

A study commissioned by UN human rights commissioner Navi Pillay concluded that there had been 59,648 deaths between February 2011 and November 2012, and that figure would now have risen above 60,000. She described the bloodshed as "truly shocking" according to news reports.

Syrian opposition groups had previously estimated 45,000 people killed. Had the world powers taken the right action a year or eighteen months ago the total would have been a lot smaller.

The Arab League efforts had failed to stop the violence. The regime is determined to crush the uprising no matter how many are killed in the process. The opposition groups are determined to topple the regime and rid Syria of its tyrannical murderous regime that had ruled Syria for over 40 years by a mixture of fear, torture and massacres.

Diplomatic activities at the United Nations Security Council to address the Syria crisis suffered a major setback in July 2012 when Russia and China vetoed a British-sponsored resolution that would have punished the Syrian government with economic sanctions for failing to carry out a peace plan.

It was the third time that Russia and China had vetoed resolutions on Syria since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad began in March 2011. It must be said that Russia and China had never been interested in human rights and the protection of human life.

The Syrian regime is going to fall sooner or later. It has lost the support of its people and most of the Arab Street. China and Russia have decided to stand against the Arab Spring Tsunami and stop the clock. What China and Russia are telling the Syrian people and the Arab world is this: "Look we are friends of Bashar al Assad and we only accept his version of the situation and we support him even if he exterminates the entire Syrian population". This is a double blow coming from China and Russia as they have both managed to alienate 20 million Syrian people and 250 million Arab people not counting the one billion Muslims throughout the world.

The Obama administration and the West must now recognize that silence is not an option. Silence and inaction in the early 1940s led to the holocaust and the extermination of 6 million Jews. Can the world turn a blind eye to the atrocities committed by a murderous thuggish regime against its own people? Verbal condemnation is insufficient. Action is required and very quickly.

The Syrian regime is getting substantial military and economic help from Russia, Iran, North Korea and Hezbollah. The Free Syrian Army is getting limited assistance from Qatar and Turkey.

The question is how to get around the Veto. Some legal experts believe that by invoking the obscure UN Resolution 377, also known as the "Uniting for Peace" Resolution, it would not be necessary to seek a UN Security Council Resolution.

On 27 June 1950 USA called on the UN to use force to get North Korea out of South Korea as they had ignored the Security Council Resolution of June 25th. This was voted for but Russia could not use the Veto because it was still boycotting the UN. As a result, the United States pushed through the resolution as a means of circumventing possible Soviet vetoes. The measure states that, "in the event that the Security Council cannot maintain International Peace; a matter can be taken up by the General Assembly". This procedure has been used 10 times so far, most notably in 1956 to help resolve the Suez Canal crisis. Britain and France, which were occupying parts of the canal at the time, vetoed Security Council resolutions calling for their withdrawal. The United States called for an emergency "Uniting for

Peace" session of the General Assembly, which passed a withdrawal resolution. (A simple majority vote is required.)

There is a general but not legally universal consensus that in exceptional circumstances the International Community can act to prevent human catastrophes as happened in Kosovo and Serbia in the late 1990s. In case of paralyzed United Nations Security Council and to stop flagrant war crimes against humanity, large scale violations of human rights and ethnic cleansing, all these can provide a legitimate basis for action on the part of the International Community.

Experts believe that if the Security Council is incapable of acting, a new norm of intervention by a coalition of states would seem to be entirely justified where large scale atrocities are being committed as is happening now in Syria.

The very least that can be done immediately is the creation of no-fly zones in the North of Syria along the Turkish borders and in the South along the Jordanian borders.

If the Free Syrian Army is provided with the anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons they can do the job and boots on the ground will not be needed.

nehad ismail is a London Based broadcaster and commentator on Middle Eastern Affairs.