

Human Rights Council – 42nd session

Item 4 General Debate

17 September 2019

Australian Statement

In 2019, the international community commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, which form the cornerstone of international humanitarian law. This body of international law plays a critical role in restraining armed force, putting limits on warfare and limiting human suffering during armed conflict. Australia deeply regrets that its rules are not universally respected and upheld, including by member states on this Council.

Australia is troubled by the **Syrian** regime's intolerable brutality toward its own people, including the use of chemical weapons. It is unacceptable that Syrian civilians, after more than eight terrible years, continue to suffer indiscriminate bombardment of their homes and infrastructure, and the deliberate targeting of medical personnel and facilities. Australia is also deeply concerned by reports of torture, arbitrary detention, and extrajudicial killings in Syria.

Australia also remains alarmed about the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict in **Yemen**, including reported violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We condemn in particular the oppression of individuals and communities, such as the Baha'is, based on their religious beliefs.

Australia condemns authorities in **Venezuela** for the grave political, economic and humanitarian crisis created by their actions. We call for an immediate end to human rights violations, such as torture and extrajudicial executions.

We have previously noted that Australia is deeply concerned by reports of enforced disappearances, mass detention, and restrictions on freedom of religion and freedom of movement of Uighurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang. We urge **China** to allow meaningful access to Xinjiang for independent international observers, including for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Australia deplores the widespread and systematic human rights violations committed by the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**. We call on the DPRK to halt its WMD and ballistic missile program and improve the living conditions of its people.

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