

Human Rights Council – 28th session (2-27 March 2015)

Statement by Ireland during the Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

17 March 2015

Ireland aligns with the statement of the European Union and adds the following.

We thank the members and staff of the Commission of Inquiry for their latest report and today's oral update.

Two days ago, Ireland, like many members of the international community, marked the fourth anniversary of the popular uprising of 15 March 2011 in Syria, which called for an end to the corruption of the Assad regime. These protests were met with extreme brutality and the subsequent conflict, described by the report of the Commission as a 'conflagration of an unparalleled scale and magnitude', has caused the deaths of over 200,000 Syrians, the flight of almost 4 million refugees to neighbouring countries, and the displacement of more than 7.5 million people within Syria.

Over half of those who have had to leave their homes are children, many of them deeply traumatised by what they have witnessed. Half of Syria's children, 2.4 million, are no longer in school. Life expectancy in Syria has been reduced by 24 years since the beginning of the conflict, a testimony to the horrific hardship and suffering borne by the Syrian population.

Ireland reiterates its condemnation of the multiple crimes inflicted on the Syrian people by the parties to the conflict, and repeats its call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. We commend the invaluable work of this Commission in recording these crimes and supporting the urgent and important work of ensuring accountability for the victims of the conflict. We call on the Syrian regime to stop the use of chemical weapons including chlorine, barrel bombs and other forms of indiscriminate bombardment against civilian areas.

Ireland stands with its international partners in supporting a political solution based on the principles of the 2012 Geneva communiqué: the ending of violence, the formation of an inclusive transitional governing body with executive powers, and a new constitutional process for a democratic Syria which preserves Syria's multi-ethnic and multi-religious character.

We reiterate our call for safe and unhindered humanitarian access inside Syria. Ireland has already provided almost €31 million in humanitarian assistance for the people of Syria since 2011, delivered through trusted NGO partners, UN agencies and the Red Cross. We will participate in the donor conference later this month and will maintain our support for the victims of this humanitarian crisis throughout 2015.

We must also work to implement measures to address the crisis of terrorism and violent extremism, which threaten the peoples and countries of the Middle East, Europe, Africa and elsewhere. We stand with all victims of violent and extremist ideology and are determined to counter these threats while working to strengthen the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

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