



HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 48th SESSION

Interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Ms. Karen König Abuzayd – Member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic:

- *Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: [A/HRC/48/70](#)*

Ten years after this body established the Commission, the **parties to the conflict continue to perpetrate war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria**. Incidents of **arbitrary detention** by Government forces remain unabated and **grave violations of human rights** and IHL continue to be committed. The **Syrian economy has collapsed** and the **healthcare system is decimated**. This is **no time to think that Syria is a country fit for its refugees to return**. The war on Syrian civilians continues.

North-west Syria: The March 2020 ceasefire agreement between Russia and Turkey, has been unravelling with **aerial bombardments and shelling**. **Medical facilities**, such as the de-conflicted hospital in Atarib, **markets and residential areas have been struck** by aerial and ground attacks, often indiscriminately, causing numerous **civilian casualties**.

The UN-designated **terrorist organization Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS)** continued imposing **restrictions on media and the freedom of expression** in its area of control in the northwest, including by **arbitrarily detaining media activists and journalists**, including **women**.

In the Afrin and Ra's al-Ayn regions of **Aleppo**, civilians live in fear of **vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices** that are frequently detonated in crowded civilian areas - striking markets and busy streets and **claiming the lives of many**. **Indiscriminate shelling** also continued, including on 12 June when munitions struck multiple locations in **Afrin city**, killing and injuring many and destroying parts of the "de-conflicted" al-Shifa hospital.

The "Syrian National Army" (SNA) in this area also continued to **unlawfully deprive civilians** – primarily of **Kurdish origin** - of their liberty, with documented cases of **torture** including **sexual and gender-based violence in detention**.

North-eastern Syria: After the territorial defeat of Da'esh, thousands of women and children remain unlawfully interned in **camps across northeast Syria** in the territory controlled by the Kurdish-led SDF coalition. In **Al Hawl** and other camps near the Iraqi border in northeast Syria, an **estimated 40,000 children are held**. Nearly half are Iraqi; 7,800 come from nearly 60 other countries. Most foreign children remain deprived of their liberty, since their **home countries refuse to repatriate them**.

Eastern Syria: SDF continued to **detain more than 10,000 suspected former Da'esh fighters** in prison facilities across **eastern Syria** since at least 2019. Among them are around 750 boys.

South-west Syria: The southwest experienced **fighting** not seen since before the 2018 Russian-agreement between the **Syrian Government and armed opposition groups**. The past months have seen the return of **sieges and siege-like tactics**, in Dar'a, Quineitra and Rif Damascus governorates.

The Government of Syria, HTS, SNA and SDF continue to **hold a vast number of detainees** in appalling detention conditions where detainees in **fragile health** may not survive a **COVID-19 outbreak**.

The COI recommends UN Member States to facilitate the **creation of a mechanism with an international mandate** to coordinate and consolidate claims regarding **missing persons**, including persons subjected to **enforced disappearance**. The COI also recommends States to **remove all obstacles to humanitarian aid**, including those exacerbated by **sanctions**, that have overly cumbersome humanitarian exemption procedures.



Delegation of Syria – Speaking as the country concerned:

This meeting is another proof that the **Human Rights Council mechanisms are used as a platform to target States**. This Council chooses to ignore **American, Turkish and Israeli attacks**, who terrorize Syrians, support terrorist militias and exploit natural resources.

The **Turkish regime** is using **water** to **threaten lives of millions of civilians**. This practice amounts to collective punishment and is a **crime against humanity**. **Turkey also limits humanitarian access** in northern Syria around Idlib. In 2017 an **America air raid against a school killed more than 50 civilians**. The Turkish invasion of Afrin killed civilians, destroyed schools and properties. The Commission avoids these investigations because its **sponsors refuse it**.

The **unilateral coercive measures** imposed cause great suffering and **violate the basic rights of Syrians**. It impedes the return of refugees and the work of humanitarian organizations.

The report of the Commission is **non-objective and non-credible**. It is just another attempt to discredit the Syrian government and its right to liberate Syria. The return of Syrians in their hometowns and the restoration of the State authority confirms that **government's approach was the right one**.

INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (45 statements)

States: Finland on behalf of Nordic-Baltic States, European Union, Germany, Qatar, Liechtenstein, Greece, United Arab Emirates, Israel, France, Switzerland, Australia, Ecuador, Luxembourg, Kuwait, Armenia, Egypt, Iraq, Albania, Venezuela, Netherlands, Bahrain, Cuba, Malta, People's Democratic Republic of Korea, United States, Russian federation, Belarus, Ireland, Turkey, Brazil, Belgium, China, Cyprus, Italy, Georgia, Jordan, Chile, United kingdom, Romania, Nicaragua, Japan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia.
UN Agency: UN WOMEN

The majority of States taking the floor expressed their **full support to the Commission of Inquiry** and commended it for its report. States reiterated all parties to the conflict to meaningfully engage in a **peaceful political agreement**, in line with the **UN Security Council Resolution 2254**.

A high number of States denounced the **widespread and systemic human rights violations** committed by all parties to the conflict in Syria, including indiscriminate attacks **against civilians, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, targeted killings, torture, sexual and gender-based violence**. Some violations could amount to **crimes against humanity**. States reiterated the urgent need to address the climate of **impunity** currently prevailing in Syria. Several States also urged the situation to be referred to the **International Criminal Court**.

In opposition, several States expressed their **discontent with the meeting and the work of the Commission of Inquiry**. They stated that the debate was **biased and politicized** and that it was organized to advance a specific political agenda on Syria. Most of these States expressed their **support for the Syrian government** and defended the **territorial integrity and sovereignty of the State of Syria**. (Venezuela, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of North Korea, Russian Federation, Belarus, China, Nicaragua, Iran, Sri Lanka).

Several States were concerned over the dire **humanitarian situation in Syria**. They urged all parties to **allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access** on the Syrian territory. Many States declared that, considering the current situation, **conditions for the return of refugees and displaced persons in Syria were not met**.



Some States denounced the **demographical engineering operated in Northern Syria**, including by Turkey.

States also deplored the **situation in the southern town of Dar'a**, where **siege and starvation tactics** are being imposed.

8 NGOs took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue:

International Council Supporting Fair Trials and Human Rights, Ma'at for Peace Development and Human Rights, World Jewish congress, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Advocates for Human Rights, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Commission of Jurists, Palestinian Return Center, World Council of Aramean.

The International Council Supporting Fair Trials and Human Rights denounced **the support of external States to terrorist armed groups** in Syria. The NGO *Ma'at for Peace Development and Human Rights* denounced the **Turkish backed armed groups operating in Northern Syria** and the arbitrary arrests and ransoming in the region. *The World Jewish Congress* was concerned about the **situation of women subjected to unlawful detention**, leading in turn to increased **gender-based human rights violations**.

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies called on UN member states to **establish an international and impartial mechanism** in order to locate **those missing** in Syria because of detention and enforced disappearance. *The Advocates for Human Rights* deplored the **recruitment of Syrian mercenaries**, including **child soldiers**. The *Palestinian Return Center* deplored the humanitarian situation in the town of **Dar'a** and the inhumane **blockade** imposed on the city. *The World Council of Arameans* denounced the ongoing attempts by the **Kurdish YPG militia** to **erase the presence of the indigenous Arameans** of Northeast Syria.

The International Commission of Jurists reiterated the importance of **accountability for the crimes** committed in Syria and saluted the **universal jurisdiction developments** in Europe.

Watch the full Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria on [UN WebTV](#)