

Human Rights Council – 38th Session

**Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria
26 June 2018**

Australian Statement

Australia is deeply concerned by continued human rights violations and abuses in Syria and the devastating humanitarian toll inflicted on the Syrian people by the ongoing conflict.

Regrettably, attacks on civilians and civilian objects, including medical facilities, continue. There are also reports of attacks on first responders. These shameful and unlawful acts must stop.

Australia remains concerned by the indiscriminate violence, siege tactics and forced displacements that have characterised some recent military operations. The COI's report confirms the brutal tactics used by pro-Government forces in eastern Ghouta.

We are particularly concerned by violations of the south-western and Idlib de-escalation zones and urge all parties to the conflict to keep the zones intact.

The plight of displaced people has been exacerbated by the persistent denial of humanitarian access and may be worsened by changes to Syria's property laws. Refugees in neighbouring countries also continue to face difficult circumstances. We recognise the valuable role Syria's neighbours play in hosting these displaced people.

We condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria, including the April attack in Douma. The perpetrators must be held to account and such attacks must cease. We strongly support the work of the OPCW's Fact-Finding Mission but regret the actions of the Syrian Government and its backers in preventing the re-establishment of an attribution mechanism. We support consideration in the OPCW of stronger measures to attribute responsibility for the uses of chemical weapons.

We ask, in the COI's view, what more can the international community do to end impunity for chemical weapons use?

[254 words]