

Human Rights Council – 42nd session

Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

17 September 2019

Australian Statement

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

We are deeply concerned by recent attacks on medical personnel and facilities, schools, and other civilian infrastructure in the Idlib de-escalation area. The UN has recorded more than 1000 civilian fatalities since April this year, predominantly caused by indiscriminate bombardment by the Syrian regime and its allies.

Reaffirming our call at the 41st session of this Council, we continue to urge all parties to adhere to the 2017 agreement that established Idlib as a 'de-escalation' zone, and the 2018 Sochi agreement establishing the Idlib de-militarised zone. Counter-terrorism objectives do not absolve states or governments of their obligations under international human rights and international humanitarian law.

It is unacceptable that an estimated 98,000 persons have been forcibly disappeared in Syria since March 2011. The Syrian regime should, as a matter of urgency, clarify the fate of those disappeared, detained, tortured or killed. We are deeply concerned by continuing reports of sexual and gender-based violence. We urge the regime to release any arbitrarily detained persons, particularly women and children, as called for in the UNSC resolution 2254 and the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic's recent report.

Australia strongly supports efforts to achieve accountability for crimes committed in Syria, including this Commission and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria.

Mr President, we would be interested to hear how the Commission is tracking attacks on civilian targets, particularly medical facilities, in Idlib?

[252](#) Words