

Human Rights Council – 41st session

Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
2 July 2019

Australian Statement

Australia thanks the Commissioners for their important work.

Australia condemns unequivocally all human rights violations and abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law, in Syria by all parties.

We are gravely concerned by the recent escalation of violence in north-western Syria, including the reported deaths of more than 230 civilians since April and unlawful damage to 26 health facilities and 37 schools. We also condemn Hayat Tahrir al-Sham's abuses within Idlib and its indiscriminate attacks on regime-held territory. Accountability for violations of international law remains critical, and civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected. Counter-terrorism objectives do not absolve states or governments of their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law.

Australia supports the UN Secretary General's recent call for those with influence, particularly Russia and Turkey, to stabilise the situation in Idlib without delay. All relevant parties should adhere to the 2017 agreement that established Idlib as a 'de-escalation' zone, and the 2018 Sochi agreement establishing the Idlib de-militarised zone.

Australia calls on all parties to the conflict to allow timely, safe, unhindered and sustained humanitarian access based on greatest need.

We remain concerned by reports of arbitrary arrests, detentions and killings in areas returned to regime control. The Syrian regime should clarify the fate of those disappeared, detained, tortured or killed by Syrian state apparatus over the past eight years as a matter of urgency.

Australia maintains the strongest possible position that the use of chemical weapons anytime, anywhere, and under any circumstances is unjustifiable and unacceptable.

We would be interested to hear from the Commission of Inquiry on how you are adapting your methods of work given changing circumstances on the ground?

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