



**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

**United Nations Human Rights Council: 29th Session
Item 4: Interactive Dialogue, Commission of Inquiry on Syria
Oral Intervention**

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN)

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Thank you Mr. President,

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) in cooperation with the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network (EMHRN) commend the Commission's efforts to ensure justice for the horrific crimes that continue to be carried out in Syria. The failure of the international community to ensure accountability for these crimes is a profound disgrace.

It is no secret that the situation in Syria and for Syrians is characterized by ever increasing chaos, sufferings and fear.

The persistent use of prohibited weapons, such as barrel bombs, by the Syrian forces against civilian populated areas, sieges imposed on entire cities resulting in the starvation of local communities, combined with large scale campaigns of arrest and systematic torture and brutal violations committed by extremist groups in areas under their effective control has created an unprecedented human rights and humanitarian crisis.

More than four million have been forced to flee abroad, mainly to neighboring countries. Day after day the desperate living conditions of these refugees, including tens of thousands of children, continue to deteriorate to the extent that thousands are now ready to risk their lives at sea.

Violations of women's rights have flourished in this conflict. Women in custody face daily abuse and rejection from their communities upon their release. Extremist armed groups impose deplorable restrictions on their rights.

Syrian human rights defenders, who seek to reveal the truth and ensure justice, have been rewarded for their efforts with torture, imprisonment, forced disappearances and death. In the best case scenario they must endure the bitterness of exile.

At a time when Syria neighboring countries are confronted to immense challenges to deal with the situation of millions of refugees, the international community should not

only provide safe haven to those escaping Syria to save their lives, it should address the roots of phenomenon.

Impunity has been a primary driving force of the conflict in Syria; it is the fuel that feeds the fire. Any political settlement brokered by the UN must go hand in hand with accountability mechanisms that provide remedies for victims and deterrence for perpetrators. In this context, we urge the Commission to go beyond identifying individual criminal responsibility and establish a clear chain of command for violations committed by all parties.

It is the duty of this Council to exert maximum pressure to ensure that the Security Council finally refers the Syrian situation to the ICC or to an ad hoc tribunal, and to develop alternative forms of accountability so long as Russia and China continue to shield the Syrian regime and terrorist organizations from justice through their veto power.

Mr. President,

Syria cannot wait any longer: being confronted to a political deadlock for almost 4 years, this Council and UN member states should explore alternative means to ensure accountability, particularly by activating universal jurisdiction mechanisms until the ICC is fully empowered to prosecute alleged crimes committed in Syria.

Thank you Mr. President.