

Syrian Government forces and anti-Government groups responsible for war crimes: UN Commission of Inquiry

Geneva -- The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (CoI) on Syria today released its latest report on the human rights situation in Syria in which it concludes that Government forces and *Shabbiha* fighters had committed the crimes against humanity of murder and torture, war crimes and gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including unlawful killing, indiscriminate attacks against civilian populations and acts of sexual violence.

The 102-page report, mandated by the Human Rights Council, underlines that such violations were committed pursuant to State policy pointing to the involvement at the highest levels of the armed and security forces and the Government.

The report also updates the CoI findings on its special inquiry into the events in Al-Houla on 25 May 2012 concluding that Government forces and *Shabbiha* fighters were responsible for the killings of over 100 civilians, nearly half of whom were children.

The Commission further reports that war crimes, including murder, extrajudicial killings and torture, were perpetrated by anti-Government armed groups. However these violations and abuses were not of the same gravity, frequency and scale as those committed by Government forces and the *Shabbiha*.

The Commission also notes that since 15 February 2012 the situation in the country has deteriorated significantly with armed violence spreading to new areas and active hostilities raging between the Government forces and *Shabbiha* and anti-Government armed groups. The Commission reports that more brutal tactics and new military capabilities had been employed in recent months by both sides to the armed conflict.

Through the present report, the Commission reiterates that an international consensus is essential to end the violence in Syria and to build the road towards a political transition process that reflects the legitimate aspirations of all segments of Syrian society, including ethnic and religious minorities.

The Commission underlines that the lack of access to the country significantly hampered its ability to fulfill its mandate. In the absence of access to the Syria, the Commission continued to deploy to the region to collect firsthand accounts from those who left the country. Since 15 February, the CoI conducted 693 interviews in the field and from Geneva, bringing the total number of interviews conducted by the CoI to 1,062 since its establishment in September 2011.

Background

The Commissioners are Mr. Paulo Sergio Pinheiro (Chairperson) and Ms. Karen Koning AbuZayd.

The present report, scheduled to be presented at the 21st session of the Human Rights Council on 17 September, was submitted pursuant to Council resolution [A/HRC/RES/19/22](#) of 23 March 2012, which extended the mandate of the Commission established by resolution [A/HRC/RES/S-17/1](#) of 22 August 2011. The report sets out the findings of the Commission based on investigations conducted through 20 July 2012 and builds upon the Commission's [Periodic Updates](#) released on 16 April and 24 May, as well as the Oral Update presented to the Human Rights Council on 27 June 2012 ([A/HRC/20/CRP.1](#)). The report also updates the findings of the Commission's special inquiry into the events in Al-Houla, mandated by resolution [A/HRC/RES/S-19/1](#) of 1 June 2012.

To access the report and more information about the CoI and the Human Rights Council please visit the Council website: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/HRCIndex.aspx>

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