



## Reports on the 45<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council

### Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

22-23 September 2020

*Paolo Sergio Pineheiro – Chair of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria:*

As we are reaching the **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conflict**, the Syrian population continues to suffer gross human rights violations, by all the actors to the conflict, including **arbitrary detention, disappearances, torture, deaths in custody**. New forms of violations with **sectarian undertones** are also increasing, including **targeted killings, looting and appropriation** of property. We are also seeing more incidents of **sexual and gender-based violence**. These human rights violations amount to **crimes against humanity**.

Syria's **government security apparatus** continues to violate human rights, particularly in areas previously held by non-State and terrorist groups. Security system prevent people from owning or renting a home.

The constant threat of arbitrary detention stifles **freedom of movement** and the barriers to the return of **refugees** are omnipresent, this is all aggravated by the **Covid-19 situation** with number much higher than the official figures given by the government.

**9.3 million Syrians are now food insecure**. The COI reiterates its call to **easy economic sanctions** to ensure access to food, medical supplies and to avoid further destitution of an already desperate population.

The **Turkey-backed Syrian National Army** may have committed **war crimes against civilians**, including **hostage-taking, cruel treatment, torture and rape**, as well as **looting of properties** in Kurdish areas. **UNESCO-protected heritage sites** have been bulldozed and looted

**Turkey** has been a refuge for millions of Syrian refugees. It also plays a **unique role** vis-à-vis Syrian actors in the conflict. We encourage Turkey to utilize its position to **prevent abuses by the Syrian National Army**, to provide accountability and protect civilians in areas under its control.

We are encouraged by efforts of many states, who have **exercised universal jurisdiction to bring to justice** many perpetrators of war crimes. We will continue to assist member states in this endeavour.

The COI proposed key practical steps that the international community could work towards:

- Set up an **international mechanism** to coordinate efforts to collect information on the 100.000 missing and disappeared in Syria.
- **Facilitate prisoner releases**. To be detained in Syria is nearly always to be missing.
- Ensure **detention monitoring** by independent organizations such as ICRC or OHCHR.
- Facilitate a **moratorium on executions**.
- **Rule of law reforms**
- **Remove obstacles to sustainable return** of the 5.6m refugees and the 6.6m IDPS in their homes.

*Comments by Syria (country concerned):*

Syrians are living under siege and economic terrorism **sponsored by external actors**. The **Turkish regime** and its militias must be held accountable for the **war crimes** they committed in Syria.

The **unilateral coercive measures** imposed on Syria are targeting the population and fostering poverty in Syria. No need of investigation to know that these sanctions are **sponsored by USA and Europe**. European countries are still not taking care of the **repatriation of their citizens** linked to ISIS in Syria.

The COI continues its sterile discussion and is only **fabricating accusations against Syria**, in a systematic **campaign of misinformation**. We refuse this report, which does not abide by the code of conduct and the criteria of objectivity and non-politicization.

## INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

**42 delegations** took the floor during the interactive dialogue.

The vast majority of the speakers expressed concerns over the widespread violations committed by all parties to the conflict, including **torture, sexual and gender-based violence, killings, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, recruitment of children, death in custody, torture, use of siege and starvation tactics**. It was also shared that conflict had a disproportionate **impact on women and girls**.

It was shared by a majority of delegations that **humanitarian access** in all parts of the country must be **restored** at all cost and that humanitarian infrastructure should not be targeted. The majority of states deplored the current **humanitarian crisis impacting the country**, which has been exacerbated by the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

Several delegations expressed their support for the **UN Security Council Resolution 2254**, calling for a **nation-wide ceasefire** and a **political solution** to the conflict (*European Union, Germany, France, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Greece, Bahrain, Malta, Albania, Ireland, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Cyprus*).

Some delegations denounced the **violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime** (*European Union, Sweden on behalf of Baltic and Nordic countries, Qatar, Germany, Israel, France, Netherlands, Turkey, Georgia*).

Some delegations denounced the violations perpetrated by non-state actors, including **the Syrian National Army, in regions under Turkish control** (*European Union, Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Armenia*).

States emphasized the importance of the safe, dignified and voluntary return of the **Syrian refugees** (*European Union, Jordan, Egypt, Romania, Cyprus*).

States denounced the **bombing of civilian's infrastructures**, including on medical facilities and schools (*Liechtenstein, Israel, Italy, Brazil, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Netherlands, Bahrain, Cyprus, Romania, Georgia*).

The efforts made by the **UN Special Envoy, Mr. Petersen** have been praised by some delegations (*Germany, Jordan, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Greece, Switzerland, Ireland, United Arab Emirates*).

Some delegations expressed their **support for the Syrian regime** and denounced **foreign interference** as well as violation of the territorial integrity of Syria (*Iran, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba*).

The **unilateral coercive sanctions** imposed on Syria were denounced by some states (*China, Russian Federation, Belarus, Iran, Venezuela, Cuba*).

The work of the **COI** and the **International Independent and Impartial Mechanism for Syria** have been praised by several delegations (*Sweden on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries, Liechtenstein, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Albania, Ireland*).

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**10 Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** took the floor.

Civil society emphasized the **terrible humanitarian and economic crisis in Syria**. This crisis is exacerbated by the **international economic sanctions** imposed on Syria. The **Covid-19 pandemic** is also a factor aggravating the situation for millions of Syrians.

NGOs also highlighted how the conflict in Syria had a **disproportionate impact on women and girls**.

Civil society condemned the terrible human rights violations committed against **civilians** since the beginning of the conflict, some of them amounting to **war crimes and crimes against humanity**.

**Press freedom, repatriation of fighters, and foreign interference** were also among the issues raised.

**Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (42 delegations):**

Human Rights Council members: Qatar, Germany, Italy, Japan, Australia, Chile, Netherlands, Bahrain, Venezuela, Armenia.

Observer states: European Union, Sweden (*on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries*), Liechtenstein, Jordan, Israel, Brazil, France, Belgium, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Greece, China, Iran, Switzerland, Malta, Cuba, Luxembourg, Croatia, Russian Federation, Belarus, Albania, Ireland, United Kingdom, Egypt, Turkey, Romania, United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Georgia, Cyprus, Nicaragua, UN Women.

**Civil Society Organizations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (10 NGOs):**

International Council Supporting Fair Trial, The Next Century Foundation, Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, Union of Arab Jurists, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Reporters sans frontières international - RSF, Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, Partners For Transparency, Institute for NGO Research, Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration.