

**Statement**

**SNHR Welcomes the COI’s Recent Report and the HRC’s Most Recent Resolution on the Escalation of Violations in Syria**

**Five Oppressive States Voted Against the Syrian People and Human Rights**

HRC 55					
A/HRC/55/L.21 - Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic					
YES	ALBANIA	NO	ERITREA	YES	MALAWI
NO	ALGERIA	YES	FINLAND	ABST	MALAYSIA
YES	ARGENTINA	YES	FRANCE	ABST	MALDIVES
ABST	BANGLADESH	YES	GAMBIA	YES	MONTENEGRO
YES	BELGIUM	YES	GEORGIA	ABST	MOROCCO
YES	BENIN	YES	GERMANY	YES	NETHERLANDS (KINGDOM OF THE)
ABST	BRAZIL	YES	GHANA	YES	PARAGUAY
YES	BULGARIA	YES	HONDURAS	YES	QATAR
NO	BURUNDI	ABST	INDIA	YES	ROMANIA
ABST	CAMEROON	ABST	INDONESIA	ABST	SOMALIA
YES	CHILE	YES	JAPAN	ABST	SOUTH AFRICA
NO	CHINA	ABST	KAZAKHSTAN	ABST	SUDAN
YES	COSTA RICA	YES	KUWAIT	ABST	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
YES	COTE D'IVOIRE	ABST	KYRGYZSTAN	YES	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NO	CUBA	YES	LITHUANIA	ABST	VIET NAM
YES	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	YES	LUXEMBOURG		
<b>YES 27</b>		<b>ABST 15</b>		<b>NO 5</b>	

**Monday 06 May 2024**

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.

## I. We Welcome the COI's Report, and Underline Our Ongoing Coordination With the Commission Since 2011

On March 11, 2024, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) [submitted its 29th report to the UN Human Rights Council \(HRC\)](#). The report, which covers the period between July 1, 2022, and December 31, 2023, documents the most serious violations of fundamental human rights and international humanitarian law across Syria during that time, drawing upon 528 direct interviews.

We, at the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR), have studied the report in detail. Below is a summary of its most noteworthy insights:

The report sheds light on the continued and widespread violations of human rights and international humanitarian law at the hands of the parties to the conflict and controlling forces in Syria. Over 13 million people, the report stresses, are now either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or seeking asylum in other countries, while 90 percent of all Syrian civilians are living under the poverty line. Moreover, it is estimated that 16.7 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance to stay alive, the highest number of people classified as being in need since the start of the conflict.

Moreover, the report notes that the number of Syrians seeking asylum in Europe reached its highest levels in seven years in November 2023, which saw a 30 percent year-on-year increase from November 2022, with that figure continuing to rise. By the end of December, the report reveals, only one-third of Syria's Humanitarian Response Plan for 2023 was funded. To make matters worse, in January 2024, the World Food Programme (WFP) ended its decade-long assistance programme, even though over half of the Syrian population are living in hunger. The report stresses that "the failure of the Security Council to renew the cross-border aid mechanism in July 2023 raised concerns over the sustainability and effectiveness of the aid response to 4.1 million people" in northern Syria, which is the region worst affected by the catastrophic earthquake of February 6, 2023.

The report also provides details of the widespread lack of any security in regime-held areas, stressing that Syrian citizens, including former refugees and IDPs returning to regime-held areas, continue to face arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and deaths due to torture.

On the subject of military operations in the areas under the control of other parties, the report explains that the Syrian regime has continued to target civilians in northwestern Syria, noting that it has repeatedly used cluster munitions. The report also documents ground attacks which it notes may "amount to war crimes". Similarly, the report sheds light on aerial attacks by the Russian air force that may constitute war crimes in the form of indiscriminate attacks resulting in the death and injury of civilians. The report stresses that during the period in question, northwestern Syria has seen the most intense escalation of hostilities since 2019/2020 by Syrian regime forces and Russian forces. In this context, we must commend the COI's explicitly assigning responsibility to Russian forces by name, which was something we had repeatedly recommended to the COI previously, following our review of each of its reports.

Meanwhile, the report states that Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has restricted fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, as the group continues to detain journalists and activists over their views opposing the HTS's policies. The report adds that detainees held by HTS are denied healthcare, as well as being denied the opportunity to contact their families. Similarly, it continues, some factions of the Syrian National Army (SNA) continue to carry out arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances, further noting that some SNA personnel have practiced torture, including sexual violence.

The report also sheds light on the prison camps in northeastern Syria, noting that Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) continues to detain about 56,000 civilians, who are mostly children and women. The report stresses that the conditions in al-Hawl and al-Rouj Camps may amount to cruel or inhumane treatment.

The report calls on all parties to the conflict to immediately cease all indiscriminate and direct attacks against civilians and civilian objects, to launch independent and credible investigations into all incidents that resulted in civilian casualties in order to ensure non-repetition, to ensure that those responsible are held accountable, and to make the findings of all such investigations public.

Meanwhile, the report stresses that torture and other forms of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment, including sexual violence and gender-based violence continue to be inflicted by staff in detention centers must end. The report also calls for the release of arbitrarily detained detainees and for the relevant authorities to ensure that the perpetrators of these violations are held accountable through fair trials. In the same context, the report calls for ending all cases of enforced disappearance and taking all feasible measures to "locate all those detained and/or disappeared, establish their fate or whereabouts and ensure communication with their families;"

Moreover, the report calls for continuing to seek accountability, and ensuring a voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustained return of refugees with no risk of physical harm or violation of their fundamental human rights.

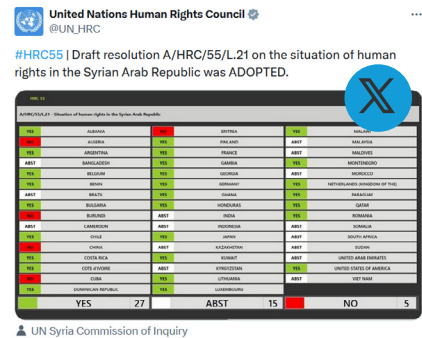
SNHR welcomes the findings of the COI report and its recommendations. We support its mandate and the investigations it has carried out since its establishment in the summer of 2011. The COI has been a great help to the Syrian people, professionally and impartially documenting the violations perpetrated against them, always welcoming criticism directed at it regarding some points and reviewing these points. Since the earliest days of the COI's establishment, SNHR has cooperated with its investigators, providing them with data and any information required, as well as facilitating communication and relations with victims and their families. We emphasize our continuing support for the COI's work, given its exceptional importance in light of the continuing perpetration of atrocious violations in Syria, especially by the Syrian regime.

## II. Despite the HRC Acknowledging the Escalation of Violations in Syria, Five Oppressive States Have Voted Against the Syrian People and the HRC Resolution

On April 4, 2024, [the HRC adopted resolution 55/22](#) which extended the COI's mandate for one year. The report requests that the COI provides an oral update during its 56th session, and an updated report during its 57th and 58th sessions. Furthermore, the resolution provides for referring all the reports and oral updates submitted by the COI to all the relevant UN bodies, and recommends that the UN General Assembly submits the report to the Security Council to take the appropriate action.

The resolution condemns the lack of human rights across Syria, stressing that the conflict “has been marked by consistent patterns of gross violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law.” Accordingly, the report calls on all parties to the conflict to immediately comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The resolution further stresses that all those responsible for violations and abuses must be held accountable. In this context, the resolution calls on the Syrian regime to fully cooperate with the HRC and the COI, by “granting the Commission immediate, full and unfettered access throughout the Syrian Arab Republic.”

Furthermore, the report highlights the rising levels of violence in Syria, including airstrikes and the use of cluster munitions. It should be noted in this context that the Syrian regime and its Russian ally are the only parties to have used cluster munitions in Syria, as our databases can attest.



The report calls on the Syrian regime and other parties to the conflict to immediately release all those who have been subjected to abduction, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary detention, and to provide accurate information about their fate and whereabouts. The resolution underlines the disastrous effects of enforced disappearance on the victims' families, especially for women and children. The report also urges the Syrian regime to reveal further information about the fate of approximately 344,684 detainees and convicts who, the regime claims, have benefited from its “amnesty laws” and the documented executions in the massacre in Damascus city’s al-Tadamun neighborhood. The resolution also calls on regime forces to cease their retaliatory acts against families trying to obtain additional information about their loved ones who are missing and/or arbitrarily detained.

Meanwhile, the report notes that, to date, over seven million refugees have been forced to flee Syria, while another seven million-plus have been internally displaced since the start of the conflict. As such, the report calls on the parties to the conflict to cease any violations that may lead to further displacement, and called on the Syrian regime to ensure the protection of human rights

of returning refugees and IDPs, especially in light of the findings of the reports by the COI and the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) about the regime failing to provide a safe and stable environment that could ensure a sustained, voluntary, and dignified return for refugees inside Syria.

Additionally, the resolution reiterates that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria must be held accountable.

Despite the fact that the outcome of this resolution is in the best interests of the Syrian people and the Syrian state against the perpetrators of violations, [five oppressive totalitarian states have voted in favor of the Syrian regime](#) that has been involved in crimes against humanity, namely: China, Cuba, Burundi, Eritrea, and Algeria. Meanwhile 27 states voted in favor of the resolution and of the Syrian people.

SNHR has consistently monitored all resolutions adopted by the HRC on Syria. To date, since the start of the popular uprising for democracy in 2011, the HRC has released 43 resolutions on the human rights situation in Syria, including 15 resolutions on establishing a fact-finding mission, which was subsequently set up, taking form in the COI and its extended mandate. To that end, we have documented the states that voted in favor of HRC resolutions on Syria, those who abstained, and the states that voted against HRC resolutions, which, in other words, mean they deny the violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime, practically emboldening this bloodthirsty regime to commit more violations, by guaranteeing it support at the HRC. [SNHR has released multiple reports and statements on this matter, the most recent of which was a report released in April 2023](#), providing a brief analysis of the voting behavior of states with respect to HRC resolutions on Syria. The report found that only 12 states, all share despotic characteristics, have consistently and constantly voted in favor of the Syrian regime at the HRC since March 2011, including the five states named above who voted against the most recent resolution on April 5, 2024. All of these states are totalitarian states that have no regard for democracy and international human rights law. As such, those states support one another against human rights. On average, four or five states vote in support of the regime in contrast to the 30 states that vote in favor of HRC resolutions on Syria, out of 47 states eligible to vote. In other words, all HRC resolutions on Syria have gained an overwhelming majority of support over the past years.

We, at SNHR, welcome the HRC resolution and its recommendations, contained in the document A/HRC/55/L.21, which draws primarily upon the work of the COI. We extend our thanks to all states that voted in support of the rights of the Syrian people, while condemning the stance of China, Cuba, Burundi, Eritrea, and Algeria in support of the violations of the Syrian regime and voting against a resolution that extends the mandate of the COI, all of whose findings are in the interest of the Syrian people and the Syrian state against the perpetrators of violations. Despite all of these points, those oppressive states have chosen to vote in favor of the Syrian regime which is engaged in perpetrating crimes against humanity.



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*No justice without accountability*

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