

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 50th SESSION

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

(oral update)

29 June 2022

In his opening remarks, **Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Syrian Arab Republic** addressed the Council over the **worsening situation in Syria**. In particular, he referred to that parties to the conflict have consistently failed in their obligations to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need across Syria. The international community should remove these and all other obstacles to humanitarian aid. He reported the dramatic situation of millions of **refugees**. As living conditions in displacement camps deteriorated, many were forced to return to their homes located in frontline areas, exposed to frequent attacks and kills. Rights are routinely violated in these camps, as well as in the prisons. Women and children are the main victims of ill-treatments and life-threats.

He further reported the situation across Syria. In particular, the COI is investigating several recent **incidents** in the east of the country, where hostilities between pro-government forces, the Syrian National Army and the Syrian Democratic Forces continued. This has resulted in the harm of countless civilians. In southern Syria, widespread insecurity remains in formerly besieged areas, including frequent assassinations by unknown perpetrators of community leaders. In Government-controlled areas, people perceived as not supporting the government live in constant fear of speaking out both on- and off-line, well aware of the risks of arbitrary detention, torture or enforced disappearance.

Addressing questions and comments made by Member States, **Mr. Paulo Pinheiro listed four ways to support the Syrian population**. Firstly, he encouraged States to improve humanitarian assistance. Second, he stressed the establishment of a mechanism that deals with disappearances and arbitrary detention. Further, he insisted on accountability measures under international criminal justice systems or under national jurisdictions that remove impunity. The fourth way expressed by Mr. Paulo Pinheiro concerned concrete States' actions to invite and motivate all parties to the conflict to political negotiations. This is in order to end the conflict.

Syria (Concerned Country) rejected the Council's discussions on the situation in Syria, the COI mandate and its biased reports and statement. It affirmed that reports suffered from **lack of objectivity** based on misleading sources of information and pre-fabricated accusations which ignore the real causes of the crisis. He also considered the discussions governed by interventionist agendas and **non-consensual resolutions** promoted by the U.S. and the EU to provide justification for its hostile policies that violate the Charter of the United Nations and the founding principles of the Council. In spite of **efforts** to restore and consolidate security and stability, achieve economic recovery, improve living conditions for citizens and facilitate the return of displaced persons to their homelands and places of origin, Syria faced challenges from Turkish, Israeli and American occupations. Finally, Syria, **rejected the accusations and fallacies** promoted by the Commission's reports, the statements of its state sponsors and its attempts to promote the establishment of **new international mechanisms on Syria**.

Interactive dialogue

41 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. **The majority of countries** expressed their concern about the Human Rights violations and abuses in Syria. They condemned attacks and killings against civilian and facilities, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. Countries reported civilians detained without judicial process are deprived of their liberty, and often experience sexual violence, are tortured and denied the most basic level of human rights. In particular, **Belgium** focused on multiple violations and abuses of children's rights. It affirmed that boys and girls are regularly and systemically raped and sexually violated, targeted, killed, detained, recruited, and used in armed conflict. They have also been denied education and childhood. **Qatar** agreed with the Commission of Inquiry on the importance of establishing a mechanism to detect the fate of missing and disappeared persons. Moreover, **several countries** stressed the importance of accountability for all those responsible for human rights violations, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria and to bring perpetrators to international criminal justice. However, **China and Belarus** did not support the mandate of the international commission on Syria and similar structures, considering them exclusively political. Due to the absence of universally recognized criteria, they did not consider such experts neutral. They regretted that the commission ignored the negative impact of illegal sanctions on the Syrian population.

NGOs informed the Council on data and figures on the violation of human rights in Syria. They called on the country to establish a nationwide ceasefire that prioritises the protection of civilians and precludes enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions. NGOs urged also all parties to the conflict to cooperate with the COI and other UN mechanisms to secure a political solution based on an inclusive Syrian identity, the rule of law, human rights and accountability.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (41 country delegations):

Albania, Australia, Belarus, Ecuador, Egypt, European Union, France, Germany, Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Qatar, Russian Federation, Spain, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates, United States, Cuba, Venezuela, Iceland (on behalf of the Northern Balkan Countries), Belgium (on behalf of 26 States Member of the Geneva Group of Friend on children and armed conflict), Switzerland, Qatar, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Türkiye, Georgia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Chile, Nicaragua, Israel, UK

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor (10):

Association Ma'onah for human rights and immigration, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Centre Europe - tiers monde, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, International Commission of Jurists, International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, Meezaan Center for Human Rights, Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, World Jewish Congress

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#) and to [UN Web TV](#).