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Syrian Regime Heading for All-out War on the People

Brussels, 13 March 2012 (ITUC): Reports of yet further atrocities against innocent civilians, as the Syrian military continues all-out military assaults against Homs, Idlib and other cities, show the Assad regime's determination to cling on to power, whatever the cost to the people of Syria. Having refused the Red Crescent/Red Cross access to the areas under siege and snubbed UN envoy Kofi Annan's peace overtures, the regime is now intensifying its attacks on the civilian population and effectively engaging in an all-out war on the country's population which risks spreading beyond the Syria's borders.

"The international response to Syria's slide into deeper and yet more vicious conflict must focus on protecting human life and finding a political settlement which can finally bring democracy to one of the world's most repressed societies. The flow of arms into the country must stop, and the UN must be empowered by the international community, including all the Security Council members, to bring to bear the necessary pressure to stop the carnage," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The Assad family, supported by an influential minority, has ruled Syria for over four decades. Notorious for massacres of its own population especially during the 1980s, and thousands of killings of political opponents, the regime also ruthlessly repressed freedom of speech and other basic rights, ensuring that independent civil society organisations such as trade unions could never develop. With popular dissent growing, the absence of such organisations has deprived the people of ways to address political, social and economic injustice.

Since the uprising began in the city of Daraa one year ago following the arrest and torture of 15 children by security forces, the regime has stepped up violent repression. Torture has become even more routine than before the uprising, journalists have been deliberately targeted to stop the truth emerging, and the civilian population subjected to ever-increasing attack. Reports from refugees even detail the deliberate and systematic torture of children in order to intimidate families and local communities. In the absence of any real sign of the regime being willing to negotiate, the armed opposition has gathered support and strength and is now in open conflict with the security forces.

"The Assad regime and its apologists abroad still claim that the uprising is orchestrated by some kind of international conspiracy. This is nothing but a propaganda lie, to disguise the contempt for the people held by President Assad and the minority which has kept his family in power for decades. The regime is guilty of appalling crimes, and those responsible must be brought to justice," said Burrow.

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