

Only America can hasten the end of Bashar al Assad's Syrian Regime, says Nehad Ismail

Bashar al Assad and his gang must face trial for crimes against humanity.

How many more massacres have to be committed by Bashar al Assad and his gang of five criminals before America takes the lead in putting an end to the slaughter in Syria. How many have to die before the UN takes a firm and decisive stand against the Damascus regime which is terrorising its own people.

It is time that Bashar al Assad and his five henchmen face trial at the International Criminal Court over the brutal crimes committed by the Syrian Security Forces against the unarmed civilians.

Stephen Rapp the US ambassador in charge of investigating war crimes told the Guardian Newspaper during a recent visit to London in July that the killing of Syrian civilians demanding democracy is a "crime against humanity". The crimes of the Syrian regime are in breach of articles 7 and 8 of the ICC Treaty which covers murder, torture, kidnapping, wilful killing of civilians, multiple acts of murder or persecution committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against any civilian population. The deliberate decisions to use gun-boats against Latakia and anti-aircraft guns against residential buildings are a sufficient proof of crimes against humanity.

On May 16th the London Financial Times reported that Nick Harvey the UK Armed Forces Minister said it was "highly likely" that the ICC, the International Criminal Court would seek the arrest of Bashar Al-Assad over his role in the violent crackdown on protesters. The UN Security Council must convene to secure a resolution calling for Bashar al Assad to step down and be arrested to face trial by the ICC for crimes against humanity. The US must exert pressure on China and Russia to prevent a veto or a watered-down Security Council Resolution.

The regime's killing machine is still in overdrive. Since Mid March 2011, over 2000 Syrian have been killed. Many more will die unless the World acts decisively against the Damascus criminal regime. More than 15000 Syrians are in detention and many of them are subjected to the worst kind of torture and beating.

The shameless regime has become a master in deception and mendacity. It lied to its people, to the Americans and to the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Foreign Minister Mr. Ahmet Davutoglu. The regime is only believed and supported by Iran and Hezbollah.

Bashar is committing a fatal error as he is sleep walking into the garbage bin of history as yet another blood thirsty tin-pot dictator.

The regime has committed a number of grave blunders that would prove costly and could potentially bring the Bashar's regime down sooner than we think. The regime dismissed the protests and upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt by announcing that Syria is not Tunisia and it is not Egypt. It also fatally ignored the popular revolts in Yemen and Libya. The ruling clique assumed that Syria is immune to such upheavals and the people of Syria are incapable of protesting against the dictatorship.

Activists argued that if Bashar was really interested in reforms, he would have dissolved Parliament and ordered the formation of a commission to prepare for Parliamentary and Presidential elections. He would have dismantled the Baathist ruling party as some opposition figures demanded. He would have ordered the immediate release of all political detainees and stopped the killing spree. The cynical lifting of the emergency law was swiftly followed by harsh measures.

The choice was clear reform or repression. Bashar chose the latter.

The Five who must also face trial by the International Criminal Court:

Some observers believe that Bashar al Assad is too weak and is not in control. He is under the tight grip of five men who are fiercely opposed to any reforms. The first is his younger brother Maher al-Assad Commander of the Republican Guards and the elite Fourth Division. The second man is Assef Shawkat, a brother-in-law of President Bashar al-Assad and Head of Military Intelligence and is considered as one of the main pillars of the regime. The third man is Ali Mamlouk, Special Security adviser. The fourth is Hafez Makhoul a cousin of President Bashar al-Assad and Head of General Intelligence. The fifth man is Rami Makhoul the billionaire brother of Hafez Makhoul.

The five men are not interested in human rights or reforms. They are totally focused on power, money and survival of the regime even if this means a civil war and a blood bath.

Targeted sanctions have not worked. The least that can be done in the immediate term is the severing of all diplomatic relations with Syria by the US, Canada, the EU and the Arab countries. The UN must call for the imposition of a total embargo on the import and export of oil and petroleum products from and to Syria.

This regime has lost legitimacy and the US can be the catalyst in removing this odious terrorist regime from power.

This article was first published in the Huffington Post. Nehad Ismail is a London-based commentator on Middle East matters