



13 March 2018
Index number: MDE 24/8038/2018

**UN Human Rights Council
Thirty-seventh session, 26 February - 23 March 2018**

**Item 4:
Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry
on the Syrian Arab Republic**

Syria's Eastern Ghouta: End Unlawful Attacks and Lift the Siege

Thank you Mr. Vice-President,

Amnesty International welcomes the report of the Commission of Inquiry and echoes the Commission's grave concerns regarding the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crisis in Syria.

In a recent report Amnesty International documented¹ the Syrian government's forced displacement of thousands of civilians through four local agreements negotiated with armed opposition groups. In this context, the Syrian government forces subjected civilians to unlawful sieges, arbitrarily restricting access to humanitarian and medical aid, and conducted air and ground attacks on civilians and civilian objects killing and injuring hundreds. Given that these violations were carried out as part of a systematic and widespread attack against the civilian population, they constitute crimes against humanity.

The evidence also shows that armed opposition groups violated international humanitarian law, unlawfully besieged two areas in Idlib, and shelled civilians in these areas.

Mr. Vice-President,

¹ Amnesty International, *We Leave or We Die: Forced Displacement Under Syria's "Reconciliation" Agreements* (Index: MDE 24/7309/2017), 13 November 2017, <http://syriadisplaced.com/>

Amnesty International is deeply concerned that the Syrian government's merciless tactics in Eastern Ghouta, subjecting around 400,000 people to an unlawful siege, depriving them of access to food and medicine, while simultaneously launching unlawful attacks that have killed and injured thousands of civilians, is part of its systematic attack against the civilian population. The situation in Eastern Ghouta is nothing short of catastrophic and, despite resolutions by this body and the Security Council, is only getting worse.

The government of Syria must immediately end all direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, as well as indiscriminate attacks, and lift the unlawful siege, allowing unfettered access for humanitarian organizations to deliver life-saving aid to all of those in need in Eastern Ghouta.

Moreover, all parties to the conflict must allow civilians wishing to flee the fighting in Eastern Ghouta to be granted safe passage.

Our question: in light of the scale of ongoing violations and crimes, how can the Commission, and this Council, contribute to and make meaningful steps towards, accountability in Syria?

Thank you Mr. Vice-President.