United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 25, 2011

Ambassador Susan Rice
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Ambassador Rice:

We write to express our deepening concern for the situation in Syria where government-led violence against peaceful protesters continues to escalate. The United Nations now estimates that more than 3,000 Syrians, including almost 200 children, have been killed since the popular protests began in March. Given the Syrian government's brutal and well documented crackdown, including the use of rooftop snipers, shelling of residential neighborhoods, disappearances, and torture, it is paramount that the Security Council refers credible allegations of crimes against humanity by President Bashar al-Assad's regime to the International Criminal Court.

In August, the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights laid the foundation for such charges with findings from its investigative mission on the crackdown in Syria. It specifically noted "a pattern of human rights violations that constitutes widespread or systemic attacks against the civilian population, which may amount to crimes against humanity." The violations included murder, enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, deprivation of liberty, and persecution. Syrian forces were also noted to have tortured or killed children on several occasions. Clearly these deeply troubling and grave charges demand further investigation and action.

The Syrian people have suffered 40 years of economic hardship, political repression, and corruption under the Assad family. Understandably, like so many others across the region, the Syrian people aspire for a better life, a chance to freely choose one's government, and a hopeful and dignified future for one's children. While ultimately such change will have to come from within, the United States and the international community have a moral responsibility to support such aspirations for fundamental human and political freedoms.

We commend your efforts thus far to encourage the Security Council to condemn the Syrian actions, despite troubling opposition from Russia, China, and others. As the Assad regime continues to demonstrate further brutality against its own people, Security Council members such as India, South Africa, and Brazil – all of whom have suffered under their own repressive governments in the past – should feel compelled to support Security Council action. That our Ambassador, Robert Ford, just had to leave Syria due to credible threats to his safety should also be deeply troubling to these Security Council members. Your continued leadership on these matters will be critical and invaluable.

The people of Syria deserve to know that the people of the United States understand their plight, stand behind them, and will work to bring justice to their country.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

Robert Menendez
United States Senator

Barbara Boxer
United States Senator