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UN Human Rights Council
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Item 4

Oral Intervention by Amnesty International in the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Mr. President,

More than four years since the crisis in Syria began, the warring parties continue to use explosive weapons in populated areas with devastating consequences for civilians. They are committing serious violations of international humanitarian law, many of which amount to war crimes.

Amnesty International has recently documented the Syrian government's use of barrel bombs in Aleppo¹. These and other air attacks are targeting the very heart of civilian life in Syria, including hospitals, schools, public markets, mosques, and transportation hubs. Amnesty International has concluded that the government's aerial campaign in Aleppo appears to have deliberately targeted civilians and civilian objects and forms part of a systematic, as well as widespread, attack against the civilian population across Syria. As the evidence points to these violations having been committed in furtherance of a state policy, Amnesty International's assessment is that they amount to crimes against humanity.

In recent weeks, the international community and UN member states have joined together to condemn barrel bomb attacks. Now, Amnesty International calls upon UN member states to follow their expressions of outrage with meaningful steps aimed at obtaining action by the Security Council.

The Human Rights Council should urge the Security Council to take the following steps in response to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. First, Security Council should impose an arms embargo on the Syrian

¹ Amnesty International, *Syria: 'Death everywhere' – war crimes and human rights abuses in Aleppo, Syria* (Index: MDE 24/1370/2015).

government. Second, it should enforce its own resolutions, especially Resolution 2139, by instituting targeted sanctions on all those responsible for violating it by committing war crimes or crimes against humanity in their conduct of hostilities. Third, it should demand unhindered access to Syria for the Commission of Inquiry on Syria, humanitarian and human rights organizations, and international journalists. Last but not least, it should begin the process of referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The future of Syria and its people and the credibility of the United Nations itself is in the balance.

Thank you, Mr. President.