

5th Brussels Conference - Supporting the future of Syria and the region

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30 March 2021

Statement by Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

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For the past ten years, through what has been among the most devastating conflicts of the modern era, civilians have been brutally and illegally attacked, with impunity. Families and communities have been starved, bombed and forcibly displaced. A generation of children has known nothing but this bloodshed and deprivation.

Today, realization of the entire spectrum of human rights remains impossible for many Syrians – from the right to life, to an adequate standard of living, housing, education and the right to health, a right that is especially vital in the context of the global pandemic.

At least 11.8 *million* people have fled their homes, with 6.2 million of them seeking refuge inside Syria's borders. Their situation is especially perilous, and the sharply worsening conditions in the Al Hol camp are of particular concern. The international community needs to dramatically step up efforts to meet humanitarian needs.

I am deeply disturbed by the brutal conditions endured by large numbers of people in detention. Many others have been forcibly disappeared leaving their families unaware of their fate. All parties to the conflict are responsible.

The international response to this nightmarish conflict must now – at last – place human rights at the forefront. Parties to this conflict – including regional and international actors – must put an end to the bloodshed, and we need to see tangible progress by the Constitutional Committee. International actors must seek to bridge divides, and make the voices and needs of the Syrian people – including the displaced – a key priority in a negotiated political settlement.

We must advance effective accountability for the severe human rights violations committed by all parties, in order to move towards a sustainable peace.

I repeat my endorsement of the call for creation of an independent mechanism, with an international mandate, to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing people, identify human remains, and provide support to their families.

Above all, we must all take action to support a future for Syria's people in which human rights are respected, protected and fulfilled.

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