



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

Human Rights Council: 33rd Session
Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
September 19, 2016

Mr. President,

The Cairo Institute along with 4 Syrian NGOs¹ urge this Council to strengthen its actions on Syria, in particular by ensuring that perpetrators of crimes against international law are brought to justice. Accountability and the voice of victims should remain at the forefront of the work of this Council.

On Aug 18th, the image of the Syrian boy, Omran Daqneesh, sitting dazed and bloodied in an ambulance in Aleppo made worldwide headlines. Omran who was fortunate enough to survive the bombardment of what appears to be a civilian building does not share the same fate of the thousands of Syrian civilians who have died as a result of the conflict. Recent numbers indicate that more than 250,000 persons have died, more than 13 million are in need of humanitarian assistance, with almost 5 million refugees having fled the country.

On a number of occasions, the CoI has recommended that third states have an important role to play towards ensuring accountability and redress for Syrian victims through the referral to the ICC and the use of national or universal jurisdiction. Despite the fact that many grave violations of international law have been documented by the CoI and other credible international and regional bodies, only few attempts to use universal jurisdiction and national mechanisms of accountability have so far taken place. While we applaud countries like Germany, France, and Sweden for taking initial steps in this direction, much more can still be done within these countries and countries throughout the world. Like these states, other countries need to dedicate resources to begin to open preliminary investigations into crimes in Syria and to formulate a list of individuals suspected of committing crimes in Syria that can be used to ensure that any such individual is held to account if they come under the jurisdiction of that state.

Needless to say that prosecuting low-ranking officials accused of war crimes or crimes against humanity in Syria is important; however, there is a greater need for states to uphold their international responsibility through a common coherent strategy to cooperate closely and bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for the most heinous and grave crimes committed in Syria.

¹ This statement is delivered jointly with the following Syrian NGOs: Dawlaty – Syrian League for Citizenship – Syrian Network for Human Rights - The Day After

Finally, we urge this council to adopt a resolution focusing on accountability that would lay out the steps that can and should be taken by states on a national and international level in order to strengthen efforts to ensure that there will be no safe haven for individuals in Syria that have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. We would like to ask the CoI if they have carried out and would consider a study of how to strengthen the use of national mechanisms of accountability and the use of universal jurisdiction by third party states in relation to crimes committed in Syria?

Thank you Mr. President