

Thank you, Mr. President.

The EMHRN and CIHRS welcome this new report of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Republic.

For more than two years, the Syrian government has continuously used indiscriminate and excessive force against its population, arbitrarily arrested tens of thousands of Syrian men, women, and children, and systematically practiced torture on a wide scale. According to VDC, over 62,000 civilians and anti-government combatants have been killed since March 2011. These and other grave human rights violations amount to crimes against humanity.

The subsequent militarization of the conflict in Syria has resulted in increased involvement of both pro- and anti-government non-state actors which have reportedly committed grave violations of international humanitarian law that may amount to war crimes. The diversity of the foreign and domestic armed groups operating in Syria makes it difficult to identify chains of command and establish responsibility for crimes and constitutes a growing obstacle to establishing a process of accountability, which is absolutely necessary.

The use of systematic violence by governmental forces created a context ripe for sexual violence, turning women's bodies into battlefields. Abuses against women, including sexual harassment and rape, grew out of the context of governmental campaigns of collective punishment against the protest movement and significantly increased recently to include kidnappings. All parties to the conflict have been responsible for such abuses.

Women and children represent a significant proportion of refugees and IDPs and are not adequately supported by the international community. They find themselves in a very vulnerable situation and are exposed to numerous violations of their fundamental rights. Several cases of forced marriage and sexual harassment have been reported in refugee and IDP camps.

Until now, the international community has failed not only to protect the Syrian population, but also to ensure that genuine mechanisms of accountability are put in place. The inability to address the issue of impunity in Syria contributes to the repetition and increase of human rights violations in the country and region.

We urge this Council to reject politicization in analyzing human rights violations in Syria and to fulfill its duty to defend the interests of the victims of violations by clearly and firmly calling upon the Security Council to refer Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Thank you, Mr. President.