

**Press release**

# **New York: SNHR Takes Part in an International Event on Accountability in Syria at the UN Headquarters**

**SNHR**

SYRIAN NETWORK FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

الشبكة السورية لحقوق الإنسان

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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 analyses in Syria.



New York, September 27, 2018 – SNHR delivered a speech as part of an event held at the New York-located UN General Assembly headquarters. Entitled, “**Ensuring Justice for Syria**”, the session was chaired by H.E. Sheikh Mohammad bin Abdul Rahman Al Thani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, and H.E. Ms. Aurelia Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein. The event was also attended by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms. Michelle Bachelet and Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel, Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).

Among the attendants were also a wide range of foreign affairs ministers, as well as delegates of permanent state members at the Security Council, primarily states who support the IIIM and the path of accountability in Syria.

Sheikh Al Thani, Qatar Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed his state’s sustained support for the IIIM in light of the Security Council’s failure to achieve any form of accountability of those who committed crimes in Syria, stressing that the IIIM should cooperate with local society organizations in Syria. Frick, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Liechtenstein, spoke next about the establishment of the IIIM and stressed that states should support the Mechanism and provide and share data. She added that the IIIM has paved the way to hold the criminals accountable in Syria, especially that the Syrian regime has started to issue death documents that call for the urgent intervention of several states. The UN High Commissioner for Syria shed light on the magnitude of the egregious violations that have been committed against the Syrian people, including the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime and ISIS, and how none of the parties involved in the conflict has yet to hold any individual who was involved in violations accountable. The Head of the IIIM took the floor next, speaking about the difficulties and the accomplishments of the IIIM, while shedding light on its most recent report that was submitted to the UN General Assembly in August. One of the most notable accomplishments of the IIIM, she noted, was developing complex programs that enable the IIIM to store large volumes of pictures and videos securely and safely, as well as making great progress in accelerating the collection of data from international and local organiza-



tions, as well as states. She also touched upon the agreement reached with the Commission of Inquiry which enabled the IIIM to access information and data from the Commission of Inquiry, where the IIIM can now, using the capabilities and information it has, assist with cases that are being worked on at European states' courts with universal jurisdictions. Moreover, she revealed that the IIIM are preparing two lawsuits that are set to be announced by the end of the year. The IIIM, she added, has also signed an agreement with the OPCW which will allow the IIIM to access the materials possessed by the OPCW as well. As for working with Syrian civil society organizations and challenges, she said that the IIIM needs to hire 40 individuals by the end of the year, including Arabic-speaking individuals. Marchi-Uhel, Head of the IIIM, concluded her speech by highlighting budgetary challenges, revealing that they have a shortage in their budget for 2019, and called for more financial support from states, as well as sharing the information they have on violations and victims.

Fadel Abdul Ghany, chairman of SNHR, stressed that even with the Syrian regime and its allies taking over Syrian lands, the path of accountability can't be stopped, as the Syrian regime has been involved in thousands of crimes against humanity, while declaring the Syrian regime's allies partners in those crimes given that they have provided support, which led them subsequently to undertake a military intervention in the hopes of achieving a decisive victory to end the path of accountability. Mr. Abdul Ghany also shed light on the large set of data that has been documented and collected by SNHR on daily basis over the course of seven years, where he showcased some examples. On a related note, he stressed that accountability is not optional, but rather crucial for the Syrian community and its stability, describing it as the backbone of a democratic transition. He also emphasized that the international law prohibits granting amnesty for perpetrators of egregious crimes such as crimes against humanity, genocide, and war crimes. Criminals' impunity, he added, will perpetuate the Syrian conflict, and will even force a segment of the Syrian people into the arms of extremist groups who thrive on the absence of justice and accountability, especially that the Syrian regime has already managed to escape punishment multiple times, thanks to the protection of Russia who used its veto to prevent the referral of the Syrian case to the International Criminal Court at the Security Council.

According to Mr. Abdul Ghany, establishing the IIIM comes to rekindle some hope for the path of accountability in the eyes of the Syrian people, which is why the Syrian regime and its allies are sparing no effort to undermine the work of the IIIM and end the path of accountability. Mr. Abdul Ghany called on the states supporting the IIIM and the path of accountability in Syria to make another step forward and establish an international tribunal for Syria through



a General Assembly resolution. He also urged the states who have universal jurisdiction to make greater efforts to submit more cases, while acknowledging that imposing economic sanctions on the states supporting the Syrian regime, particularly weapon manufactures, is another effective form of accountability. Additionally, Abdul Ghany called on the states who allied themselves with the Syrian regime to abandon it, seeing that it has lost its legitimacy and can't be rehabilitated. Lastly, Abdul Ghany said that the only real alternative is accountability and justice by seriously contributing to establishing a democratically elected pluralistic political regime, which is the only way to ensure interests, security, and peace.

Afterwards, the floor was open for the states in attendance to speak, where all speeches agreed on supporting the path of accountability in Syria, as some ambassadors announced funding for the IIIM. To see the full session, [please click on the link](#).

You can also read SNHR chairman's speech which can be [found on this link](#).





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