

Human Rights Council – 43<sup>rd</sup> session

Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria

10 March 2020

**Australian Statement**

Australia thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its comprehensive report.

We remain deeply concerned by the ongoing human rights violations and abuses inside Syria. Of particular concern is the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone, including clashes between Syrian and Turkish forces. We strongly condemn the indiscriminate and disproportionate regime attacks which have resulted in a significant number of civilian casualties and the displacement of almost one million people, the majority of whom are women and children.

This reprehensible violence has created what the UN Secretary General has referred to as a “man-made humanitarian nightmare”. We call on all parties to the conflict to maintain the current ceasefire and allow safe, timely, unimpeded and sustained humanitarian access to prevent further deterioration of this already dire situation.

We call on Syria to release the thousands of Syrians who have been unlawfully or arbitrarily detained, to genuinely engage with the political process, and to honour its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. We call on all those with influence over the Assad regime, especially Russia, to pressure Syria to meet these basic expectations.

Australia acknowledges the disproportionate impact of the ongoing conflict on women and girls, particularly those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities. We deplore the abuse of children’s rights, such as the denial of education to girls and the forced conscription of boys in regime controlled areas.

We urge Syria to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry and allow it access to Syria to facilitate its important work.

We would be interested to hear about the Commission’s plans for the investigation of human rights violations and abuses resulting from the latest hostilities in Idlib.

**[281 Words]**