



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

United Nations Human Rights Council: 31st Session

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

Oral Intervention

15 March 2016

Thank you, Mr. President,

As we mark the 5th anniversary of the Syrian conflict, described by the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) as "One of the most atrocious humanitarian crisis" in the world, the lives of Syrian men, women and children continue to be ravaged by the destruction of their country.

CIHRS would like to salute the role played by the COI over the last 5 years. Its continued investigations give hope that one day justice for victims will be achieved. The two reports presented to this session paint a horrific picture.

Hundreds of innocent victims murdered on almost a daily basis from indiscriminate attacks committed by all parties to the conflict, including foreign military forces; The systematic use of starvation, sexual violence, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances as arms of war; Factories of "extermination" and torture run by the Syrian government. The photos of Syrian torture victims, or the Caser photos, are shocking evidence of what goes on in Government controlled detention centres.

We share the CoI's concerns regarding the forcible transfer of communities and attacks on religious ethnic and sexual minorities. The entrenchment of sectarian violence will no doubt be a threat to the independence, territorial integrity, and non-sectarian character of Syria for generations to come.

We support the CoI's recommendations for influential actors, in particular the members of the Security Council, to pressure all parties to end the violence and to support a political solution. This should include an end to the proliferation and supply of weapons to all parties to the conflict. It also requires the humane treatment of asylum seekers and refugees as required by international law.

As history has taught time and time again, the only sustainable solution to the crises must include accountability for those committing these horrific acts. The Security Council should refer the situation in Syria to the ICC. We call on all governments who have not done so to immediately open official investigations into crimes committed in Syria by the activation of universal jurisdiction to pursue accountability for crimes committed and, where applicable, national tort law to provide redress for victims.

The debates here at this Council have become increasingly divorced from the plight of Syrian victims. In order to ensure a victim oriented approach by the Council towards the Syrian conflict, we call for the convening of a high level panel at the 32nd or 33rd Session of the Council that would provide Syrian victims or eyewitnesses to crimes committed in Syria to deliver credible testimonials.

Finally, Mr. Pinheiro on 22 February you declared: "*We are seeing an overwhelming yet consistent intensification of external military involvement in Syria with devastating consequences for civilians.*" HRC res. S-17/1 gave the CoI mandate "*to investigate all alleged violations of IHRL since March 2011 in Syria*". Does the COI plan to report on violations by foreign military forces in the future?

Thank you.