

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 53rd SESSION

Interactive Dialogue on the oral update of the Commission of Inquiry on the Arab Republic of Syria

05 July 2023

Paulo Pinheiro, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, reported that millions of people in Idlib have been displaced multiple times since 2011. To them, it is unacceptable to leave humanitarian access entirely under the control of parties to the conflict who have blocked aid in the past. There is an urgent need to re-examine how the UN and the international community are addressing their predicament, to ensure predictable and sustainable aid flows in the future. He welcomed repatriations, mostly of women and children, by over a dozen countries around the world, since the beginning of the year, and the release of Syrians too. The pace of such **voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable repatriations needs to speed up**, given the conditions in the camps and the unlawfulness of the detention. However, most Refugees said they **fear returning** because of the security situation in the country and the risks they run of extortion, being arrested and imprisoned, being conscripted and sent to the front lines, alongside a critical lack of livelihood and work opportunities.

He called for Member States to hold accountable responsible for serious human rights violations and war crimes through fair trials. These include arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture, ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, deaths in detention, violations of housing, land, and property rights, and the rights of those displaced internally or outside the country.

In conclusion, he affirmed that the conflict has amplified **discrimination against women and girls**. They face mounting challenges with regard to access to food, housing and birth registration of their children, early and forced marriages, and protection against sexual- and gender-based violence.

Syrian Arab Republic (Country concerned) addressed the Council informing it about the bias of this Committee against the Syrian government, an integral part of its establishment, and its methodologies of work. It renewed the lack of the mandate's recognition of the Committee. It shows a failure in providing an objective assessment of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, its causes, and its consequences. Countries supporting this Committee repeat their irresponsible stances that prolonged the suffering of the Syrians and undermined their basic rights. These speeches are full of false humanitarian allegations from countries that have directly participated in the killing and displacement of Syrians. The Country is determined to continue its efforts to liberate all its territory from terrorism and to restore security, stability, and the rule of law. The Syrian Arab Republic reaffirmed its firm commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to all those in need without discrimination and its efforts for the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of all Syrian refugees to their homeland.

The Country stressed its commitment to continue its efforts to strengthen, improve and develop national legislative and institutional frameworks on human rights in accordance with its international obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights for all its people without discrimination.

Interactive dialogue

39 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. Most of the countries condemned the persistent, widespread, systematic, and serious violations and abuses of human rights and all violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict, especially by the Syrian regime and its allies. **The EU and the UK** expressed concern about the ongoing high level of sexual and gender-based violence in a climate of total impunity and for the persistent lack of protection for those in vulnerable situations, including children and persons with disabilities by the

Syrian regime. **The Netherlands** remained determined to fight all forms of impunity, establishing accountability in order to achieve a lasting political solution to the conflict. Along with **Canada**, it started legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice to hold the Syrian Arab Republic accountable for torture and other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. This case includes sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, as a means of torture. **Zimbabwe, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Venezuela** affirmed that the multi-dimensional impact of the illegal unilateral coercive measures has exacerbated the situation by creating barriers that make it more difficult for the Government of Syria to address the human rights and humanitarian needs of its people.

United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, and Jordan stressed the contribution to international efforts to eradicate terrorism and ensure the defeat of terrorist organizations and prevent the spread of their violent ideology. Refugee conditions, safe returns, and humanitarian aids remain concern issues.

Cuba and Sudan criticizing the politicization of the human rights issues, stressed the essence of fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, considering the interests and aspirations of that people, ceasing interventionist and destabilizing actions, and fostering cooperation with the country's authorities. **Russian Federation** regretted the lack of attention to the problems that really serve as an obstacle to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission is looking for ways to put pressure on the country, replicating unfounded accusations against Syria. This is indicative of the politicized approach of the mechanism.

NGOs shared the Commission's concerns regarding human rights violations and war crimes, including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial and summary executions against civilians, and detention of civilians. They called upon an immediate release of all detainees and the establishment of an independent and impartial mechanism of accountability to hold perpetrators of torture and arbitrary detentions to account.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (39 country delegations):

European Union, Iceland, Qatar, Netherlands, Israel, Italy, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ecuador, Germany, Luxembourg, United States, Belgium, France, Iraq, Brazil, Malta, UK, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Türkiye, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, China, Switzerland, Jordan, Sudan, Albania, Georgia, Cuba, Romania, Lao's People Democratic Republic, Cyprus, Islamic Republic of Iran, Belarus, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Greece.

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

Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression, Maat for Peace - Development and Human Rights Association, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Association Ma'onah for Human Rights and Immigration, Centre Europe - tiers monde, World Jewish Congress, Physicians for Human Rights, International Service for Human Rights, The Next Century Foundation, Christian Solidarity Worldwide.

To watch the full meeting refer to the UN WEB TV: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#).