



Syria: Accountability to be at the heart of any future resolution to the conflict. Oral intervention at the 21st session of the UN Human Rights Council (10-28 September)

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Item 4¹: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic *Oral statement*

Madam President,

Amnesty International's recent field investigations in northern Syria have uncovered further disturbing evidence of grave human rights violations and abuses – many of which amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. These are being committed largely by Syrian government forces and pro-government militia, but also in some cases by opposition fighters in the deepening internal armed conflict. Civilians are increasingly bearing the brunt of the conflict.

Government forces have escalated indiscriminate attacks on villages, towns and city neighbourhoods that are supportive of or controlled by the opposition. Thousands have been killed since mid-March 2011, mostly civilians and many of them children. Recently an Amnesty International delegate witnessed daily indiscriminate air bombardment and artillery and mortar shelling in Aleppo city, the Jabal al-Zawya region and elsewhere in the Idlib governorate. At times it appeared that civilians were deliberately targeted. All such attacks violate international humanitarian law (IHL).

Many persons are detained arbitrarily in conditions amounting to enforced disappearance in detention centres where torture and other ill-treatment are routine and at times results in the death of detainees. The number of extrajudicial executions and summary killings by all sides is also rising.

Amnesty International urges all states to use their influence to press all sides to the conflict to put an immediate end to human rights abuses and to abide by IHL.

The muted international reaction to the attack on Daraya, a suburb of Damascus, in late August, where hundreds of individuals, including women and children were reportedly killed after days of governmental shelling and clashes with opposition forces, highlights the difficulties of establishing the truth without unhindered access for international observers to all parts of Syria. While our information suggests that most of the victims in Daraya were killed by government forces, we cannot exclude the possibility that some died at the hands of opposition forces.

Amnesty International calls on the Human Rights Council to extend the mission of the independent international Commission of Inquiry to monitor, document and report on international crimes and human rights abuses committed in Syria by all parties. The Syrian authorities must grant it unhindered access to the country. The international crimes and grave human rights abuses committed in Syria require that

¹ Item 4 on the agenda of the Human Rights Council: *Human rights situations that require the Council's attention.*

accountability be at the heart of any future resolution to the conflict. Amnesty International therefore also urges this Council to call clearly for the International Criminal Court to be seized of the situation in Syria.

Thank you Madam President.