

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL – 55th SESSION

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

18 - 19 March 2024

**Mr Paolo Sergio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry** (hereafter the Commission), presented the report to the Council. Syria has become a yet more dangerous place to live, with the largest escalation of violence on multiple fronts. He reported last deadly attacks. Reports of deaths in Syria's state custody continued, including military prison while authorities obstructed and profited through exhaustion from families' efforts to discover the whereabouts of their detained relatives.

Mr Pinheiro reported that one year after a major earthquake, daily life for civilians worsened with deepening economic crisis and funding for aid. A severe shortfall in donor funds has forced the World Food Programme to suspend regular food aid in Syria placing millions in the grip of hunger.

He urged all states including Syria to immediately allow all children to return home from the camps and to ensure the integration of society while pursuing effort towards accountability for Daesh crimes. He called on the Council members to not lose sight of the Syrian crisis. Syria also needs a cease fire to end the conflict and to find an inclusive path towards a just political settlement.

He affirmed Syria's continued efforts to work with UNHCR to ensure, quote, greater and broader humanitarian access, and the flexible and predictable presence of UNHCR, especially in the main areas of return and border points, end of quote.

**Syrian Arab Republic (Country concerned)** affirmed that the Commission continues to perform the political function entrusted to it. The Commission has been used by its sponsors to promote their unilateral and misleading narrative about the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which makes it ineligible to play any positive role in promoting and protecting human rights. The Mechanism has also become a tool for rehabilitating terrorist groups, promoting illegal structures and entities, and granting them a certificate of good behaviour, which constitutes direct support for these groups and involvement in threatening the territorial integrity of the Country. The mandate is ready to discuss all issues except ways to help the Syrian people, and its only contribution is to undermine opportunities for objective and constructive dialogue about these ways.

### Interactive dialogue

45 country delegations took the floor during the interactive dialogue. **The majority of the countries** condemned the regime's widespread use of unjust detention and physical abuse against detainees on a massive and systemic scale. Sexual and gender-based violence. Arbitrary or incommunicado detentions, as well as forced disappearances, remain systematic. They reported that after 13 years, the war continues several fronts, the humanitarian situation continues to worsen while the funds available are decreasing. All parties to the conflict continue to commit violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. In addition, **Ukraine, Brazil, Malta, and the EU, among others** condemned the serious violations and abuses against civilians, and agreed with the Commission in ensuring that all alleged perpetrators are held accountable for their actions. **Countries, as Switzerland, the US, Qatar, Italy, and Liechtenstein** called on all parties to immediately cease these practices which may constitute war crimes, reaching a political solution in line with the Geneva Declaration and the SC Resolutions.

**The Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Iran** affirmed that one of the most serious challenges for modern Syria is the extremely difficult socio-economic situation, a direct consequence of the unrelenting sanctions pressure. The illegal US military presence provokes an escalation of contradictions between the Kurds and local Arab tribes; and serious human rights violations in IDP camps, prisons and “rehabilitation” centres located in non-Damascus-controlled areas. Venezuela, **Nicaragua**, and **Cuba** rejected the politicized approach of the mechanism, which is intended to be unbiased and impartial. The Commission negatively affects the opportunities for constructive and objective dialogue. **They** also rejected the unilateral coercive measures taken against the Syrian people and the increasing attacks on the civilian population in the Syrian Golan.

**Lebanon** stressed that the overgeneralization of the quote “*Syrian Arab republic remains unsafe for return*” is beyond the mandate of the Commission. It does not consider the multiple parameters of a very complex situation, in particular the plight of neighbouring countries, which cannot anymore bear the brunt of this protracted refugees’ crisis. **Jordan, Iraq**, as neighbour countries, shared with the Council the consequences of the Syrian crisis, as well as national provisions in support of refugees.

**NGOs** remained deeply concerning human rights situation in Syria, including incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, and rape against detainees, torture and ill-treatment, attacks against civilians and civilian targets, arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings. These attacks are not only gross violations of international humanitarian law but also deprive Syrians of their fundamental right to access medical care safely. As the **Physicians for Human Rights** added violence against healthcare disproportionately affects women and girls, depriving them of essential reproductive and maternal healthcare services. **The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression** emphasized that ending the state of impunity is the only inevitable path to a settlement in Syria. Perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions, and justice must be served for the victims and their families, stressed **Non C’è Pace Senza Giustizia**.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (45 country delegations):

*Austria, Belarus, Estonia (on behalf of Nordic-Baltic countries), Canada (on behalf of a Group of Countries), European Union, Italy, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Russian Federation, Switzerland, United States of America, Zimbabwe, Cyprus, Iraq, Cuba, Brazil, DPRK, Egypt, China, UK, Lao PDR, Eritrea, Albania, Ukraine, Dominica Republic, Sudan, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Burundi, Nicaragua, Israel, Venezuela, Belgium, Iran, Malta, Qatar, France, Costa Rica (on behalf of a group of countries), Türkiye, Germany, Georgia, Belgium, Iran, Greece.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive dialogue (9):

International Council Supporting Fair Trial and Human Rights, Non c’è Pace senza Giustizia, Physicians for human rights, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Palestinian Return Centre LTD, Gulf Centre for Human Rights GCHR Limited, Syrian Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression, World Jewish Congress, International Bar Association.

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