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Human Rights Council holds interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

Human Rights Council
MORNING

17 March 2015

The Human Rights Council this morning held an interactive dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission, said that civilians had always been the primary victims in Syria, treated as legitimate targets by Government forces, anti-Government armed groups, extremists and terrorist organizations. There was an obligation to bring the war to a close and the international community must unite to bring about an urgent diplomatic solution capable of ending the violence and delivering the perpetrators to justice. Mr. Pinheiro stressed the urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and the use of highly destructive explosive weapons, cut off funds supporting belligerents and terrorist organizations, and called upon States other than those bordering Syria to do more to shoulder their responsibility towards Syrian refugees.

Syria, the concerned country, said that the Commission's selective and politicised practices were blatant and defied the standards of credibility that it should respect. The accusations against the Government and turning a blind eye to the crimes by other armed groups, such as Al-Nusra, led Syria to doubt the credibility of the sources. The Commission had not spoken about the crimes committed by Da'esh, it had remained silent as to the responsibility of States such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which funded the terrorists, and had neglected the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the civilians, which amounted to war crimes.

In the interactive dialogue, speakers expressed deep concern about the deteriorating situation in Syria, and the dangerous repercussions it had for the region. They strongly condemned the shocking and horrific scale of abuses committed by the Assad regime, including systematic targeting of civilians, restriction of humanitarian assistance and torture, and the atrocities and barbaric acts committed by non-state groups, including Da'esh/ISIS.

Failing to address the prevailing culture of impunity was contributing to the escalate of horrors and hampering the basis for a longstanding peace. The International Criminal Court was the venue where all perpetrators of atrocities should be brought to justice. The international community should contribute to the appropriate functioning of domestic and international criminal justice mechanisms, and States should use the principle of universal jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. Some speakers said the report of the Commission of Inquiry was unbalanced as it only put responsibility for the main human rights violations on the Government of Syria; atrocities had been perpetrated by armed and terrorist groups.

Taking part in the interactive dialogue were Qatar on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries, European Union, Bahrain, Holy See, New Zealand, Portugal, Netherlands, Maldives, Tunisia, Estonia, Lichtenstein, Switzerland, Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Jordan, United Kingdom, United States, Latvia, China, Thailand, Turkey, France, Russia, Cuba, Chile, Belgium, Morocco, Italy, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Canada, Japan, Greece, Poland, Albania, Botswana, Germany, Luxembourg, Israel, Belarus, Iran, Spain, Ecuador, Slovakia, Iraq, Egypt, Mexico, Sudan, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Australia, Venezuela, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, and Romania.

Also speaking were the following non-governmental organizations: Syriac Universal Alliance, Press Emblem Campaign, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Union of Arab Jurists, CIVICUS-World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and World Jewish Congress.

The Human Rights Council is holding a full day of meetings today. At noon, the Council will hold a general debate on its agenda item on all human rights situations that require the Council's attention.

Documentation

The Council has before it the **report of the Commission of Inquiry on the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic** ([A/HRC/28/69](#))

Presentation by the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO, Chair of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, underlined that civilians have always been the primary victims in Syria. They were treated as legitimate targets by Government forces, anti-Government armed groups, extremists and terrorist organizations. Lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders have been consistently abducted and silenced. The Commission was concerned for their safety and it called for their release. An alarming number of cases of sexual violence were still being committed inside Syria. Yazidi women and girls, abducted by the Islamic State in Iraq, were sold and re-sold inside Syria, where they were held in sexual slavery. Men, boys, women and girls were also subjected to rape and sexual assault in Government detention facilities. Aerial and ground weapons, both conventional and improvised, including bombs, rockets and missiles, were used indiscriminately and disproportionately, killing tens of thousands of civilians. There was an urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and the use of highly destructive explosive weapons that have devastated Syria's towns and cities. Funds flowing into Syria that were used to support belligerents, including groups defined as terrorist organizations under Security Council Resolution 2170, should also be cut off. The Commission was dedicated to not only bringing forth the voice of victims, but also to finding a path to justice for them. The Commission continued to advocate for a Security Council referral to the International Criminal Court or an ad hoc tribunal. It was noted that almost 3.9 million Syrians lived as refugees, mainly in countries bordering Syria. Many of them were also stranded at the borders, prevented from accessing the relative safety of the refugee camps. Countries other than those neighbouring Syria had to do more to shoulder the responsibility towards Syrian refugees. Only half of the pledged funds by Member States have been realized. There was an obligation to bring the war to a close and the Human Rights Council had to demand that the international community unite to bring about an urgent diplomatic solution capable of ending the violence and delivering the perpetrators to justice.

Statement by the Concerned Country

Syria said that the selective and politicised practices of the Commission of Inquiry were quite blatant and defied the standards of credibility that the Commission should respect. The report recycled accusations from previous reports and raised questions about the credibility of the conclusions which were based on one-sided narratives of people hostile to Syria. It neglected to take into account the suffering of civilians and the information provided by the Government. This behaviour coincided with the predetermined attitude of the Commission which bowed to States that supported terrorism and slaughtered Syrian people. The accusations against the Government and turning a blind eye to the crimes by other armed groups, such as Al-Nusra, led Syria to doubt the credibility of the sources. The Commission had not spoken about the crimes committed by Da'esh and remained silent as to the responsibility of States such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, which funded the terrorists. The report also neglected the impact of unilateral coercive measures on the civilians, which amounted to war crimes.

Interactive Dialogue

Qatar, speaking on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council, condemned the refusal of Syria to allow access to the Commission and said that the regime was prepared to destroy the people just to remain in power. The Commission of Inquiry had shown the new chapter in the tragedy that the Syrian people were suffering from. The regime had become a hotbed of terrorism, allowing the proliferation of groups prohibited by international law. The Gulf Cooperation Council was committed to finding a solution to the suffering of the Syrian people, and called for the stepping up of efforts to end this crisis, and the convening of a conference on humanitarian assistance to Syria.

Denmark, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, strongly condemned gross human rights violations committed by Government forces and non-State armed groups and was very worried about the increasing number of cases of sexual violence against women and the continued deterioration of children's rights. There could only be a political solution to this conflict. The influx of foreign fighters in the country was a grave concern. The Nordic Countries welcomed the efforts by the Commission to identify perpetrators and welcomed any steps that could lead to the prosecution of those responsible for the crimes committed in Syria, including the referral to the International Criminal Court.

European Union noted that civilians continued to suffer in Syria on a daily basis, in particular women and children. The European Union deeply regretted that the Syrian regime continued to deny the Commission access to the country. Systematic and widespread violations and abuses of human rights law and international humanitarian law continued, causing nearly 11 million refugees and displaced persons, as well as the obliteration of Syria's infrastructure. All those responsible for violence and abuses had to be held accountable.

Bahrain thanked the members of the Commission of Inquiry, and expressed regret that they were not allowed to visit Syria. Bahrain reiterated support for the territorial unity of Syria, as well as for the possibility to establish a transitional government. Bahrain condemned the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime and the use of toxic weapons, as well the suffering of women, children and the elderly. Bahrain supported the hosting of the third Kuwait conference to support humanitarian aid for Syria. The presence of foreign agents only exacerbated the conflict.

Holy See noted that more than 10 million Syrians have fled their homes, amounting to almost half of the country's population. They were deprived of their basic rights to shelter and adequate housing, security and human dignity. Many were victims of human rights abuses and were in urgent need of protective measures and support. Children were recruited, trained and used in active combat roles. Every child had the right to be registered at birth and simplifying mechanisms for registration, waiving fees, and advocating for refugee inclusive

registration were steps to solve the plight of stateless children.

New Zealand said that the international community must not give up on the Syrian people, as they were now dealing with the worst-case scenario. The death toll had passed 220,000 people and massive and systematic human rights abuses had so far been met with impunity. Indiscriminate attacks on civilians continued, including the use of illegal weapons, such as cluster weapons, chlorine and barrel bombs. Accountability was a necessary part of conflict management and prevention, and measures to break the cycle of impunity should reflect and be responsive to the realities of the situation in Syria.

Portugal joined those who strongly condemned systematic and widespread gross violations of human rights and international law, which continued in total impunity. The spread of extremism, namely through the brutal actions of Da'esh/ISIS and other armed groups, highlighted the serious risk and the dangers of further spill over in the whole region. Failing to address the prevailing culture of impunity was contributing to the escalade of horrors and hampering the basis for a longstanding peace.

Netherlands urged the international community to contribute to the appropriate functioning of domestic and international criminal justice mechanisms and said that States should use the principle of universal jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute perpetrators. It was extremely disappointing that after four years of fighting in Syria there was no evidence of the conflict coming to an end; a step-by-step approach needed to be followed and the international community should do everything possible to get the warring parties to the negotiating table.

Maldives appreciated the work done by the Commission of Inquiry, and called on the Syrian Government to grant the Commission access to the country. The conflict in Syria was characterized by a complete lack of adherence to the norms of international law, with hundreds of thousands of Syrians, including women and children, killed, and half of the country's population forced to flee their homes. Maldives strongly condemned all violations of international law and thus supported the recommendations of the Commission, noting the importance of ensuring continued monitoring and reporting on the situation in Syria.

Tunisia thanked the Commission of Inquiry for having documented human rights violations in Syria, which would allow for accountability and punishment of all who had committed those violations. Tunisia expressed solidarity with the Syrian people, and reaffirmed its position to fully support all efforts to find a political solution. It called on the international community to reinforce its assistance to refugee relief inside and outside Syria.

Estonia noted that the work of the Commission of Inquiry was remarkable, considering the denial of access to Syria. There was a total failure of civilian protection in the country. All parties to the conflict were responsible for ensuring that the civilian population was respected and protected. The Syrian conflict was the largest humanitarian crisis and it was seriously affecting Syria's neighbouring countries and threatening regional stability. The solution to the crisis could only be political.

Lichtenstein appreciated the innovative approach applied by the Commission in its latest report, providing an overview of the entire conflict, and asked if it was considering further innovations in the working methods, such as conducting public hearings. The International Criminal Court should be the venue where all perpetrators of atrocity crimes should be brought to justice, but in the view of the veto in the Security Council on the referral of Syria to the International Criminal Court, it was necessary to consider other ways of holding perpetrators accountable.

Switzerland welcomed the recommendations by the Commission and deplored that Syria continued to refuse access to the territory for the Commission. The human cost of the conflict was immeasurable, while the extensive use of children as spies, messengers, and even as suicide bombers was extremely shocking. The parties to the conflict must respect the prohibition of recruitment and use of children in conflicts. Switzerland asked whether the Commission had given further thought to transmitting the list of presumed perpetrators to authorities ready to undertake independent criminal proceedings.

Saudi Arabia said that Assad's regime, which had lost all credibility, continued carrying out grave human rights violations against Syrian civilians, including the use of prohibited weapons. Armed terrorist groups had found fertile ground in Syria because of the actions of the Government; those groups were operating in the name of Islam, but they had nothing to do with Islam. Withholding the names of presumed perpetrators of crimes only perpetuated the human rights violations and Saudi Arabia called upon the Commission to publish the list with names of suspects.

Ireland noted that the conflict in Syria had caused the deaths of more than 200,000 Syrians, the flight of almost 4 million refugees to neighbouring countries, and the displacement of more than 7.5 million people within Syria. It called on the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court, and called on the Syrian regime to stop the use of chemical weapons, barrel bombs and other forms of indiscriminate bombardment against civilian areas. It also called for safe and unhindered humanitarian access inside Syria.

Jordan thanked the Commission of Inquiry for their work, and expressed its deep concern about the deteriorating situation in Syria, as well as the dangerous repercussions it had for the region. It was noted that Jordan hosted massive numbers of Syrian refugees, thus shouldering a lot of the humanitarian needs in the region. Jordan expressed support for the territorial integrity of Syria.

United Kingdom noted that the scale of abuses committed by the Assad regime over the past four years was shocking and horrific. It fully supported the Commission's call for greater accountability and for the situation in Syria to be referred to the International Criminal Court. All perpetrators, state and non-state actors, had to be held accountable. The United Kingdom would continue to work for a political transition in Syria, bringing together moderates from all sides.

United States highlighted the atrocities committed by the Assad regime, including systematic targeting of civilians, restriction of humanitarian assistance and widespread torture. Non-state groups, including ISIL, continued atrocities as well. The Assad regime's brutal repression against peaceful protests had caused the situation to deteriorate. The regime continued to unjustly imprison women, doctors, human rights defenders and lawyers, and it was urged to release them, grant access to humanitarian agencies and cooperate with international actors, including the Commission.

Latvia said the evidence gathered by the Commission of Inquiry would be invaluable in the future accountability efforts. Its findings were deeply troubling and showed widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by the regime and armed groups. Latvia was concerned about the situation of the most vulnerable groups, including women and children. Extremism threatened the human rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities. Latvia was concerned that humanitarian workers had been targeted, and called for unhindered humanitarian access.

China took note of the report presented by the Commission of Inquiry. China said the conflict had allowed terrorist groups to spread, and underlined that peace and security, through dialogue and a political settlement decided by Syria's own people, was the prerequisite for the protection of human rights in Syria. China expressed concerns about the humanitarian situation in Syria and called upon all relevant sides to engage in dialogue.

Remarks by the Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO, Chair of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, in response to questions raised by the delegations, reiterated that all the information in the report was based on testimonies of victims of human rights violations; interviews were held with victims who were both inside and outside of Syria. The Commission had reported extensively on the crimes committed by Da'esh, including through a thematic paper published in November 2014, and had consistently reported on the human rights violations committed by all parties to the conflict, including by Al-Nusra. In almost four years of its existence, the Commission had never taken sides in this conflict; the only side it had ever taken was that of the victims. Ensuring accountability was a process and not a single action, and the Commission would do it in a realistic and responsible manner. The best way for now was by releasing the list of names to those States willing to exercise universal jurisdiction, for further investigation and prosecution. The Commission currently did not intend to hold public hearings, because it was difficult to ensure safety of the victims and witnesses, which would be put in danger by public hearings. Holding alleged perpetrators to account was essential, Mr. Pinheiro reiterated, and said that the Commission would share names and information about events listed in its database.

Interactive Dialogue

Thailand strongly condemned all forms of violence by all parties in Syria, as well as serious concern about the multiplication of unlawful attacks on civilians, schools and medical facilities. It called upon all States and international organizations to strengthen measures to help specific groups, such as women, children, persons with disabilities and minorities. It also called on the Syrian Government to cooperate with the Commission, which would help ensure accountability and end impunity.

Turkey underlined that the conflict in Syria was a direct threat to the entire region's peace and stability. It noted that the root causes of the conflict had to be addressed before dealing with the problem of the Islamic State. The Assad regime could not be considered a partner in the fight against the Islamic State, and Turkey rejected the baseless allegations made by the Syrian representative during the discussion. It was noted that the international community should honour Turkey's contribution to the humanitarian effort for Syria.

France said that the Commission of Inquiry had carried out important work, despite the lack of access to the country. The war crimes, crimes against humanity and massive violations of human rights in Syria were horrific. There was complete lack of accountability, and the terrorist threat amplified the suffering of the Syrian people. France called for the extension of the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry. It asked the Commission members to elaborate on ways impunity in Syria could be ended.

Russian Federation was pleased to note that the report by the Commission referred to atrocities perpetrated by ISIL, and underlined the importance for the international community to combat terrorism. The Russian Federation said that atrocities by ISIL were of an unprecedented scale. The provision of weapons to moderate groups would only ultimately give more arms to ISIL or end up with the creation of other terrorist groups. Russia supported the mandate of the United Nation Special Envoy in Syria, and was disappointed that opposition groups had refused to implement his propositions.

Cuba continued to closely follow the situation in Syria, where the information available was imprecise and often manipulated. Cuba condemned violence and attacks against civilians, but rejected the manipulation of the situation there. Some States supported violent

armed groups fighting the Government, which was now obliged to combat these groups. Cuba underlined the importance of respecting States' sovereignty, and stressed that peace could only be achieved through political dialogue. Cuba regretted the politicization of the Council on this issue.

Chile stressed the importance of a global political process for lasting peace, and underlined the importance of allowing access to the Commission of Inquiry. Chile emphasized the important role played by the Commission of Inquiry in documenting evidence, and highlighted that there could be no impunity for perpetrators of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Chile asked what steps could be made to ensure accountability.

Belgium underlined the excellent work done by the Commission of Inquiry, carried out in difficult conditions as it was not granted access to Syria. Belgium called on Syria to grant immediate access to the Commission. It was crucial for all abuses and violations to be punished, and Belgium called on the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. It reaffirmed its support for the extension of the Commission's mandate, in particular for the fight against impunity.

Morocco said that the report of the Commission of Inquiry demonstrated the continuing deterioration of the situation in Syria. Morocco condemned the exponential increase in war crimes, which did not spare women, children, hospitals and schools. It repeated the urgent need to bring an end to the violence and grave violations of human rights, and to guarantee adequate protection for the civilian population. The solution for the crisis should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, and put in place conditions for a political transition.

Italy expressed full support for the work of the Commission of Inquiry. It was essential that human rights violations in Syria were documented in order to hold perpetrators accountable. Some of the most heinous atrocities were committed against women, children, ethnic and religious minorities. Many historical and archaeological sites had been affected by the fighting, and looting and illegal excavations had also been reported. Italy called for a sustainable political settlement of the crisis in Syria.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea said that human rights issues or disputes must be addressed through constructive dialogue and cooperation, free from unilateral coercive, confrontational and selective condemnation based on political motives. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea extended its full support to the Government of Syria for their struggle to defend their sovereignty and right to existence.

Canada was gravely concerned by the main trends identified in the report, including the continued use of siege strategies by the Government forces and the bombardment of those areas, as well as arrests and enforced disappearances of parts of its population. Canada condemned the "militarization" of health, especially by government forces, either by targeting civilians in need of assistance, by attacking medical facilities and personnel, or by denying medical services as a form of reprisal.

Japan remained deeply concerned about the continued indiscriminate attacks against civilians and called for an immediate end to the violence. All parties concerned should observe relevant international humanitarian law and human rights law and ensure the realization of unfettered humanitarian access. Japan recognized the growing severity of the situation, and considered that the political solution based on the Geneva Communiqué was indispensable to stabilize the situation in Syria.

Greece welcomed the efforts by the Commission of Inquiry to document human rights violations and abuses by all parties, including ISIL, despite the fact that it had been denied the right to access to Syria. Humanitarian access was also urgently needed. Greece fully supported calls for the deferral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court and stressed the importance of accountability. Greece expressed its deep concerns about the spread of terrorism and the absence of protection of civilians, including those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities.

Poland was dismayed by the scale and barbarity of atrocities in Syria, and expressed grave concern over the fact that over 200,000 people had lost their lives in the conflict there and over the situation of vulnerable groups. Poland condemned Syria's refusal to allow access to the Commission of Inquiry to its territory, and underlined that the Syrian authorities had failed to comply with their international obligations. Poland also condemned the barbaric acts by ISIL and noted with particular concern the systematic targeting of religious and ethnic minorities, children and other vulnerable groups.

Albania expressed its deepest appreciation to the numerous victims and their testimonies that had contributed to the work of the Commission of Inquiry. Albania strongly disapproved of the indiscriminate use of weapons by State and non-state actors. Albania was extremely concerned with the spread of extremist groups, particularly ISIL, which constituted a threat to the region and the world. The situation of vulnerable groups, civilians, children, and religious minorities, and human rights violations against them were deeply concerning. Albania reiterated the need for a political solution as the only way out of this conflict.

Botswana welcomed the Commission's continued efforts in documenting the serious crimes committed in Syria. It was noted that war crimes and crimes against humanity were being committed on a massive scale, and that civilians continued to bear the brunt of the conflict. Denial of humanitarian aid had become an instrument of war in Syria, which had devastating effect on civilians, and Botswana

thus welcomed the initiative by the new United Nations Special Envoy to Syria to establish a series of “freeze zones” to facilitate the flow of much needed humanitarian aid.

Germany reiterated that full access to Syria had to be granted to the Commission of Inquiry. The findings of the Commission had a sound basis for tracing and understanding the tragic events. Germany urged the Syrian Government and all parties to stop all violence, respect human rights and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. The Syrian Government had to put an immediate end to torture and ill-treatment in its prisons.

Luxembourg said that the work of the Commission of Inquiry was vital in fighting impunity for the crimes committed in Syria, and called on the Security Council to refer the situation to the International Criminal Court. It was noted that children in particular suffered the consequences of the conflict. The Government and non-state actors continued to use them as soldiers, whereas schools and hospitals were being attacked. Luxembourg called for better humanitarian access to the civilian population, and asked the Commission to reflect on how children could be better protected.

Israel thanked the Commission for their professional and hard work and said that the international community and the Human Rights Council seemed helpless in the face of the ongoing atrocities. The responsibility for the mass crimes against civilians rested with the warring parties: Assad’s army and militias, terrorist organizations and other forces and units. All bore responsibility for the unfathomable loss of life, loss of human dignity, disdain for moral values, and disappearing health, social and economic services in Syria.

Belarus said that the country specific mandates undermined the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter and that cooperation was the real road towards progress in human rights. It was not possible to improve the humanitarian and human rights situation in Syria without peace and security in this country, and the Human Rights Council should work towards this end.

Iran said that the situation in Syria continued to cause concern, including the activities of terrorist groups, which represented a dangerous move which might destabilize the entire region. The international community should vigorously apply its commitment to combat terrorism while recognizing the national sovereignty of Syria within its internationally recognized borders.

Spain said the situation in Syria had resulted from the refusal of the regime to meet the democratic aspirations of its people. Spain was concerned about the total disrespect for human life in Syria, and underlined the widespread use of torture in the country. Spain stressed that Syria was a humanitarian catastrophe, and called for unhindered humanitarian access. Spain supported the calls for a referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and insisted on the importance of accountability.

Ecuador appealed to all United Nations Member States to work together to address the needs of the Syrian population. The conflict had to be resolved by the Syrian people through a political process. Ecuador condemned the interference by foreign forces, in violation of the United Nations Charter and the principle of sovereignty of States.

Slovakia said effective implementation of the Commission of Inquiry’s mandate required full and unhindered access of its members to the country. Slovakia was concerned about deliberate attacks against civilians, torture and other violence by government and non-state armed groups. The spread of extremism and terrorism was a matter of great concern, and had to be tackled through addressing its root causes and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Iraq said that unity and peace in Syria could not exist in light of such destruction and violence. ISIS had obliterated the border between Syria and Iraq, demonstrating the failure of the international community to preserve the stability of the region. The Syrian war had brought harm to civilians, including women and children. The Syrian Government had to be brought to the negotiating table, and humanitarian aid had to be provided to the civilian population. Conditions had to be created to allow Syria to find a political solution for the crisis.

Egypt thanked the Commission for their work, adding that it was closely following the situation in Syria. Violence continued with the death toll rising on a daily basis. The crisis in Syria was one of the gravest displacement and refugee crises in the world. A political solution was the only way to protect peace and security in the country, and Egypt urged that all efforts be pulled to restore a unified State, without any political partisanship.

Mexico fully supported the work of the Commission of Inquiry as the only reliable source of information on the situation in Syria. All standards of human rights and international humanitarian law were being violated by all the warring parties in Syria. Mexico was concerned that women and children were in particular subjected to various forms of violence, as well as to indoctrination by terrorist groups. Mexico urgently appealed to all the warring parties to immediately stop fighting, and called for an end to impunity.

Sudan expressed its concern about the deterioration of the situation in Syria and the human rights violations committed against civilians. All parties to the conflict should comply with the decision of the League of Arab States and the relevant Security Council resolutions. Sudan agreed that violence and military operations were not the best option and that a political solution to the conflict was needed.

Malaysia regretted that the crisis in Syria continued to worsen and the civilian population continued to bear the brunt of pain and suffering. Many victims of human rights violations were in urgent need of protective measures and support and all parties to the conflict should stop

many victims of human rights violations were in urgent need of protective measures and support and all parties to the conflict should stop the violence against each other and the civilians. Malaysia condemned in the strongest terms the so-called Islamic State in Syria for the crimes it was committing.

United Arab Emirates thanked the Commission of Inquiry for the information about the human rights violations perpetrated in Syria and condemned the regime's non-compliance with the United Nations resolutions. The crisis had displaced 10 million people inside and outside of Syria and the United Arab Emirates commended the holding of the Third Donor Conference at the end of this month, hoping that pledges would be sufficient to alleviate the suffering of the civilians.

Algeria expressed concern about the situation in Syria, and regretted that the report by the Commission of Inquiry was unbalanced as it only put responsibility for the main human rights violations on the Government of Syria. Algeria underlined that atrocities had been perpetrated by armed and terrorist groups. Foreign interference in Syria had violated its sovereignty and led to a false interpretation of events there, and to inadequate recommendations by the Commission. Mandate holders had to report without committing the Council to solutions that had not been agreed upon by the international community.

Australia was concerned about the death toll from the conflict in Syria surpassing 200,000 and about the estimated 212,000 people who were still besieged and threatened by bombardments and chemical weapons. The emergence of ISIL and atrocities it had committed had only compounded the tragedy in Syria. Perpetrators of serious international crimes had to be held to account, and Australia supported the call for a referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court. It therefore was deeply disappointed by the Security Council's veto on this matter.

Venezuela regretted the loss of lives due to the conflict in Syria, and was concerned about the situation in the country due to violent armed groups seeking to tear down the legitimate Government. This had led to many victims and displacement. Venezuela deplored the politicization of the situation there, and that the report by the Commission of Inquiry was based on unreliable information. Venezuela continued to support a political solution of the conflict, and rejected any interference or unilateral measures, including disguised humanitarian aid, to Syria.

Republic of Korea expressed appreciation for the work of the Commission of Inquiry, in spite of the complete lack of access to Syria. It noted that war crimes and crimes against humanity were being committed on a massive scale in Syria, adding that the findings of the Commission could serve as a basis to pursue accountability for human rights violations. The large majority of civilians were in dire need of humanitarian aid, and all parties needed to guarantee the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian aid to affected areas.

Kuwait condemned all acts of violence against civilians in Syria, as well as all other massive violations of international humanitarian law. The humanitarian crisis in Syria was of such magnitude that Kuwait had had to respond to it. It would thus organize the third humanitarian conference on Syria on 31 March 2015. Kuwait urged all States to ensure a positive response to the humanitarian appeal made by the Secretary-General.

Romania thanked the Commission of Inquiry for its report. The conflict in Syria needed to end. Otherwise, there would only be more victims and the conflict would spread to other countries. Romania appreciated the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to gradually achieve a scaling down of the violence, adding that the Security Council ought to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Syriac Universal Alliance said that the report had documented some of the horrors of this proxy war, but did not go far enough in describing what was really taking place, nor did it provide names of the United Nations Member States which were covertly supporting terrorist groups. The world was witnessing the near death of Christianity in Syria, Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries.

Press Emblem Campaign said that journalists had paid a very high price in to inform public opinion of the terrible human suffering and the gross human rights violations in Syria. In four years since March 2011, at least 75 media workers had been killed in Syria, which, during the past three years, had been the most dangerous place for journalists to work.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, in a joint statement with International Federation for Human Rights Leagues, said it was appalled by the failure of the international community to address impunity and protect civilians in Syria. Syrians had lost faith in the international community to protect them. The Commission of Inquiry should apply a victim-centred approach and bring attention to particular cases of torture and other human rights violations.

Amnesty International said war crime and crimes against humanity were occurring in Syria. Torture was widespread, and had been since before the crisis had started. ISIL had committed war crimes on a large scale. Amnesty International encouraged the Commission of Inquiry and the Human Rights Council to work on improving the situation of those arbitrarily detained, including peaceful activists and humanitarian personnel.

Human Rights Watch said the report by the Commission of Inquiry raised the question of what more the international community could do for Syria. The detention conditions were one of the main concerns, and torture was widespread. The Council should demand that all parties allow access to international investigators to detention facilities. Accountability was crucial and should be further encouraged.

through the publication by the Commission of Inquiry of the names of perpetrators, and the organization of public hearings of victims.

Union des Juristes Arabes said the report by the Commission of Inquiry was unbalanced. Although it addressed the atrocities committed by armed and terrorist groups such as ISIL, it did not address the countries supporting these groups, in violation of Security Council resolutions. The Syrian people had to choose their future for themselves, without foreign interference. Member States had to change their policies that had contributed to the violations in Syria.

World Alliance for Citizen Participation - CIVICUS said it was shocked by the lethargy of the international community when innocent civilians in Syria were living through unspeakable horror and when the Security Council was powerless to step in and alter the landscape of destruction and bloodshed. It supported the Commission's recommendation that the United Nations General Assembly adopt a measure calling on the Security Council to press for accountability of all perpetrators in the conflict.

World Jewish Congress commended the Commission of Inquiry for their dedication to investigate acts of violence committed by all actors in Syria. Identifying all parties was essential to ensure accountability and non-recurrence. It was deeply worried by the flourishing of fundamental and extremist religious armed groups, a phenomenon that endangered and threatened religious minority groups in the area.

Concluding Remarks by the Concerned Country

Syria, in concluding remarks, said States that advocated unilateral and politicised actions hurt the credibility of the Human Rights Council. Those practices only offered cover for crimes of terror. The Commission of Inquiry had remained silent regarding foreign support given to non-state agents in Syria, which some called "moderate opposition." The Commission had gone beyond its mandate and by trespassing it, it did not live up to the principles of integrity and objectivity. The intent to link the Commission's work with the Security Council was unacceptable and amounted to incitement and politicization. The Commission's criticism of the Syrian judicial system was unacceptable, as well as the allegation that the Syrian Government had failed to protect its civilians. Their allegations only served to justify foreign intervention in Syria.

Concluding Remarks by the Chair of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria

PAULO SÉRGIO PINHEIRO, Chair of the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria, said the Commission was mandated to establish facts and to identify perpetrators with a view to hold them accountable. Impunity had lasted for too long, and it was concerning that no discussion on the matter had taken place recently in the Security Council. Ensuring accountability was a process rather than a single action. For now, the best means was to publish names in hope that other States would use their universal jurisdiction. Other options, including the creation of an ad hoc tribunal, were proposed. Such tribunals could be based in the region and allow justice to victims at a minimal cost. The involvement of women in peace and political processes was essential. About children, United Nations agencies should strengthen their response for child protection in line with the Rights Up Front Initiative, and parties to the conflict must end the recruitment of children. The Commission of Inquiry was currently investigating the abduction of Syrian Christians by ISIL. The Chair underlined that human rights activists were targeted by both State and non-state armed groups and stressed their important collaboration with the work of the Commission.

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