

Genocide and Mass Atrocity Warning: Syria
By Dr. Gregory Stanton, Genocide Watch
7 June 2011

Since the beginning of March, the stability of the Syrian Arab Republic has degenerated at an alarming rate. Genocide Watch warns that there is an imminent threat of genocidal massacres and mass atrocities against protesters committed by Alawite troops and police loyal to the Assad government.

In the current climate of the Middle East – popularly referred to as the Arab Spring – Syrians have joined the thousands of citizens who have demanded democratic change in their repressive governments. Protests were sparked in March by the detention and torture of 15 boys who reportedly were writing anti- regime slogans on walls. On March 18th after Friday prayers, thousands of protesters marched in Daraa calling for the release of the boys and greater political freedom. The mukhabarat security force opened fire on the peaceful protesters, killing at least four people. In the following months protests erupted in many other cities. Over 1000 protesters have been killed.

Syria has attempted to close its borders to the foreign press, but cell phone images and reports have gotten through, though many cell phones have been seized. The government shut down the internet, but reports have reached the outside world. Closing of borders is one of the surest early warning signs of impending genocide and crimes against humanity. Among the other early warning signs of genocide in the top six factors to watch are:

- Prior unpunished genocidal massacres, such as those perpetrated by Assad's father in Hama in the 1980's;
- Rule by a minority sect – the Alawite sect that supports Assad;
- An exclusionary ideology by the Alawite rulers who believe they rule by right;
- Systematic human rights violations such as torture and rape;
- Fear by the ruling elite that any compromise will mean total loss of their power.

Current reports from the city of Jisr al-Shughour state that civilians are fleeing because the Assad regime is preparing for a mass attack on that city's civilian population. The government attack is in retaliation for the deaths of up to 250 military/security personnel.

Genocide Watch warns that today could be the tipping point into mass murder. From the past history of violence against dissenters in Syria it is evident that this is a high risk situation for the residents in targeted cities.

France is calling upon the UN Security Council to draft a resolution warning Syria of grave consequences if it commits Crimes Against Humanity. The U.S. should support a UN Resolution.