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## The responsibility of the international community towards the Syrian people

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In March 2011 the world began to witness anti-government protestors in Syria taking to the streets calling for an end to President Bashir al-Assad's regime and for an opening of the way for a democratic system and the enjoyment of rights and freedoms for all the Syrian people. From the outset, the Socialist International, consistent with its principles and values and its commitment to all those in the world struggling for democracy and fundamental rights, has openly supported these demands.

Throughout the period since the protests began, the Syrian regime has ignored these calls from its people, as well as calls from members of the international community, responding instead with violence and brutality, including gross violations of human rights, indiscriminate torture, repression and executions. This has resulted in a deepening of the conflict with, to date, over 100,000 deaths, as stated by the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon.

Today, as a consequence, close to 5 million Syrians are internally displaced, according to international voluntary organisations, and almost 2 million are homeless refugees in neighbouring countries.

The use of chemical weapons in Syria on the 21st of August 2013 has shocked the world. This deeply abhorrent and immoral act caused the deaths of over 1400 innocent civilians, including more than 400 children, and constitutes a crime against humanity that in our view, neither the international community nor any country can ignore.

Syria is reported to be one of the countries in the world with the largest stockpile of chemical weapons, under the control of the ruling regime. It must be restated clearly that the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons violates the widely accepted 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention, which bans the use of chemicals as weapons of mass destruction.

In our view, all the democratic nations of the world, and their citizens, have today a responsibility towards the Syrian people and all those who have been victims of this atrocious slaughter. We cannot turn our heads. The hour requires a broad and decisive international initiative to put an end to the horror and carnage in Syria and the suffering of its people, and to ensure that this type of crime is never again repeated. At the same time, as a priority, there remains the need for a political framework to open the way for democratic change in Syria that is fully inclusive of the entire population.

The world would be a better place, and the cause of peace would be greatly advanced, by nations acting together through the United Nations. To this end, the UN needs to urgently confirm the facts regarding these atrocities in Syria and to quickly define an international response, and to hold accountable those responsible. The coming days will be crucial in advancing common positions on this critical issue and the Socialist International appeals to all nations, and particularly those who are members of the UN Security Council, to lead the way with an accord that would set an example in building a safer world for tomorrow.



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