**Human Rights Council – 45th session**

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

**22 September 2020**

**Australian Statement**

**Australia thanks the Commission of Inquiry for its continued efforts to expose the horrors of the Syrian conflict.**

**We are deeply concerned that 6.2 million people, many of whom are women and children, remain displaced and continue to be denied the most basic level of human dignity. That access to life saving humanitarian aid is being obstructed for many of these people, is unconscionable.**

**We condemn reported prolific use of enforced disappearance, torture and sexual and gender-based violence by parties to the conflict. Even more distressing are the accounts of children being recruited or abducted by warring factions, forced to sacrifice their innocence and sadly, in many cases, their lives.**

We firmly believe that the only possible solution to the conflict in Syria is a political one, as envisaged in UNSCR 2254. We reaffirm our call for all parties to meaningfully engage with the UN-facilitated process, to create the conditions essential for establishing a peace that has eluded the Syrian people for far too long.

Members of the Commission, Australia remains concerned that some countries are using the COVID-19 pandemic to undermine civil and political rights. What key examples have you seen in Syria?

**[194Words]**