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مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

United Nations Human Rights Council: 20th Session
Oral Intervention: Interactive Dialogue by the Syrian COI
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
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Today, as the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria enters its 16th month, the vast majority of world governments and all UN officials have admitted the urgent need for more decisive steps to be taken by the United Nations and the international community to protect the Syrian people.

Following four Special Sessions of the Human Rights Council, numerous resolutions adopted by the GA and HRC, including the gathering of concrete evidence on crimes against humanity by the COI on Syria, with national human rights defenders estimating the number of killed to be as high as 15,000, tens of thousands more have been the victims of grave rights violations, including arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, and torture. As pointed out in March of this year by the UN and OIC assessment mission, up to 1 million people, including ever increasing numbers of refugees, are in need of humanitarian assistance.

The government of Syria continues to break its promises to halt attacks against civilians and civilian areas. Three months have passed since the government of Syria pledged to implement the six-point plan proposed by the Joint Special Envoy to Syria. Instead, attacks against civilians are on the rise, with numbers of Syrians killed yesterday alone estimated to be over 100. The use of heavy artillery against civilian targets, as well as a full military siege in Homs, Idlib and Hama continues; as does the targeted killing of journalists who attempt to reveal what is occurring in the country. The unremitting efforts of Russia and China to block any and all action by the international community to halt the bloodshed and ensure accountability for crimes committed has lead toward what some call a “de facto civil war” with no end in sight.

If the discussions taking place on June 30, as announced by Special Envoy Kofi Anan, which will include the five permanent members of the Security Council, fail to yield positive results, then everyone loses, most of all the Syrian people. This could very well be the last chance for these governments to take the required steps to ensure the de-escalation of the situation.

More can also be done by this Council. It is now imperative that the HRC includes in any resolution it adopts on the situation in Syria a clear recommendation for the situation to be referred to the International Criminal Court. It is unacceptable that this has not yet been carried out by this Council. It can and should be done during this session.

Thank you Madam President