

Thank you, Mr. President,

The Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network welcome this urgent debate on Syria.

Indeed, the situation on the ground in Syria has reached new lows, as regular reports tell of massacres and other serious human rights violations perpetrated both by the Syrian government and certain elements of the opposition.

As UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay stated in her update to this Council, the situation in Syria has become an 'intolerable affront to the human conscience'.

While horrifying accounts and reports of the May Bayda and Baniyas massacres, where allegedly pro-government militias killed hundreds of civilians, are still being released, we are concerned by the growing evidence of war crimes being committed by the Syrian army, Hezbollah militiamen, some factions of the Free Syrian Army, and Jabhat Al-Nusra, with civilians suffering as a result of sniper activity, indiscriminate shelling, and lack of access to food, water, and medical aid.

CIHRS and EHMRN are further concerned by the growing sectarian nature of the conflict in Syria that is currently being fuelled by the government and by extremist armed groups opposed to the Syrian government.

This worsening situation requires the attention of the Human Rights Council, as entrenched sectarian divides will seriously impair the building of a democratic Syria governed by rule of law.

We remain concerned about the regional impact of the crisis in Syria. While the outpour of refugees is putting a strain on neighbouring countries, clashes between pro- and anti-government factions have claimed the lives of at least 30 people over the past seven days of continued fighting in the town of Tripoli in northern Lebanon.

How many special sessions and urgent debates do we need to satisfy the mandate of this Council to fully realize the protection and promotion of human rights? We call on this Council to make no mistake this time and to call on the Security Council to request the ICC to start investigations into war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria.

Thank you, Mr. President.