SNHR Participates in the SUN Event
‘Impunity Kills - Lessons from Syria and Ukraine’

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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 analyzes in Syria.
The Hague - Syrian Network for Human Rights

Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), participated in a panel discussion entitled, ‘Impunity Kills – Lessons from Syria and Ukraine’. The event, which was held in Bornholm, Denmark, was organized by the Syria-Ukraine Network (SUN) - a coalition of organizations and individuals from Syria, Ukraine and other nations aiming to end and expose war crimes in Syria and Ukraine.

The panel featured Stephen Rapp, Fellow US Holocaust Memorial Museum & former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes & Genocide Prevention, Oleksandra Matviichuk, Director of the Center for Civil Liberties, Fadel Abdul Ghany, Executive Director of SNHR, Mouaz Mustafa, Executive Director of the Syrian Emergency Task Force (SETF), Olga Lautman, Coordinator & Senior Fellow at the Syria-Ukraine Network Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA), and Ivan M. Nielsen, former Danish Special Representative for the Syria Crisis.

The panel discussed the extraordinary challenges faced by the rules-based international system today. The absence of accountability for the crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by the Syrian regime and Russia and their impunity have only led to more horrific violations in Ukraine. The panelists also discussed the importance of accountability in a broader sense for the realization of sustained peace and stability, and the prospects of accountability in the context of the current international system and its rules.

In his speech, Mr. Fadel Abdul Ghany presented a picture of the sheer horrendous magnitude of violations committed by the Syrian regime and Russia in Syria. SNHR has documented the killing of 201,063 civilians, including 22,982 children and 11,977 women, at the hands of the Syrian regime since the beginning of the popular uprising in March 2011 up until June 2023, while Russia has been responsible for the killing of 6,950 civilians, including 2,048 children and 977 women since the beginning of its military intervention in September 2015 up until June 2023.

Furthermore, Mr. Abdul Ghany underlined the wholly illegitimate nature of the Russian intervention in Syria, citing a number for reasons. For one, he explained, Russia has violated its obligations under international law, since it has sided with a regime involved in crimes against humanity, including torture; this also extends to the fact that the Syrian regime has used internationally prohibited weapons, including cluster munitions, chemical weapons, enforced disappearance, and other proscribed objects or policies, all of which violate the binding rules of international law. In this sense, he noted, Russia has become a partner in the violations committed by the Syrian regime. More importantly, he
added. Russian forces themselves have been involved in committing thousands of horrific violations in Syria, some of which, including extrajudicial killings and forced displacement, constitute crimes against humanity, as well as and war crimes, such as bombing hospitals and civil defense centers, with all of these blatant violations of international law repeatedly proven and confirmed by many international reports, as well as by SNHR’s reports and statements.

He further clarified that Russia has used the same strategies in its war on Ukraine because it has been able to completely avoid any punishment for doing so in Syria, paying no price at all for its unlawful intervention in Syria, as the West did not impose any sanctions on Russia following its military intervention there, even after its forces bombed dozens of hospitals and vital facilities. He added that the Syrian regime also followed in Russia’s footsteps by expressing political support for Russia by any means necessary. For instance, the Syrian regime voted against suspending Russia’s membership in the UN Human Rights Council, with the Syrian regime, alongside Russia itself and North Korea, being the only nations with UN membership to recognize the independence of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions.

Mr. Abdul Ghany concluded his speech by underscoring that a special tribunal must be established to investigate into Russia’s crimes in both Syria and Ukraine, while the Syrian and Ukraine people’s fight for freedom and democracy must be supported, which can be done through undermining Bashar Assad, a main ally of Putin, and by exerting more serious effort towards achieving the process of political transition towards democracy in Syria.

SNHR’s participation in this event formed part of its efforts to spread and promote the culture of human rights, implement the rules of international law, support accountability efforts, combat impunity, preserve the rights of victims, raise awareness of the vital importance of accountability for realizing sustained peace in Syria, and prevent the recurrence of these horrific crimes in Syria and globally.