

# Council condemns gross violations of human rights by Syria, asks Commission of Inquiry to Conduct Inquiry into events in Al Qusayr

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Human Rights Council  
MIDDAY

29 May 2013

The Human Rights Council today held an urgent debate on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Syria and adopted a resolution in which it strongly condemned the widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and the Government-affiliated militias, including against the people of Al Qusayr, and requested the Commission of Inquiry to urgently conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the events in Al Qusayr.

In the resolution, adopted by a vote of 36 in favour, 1 against and 8 abstentions, the Council strongly condemned the regime's use of ballistic missiles and other heavy weapons against civilians. It condemned all violence in Syria, irrespective of where it came from, and called upon all parties to immediately put an end to all forms of violence, including terrorist acts and acts of violence or intimidation that may foment sectarian tensions.

The Council also condemned the intervention of foreign combatants fighting on behalf of the Syrian regime in Al Qusayr, and demanded that the Syrian authorities allow free and unimpeded access by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to all civilians affected by the violence.

At the beginning of the urgent debate, Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the situation in Syria reflected a failure to protect civilians from human rights violations by all parties. Clashes between Government forces and anti-Government armed groups had reportedly resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. In the run-up to the conference on Syria in Geneva, States, especially those with influence on the combatants, had to act collectively to stop the conflict from worsening. The Council should send a clear message to all parties, and the external actors wittingly and unwittingly fuelling it: the conflict had to cease; the flow of arms had to stop; and the process of national dialogue had to begin.

Chaloka Beyani, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, speaking on behalf of the Coordinating Committee of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, said that over 70,000 persons were estimated to have been killed

during this conflict. If the international community failed to find a solution to this crisis, the short- and long-term consequences for the people and the State itself would be immeasurable, and there would also be profound effects on neighbouring countries.

Christof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, said that for two years the relentless deterioration of the human rights situation in Syria had been witnessed, with violence and human rights violations reaching an alarming level of gravity. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and violence must stop. Mr. Heyns supported calls for Members of the Security Council to strengthen their efforts to help restore peace in Syria and hoped that the International Conference to be convened next month on Syria would be a meaningful step in this direction.

Syria, speaking as the concerned country, said that every time the rebels felt that they were going to fail they rushed to push for such debates in the Council. The town of Al Qusayr had seen no massacres, but it had been terrorized by jihadists. Syria rejected the use of the Council's time on what it called "surreal and sterile stage acts" in considering this resolution. The cynical actions of the Council gave cover and succour to terrorists and Syria would reject the resolution, which was in any case full of lies and hypocrisy.

During the debate, speakers lamented the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in Syria and condemned the grave violations to human rights and humanitarian law reportedly committed by all parties to the conflict; in particular, the alarming acts of violence committed against civilians, including women and children. While some delegations welcomed the urgent debate and highlighted the Council's responsibility to address human rights violations, others denounced it as an example of double standards and the attempt by some States to promote their own interests. Speakers reiterated calls to all parties to immediately cease hostilities and to engage in dialogue. Several delegations recalled international initiatives to the crisis, including the efforts of Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahmini and the upcoming international conference on Syria jointly convened by Russia and the United States in June.

Speaking during the general debate were Ireland on behalf of the European Union, Qatar, United States, Switzerland, Montenegro, Italy, Argentina, Peru, United Arab Emirates, Chile, Japan, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Austria, Maldives, Thailand, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Kuwait, Estonia, Venezuela, Spain, Angola, Botswana, Libya, Brazil, Poland, Gabon, Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Mexico, Australia, United Kingdom, Norway, Russia, Uruguay, New Zealand, Algeria, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Cuba, Paraguay, Holy See, France, Iran, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Belgium, Croatia, Tunisia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Canada, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Netherlands, and Honduras.

The Press Emblem Campaign, Amnesty International, Movement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik, Civicus, International Commission of Jurists, Association of World Citizens in a joint statement, the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies also took the floor.

Qatar introduced the draft resolution. Speaking in general comments or explanations of the vote before and after the vote were Ireland on behalf of the European Union, Venezuela, Ecuador, Pakistan, Peru, Germany on behalf of Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic, Chile, Argentina, Indonesia and Thailand. Guatemala and India asked for clarification on the draft resolution.

At the beginning of the meeting, Russia, speaking on behalf of a group of States in a point of clarification, said that there remained certain questions concerning the purpose, format and procedure of this urgent debate on which they wished further clarification from the Secretariat.

Remigiusz Henczel, President of the Council, recalled two precedents for the urgent debate organised by the Council, adding that urgent debates were based on a decision of the Council to adjust its programme of work to address a matter considered to be urgent at the explicit request of a State or a group of States which considered that a matter was so urgent that it could not wait until the consideration of other agenda items later during the session.

In the afternoon meeting, the Council will resume its clustered interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and with the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

## Resolution

In a resolution (A/HRC/23/L.1) on the deteriorating situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, and the recent killings in Al-Qusayr, adopted by a vote of 36 in favour, 1 against and 8 abstentions, as orally revised, the Council strongly condemns all violations of international humanitarian law and the widespread and systematic gross violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Syrian authorities and the Government-affiliated militias, such as those violations involving the regime's use of ballistic missiles and other heavy weapons against civilians in the Syrian Arab Republic, including against the people of Al Qusayr; condemns all violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, irrespective of where it comes from, and calls upon all parties to immediately put an end to all forms of violence, including terrorist acts and acts of violence or intimidation that may foment sectarian tensions; calls upon the Syrian authorities to meet their responsibility to protect the Syrian population and to put an immediate end to all attacks against the civilians of Al Qusayr; stresses the need to ensure accountability for those responsible for the massacre in Al Qusayr; reaffirms that the Syrian people, on the basis of broad, inclusive and credible consultations should determine, within the framework provided by international law, the process and mechanisms to achieve justice, reconciliation, truth and accountability for gross violations, as well as reparations and effective remedies for victims, while underlining the relevance of referrals to the appropriate international criminal justice mechanisms under appropriate circumstances; condemns the intervention of foreign combatants fighting on behalf of the Syrian regime in Al Qusayr, and expresses deep concern that their involvement further exacerbates the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation; demands that the Syrian

authorities allow free and unimpeded access by the United Nations and humanitarian agencies to all civilians affected by the violence; requests the Commission of Inquiry to urgently conduct a comprehensive, independent and unfettered inquiry into the events in Al Qusayr and also requests the Commission to include the finding of the inquiry in its report to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-fourth session; and decides to remain seized of the matter and to take further action on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The result of the vote was as follows:

In favour (36): Argentina, Austria, Benin, Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Estonia, Gabon, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Montenegro, Pakistan, Peru, Poland, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Sierra Leone, Spain, Switzerland, Thailand, United Arab Emirates, and United States.

Against (1): Venezuela.

Abstentions (8): Angola, Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Philippines, and Uganda.

#### Action on the Resolution

Qatar, introducing draft resolution HRC/23/L.1 on the deterioration of human rights in Syria, particularly in Al Qusayr where civilians were subject to heavy shelling and a siege preventing them from leaving and receiving emergency humanitarian assistance, said that the draft resolution condemned all the violations of international humanitarian law as well as all acts of violence perpetrated, regardless of the source, and called for an end to the violence. The draft resolution also condemned the intervention of foreign combatants fighting on behalf of the Syrian regime. There could be serious consequences for neighbouring countries. The draft resolution called for free and unimpeded humanitarian access. Furthermore, the draft resolution decided that the Commission of Inquiry should provide a full investigation of the events in Al Qusayr and present these results in a report at the twenty-fourth session of the Council. This was an objective and balanced text and it was hoped it would be approved by consensus.

Ireland, in a general comment on behalf of the European Union, said it supported the resolution and looked forward to a comprehensive review of the next steps toward peace, reconciliation and reconstruction.

Venezuela, in a general comment, said the resolution lacked any kind of balance and did not condemn the acts of violence perpetrated by the anti-Government forces in Syria. It damaged the work of the Human Rights Council and its claims to protect universal human rights. It was politicized in favour of Western interests and Venezuela would not vote in favour of it.

Syria, speaking as a concerned country, said that it was satisfied with the number of statements heard that expressed dissatisfaction with the holding of such sessions and that

had suggested the stopping of flows of weapons to armed groups in Syria. Terrorist-sponsoring States including those sponsoring this draft resolution were sad because their mercenaries had been defeated. The claims by the sponsors that there were armed groups participating next to the Syrian Army in Al Qusayr were a pretext used to cover their own sponsorship of terrorists. The majority of countries agreed to the importance of holding a Geneva second conference. However this conference was diametrically in opposition to this draft resolution that only helped in stopping the preparation of this conference. Syria did not feel that the sponsors of the draft resolution were aiming for an end to the bloodshed.

Ecuador, in an explanation of the vote before the vote, drew the attention of the Council to the issue of parties that had provided money, weapons and training to the belligerents in Syria, worsening the conflict. This had not been reflected adequately in the text of the resolution. Also the resolution did not mention recourse to the International Criminal Court and therefore Ecuador would abstain from the vote. Furthermore, the resolution eroded the aims of the proposed Geneva peace talks.

Pakistan, speaking in an explanation of the vote before the vote, said it was deeply concerned about the violence and human rights abuses in Syria. The Council had to play its role to achieve its objectives; this was a time for diplomacy and for the international community to stop the carnage in Syria. Pakistan would vote in favour of the resolution to show its solidarity with the people of Syria, but had some reservations. The resolution could have been more balanced, recognising the responsibility of all sides to the conflict for the violence. The foreign supply of weapons to all sides must stop and this resolution should not become an instrument of division. Pakistan hoped that the resolution would contribute to stop the bloodshed in Syria.

Peru, in an explanation of the vote before the vote, condemned all violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law committed in Syria by all parties, including the intervention of external actors, and said that this should be underscored. Peru would vote in favour of the draft resolution as it was essential for the Human Rights Council to reaffirm its appeal to all parties to put an end to all forms of violence and uphold human rights and international humanitarian law.

Germany, in an explanation of the vote before the vote on behalf of Germany, Austria and Czech Republic, said the events in Al Qusayr deserved a full inquiry to determine the nature and gravity of the violations of human rights law taking place there. They regretted that recourse to the International Criminal Court had not been made part of the resolution but supported all efforts, including the Kerry-Lavrov process and the Geneva peace talks, to find peace. The Human Rights Council had to address all human rights abuses and although not everything they would have liked had been addressed by the text of the resolution, they would nevertheless vote in favour of the resolution.

Guatemala sought clarification about what text was being voted on, as there was no mention in the introduction of oral revisions.

REMIGIUSZ A. HENCZEL, President the Rights Council, said that text distributed in the room at 5 p.m. was L1. Oral Revisions (2).

India shared the concern expressed by Guatemala.

REMIGIUSZ A. HENCZEL, President the Rights Council, said that the correct text was L1. Oral Revisions (2). The President asked Venezuela whether it wished to call for a vote.

Venezuela called for a vote and said that it would vote against the draft resolution proposed, as it had said in its general comment.

Chile, speaking in an explanation of the vote after the vote, condemned the violence in Syria and said the worsening crisis deserved action by the Human Rights Council. The priority should be to ensure respect for the human rights of victims. Chile had voted in favour of the resolution in order to ensure the credibility of the Council and to send a message to the victims.

Argentina, in an explanation of the vote after the vote, said that it was following the situation in Syria with concern. Argentina regretted the continued militarisation and said that it was crucial to curb the spiral of violence in which all stakeholders were immersed. It reaffirmed its appeal to all countries that were providing arms to cease sending weapons to parties to the conflict, which only worsened the tragedy suffered by the Syrian people.

Indonesia, in an explanation of the vote after the vote, said that it condemned the continuation of serious violations of human rights in Syria irrespective of where they came from and that this should have been reflected. As the text did not adequately reflect this, Indonesia had decided to abstain from the vote.

Thailand, in an explanation of the vote after the vote, said that although it appreciated efforts to improve the text to accommodate views and comments made, Thailand felt that it could have been more balanced. Nonetheless, Thailand had voted in support of the resolution as it felt that this was warranted, given the escalation of the situation in Syria.

### Opening Statements

NAVI PILLAY, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said that the situation in Syria reflected a failure to protect civilians from human rights violations by all parties. The situation was beginning to show signs of destabilizing the whole region.

Reports indicated that Government forces continued to carry out attacks that killed civilians, including in Al-Qusayr. Since anti-Government armed groups took control of Al-Qusayr in 2012, a year-long siege had resulted in a deteriorating humanitarian situation. This had greatly worsened over the last month, as efforts to capture Al-Qusayr had intensified. Clashes between Government forces and anti-Government armed groups had reportedly resulted in hundreds of civilian casualties. Immediate action to stop further bloodshed was needed. The solution had to be political, not military. Outside forces were reported to be fuelling the conflict by providing weapons and ammunition to

one side or the other. In the run-up to the proposed International Conference on Syria in Geneva, States, especially those with influence on the combatants, had to act collectively to stop the conflict from getting worse. The collapse of the State of Syria would have devastating consequences, not just for Syrians, but also for the region and the whole world. Syria had to be referred to the International Criminal Court; war crimes and crimes against humanity were being routinely committed and the prevalent culture of impunity was helping to prolong the conflict. Ms. Pillay said that this Council should send a clear message to all parties to the conflict, and the external actors wittingly and unwittingly fuelling it: the conflict had to cease; the flow of arms had to stop; and the process of national dialogue had to begin.

CHALOKA BEYANI, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, speaking on behalf of the Coordinating Committee of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, said that despite the brave efforts of many, within and outside Syria, to respond to the urgent humanitarian needs and find a solution to end human suffering, the international community had not yet succeeded. Over 70,000 persons were estimated to have been killed during this conflict. There were accounts that anti-Government forces had been committing grave violations against civilians, including humanitarian workers, and using civilians as human shields. Such violations were strongly condemned and all parties to the conflict were called upon to end the violence and, with the support of the international community, to urgently find a political solution. The United Nations estimated there were nearly 7 million people in need in Syria of which 3 million were children. Over 4 million people had been internally displaced and a further 1.4 million had sought refuge in neighbouring countries. More funding was needed to meet the urgent humanitarian needs and regional and international solidarity would be needed for both persons in Syria and those that had fled to neighbouring countries. Donors were called upon to demonstrate their solidarity by expanding their support to neighbouring countries hosting refugees. It was imperative that the Syrian Government and all other parties to the conflict ensured full and unimpeded humanitarian access to all in need, be they under Government or opposition control. The State had the primary responsibility to ensure respect for human rights and international law, and to exercise due diligence with regards to actions of non-state actors. If the international community failed to find a solution to this crisis, the short- and long-term consequences for the people and the State itself would be immeasurable, and there would also be profound effects on neighbouring countries.

CHRISTOF HEYNS, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, said that for two years the relentless deterioration of the human rights situation in Syria had been witnessed, with violence and human rights violations reaching an alarming level of gravity. Information reported on the violations of the right to life in Syria raised an ever higher level of alarm. The fourth report of the independent international Commission of Inquiry on Syria stipulated that the situation had been worsening further, following the escalation of the conflict between the Government forces and affiliated militia on the one hand and anti-Government armed groups on the other. The tens of thousands of deaths, especially of civilians, constituted a figure that was

particular appalling. Government forces and militia associated with it reportedly continued to commit unlawful killings. Reports on the killings perpetrated by the anti-Government armed groups were also very distressing. Mr. Heyns expressed deep concern at the current level of unlawful killings perpetrated by all parties and recalled obligations under both international humanitarian and human rights law to protect the right to life. It was a State's obligation to ensure that its own security forces did not commit human rights violations and to protect its population. Accountability for unlawful killings committed needed to be ensured by the authorities in Syria to shed light on the events unfolding since March 2011. Perpetrators must be brought to justice and violence must stop. Mr. Heyns supported calls for Members of the Security Council to strengthen their efforts to help restore peace in Syria and hoped that the International Conference to be convened next month on Syria would be a meaningful step in this direction.

#### Statement by Syria as the Concerned Country

Syria, speaking as the concerned country, said that every time the rebels felt that they were going to fail they rushed to push for such debates in the Council. Qatar and Turkey had blood on their hands. The High Commissioner would be better keeping silent if she could not publish reliable information about the situation in Syria. Billions of dollars had been spent by Qatar to train jihadis in Turkey to spread chaos. The resolution was not objective; it was biased and drafted in a hate-filled manner that was far from transparency. The town of Al Qusayr had seen no massacres, but it had been terrorized by jihadis. Nearby Lebanon had been shelled in a desperate effort to bring it into the war. The Government had made efforts to evacuate the town, but persons there were being held as a human shield. Syria rejected the use of the Council's time on what it called "surreal and sterile stage acts" in considering this resolution. The cynical actions of the Council gave cover and succour to terrorists and Syria would reject the resolution, which was in any case full of lies and hypocrisy.

#### Discussion

Ireland, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that it was seriously concerned by military operations conducted by the Syrian Government in Al Qusayr that caused immense human suffering. The European Union reiterated its condemnation of the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime which according to the Commission of Inquiry amounted to crimes against humanities. The European Union was also extremely concerned about the involvement of extremist and foreign non-State actors. All parties had to respect international humanitarian and human rights law and all those responsible for violations and abuses had to be held accountable.

Qatar said that the Syrian population had been witnessing grave and systematic violations of human rights for over two years in a situation which also threatened regional security. The international community should not stand silent before crimes committed by the Syrian regime across the country and the entry of foreign elements. The Human Rights Council was called upon to investigate the humanitarian situation and take all measures



to protect civilians. It was hoped that the resolution on the deteriorating situation of human rights in Syria and the recent killings in Al Qusayr would be adopted by consensus.

United States condemned the recent airstrikes and artillery bombardment on Al Qusayr, which had reportedly killed more than 183 civilians. These innocent men, women and children were the latest victims among the 80,000 who had been killed since the regime began its brutal campaign more than two years ago. The United States was deeply concerned about the risk of increasing sectarian violence from all sides and condemned Hezbollah's direct role in the hostilities, a role which inflamed regional tensions, escalated violence inside Syria and incited instability in Lebanon.

Switzerland condemned the grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law and the recent events in Al Qusayr, whose civilian population was paying the greatest price, and called on Syria to fulfil its international obligations. Violations continued to be committed flagrantly by all parties. Switzerland reiterated the call to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. On the ground the situation continued to deteriorate and international humanitarian aid was not enough to cover the humanitarian needs.

Montenegro was extremely concerned about the escalating violence taking place within Syria and the overt violations of human rights law and humanitarian law. Montenegro supported comprehensive action and coordinated efforts to urgently address the escalating humanitarian crisis, and the appeal of the High Commissioner to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. Montenegro strongly encouraged the advancement of a political solution to the crisis along the line of the Geneva communiqué.

Italy said that it strongly deplored the siege of Al Qusayr and condemned the atrocities committed by the Syrian regime and its militia, which could fall into the category of crimes against humanity. Italy urged all parties to put an end to the bloodshed. An additional cause of concern was the humanitarian crisis that was resulting because of the war. Italy firmly supported the creation of a transitional body that could lead to a stable and democratic Syria.

Argentina said that it was deeply concerned about the plight of Al Qusayr and the increasing militarization of the situation. Argentina supported any political process that could end the bloodshed. Argentina was opposed to outside actors supplying arms and escalating the situation.

Peru extended brotherly feelings to the people of Syria. It was deeply concerned that war crimes and crimes against humanity were possibly being committed. Peru appealed for an end to the violence so that there could be a Syrian-led process toward democracy and peace. Peru supported the efforts of United Nations peace envoy to Syria Lakhdar Brahimi and the proposed Geneva peace conference.

United Arab Emirates said that it strongly denounced the siege on the city of Al Qusayr and it held the Syrian Government responsible for the continued shelling of the city in violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The situation could only be settled by putting an end to all military operations, opening of safe corridors and allowing unimpeded humanitarian access. A political solution was the only solution to put an end to this conflict.

Chile said that it condemned violations of human rights both by the Government and by the actions of armed groups who were contributing to the situation, with serious humanitarian implications. It was fundamental to put an end to the militarisation of the conflict. The Geneva conference was encouraging and it was hoped this initiative would help in finding an inclusive commitment by all parties. The Council had to be geared towards ensuring that this ethical imperative was met.

Japan was deeply concerned by the escalating armed violence in Syria and the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Japan condemned all violence in Syria and called for its immediate end. It was vital that a thorough investigation into the human rights violations be investigated and that those responsible be held accountable. Also essential was the need for the international community to offer its united support to bring all parties concerned to dialogue, leading to a political transition that would reflect the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.

Ecuador reiterated its solidarity with the Syrian people and condemned human rights violations committed in Syria irrespective of the circumstances and perpetrators. Ecuador rejected any initiative that intended to allow interference in the internal affairs of States. Unfortunately, the Council was being used to promote the political agendas of certain countries. The Council should condemn acts of violence without distinction and, in this case, the Government, opposition groups and countries providing weapons to these groups were responsible for the violence.

India said that it was regrettable that the situation in Syria continued to deteriorate. India strongly condemned all violence in Syria as well as all violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, irrespective of the perpetrators. The military approach pursued by various sides to the conflict had undermined the efforts for a political solution to the crisis. India welcomed the decision by Russia and the United States to convene a meeting of the Action Group with the Syrian parties.

Indonesia expressed deep concern at the continued bloodshed and suffering in Syria. Despite many special sessions of the Council, flagrant violation of human rights continued to persist, inflicting significant humanitarian impact on the Syrian people. All parties were equally responsible for the violations and crimes committed on the ground, and all parties should be held accountable. Hostilities should stop and unfettered humanitarian access should be ensured for those in need.

Republic of Korea noted with concern that anti-government armed groups had used civilians as human shields, hiding within densely populated areas. It called upon all parties in Syria to immediately cease the perpetuation of violence against innocent civilians and that all those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and gross violations of human rights be brought to justice. It fully supported the draft resolution, which was a simple and well-balanced text.

Austria said that the ongoing brutal violence in Syria was of great concern. It condemned all human rights violations and abuses committed daily and perpetrators of these should be held accountable. The sad events of Al Qusayr showed how the intervention of foreign elements worsened the situation. Austria further demanded that all parties to the conflict allow unimpeded humanitarian access.

Maldives condemned in the strongest terms the gross and systematic violations that had taken place and the use of disproportionate force in residential areas by the Syrian Government. It remained concerned by documented instances of human rights violations by anti-government armed groups operating inside Syria, such as torture and extra-judicial killings. It was most disconcerting that the conflict and all its maladies were spilling over to neighbouring countries, with wide implications for the peace and stability of the entire region.

Thailand deplored the continuing loss of civilian lives and condemned acts of violence against innocent civilians in Syria. The debate would be more productive if the human rights situation in Syria was considered as a whole, taking into account and addressing violations by all parties. Those conducting human rights violations and abusing international laws must be held accountable. Thailand reiterated the belief that the best solution lay in an inclusive and meaningful dialogue among all parties, and only by peaceful means.

Costa Rica expressed its indignation for the widespread human rights violations in Syria. The Council should shoulder its responsibility as grave violations were not only the domestic responsibility of governments. Costa Rica called on Syria to respect its commitments under international law and expressed hope that the calls to the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court would be heard.

Guatemala said it had voiced its conviction that the Council should address human rights violations wherever they occurred. Guatemala had voted in favour of a number of General Assembly resolutions and adopted a position of principle with regards to the conflict in Syria. Guatemala reiterated its strongest condemnation of all violations of human rights and humanitarian law taking place in Syria and urged parties to put an end to the violence in all its forms and to respect international law.

Kuwait said that it was following with great concern the development of the situation in Syria and condemned the targeting of areas populated by civilians. Everything had to be done to stop the violence. The international community could not remain silent. The

Syrian Government was asked to immediately lift the military blockade on Al Qusayr and to stop targeting civilians. United efforts were needed to bring the Syrian people out of this dark tunnel.

Estonia said that the situation in Syria was shocking and action was needed, now. The cessation of violence by all sides was badly needed. Estonia firmly believed that a political solution was the only way to end the conflict and it thus supported the holding of an international conference. It was hoped that the Syrian Government and the opposition would attend the conference without preconditions. It was critical to ensure that violations were documented and that potential evidence was safeguarded.

Venezuela said it did not believe that the protection of human rights should become a pretext for intervention. This urgent debate was part of such an agenda, led by Washington. Venezuela was concerned about some double standards and policies being implemented by States. Venezuela reaffirmed its support to the Syrian Government as the legitimate representative of its people and appealed for the respect of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

Spain said the Council must clearly condemn the perpetrators of crimes on both sides in Syria and the Commission of Inquiry would play a key role in this regard. It was key that the Syrian Government cooperated with the Commission of Inquiry and that humanitarian aid was allowed into Syria. This was the message that the Spanish Government had conveyed to different members of the opposition during the recent meetings in Madrid. Time was pressing and unless action was taken, a large-scale war could unfold in the region.

Angola remained deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation and the grave violations in Syria. Angola condemned all acts of violence and violations of international law, and called on parties to halt the violence. Angola supported mediation efforts by the Joint Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi and other efforts underway by the international community and the United Nations. Angola also supported the initiative to hold an international conference to resolve the crisis; a negotiated political solution was the only possible solution

Botswana recalled that since the start of the conflict more than 80,000 Syrians had lost their lives and more than 1.5 million Syrian refugees had fled to neighbouring countries. The indiscriminate targeting and killing of small children, women and unarmed civilians, as well as the shelling of hospitals and schools, was even more alarming. Botswana supported recommendations by the High Commissioner for the Syrian situation to be referred to the International Criminal Court and reiterated its support for the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy.

Libya said that it had been deeply affected by the suffering of the Syrian people for over two years. Libya was following with great concern the deterioration of the human rights situation and condemned violations perpetrated by the ruling regime and the intensive

shelling of Al Qusayr, Homs and rural Damascus. It called on the Syrian authorities to cease gross and systematic human rights violations and urged the international community to do all that was possible to put an end to these violations.

Brazil believed that the Human Rights Council had to closely follow the escalating violence in Syria and that it could not remain silent while civilians were subjected to gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The violence in Al Qusayr was a matter of grave concern. Brazil condemned all violence and called on all parties to the conflict, in particular the Government, to immediately put an end to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Poland said that it was appalled at ongoing atrocities and the recent reckless hostilities in Al Qusayr. Poland strongly condemned all killings and targeted attacks on civilian buildings, and was concerned by the increased displacement of the local population. The Syrian authorities were urged to meet their responsibility to protect their population and to put an immediate end to attacks on civilian buildings. Poland also called on all sides to immediately halt the violence and allow humanitarian access.

Gabon said that it was deeply concerned about the situation in Syria, especially about the serious violations of humanitarian law and human rights on the ground, and firmly condemned all such violations. Gabon remained deeply committed to a political settlement of the crisis aimed at preserving the territorial integrity of Syria, and welcomed the efforts made by the United Nations mediator and the Arab League in that respect.

Turkey said that the Secretary-General had recently reminded the international community of the seriousness of the situation in Syria. The people of Al Qusayr continued to find themselves under siege and were being held captive without water or electricity. The Syrian regime was pursuing a policy of ethnic cleansing and a sectarian-driven war to divide the Syrian people. Turkey called on the international community to protect and assist those suffering in Syria.

Egypt said it condemned the violation of human rights in Syria. The Syrian people should be finally allowed to live in peace and an end should be put to the bloodshed in the country. The Egyptian President had sought to communicate with the parties involved in the conflict to try and hold unifying negotiations. Syrian refugees who had fled the country should be able to return to their homes and live in a peaceful and secure environment.

Morocco said it strongly condemned the brutal crimes perpetrated against civilians in Syria and the shelling of cities and arbitrary executions. It was important to conduct an international and comprehensive investigation of all allegations and to identify all those responsible. Morocco called on Syria to provide access to the Commission of Inquiry to fulfil its mandate and it was important for certain clear principles to be respected, including the territorial unity of Syria, halting of violence, and a political process in accordance to the aspirations of Syrians.

Jordan said that a political solution was needed to put an end to the conflict in Syria and respond to the aspirations of the Syrian people, preventing the potential grave consequences to the region. From the beginning of the conflict, Jordan had provided assistance to the persons fleeing from the conflict within its means. Jordan hoped that the second Geneva conference to be held in June would set the basis of a peaceful solution and called on all parties to put an end to acts of violence.

Mexico said that a number of Government and opposition groups were committing violations in Al Qusayr, which had been described as “wanton human rights violations” in the words of the High Commissioner and should be condemned. The Council should emphasise that all parties had obligations under international humanitarian law. Any event that triggered the escalation of violence and further threatened peace and security in the region should be considered by the different organs of the United Nations.

Australia said that the conflict in Syria had a major impact on the people. Australia strongly condemned the violations of human rights in the country. It regretted the involvement of Hezbollah in the conflict and called on all parties to comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. The scale of the humanitarian crisis was apparent in Lebanon and other neighbouring countries, to which over one million Syrian refugees had fled. Australia had increased its humanitarian assistance package to \$ 78.5 million.

United Kingdom said that it condemned the deliberate and targeted killings of innocent civilians in Syria. It was important that the Council react to the violations of fundamental human rights taking place in Syria. The United Kingdom also expressed concern at the intervention of foreign combatants on behalf of the Syrian regime in Al Qusayr, and deplored all violations and abuses committed by the regime and the armed opposition. President Assad was primarily responsible for the crisis.

Norway said that it was appalled by the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria. The use of ballistic Scud missiles, of fragmentation bombs and of other heavy weapons, the systematic disrespect for basic humanitarian principles, and the ongoing sexual violence were totally unacceptable. Norway remained convinced that there must be a political solution to the Syrian crisis and called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Russia expressed grave concern and called for the crisis to be surmounted by the Syrians themselves, through the cessation of violence and a broad political dialogue without preconditions. Russia condemned any manifestations of terrorism or violence against the civilian population and stood against the further militarisation of the conflict, including the unlawful delivery of arms. The urgent debate on Syria at this session of the Council and the draft resolution were untimely and complicated the launch of the peace process in Syria. The draft resolution clearly favoured the radical opposition and did not condemn the foreign terrorists fighting with the opposition.

Uruguay was deeply concerned about the generalised violence and killings in Syria; the increased use of heavy artillery including indiscriminate shelling of population should be avoided. Uruguay also condemned acts breaching international humanitarian and human rights law and called on all parties to uphold these standards. Uruguay also called on parties to allow for humanitarian access, especially to the civilian population that needed to be evacuated; and called on the Syrian Government to cooperate with the United Nations.

New Zealand said that the humanitarian crisis in Syria had political failure at its heart, the failure of the Government to respond to the legitimate aspirations of its peoples and to fulfil its obligations of international law, and the failure of the international community to take leadership when international law was broken. New Zealand urged the parties to participate fully in the Geneva conference and to come to the table ready and willing to begin the process of a negotiated settlement.

Algeria said that it condemned all human rights violations which had occurred in the context of the Syrian crisis and called on parties involved in the conflict to refrain from violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Algeria hoped that a political dialogue would be held as a matter of urgency and said that the settlement of the crisis should be based on political dialogue and on commitments made by all parties to the conflict in a responsible manner.

South Africa said that the humanitarian consequences of the Syrian conflict had been devastating and that it was one of the worst humanitarian disasters of all times. South Africa expressed its solidarity to the innocent families who had been forced to flee their home country. South Africa urged the parties to use the opportunity presented by the conference to be held in Geneva soon to engage in negotiations without preconditions and find a political solution reflecting the will and aspirations of the Syrian people.

Saudi Arabia said that it supported all the regional and international efforts aiming to resolve the crisis in Syria. The present urgent debate underlined the deterioration of the situation of human rights in Syria. A ferocious war had been launched on the city of Al Qusayr, where forced disappearances had also been reported. Syrian governmental forces were targeting hospitals, pharmacies, bakeries and schools, where the civilian population was hiding. Those actions amounted to crimes against humanity.

Bahrain said it had been following the developments in Syria and the deterioration of human rights. The regime was using heavy weaponry against unarmed civilians, leading to the killing of women and children and the destruction of cities and infrastructure, which constituted an important breach of international law. Bahrain reaffirmed the importance of a unified international vision to achieve an end to the daily bloodshed of the Syrian people and called on all parties to refrain themselves from violence, to protect civilians and to avoid sectarian divisions.

Cuba said it was alarmed by calls for a regime change and the use of force in Syria, rather than the promotion of dialogue and negotiations. Cuba condemned the death of innocent people and the use of this situation by certain countries to promote their interests. In the light of recent experiences in the Council and the double standards characterising the behaviour of the United States and other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Cuba rejected any attempt to violate Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and reaffirmed its support for a peaceful and negotiated solution to the crisis.

Paraguay expressed deep concern at the situation in Syria and the increase in violence, which went beyond anything foreseen by international law and standards. Many people caught in the conflict must receive the support of the international community wherever needed, as indicated by the High Commissioner. Both Government and opposition groups were reported to have committed violations. Impunity was not an option. Paraguay urged all parties to respect basic humanitarian principles and allow for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those affected.

Holy See said that the situation in Syria amounted to an enormous national tragedy which could intensify regional and global conflicts. The way forward was not by the intensification of military action but by dialogue and reconciliation, a process which the proposed diplomatic conference could help to promote. The international community should show its solidarity to the victims of the Syrian crisis, particularly children in refugee camps and in conflict areas.

France said that in Al Qusayr the authorities were killing the people they were supposed to protect. The clashes in Syria had lasted for two years and had possibly even included the use of chemical weapons. Grave violations of human rights and serious war crimes had been committed during this time. France welcomed efforts made to resolve the crisis in the context of the diplomatic conference organized in Geneva, and called for the Syrian crisis to be referred to the International Criminal Court.

Iran said that the amplified militarization of the Syrian conflict was catastrophic for the people of Syria and could have disastrous consequences for the entire region. The international committee should try to find a political solution to the problem through inclusive and meaningful national dialogue. The one-sided condemnation of the Syrian Government and the unconditional support given to the opposition were not conducive to a peaceful settlement but encouraged the opposition to continue the armed struggle.

China was deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in Syria and condemned all violations against civilians. A political solution was the only way out of the current situation and the future and destiny of Syria could only be decided by the Syrian people. All parties to the conflict should refrain from violence and the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria should be respected. China hoped that all parties would seize the positive momentum created by the convening of a peace conference in Geneva and work towards a political solution.



Democratic People's Republic of Korea was concerned that the situation in Syria was being aggravated by the terrorist acts carried out by rebels who received military, financial and other assistance from the outside. Human rights issues or disputes must be resolved through genuine dialogue and constructive cooperation, free from unilateral, coercive, confrontational and selective condemnation based on political motives. The Syrian Government and people would resolve their own issues without any outside intervention. The politicisation, selectivity and double standards in the field of human rights should end.

Belgium regretted that the ongoing escalation of violence and bloodshed in Syria had forced the Council to hold a second debate on this matter. Despite calls from the Council to all parties to uphold international law, violence continued and hundreds of civilians had been killed and thousands might be trapped by indiscriminate shelling. Belgium reiterated its call to all parties to respect international human rights and humanitarian law. Belgium also called on all parties to allow civilians to access medical care.

Croatia said that it was alarmed by the situation in Syria and by the recent brutal killings in Al Qusayr, and condemned the scale of the violence used by the Syrian regime. Croatia called on all parties to the conflict to provide medical assistance to all those in need. Given the deterioration of the conflict, it was now necessary for the Security Council to urgently to refer the crisis to the International Criminal Court. Croatia called on the Syrian Government to immediately end the violence.

Tunisia said that the violation of the human rights of civilians in Syria was alarming and supported all efforts to find a political solution which would stop the bloodshed and take into account the aspirations of the Syrian people. Tunisia pointed out that the humanitarian crisis in Syria would have repercussions for the whole region, and called on international actors to support a political settlement of the crisis.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia said that the Council, which had the responsibility to protect the Syrian people, should continue to address human rights violations effectively. The violence and military action in Syria must cease immediately before spreading to the rest of the region. The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia condemned the atrocities in Al Qusayr and said that all parties to the conflict should remember their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Canada strongly condemned the senseless violence it said was perpetrated by the Assad regime in Syria. More than 94,000 persons had been killed in the war and Canada was particularly concerned with the plight of civilians in Al Qusayr. Hezbollah continued to play a destructive role. Canada called for safe and unhindered access for humanitarian actors. Canada had contributed more than \$ 50 million to address humanitarian needs arising from the Syrian crisis.

Lebanon said it regretted the violence that had blighted Syria. Lebanon had historic and geographical links with Syria and Lebanon was the country most affected by the conflict. It had sent a document to United Nations bodies stating that it should be protected from

the war. Lebanon was committed to staying out of the conflict and considered that outside interference was to be avoided. The price it paid for the conflict, with respect to outflows of refugees, was too high. The independence and security of Syria had to be preserved.

Nicaragua deplored the fact that the adoption of several resolutions by the Council had not led to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and insisted that these urgent debates were only inflaming the conflict. Nicaragua expressed its solidarity with the Syrian people and stressed that peace would only stem from a political process. Nicaragua reaffirmed its commitment to the United Nations Charter and urged an end to calls for military intervention and regime change which had proven to be a failure for humanity.

Nigeria said that the situation in Syria warranted the attention of the international community in general and the Council in particular. The massacre in Al Qusayr constituted a reprehensible and totally unjustifiable act and drew attention once more to the unacceptable use of force by the Syrian Government. Nigeria welcomed the joint efforts of Russia and the United States to find a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis and was encouraged by the news that the Syrian Government would, in principle, participate. Nigeria also hoped that the opposition would also participate.

Netherlands said that Al Qusayr provided an example of the capacity of the crisis in Syria to affect the region. What had started like a peaceful movement for freedom and human rights had unfolded into violence. The response of the Government to the legitimate calls for freedom was the root of the conflict. The Netherlands welcome the joint Russia and United States initiative to prepare the way for the Geneva II peace talks and urged all parties to engage in this process.

Honduras said that the Syrian crisis should be referred to the International Criminal Court so that the serious crimes committed in Syria did not go unpunished. Honduras appealed to the international community and the Council to send out a clear message that human rights should be fully respected, and called for the sale of arms to all parties to cease immediately. The upcoming Geneva conference on the Syrian crisis should be used to restore peace, of which the people of Syria had been deprived.

Press Emblem Campaign said that it had received information that 49 media workers had lost their lives since the beginning of the clashes in Syria. The civil war did not involve two opponents but, rather, a growing number of actors whose objectives were not always transparent and who were fighting against government troops and anti-governmental forces.

Amnesty International said that indiscriminate ground and air attacks by Syrian government forces were responsible for the majority of civilian deaths, although all sides had summarily killed and captured fighters and civilians. As fighting raged in Al Qusayr, Amnesty International called on all sides to spare civilians and treat captives humanely.

Movement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples said that of the at least 80,000 persons killed in the conflict, most were believed to be civilians. It was also concerned about the alleged use of chemical weapons in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs.

Verein Südwind Entwicklungspolitik said the conflict was becoming increasingly sectarian and it was unacceptable for the international community to keep turning a blind eye. Its passive approach should be ended. Südwind said the conflict was expanding across the region and the "fanatics" should not be armed.

Civicus supported the debate and said the international community had failed. The situation was increasingly politicized with States lining up behind certain positions to further their strategic interests against the protection of human rights. Accountability for war crimes was key.

International Commission of Jurists called on the Council to request the Security Council to take effective measures to end the ongoing conflict in Syria and for it to be referred to the International Criminal Court as war crimes and crimes against humanity were taking place unabated. It was the civilian population that bore the brunt of an increasingly sectarian and radicalized conflict.

Association of World Citizens together with International-Lawyers.org deeply regretted the significant evidence of the direct involvement of foreign States, some of which were members of the Council, in the conflict through the provision of intelligence and weapons to non-government actors. They regretted that States instrumental in calling for peace talks in Geneva were sabotaging their own efforts by restricting who would participate in the talks and by intensifying their efforts to promote violence in Syria.

International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists said everyone was aware of the number of Syrians who had lost their lives or sought refuge; they were heard on a daily basis in the news and at the United Nations. There was concrete evidence that the Syrian regime had used chemical weapons but nothing had been done. The increased involvement of terrorist organization Hezbollah had also been witnessed.

Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies said that the situation on the ground in Syria had reached new lows, with regular reports of massacres and serious human rights violations perpetrated both by the Syrian government and by certain elements of the opposition. The Council should refer the case to the International Criminal Court.

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