

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 52nd SESSION

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

21 March 2023

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic** urged all states to respond generously to the appeal for support by humanitarian agencies in the country after the recent earthquake. The Chair remarked Syrians' condemnation of the actions by the Syrian State after the catastrophe and lament the inaction of the international community to help them rapidly. He also condemned the politicization of the human rights situation in Syrian which is impeding aid to reach Northwest Syria and instead flowing only to Türkiye. The Chair highlighted that all parties to the conflict have failed to stop hostilities and deplored Israel's strikes of Aleppo's Airport. The Chair called upon all parties of the conflict to a cessation of hostilities and consent to allow impartial humanitarian relief to reach the most affected territories. The Chair detailed in his report the numerous attacks suffered by Syrians: aerial and ground attacks where civilians were injured; killings of farmers by government authorities; rocket attacks on Northern Aleppo; Airstrikes by the Russian air forces; torture, ill-treatment, and executions of detainees by the HTS and the SNA; gender-based violence and inhumane treatment of women and children. The Chair emphasized that national legislation is not protecting women and children. Finally, the Chair welcomed the progress of the study of the establishment of an independent international entity to search for the missing and disappeared and calls upon states to move from discussions and pass a resolution on the matter.

Syrian Arab Republic (Country concerned): The country categorically rejected the mandate and the report which contains false and fabricated information. Syria condemned as it is politicized and relied on information of false witnesses and fabricated evidence. Syria remarked that the crimes referred to in the report are all attributable to the terrorist armed groups in the country that are being supported by the countries that promote this mandate. Syria deplored that the word "terrorism" did not appear once in the report. Syria believed the Commission did not consider the negative impact of UCMs on state capacity to respond to natural disasters. The country rejected UCMs and called upon all states to: contribute to the reconstruction of infrastructure that was destroyed by terrorist armed groups; pressure Turkish forces and US forces that support terrorist armed groups to leave the country; help stop the repeated attacks committed by the Israeli occupation on Syrian territory. The government was ready to cooperate with those that have sincere intentions in improving the humanitarian situation in Syria. Finally, Syria urged all countries to confront and combat these terrorist groups.

Interactive dialogue

All countries expressed their condolences to all those affected by the wave of destruction caused by the earthquake in February. Some countries and States' organisations commended the work of the Commission and supported a mandate renewal. Countries such as the **EU, U.S., Israel, Albania, Australia, Israel** condemned the systematic violations of human rights by all parties to the conflict, especially by the Syrian regime and its allies. They echoed the UN Secretary General and the COI's call for a mechanism to determine the fate of missing persons and support survivors. They expressed their concern for the rise in gender-based violence, torture, forced displacement, extrajudicial executions and regret Syrian laws continue to discriminate women. Some also expressed their support to the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and demanded all parties to the conflict to release the arbitrarily detained and to provide information on the fate of the missing. **Switzerland** called on all parties to allow humanitarian aid into the country, expresses its support for the IIIM and urges a peaceful solution. The **U.S.** expressed the need to protect Syrian human rights defenders.

Qatar remarked the Syrian regime lacks seriousness in negotiating a credible political process. **Israel** expressed its concern about reports of social and demographic engineering in all areas throughout Syria. **Georgia** and **Chile** highlighted the need to guarantee accountabilities for all crimes being committed. **Ecuador** reiterated its call for States to refrain from providing weapons, military support, and funding to criminal groups. **Japan, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Sudan, and Türkiye** called upon all parties to negotiate a peaceful political solution. **Sudan** urged the international community to intensify assistance efforts and the OHCHR to provide technical assistance while respecting the principles of the UN charter. **Japan** strongly urged the Syrian authorities to immediately release all prisoners of conscience and arbitrarily detained persons.

China, Cuba, DPRK, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Iran, Nicaragua, Belarus, and the Russian Federation, rejected the mandate as it is politicized and based on fabricated information. They expressed that the human rights situation in Syria can be better addressed through the respect of the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of the country. They condemned foreign occupation, the interference of states in Syria's sovereignty and the negative impact of UCMs imposed by Western powers. They deplored that the mandate does not recognize the existence of terrorist groups in the country. They called upon the international community to provide humanitarian assistance, engage in constructive dialogue with the Syrian Government, and support national efforts towards addressing human rights challenges. They urged for a peaceful negotiated solution without foreign interference. The **Russian federation** further condemned the foreign occupation in Syria and deplores its exploitation of natural resources.

Most NGOs commended the work of the COI and highlighted the human rights violations that require special attention from the Human Rights Council, including extrajudicial killings, and systematic torture practices, including sexual and gender-based violence in detention. Some called upon the Syrian government to release arbitrarily detained persons, stop enforced disappearance, and take all measures to locate all detainees and disappeared persons. Some endorsed the recommendations of the COI to refer the Syrian file to the International Criminal Court. Other NGOs called upon sanctioning States to remove sanctions that prevent the Syrian population from accessing basic needs and services and that inhibit the reconstruction of basic infrastructure destroyed by the conflict and earthquake. NGOs emphasized the lack of gender-responsive aid which leave women at risk of sexual violence and exploitation.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (50 country delegations):

European Union, Norway (on behalf of a group of countries), Liechtenstein, United States of America, Qatar, Ireland, Ecuador, Israel, Germany, Japan, United Arab Emirates, Belgium, China, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, Poland, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Zimbabwe, Egypt, Netherlands, Iraq, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Malaysia, Albania, Greece, Türkiye, Jordan, Malta, Georgia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Chile, Australia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Belarus, Romania, Sri Lanka, Cuba, Brazil, Nicaragua, Ukraine, Sudan, Russian Federation, Kuwait, France, Italy, Switzerland, Belarus.

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (10):

Minority Rights Group, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Every Casualty Worldwide, International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, World Jewish Congress, New Humanity (Joint Statement), Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, The Palestinian Return Centre Ltd, Physicians for Human Rights, Centre Europe - tiers monde, International Service for Human Rights.

To watch the full meeting refer to UN Web TV, [here](#).