

## Human Rights Council – 44<sup>th</sup> session

### Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria

14 July 2020

#### Australian Statement

Australia thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its update to the Council and for its important work.

Human rights violations as grave and persistent as those perpetrated in Syria cannot be ignored. We condemn in the strongest possible terms widespread arbitrary detention and disappearances, torture, forced displacement, sexual and gender-based violence, and ongoing systemic and systematic denial of fundamental rights and freedoms across Syria.

The great shame is that Syria's abuses and violations are shielded and obscured from international scrutiny. The Syrian authorities continue to refuse to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry. Syria's friends attempt at every session of this council to spoil the resolution which mandates appropriate examination of the human rights situation in Syria. We are relieved that the UNSC has passed a new resolution facilitating cross-border humanitarian aid, but we are deeply concerned that access has been reduced to only one border crossing, compounding the needless suffering of the Syrian people.

We thank the COI for its focus on Idlib. We strongly condemn indiscriminate and disproportionate regime attacks. We deplore the targeting of hospitals and other healthcare facilities in violation of international law. We deeply regret the announcement by Russia of its withdrawal from the UN humanitarian notification system. This sets the stage for further violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law.

There is no military solution to the crisis in Syria. We urge all parties to genuinely engage with the UN-facilitated political process and to find ways to progress this despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic. We continue to call on all those with influence over the Assad regime, especially Russia, to pressure Syria to meet its international legal obligations and to fully cooperate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria.

[291 Words]