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Myanmar: UN Security Council must increase the pressure

(New York) Amnesty International welcomes the Security Council's statement of concern about the situation in Myanmar but urges the Council to increase pressure on the government if the mounting human rights crisis in the country is to be reversed and further bloodshed averted.

"According to reports, at least nine people have already been killed in the crackdown. Buddhist monks have also been beaten and many hundreds of peaceful protestors arrested. The threat to peace and security is rapidly rising as grave human rights violations are mounting," said Irene Khan, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

"Sending the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to the country is a step in the right direction. But the seriousness of the situation requires the Security Council to do more. It must send an urgent mission to assess the situation on the ground and engage directly with relevant actors there to stop the violence and respect human rights. The Council has often visited African countries of concern. Why should it not do the same for people in Myanmar whose human rights have been trampled upon for so long?"

Amnesty International urged the Myanmar authorities to immediately halt the violence, to release all Buddhist monks and other peaceful demonstrators and to end the suppression of human rights which is endemic. It also urged the authorities to immediately grant access to Mr Gambari and to declare that it will receive a visit from the Security Council if it expresses the intention to do so.

"The world expects a more meaningful reaction from the Security Council. It is now up to the Myanmar authorities to respond immediately to the worldwide concern about the deepening human rights crisis in the country," concluded Ms Khan.

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