arab League monitors have “watched people being killed, beaten up, and arrested by police, soldiers and militiamen” in the words of Arab League observer Anouar Malek who has resigned from the mission.

In addition, human rights organizations and members of the opposition have documented numerous attempts by the Syrian government to manipulate the Arab League, including by transferring detainees to sites that League observers were unable to access such as military areas.

The mission’s credibility and efficacy has also been questioned due to a lack of transparency, inadequate staffing and expertise of monitors, inability to protect witnesses and staff, to operate independently from the Syrian government and its inaccessibility to activists and victims on the ground.

We fear the credibility of the League of Arab States will be damaged irreparably despite the leadership it has shown during the past year, unless the League:

**Publicly release** the monitoring mission’s report.

**Recognize flaws** that have undermined the work of the monitoring mission.

**Withdraw the mission and call for the Security Council to take action** to address the ongoing violence in light of the Syrian government’s failure to implement the terms of the Arab League protocol and the Arab roadmap.

Demand an **immediate cessation of the use of force** against the Syrian people and ensure that the perpetrators of crimes are held accountable.

Citizens of the Arab world share the desire to see an end to the bloodshed in Syria and to see the Arab League play a more active and instrumental role in ending these grave human rights violations against the Syrian population. The Arab world cannot wait for the crisis in Syria to grow uncontrolled, with a clear and immediate threat to the region’s security, stability and prosperity. Syria Cannot Wait!

**Syrian organizations:**

Advocates for Justice for Syria

Damascus Center for Human Rights

Haitham Maleh Foundation

Human Rights Organization in Syria (MAF)

Kurdish Committee for Human Rights in Syria

Kurdish Organization for Human Rights & Public Freedoms in Syria

Strategic Research & Communication Centre

Syrian Democrats

Syrian Human Rights Organization (Swasiah)

Syrian Kurdish Youth Abroad

Syrian Human Rights League

**Organizations from Arab countries:**

Algerian League for Human Rights - Algeria

Al Khatim Adlan Centre for Enlightenment & Human Development - Sudan

Arab Program for Human Rights Activists - Egypt

Arab Coalition for Darfur (110 members, 19 Arab Countries)

Arabic Network for Human Rights Information - Egypt

Assyrian Human Rights Network

Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights - Bahrain

Bahrain Center for Human Rights - Bahrain

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies - Egypt

Center for Media Freedom, Middle East and North Africa - Morocco

Committee for the Respect of Liberties and Human Rights in Tunisia – Tunisia

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights - Egypt

Fédération des Tunisiens pour une Citoyenneté des 2 Rives - Tunisia

Human Rights First Society - Saudi Arabia

Instance Marocaine des Droits de l’Homme – Morocco

Iraqi Human Rights Organization - Iraq

Journalists for Human Rights – Sudan

Palestinian Human Rights Organization in Lebanon - Palestine

Sudan Social Development Organization - Sudan

The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights - Egypt

The Sahrawi Association of Victims of Human Rights Violations

Tunisian League for Human Rights - Tunisia

Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms - Yemen

Avaaz (represented in all Arab countries)