



United Nations Human Rights Council

45th session of the Human Rights Council

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

Joint Oral Intervention¹

Date: September 22, 2020

Delivered by: Karen Abboud

Madam President, Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria,

To begin with, I applaud the Commission for its efforts to expose the ongoing human rights violations in Syria, to alleviate the suffering of all Syrian people, and to curb impunity for war criminals in Syria from among the different parties to the conflict and the de-facto authorities.

Ladies and gentlemen:

While you are hearing my voice, there are other women detained in the darkness of prisons without a voice, deprived of their freedom, without knowing their fate nor where they are being held; in order to deny them due protection under the law.

It has been nine years since the Syrian people have demanded their right to freedom and a decent life. Since then, many children and adults have been exposed to some of the most horrific forms of physical and psychological torture, in prisons that - at the very least- can be described as human slaughterhouses.

In these prisons, female detainees are forced to take off their clothes, as a form of psychological torture, and are beaten and electrocuted until they lose consciousness. Numerous cases were documented in which women were repeatedly raped, by more than one person. This is part of a systematic process of torture intended to destroy the victim, not only during detention, but even if she were to escape it, she would face the guilt and stigma imposed by society on rape victims.

¹ Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression

This societal stigma may escalate to the murder of the rape victim by her family or relatives, in a so-called defense of her honor. Unexpected pregnancy and childbirth may also result from rape; with infants born in prison cells, never having seen the sunlight, living in darkness.

Therefore, **Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression** calls for the Commission of Inquiry to focus in their next report on cases of gender-based violence and sexual violence against women in Syria, and present recommendations to the international community on ways to ensure justice for the victims of these violations.

We also call on the Syrian government and all parties and factions of the conflict to immediately stop committing sexual violence against male and female detainees, and to accept survivors and reintegrate them into local communities.

Thank you.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) is an independent, non-governmental, non-profit institution. SCM is attempting to work on building a society that guarantees freedom of expression and belief, human rights and access to justice. Our vision is a democratic world, based on justice, freedom and equality, respecting human dignity and rights. SCM was established in 2004 and was granted Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), since 2011.