

Syria: a grim toll

EDITORIAL (January 06, 2013) : UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has released a statement that shows the number of people killed in the Syrian conflict, earlier believed to be around 40,000, is much higher. More than 60,000 Syrians have been killed, she said, since the uprising against the Assad regime erupted 21 months ago, noting that this number is likely to be an underestimate given that reports containing insufficient information have been excluded from UN causality list, and that a significant number of killings might not have been documented. Countless others have suffered injuries and lifelong disabilities, and hundreds of thousands forced to take refuge in neighbouring countries. As the fighting rages on, this grim toll is going to go on rising. The UN official's sense of shame and horror at the international community's inability to stop the violence is shared by all civilised people. She must be thinking of only the UN, though, when she said that "collectively we have fiddled at the edges while Syria burns." The major veto-wielding members of UN Security Council, the US and its European allies on the one side and Russia and China on the other, have kept the world body from doing anything to end the suffering of Syrian people. The one thing they have not been doing is fiddling on the edges. The US and its European allies along with their regional partners have constantly added fuel to the fire. Friends of Syria - US, Britain and France together with their Gulf Co-operation Council regional allies - worked hard to organise disparate opposition groups under the unified military command of the Free Syrian Army, giving them money and weapons. At a recent meeting in Morocco they also created a political umbrella organisation, National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, granting it immediate recognition as the "legitimate representative" of the Syrian people. Meanwhile, Friends of Syria have been accusing the Assad regime of planning to use chemical weapons so as to pave the way for direct intervention, if need be. Any such intervention is likely to result in Iraq-like instability, with serious repercussions for the neighbouring countries, especially Lebanon. Now that, realising the gravity of the situation, Moscow is putting its weight behind international peace envoy Lakhdar Brahimi the issue hopefully will be sorted out. Otherwise, as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov pointed out "the alternative to a peaceful solution is bloody chaos. The longer it continues the great its scale - and the worse things get for all." [C](#)
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