



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان



EURO-MEDITERRANEAN HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK
RÉSEAU EURO-MÉDITERRANÉEN DES DROITS DE L'HOMME
الشبكة الأوروبية - المتوسطية لحقوق الإنسان

Human Rights Council: 27th Session

Oral Intervention- Item 4, ID Syria COI

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)

16 September, 2014

Delivered by: Mr. Bassam Al Ahmad

Thank you Mr President,

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) and their Syrian partners commend the report of the COI and the extensive efforts deployed by the Commission to unfold grave violations and international crimes perpetrated in Syria.

Our organizations are appalled that the Syrian government and other warring parties utterly fail to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law, which has resulted in mass destruction and suffering.

The indiscriminate bombing of civilian populated areas such as Aleppo, Deraa and Damascus suburbs have caused massive displacement of population. Half of the Syrian population is directly affected by the conflict which resulted in the death of at least 191 000 persons, more than 3 million refugees and at least 6,5 million internally displaced persons.

Our organizations would like to pay a homage to the work of Syrian human rights activists who are deploying immense efforts to document international crimes and pave the way for accountability for victims in a context where the Syrian government continues to impede the access of the Commission to Syrian territory.

International organizations, including United Nations bodies, rely on the work conducted on a daily basis by Syrian human rights groups. The Council should recognize the price paid by these courageous persons for their commitment to human rights.

Human rights defenders are prosecuted in conditions that fall short of the most basic principles of fair trial, as for the case of the prominent journalist Mazen Darwish and his colleagues at the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM). Thousands of peaceful activists remain arbitrarily detained by the Syrian government. They are routinely exposed to torture which has already resulted in the death of thousands.

Human rights activists are also increasingly exposed to threats from non-state actors, especially when those are the primary perpetrators of violations in regions they have taken over. For more than 9 months, prominent human rights lawyer Razan Zaitounch, head of the Violations Documentation

Center in Syria (VDC) remains in the hands of an opposition armed group along with three of her colleagues.

At a time when the international community is witnessing horrific crimes committed by extremist group “Daesh”, it must not turn a blind eye on the persistent violations committed by the Syrian government against civilians and peaceful activists.

Mr President,

The Syrian people have lost hope in the ability of human rights mechanisms to address the deep-rooted culture of impunity in their country. We therefore reiterate our call to the Council to carry out its duty to defend the interests of the victims by explicitly and firmly calling upon the Security Council to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Thank you Mr. President