



REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF DEFENCE, JUSTICE AND SECURITY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA**

DURING THE

**EMERGENCY SESSION ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN
SYRIA, HELD DURING THE 19TH SESSION
OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL**

**27 February – 23 March 2012
Geneva, Switzerland**

**Madam President,
Madam High Commissioner for Human Rights,
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,**

1. Let me join my other colleagues in thanking the Commission of Inquiry for its comprehensive update of its investigations on alleged human rights violations in Syria.
2. What has been revealed is a grave human rights and humanitarian catastrophe, which, if left to continue any longer, will leave an indelible mark on the conscience of all humanity.
3. There is a clear and systematic pattern of human rights violations comprising widespread attacks, summary executions, torture as well as other inhuman and degrading treatment visited on the Syrian citizenry by its Government.
4. What is even more alarming is the indiscriminate targeting and killing of small children, women and unarmed civilians.
5. **Madam President,** In international law, the responsibility to investigate, prosecute and punish international crimes and other gross violations rests, first and foremost, with the Government.
6. The conduct of the Syrian Government has created a moral as well as political discrepancy on its part to continue to lead the Syrian people and has put into question its capacity to come up with any credible corrective process to bring Syria to normalcy. Clearly, President Assad has failed to lead a democratic transition in Syria.

Madam President,

7. We welcome the call by the League of Arab States for a democratic transition. In particular, we welcome initiatives such as the Friends of Syria Contact Group and the recent appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan as the United Nations and Arab League Envoy to Syria.

8. We also welcome the toughening of sanctions by the European Union and the United States on Syria, as well as the Turkish ban on transactions with the Syrian Government and its central bank, freezing of Syrian Government assets, and imposition of severe import duties on Syrian goods.

Madam President,

9. Botswana continues to express her disappointment on the exercise of the veto power by some members of the Security Council, thereby rendering the world body ineffective in performing its primary mandate of maintenance of international peace and security.

10. We plead with China and Russia to review their position and heed the League of Arab States' resolution of 12 February 2012, calling on the Security Council to authorise a joint Arab-United Nations force to "supervise the execution of a ceasefire", in Syria.

11. It is commonplace, **Madam President,** that, under the circumstances, the international community shoulders the responsibility to protect the people of Syria. That is our noble responsibility to all humanity.

12. We have learnt that anti-Government armed groups have also committed serious human rights violations, such as torture and enforced disappearances. These norms of *jus cogens* are not only binding on Governments, but also on individuals and non-State actors, including armed groups.

13. It is therefore our hope that this Session of the Human Rights Council will find it compelling to renew the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry, to continue its outstanding work with a view to ensuring that all perpetrators are held accountable.

14. In concluding my remarks, **Madam President**, let me reiterate that no country can afford to remain complacent and indifferent to the suffering of any people in any part of the world.

15. Botswana condemns the human rights violations in Syria and will continue to lend its voice and support to all international efforts, to bring pressure to bear on the authorities in Syria, to realise that no amount of State-sponsored terror on its population can be condoned.

16. We finally call on the international community to impose robust diplomatic measures on Syria as well as to impose strong targeted sanctions on that country's leadership, including referral to the ICC.

I thank you!