



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 19th Session of the Human Rights Council – Urgent Debate on Syria
Geneva, 28 February 2012

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See follows with great concern the dramatic and growing episodes of violence in Syria which have caused many victims and grave suffering. As we debate the continuing serious crisis in that country, I wish to reiterate the repeated appeals of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, and in particular, that of 12 February last for an urgent end to the violence and bloodshed unfolding in Syria.¹ On that occasion, His Holiness called for every party to the conflict to give priority to the way of dialogue, of reconciliation and of commitment to peace. We must not succumb to the logic of violence, where violence begets further violence. It is never too late to refrain from violence!

Madam President,

My delegation expresses its solidarity with the victims of violence and appeals for urgent humanitarian and medical assistance to relieve the sufferings of all those wounded and injured.

Madam President,

The Holy See extends a hand of friendship to all the people of Syria, of whatever religion or ethnic background, confident that all Syrians share the same common values of dignity and justice for all regardless of creed or ethnicity. Syria has a long history of peaceful coexistence among her diverse religious and ethnic communities. The Delegation of the Holy See appeals to the Syrian people not to lose sight of this heritage in responding to the legitimate aspirations of the different members of the nation. Syria,

¹ *“Dear Brothers and Sisters, I am following with deep apprehension the dramatic and escalating episodes of violence in Syria. In the past few days, they have taken a heavy toll of victims. I remember in prayer the victims among whom are several children, the injured and all those who are suffering the consequences of an ever more worrying conflict. In addition, I renew a pressing appeal to put an end to violence and bloodshed. Lastly, I invite everyone — and first of all the political Authorities in Syria — to give priority to the way of dialogue, of reconciliation and of the commitment to peace. It is urgently necessary to respond to the legitimate aspirations of the different members of the nation, as well as to the hopes of the international community, concerned for the common good of the society as a whole and for the region.”* Appeal of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI, Sunday 12 February 2012.

no less than any nation, is a member of the family of nations, and so the international community is right to be concerned for the peace and stability of the region.

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See remains convinced that regional and multilateral organizations are an important instrument in promoting peace and stability in the world, an instrument which is ever more valuable in times of crisis, and for that reason welcomes the various initiatives in favour of peace through the path of dialogue and reconciliation. The primary responsibility, however, rests with the people of Syria and for that reason I renew the Holy Father's appeal to the Syrian people *"to give priority to the way of dialogue, of reconciliation and of commitment to peace"*.

Thank you, Madam President.