

**Press release**

**NEW YORK: Speech delivered  
by SNHR chairman on accountability  
at the headquarters of the UN General  
Assembly**

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

Monday, October 8, 2018

The Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), founded in June 2011, is a non-governmental, independent group that is considered a primary source for the OHCHR on all death toll-related analyses in Syria.



Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, gave a speech on September 27 that touched upon the essentiality of the accountability issue at the headquarter of the UN General Assembly. Organized by the states of Qatar and Liechtenstein, the speech was a part of an event that was attended by a number of foreign affairs ministers and ambassadors to the Security Council, as well as the head of the IIIM and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### The speech in text:

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to thank everyone in attendance today, and everyone who made this event possible. It would also be amiss not to thank the states of Qatar and Liechtenstein, and every state that supports the path of accountability in my home country, Syria.

In this speech, I am going to touch upon three main points:

Since the very first months of the popular uprising for democracy, we have been working diligently on releasing reports to track the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Syrian regime in various patterns of violations. Released on November 23, 2011, the first report by the Commission of Inquiry confirmed the Syrian regime's implication. This entails the implication of its allies, in accordance with the international law, given that they have provided support for a regime that committed crimes against humanity. To this day, those states have been supplying the Syrian regime with militias and weapons as they are partners in those crimes. On the other hand, the Syrian regime and its allies have been hell-bent on completely crushing and dominating the country since the first months, knowing full well that this was the only way to avoid accountability, which was one reason why those states interfered directly by sending their forces who were also directly involved with the Syrian regime in committing hundreds of war crimes. The IIIM, as well as continuing on the path of accountability, is a clear message that even if the Syrian lands were completely taken over and the Syrian people were silenced, the path of justice and accountability would go on and stopping us is not something in your power.



Our employees and volunteers, at SNHR, have been working tirelessly since 2011, as we collected hundreds of thousands of pieces of data and information, and we developed complex programs. We have worked for long hours talking to tens of thousands of witnesses and survivors. I clearly remember the summer of 2012 when we would compile lists of names for Syrian citizens who were killed by the Syrian regime's aerial and artillery shelling. There were days when the death toll reached up to 400 victims.

After eight years of continued work, SNHR now possesses a database that contains names, pictures, and data for quarter-of-a-million Syrian civilians that have been killed since the start of the popular uprising. Of those, 91% were killed by the Syrian regime and its allies. We also compiled a database that contains the names of 95,000 Syrian citizens who have been forcibly-disappeared, as we still don't know whether they are alive or dead. In addition, we have a database containing 14,000 names of Syrian citizens that died due to torture, as well as data on 830 medical facilities, 1,360 schools, 580 markets, and 1,320 places of worship that were bombed and damaged, either partially or completely. We also have data on 221 incidents of chemical weapon use, and 72,000 barrel bombs dropped on the Syrians lands by the Syrian regime – which is the equivalent of two nuclear bombs. We also have tackled other crimes such as sexual violence and forced displacement on a long list of crimes. In narrating all of this, my goal is to stress, firstly, that these are not estimations, but a comprehensive database supported by details that were the results of a continued work on a daily basis over the course of eight years. Secondly, there is a prevalent perception that accountability is limited to the victims and their families, but I say, here and today, that most of the Syrian people are victims. However, accountability is also for us, human rights defenders – for my colleagues at SNHR and all Syrian human rights defenders, my colleagues at the Commission of Inquiry, and my colleagues at the IIM, and my colleagues at the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and many others who have worked on defending human rights in Syria, as well as the states who support the path of justice in Syria. After making such great efforts, we need to build on all that and bring criminals to justice.

At SNHR, we go by the motto, No Justice Without Accountability, and if I might add: No Truth Without Accountability, No Dignity Without Accountability, No Transitional Justice Without Accountability, No Democratic Transition Without Accountability.



A week ago, I had the pleasure of meeting Ms. Catherine, Head of the IIIM, at her office. And I very explicitly relayed to her that we have been in support of the IIIM's establishment and work since the beginning, and that it is our duty, as a national human rights group, to share data as well as anything that supports the path of accountability. We need the IIIM and its expertise, and without the cooperation of the human rights groups that have local experience, the IIIM will not be able to finish and complete its long work.

The Syrian community has been subjected to all of these violations, and a large portion of these violations are documented in detail with hundreds of thousands of pictures, videos, and reports. Accountability is not optional, but rather an inevitability for the Syrian people. It is the backbone of the democratic transition. In addition, the international law prohibits amnesty for perpetrators of serious crimes, such as crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. International mechanisms should intervene to ensure a level of accountability, as we have been listening to many shameful Initiatives asking the Syrian people to accept a bare minimum standard of security and livelihood in exchange of impunity for the criminals. This despicable recipe will only ignite the Syrian conflict to no end. The Syrian people will continue to be faithful to their demands for freedom, dignity, and democracy, using all forms of peaceful and armed resistance, while a part of the Syrian people might even resort to extremist groups that thrive on the lack of justice and accountability.

The Syrian regime's and its allies' impunity, which was in large afforded by Russia's protection at the Security Council through vetoing any resolution that aims to refer the case in Syria to the International Criminal Court, has incited the Syrian regime not only to keep perpetrating heinous crimes, but also to raise the scale and level of violence, and finally to do all that while bragging about being able to do whatever they want to the Syrian people, including using chemical weapons and torturing them to death, and, consequently, submit and enslave them with a fist of iron and fire.

This impunity has generated a negative reaction from the Syrian people and in the Middle East region. And it will encourage more sadistic individuals to copy the Syrian regime's experience against their people. This is why it is no surprise that most of the Syrian regime's allies are totalitarian, oppressive regimes. This reaction was embodied in a lack of sense of justice or hope about prosecuting criminals, which undermined the victims' and their families' cooperation with us, particularly in the last two years. Founding the IIIM comes to rekindle some hope, which is why the Syrian regime and its allies are avidly trying to undermine the mandate of the IIIM and end the path of justice.



## **I would like to propose two recommendations**

1. Eight long and bitter years have passed, but all the pain and crimes will not be forgotten. This past must be redressed by acknowledging the suffering of the victims, and then achieving reparation through accountability. The IIMM was an advanced and exceptional step in this regard. We call on the states that support the IIMM and the path of justice in Syria to move forward another step by establishing a special international tribunal in Syria under a resolution by the UN General Assembly.

2. The states that have signed the Geneva Conventions are obligated to fight crimes against humanity and war crimes. As such, the states that have universal jurisdiction need to make more efforts towards submitting cases on a wider scope. In addition, imposing economic sanctions on the states that support the Syrian regime, particularly weapon manufacturers, is also another effective form of accountability.

Lastly, the states who have sided with the Syrian regime have to realize that it is high time that they renounce the Syrian regime. They have to realize that it is a perishing regime that can't restore its legitimacy after everything it has done, which includes crimes against humanity. Shame, loss, and history's damnation are the only outcome those states will get from investing in a regime that has become more of a mafia and even has used chemical weapons against its own people, and from being involved in killing and crushing the Syrian people.

The only valid alternative is accountability, justice, and stability by seriously contributing to establishing a pluralistic political regime that is democratically elected. Only this will ensure interests, security, and peace.

Thank you, everyone.

[Video for the speech](#)

[Video for the entire session](#)





@snhr



Info@sn4hr.org

www.sn4hr.org

