Human Rights in Syria: A Mid-term Partial Thematic-Based Assessment of Implementation of Recommendations Accepted During the UPR 3rd Cycle

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Introduction 3

Methodology 3

1- Violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) 4

2- Torture, Enforced Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention 7

A- Continuing violations 7

B. Alleged Legislative Reform 11

Anti-Torture Law No. 16 of 2022 12

Law No. 32 of 2023 on the Abolition of the Military Field Courts 15

3- Lack of Accountability and Redress for Victims 17

4- Safe and Voluntary Return 19

Recommendations 24

About the Submitting Organisations 26

ANNEX 1: Status of Implementation 28

Introduction

On 24 January 2022, Syria participated in the third cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the Human Rights Council (HRC). The HRC adopted the Syrian UPR's outcome report during its 50th session, held between 13 June and 8 July 2022. As a result of the review, 276 recommendations were adopted, of which the Syrian government accepted 207.

This mid-term report is prepared by a group of Syrian civil society organisations, including the Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP), the White Helmets (Syria Civil Defense), Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR), the Truth and Justice Charter (TJC) and the Access Center for Human Rights (ACCHR). It covers the period from January 2022 to April 2024 and aims to highlight developments regarding the status of the implementation of recommendations accepted by Syria during the UPR in January 2022.

Methodology

This report provides a partial assessment by a group of Syrian civil society organisations of the progress made in implementing some of the recommendations accepted by Syria during the third UPR cycle. It primarily focuses on recommendations related to

- Ending indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects and other violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

- Prohibition of torture, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention.

- Combating impunity and ensuring accountability.

- Ensuring the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

This report draws primarily from the findings of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Syria (COI) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Additionally, data gathered from primary sources by the submitting organisations,

employing methodologies consistent with human rights violation documentation, contributed to the report's preparation. The Syrian Government still does not allow the COI, the OHCHR, and Syrian and international organisations to enter Syria, and it is not possible to obtain data and information from relevant government agencies.

The absence of discussion regarding the progress in implementing other recommendations accepted by the Syrian Government during the UPR's third cycle in this report should not be interpreted as these recommendations being less important or already implemented by the Syrian Government. Instead, our focus on specific accepted recommendations is due to capacity constraints and because they align with the scope of work of the submitting organisations.

1- Violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL)

Syria has accepted various recommendations for addressing breaches of IHL, including ending indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, ensuring unimpeded humanitarian access, and upholding the principles of IHL, including distinction, proportionality, and precaution. However, the Syrian Government has continued to violate IHL. All reports issued by the COI since 2022 and the information gathered by the submitting organisations in this report affirm the ongoing violations and the Syrian Government’s failure to implement the accepted recommendations.

The White Helmets, one of the organisations submitting this report, has documented various violations of IHL that they have witnessed since the beginning of the third UPR cycle. These violations include the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, attacks on humanitarian workers, and the use of internationally prohibited weapons. The information provided by the White Helmets is based on first-hand data they collected directly during their emergency search and rescue operations. These include initial responses to attacks and follow-up with victims to accurately record casualty rates and the secure removal of remnants of attacks. It is important to note that the documentation by the White Helmets only includes the attacks they responded to and does not rely on open-source data.

In 2022, the White Helmets recorded multiple military attacks on 12 camps and 183 communities, with 830 military attacks carried out by the Syrian Government and the Russian coalition. Of these attacks, 56% targeted agricultural fields, followed by 25% targeting civilian homes, 11% affecting roads crucial for civilians' daily life needs, a minimal 2% focusing on camps and public buildings, and 1% on forests, souks, and stores – public locations. The civilian casualties resulting from the military attacks in 2022 amounted to 161 dead, including 14 women, 56 children, and 91 men. Additionally, 452 wounded individuals were rescued, comprising 66 women and 138 children. These military attacks also led to the evacuation of multiple places, with 78 evacuations by the White Helmets teams in 2022. This resulted in 3,104 individuals leaving their locations during the attacks.

In 2023, the White Helmets documented 1,322 military attacks within 189 communities, with the Syrian Government's forces responsible for 84% of the attacks, while Russian forces and anonymous accounted for 6% and 5%, respectively. These attacks targeted densely populated areas such as the village of Fetireh (217 attacks), Kansafra (132), Al-Bara (104), and Idlib (45). Based on evidence collected from the White Helmets, the attacks aimed to cause the highest number of civilian casualties by targeting daily life facilities and locations, including agricultural fields (706), civilian homes (421), roads (70), schools (29), camps (17), souks (14), forests (13), mosques (12), and public buildings (8). Civilian casualties in 2023 by gender were as follows: 24 women and 98 men were killed, while 97 women and 390 men were injured. Additionally, 51 children were killed, and 233 were injured. In October 2023, Syrian regime forces targeted four White Helmets Centres in Ariha, Daret Izza, Idlib City, and Sarmin. Volunteer Abdul Basit Ahmed Abdul Khaleq was killed when his team was targeted on July 11, 2023.

The Syrian Government and Russian forces employed various types of weapons for these attacks. In 2022, artillery shelling was used in 69% of attacks (576 attacks). Airstrikes were recorded in 64 attacks, rocket launchers in 56 attacks, and anti-tank missiles and Improvised Explosive Devices used in 29 attacks, respectively. Land Mines were used in 17 attacks, and five attacks used cluster bombs. In 2023, a total of 968 attacks were carried out using artillery shelling, 175 using rocket launchers, 76 through airstrikes, 18 with anti-tank guided missiles, 17 from an unknown explosion, 13 involving explosive remnants of war (ERW), 9 encompassing small arms and light weapons

(SALW), improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and incendiary weapons. Land mines and drones were used only seven times.

In the same vein, all reports of the COI after 2022 confirm the violations of IHL by the Syrian Government. The COI's report issued on August 17, 2022, covering the period from January to June 30, 2022, documented numerous instances where Syrian Government forces conducted indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian objects across various areas. These attacks included airstrikes on poultry farms, water stations, and residential areas in Bzabor, Maarat al-Nassan, Afes, Tarmarin, and Aldana, resulting in casualties and significant damage to essential infrastructure. For instance, in Maarat al-Naasan, a ground attack claimed the lives of a family of six, including two young children and two women, while another ground attack resulted in the deaths of four boys aged between 12 and 14 on their way to school. In Afes, shelling struck a market, resulting in the deaths of two civilians and injuring three others. Evidence indicates that these attacks were deliberate and may amount to war crimes as they targeted vital facilities crucial for the survival of the civilian population, leading to civilian casualties. Additionally, the COI notes that there are reasonable grounds to believe that by attacking a fuel depot during the harsh winter conditions, government forces may have obstructed access to items essential for the civilian population's survival. These attacks, which target and disrupt economic activities, such as shelling near a fuel depot, underscore the government's disregard for the lives and livelihoods of civilians.[1]

In its report of February 7, 2023, the COI also documented 20 ground and air attacks conducted by pro-government forces in Idlib and western Aleppo, resulting in 195 civilian casualties, including 36 fatalities, of which 12 were children. The attacks damaged and destroyed food sources, IDP camps, and numerous homes where victims had sought refuge.[2] In the same context, the COI's report issued on August 14, 2023, stated that government forces repeatedly shelled towns and villages in southern Idlib and surrounding areas of western Aleppo, resulting in civilian casualties. Attacks targeted residential areas in Al Fu'ah, Sarmin, Al-Bara, Ma’arblit and Atarib.

[1] A/HRC/51/45, Paras. 41-55.
[2] A/HRC/52/69, paras. 22-44.

The COI has concluded that these attacks constitute direct targeting of civilians and civilian objects, particularly in the absence of a military presence, which amounts to war crimes.[3]

The most recent report issued by the COI on February 9, 2024, covering the period from July through December 31, 2023, also documented numerous attacks by government forces against civilians and civilian objects. Between October and December, pro-government forces launched a series of attacks in Idlib and western Aleppo, targeting civilian areas such as Saraqib, Turmarin, Atarib, Sarmin, Qarqur, Darat Izzah, Kafr Nuran and the city of Idlib. These attacks resulted in civilian casualties, including women and children, and caused significant damage to infrastructure, including homes, schools, hospitals, markets, and displacement camps. According to the COI, the indiscriminate nature of the attacks, with no apparent military targets nearby, raises concerns about potential war crimes.[4]

2- Torture, Enforced Disappearance and Arbitrary Detention

Syria has accepted several recommendations related to ending the practices of enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and all forms of torture, as well as taking measures to protect civilians from these violations. However, these violations have not stopped. All reports issued by the COI since 2022 confirm the continued patterns of crimes against humanity and war crimes related to torture and ill-treatment in detention. These include practices leading to death in detention, as well as arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance committed by the Syrian Government. Despite the issuance of a law criminalising torture and another law related to the abolition of the Military Field Court, presented as reforms in the field of human rights protection in Syria, the legal analysis of these laws shows their insufficiency to address instances of torture, enforced disappearances and other human rights violations in Syria.

A- Continuing violations

[3] A/HRC/54/58, Paras. 49-62.
[4] A/HRC/55/64, Paras. 25-40.

During the years of conflict in Syria, Syrian NGOs, the COI, IIIM, and other NGOs have extensively documented and reported on tens of thousands of missing person cases, including those subjected to enforced disappearance, as well as the presence of mass graves throughout the country.[5] As of April 18, 2024, the Syrian Network for Human Rights (SNHR) has recorded 112,000 cases of Syrians who have been forcibly disappeared in Syria.[6] Among this total, 96,000 individuals, or 85 per cent, were forcibly disappeared by Syrian authorities and pro-regime Iranian militias.[7] Despite the Government's claims that it has established entities to address the issue of missing persons and to support families in locating their missing relatives, little information has been disclosed. Moreover, there has been a lack of active efforts by the Syrian Government to investigate and clarify the fate and whereabouts of the missing, as evidenced by its failure to conduct any meaningful investigations.

In its 2023 annual report covering the period from 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) expressed concern about the persistence of enforced disappearances in Syria, stressing the urgent need to alleviate the suffering endured by affected families. The WGEID expressed regret over the absence of effective research efforts and investigations conducted by the Syrian Government to tackle cases of enforced disappearance. Furthermore, it noted the lack of accountability for those responsible for such violations and the absence of justice and redress for the victims and their families. The WGEID declared its support for the establishment of the UN's International Institution for Missing Persons in Syria to address enforced disappearance in Syria and support the families.[8]

The COI's report issued on August 17, 2022, covering the period from January to June 30, indicates that torture and ill-treatment continue systematically in detention facilities, including Sednaya Prison and detention centres run by Syrian intelligence. The COI noted that it had received information from survivors regarding cell overcrowding, the spread of diseases, including COVID-19, and denial of medical care, food, water, and sanitation. Methods of torture included electric shocks, burning of body parts, and suspension from limbs for prolonged periods, often

[5] COI, “Syria's Missing and Disappeared: Is There a Way Forward?”, 17 June 2022.
[6] The Syrian Network for Human Rights (April 18, 2024), (Accessed on 18 April 2024).
[7] Ibid.
[8] A/HRC/54/22, Paras.103-105.

accompanied by severe beatings. Among the cases documented by the COI in this report, nine men were arrested and subjected to torture and ill-treatment for failing to comply with or for defecting from compulsory military service. This included a minor who was 17 years old at the time of his arrest. Cases included defecting from service and returning after an amnesty, only to be re-arrested. Former prisoners reported being held without contact with their families or access to lawyers for periods ranging from weeks to several months. Those eventually brought before the court stated that they were forced to sign written "confessions" without having had the opportunity to read them. The COI also documented that in February 2022, less than a month after the UPR of Syria, a group of families from Eastern Ghouta received death certificates from the Civil Registry Office for more than 30 individuals who disappeared after being transferred to a collective shelter in 2018. The certificates provided the alleged date of death without clarifying the circumstances of the death. A similar date of death was mentioned on death certificates (in 2019) for several deceased individuals, likely indicating executions during the government's retaking of Eastern Ghouta. The remains of these individuals have not been returned to the families, and there is no evidence of any government investigation into these cases.[9]

In its report issued on February 7, 2023, the COI also confirmed the continued arbitrary arrests and detentions by government forces, including of individuals who had "reconciled" with the government in the past. In this report, the COI documented numerous cases of arbitrary arrest, torture, and ill-treatment of detainees, as well as extrajudicial killings by government forces. This confirms the persistence of patterns of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to these violations.[10]

On 10 July 2023, the COI issued a special report on torture in Syria entitled “No End in Sight: Torture and Ill-Treatment in the Syrian Arab Republic 2020-2023”. The report highlights widespread and systematic patterns of torture, ill-treatment and enforced disappearance in government detention centres and covers the period from January 2020 to April 2023. The report is based on 254 interviews conducted by the COI, including the testimonies of over 200 detainees and witnesses. It focuses on the main intelligence directorates and military prisons where such

[9] A/HRC/51/45, Paras. 16-26.
[10] A/HRC/52/69, paras. 52-61.

abuses are frequently reported. These include Military Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, Political Security, and the General Intelligence Directorate, as well as the Police Criminal Security Department and Military Prisons in Sednaya and Al-Balouni in Homs.[11]

This report confirms that many former detainees in government detention centres are kept incommunicado for long periods without access to family, friends, or legal counsel. The report highlighted that numerous former detainees endured different forms of torture and mistreatment, such as being suspended by one or two limbs for extended periods (known as shabeh), being folded into car tyres (known as dulab), severe beatings, electric shocks, and sexual violence.[12] Additionally, detainees described inhumane conditions such as overcrowded cells, lack of food and water, and denial of medical care, with many of them witnessing deaths in custody.[13]

The report issued on August 14, 2023, covering the period from January to June 30, 2023, also confirms the continuation of violations during the reporting period. The COI has again documented cases of deaths in custody. For example, in January, one family received what the authorities claimed to be the remains of a relative who had been detained by the Military Intelligence Directorate in 2022. The family has not received any details about the circumstances of his death and has not been able to confirm the identity of the remains they have obtained. In other cases, families have been informed by third parties that their loved ones have died but have yet to receive any communication from the authorities. In the same report, the Commission confirmed that incommunicado detentions by the government continued, with detainees often suffering in deplorable conditions, particularly in detention branches run by the security services. For example, a civilian, who is a father of three, was arrested at a Syrian Army checkpoint with his family in early 2023 and held incommunicado for almost a month by several security services, during which he was subjected to torture and ill-treatment.[14]

In January 2024, the Association of Detainees and Missing in Saydnaya Prison reported that in January 2023, the Syrian authorities conducted dredging and levelling operations in a mass grave site in Qatifa, on the outskirts of Damascus, believed to be the final resting place for the bodies of

[11] A/HRC/53/CRP.5, Summary.
[12] Ibid. Para. 4.
[13] Ibid.
[14] A/HRC/54/58, Paras. 32-42.

several thousand political detainees who were executed or died under torture in detention centres.[15] By manipulating and failing to preserve the mass grave, the Syrian authorities have negatively impacted the prospects of conducting effective exhumation and identification of the bodies buried in the area and ultimately caused irreparable harm to the right to the truth of families and exacerbated their suffering.

Finally, the latest report issued by the COI on 9 February 2024, which covers the period from 1 July to 31 December 2023, also confirms the continuation of these violations. The COI confirmed the government's continued practice of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture, and ill-treatment, as well as deaths in government custody, including in Sednaya Prison, confirming ongoing patterns of crimes against humanity. This report has documented cases where Syrian authorities have issued death certificates to detainees without providing any details about the circumstances of the death, leaving families unable to retrieve bodies for funeral rituals. For example, in November 2023, the family of a former opposition fighter from Daraa, detained since 2018, learned through the civil registry that their relative had died more than two years earlier. The family last visited the detainee in 2021 but has since been unable to obtain information on his whereabouts. Moreover, this report highlights how families are forced to resort to costly government-linked intermediaries to obtain information on their detained relatives, often with little success.[16]

B. Alleged Legislative Reform

The Syrian Government has issued several legislations claiming they aim to promote and protect human rights at all times, such as the Anti-Torture Law No.16 of 2022 and the Abolition of the Military Field Court Law No. 32 of 2023. However, to understand the potential effects of legislative reforms and laws promoted by the authorities as legislative reforms, it is necessary to look at the context in which such legislations are enacted. In recent years, the Syrian authorities have strategically utilised human rights discourse to demonstrate a commitment to reform and

[15] Association of Detainees and Missing in Saydnaya Prison, "Recent Satellite Images Expose Land Alterations at Qatifa's Mass Grave in Syria", January 2024 (accessed 05 May 2024), available at: https://www.admsp.org/en/demolition-of-evidence/
[16] A/HRC/55/64, Paras. 56-66.

international law. This approach aims to reshape the Syrian Government's image before the international community, divert attention from its compliance with international obligations, and address a history of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is evident from the overdue report of the Syrian Government to the Human Rights Committee, sent in December 2021, wherein emphasis was placed on legislative reforms despite the lack of any accountability for serious human rights violations amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity over the past decade.[17] This approach from the Syrian Government continued during the UPR in 2022, where the national report highlighted legislative and administrative steps but ignored the ongoing gross human rights violations and lack of accountability.[18] The issuance of the new Anti-Torture Law[19] and the Abolition of the Military Field Court[20] are in line with this approach, as these laws were presented as significant reforms in the field of human rights protection in Syria. However, a legal analysis of these laws reveals their inadequacy in addressing human rights violations in Syria.

Also, legislative reform should not be viewed in isolation from international developments related to accountability in Syria. In 2020, the Netherlands initiated an effort, later joined by Canada, to hold the Syrian authorities accountable for ongoing Convention against Torture (CAT) violations. This led to the Netherlands and Canada filing a case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Syria to compel it to adhere to its international obligations under the CAT.[21] Therefore, enacting the Anti-Torture Law and the abolition of the Military Field Court at this time can also be seen as a response to the case. The Syrian Government is likely to present these laws during the trial as legislative measures taken to demonstrate compliance with its international legal obligations.

Anti-Torture Law No. 16 of 2022

[17] CCPR/C/SYR/4.
[18] A/HRC/WG.6/40/SYR/1.
[19] Law No.16 of 29 March 2022, Anti-Torture Law, available in Arabic at: https://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/22932/الرئيس-الأسد-يصدر-قانوناً-لتجريم-التعذيب ; for an in-depth legal analysis of the Anti-Torture Law, SLDP & Diakonia report "No Justice for Torture in Syria: A Victim Rights-Based Analysis of the 2022 Anti-Torture Law" (November 2023), available at: https://sldp.ngo/en/blog/1551.
[20] Legislative Decree 32 of 03 September 2023, available in Arabic at: https://www.pministry.gov.sy/contents/26160/-الرئيس-الأسد-يصدر-مرسوماً-تشريعياً-ينهي-العمل-بمرسوم-إحداث-محاكم-الميدان-العسكرية
[21] Application of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Canada and the Netherlands v. Syrian Arab Republic), available at: https://www.icj-cij.org/case/188

Despite the Syrian authorities' consistent claim in their national reports to the UPR that existing domestic legislation adequately criminalises torture, a new law, the Anti-Torture Law of 29 March 2022, has been introduced. In theory, this law may appear to be in line with the CAT as it provides a comprehensive definition of torture similar to that of the CAT and applies more severe penalties for perpetrators. The new law explicitly criminalises acts of torture committed by state officials, as well as acts of torture committed by individuals and non-state actors to achieve personal, material, or political ends or with the intent of revenge or retaliation. However, the minimum penalty for acts of torture committed by non-state actors (NSAs) is higher (8 years) than those penalties imposed on State actors for the same offence (6 years).[22] This contradicts the logic of law and justice, as law enforcement officials have a greater responsibility to ensure they do not abuse their power. It is, therefore, reasonable that the punishment for any actions they commit in violation of this responsibility should be stricter than that of individuals who do not exercise such authority.

The new law generally provides for the ability of victims and survivors to file complaints about torture and seek reparations and their right to be protected from reprisals.[23] This, in principle, is in line with Syria's obligations under international law to investigate crimes of torture committed by both state agents and NSAGs. However, victims of torture in Syria will encounter a fundamental obstacle in their pursuit of justice and redress: the immunity from prosecution enjoyed by state agents involved in human rights violations, including torture. Under Syrian law, members of the army and its intelligence services, members of the Internal Security Forces, and the General Intelligence Directorate enjoy de facto effective immunity from prosecution for crimes committed during service, and they are prosecuted only with the approval of their superiors.[24]

It is also crucial to highlight that the new law is silent about other forms of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment). This could justify various forms of ill-treatment by claiming they do not meet the criteria for torture. The failure of the Syrian authorities to

[22] Law No.16 of 29 March 2022, Anti-Torture Law, Article 2.
[23] Ibid., Article 7.
[24] SLDP & Diakonia report "No Justice for Torture in Syria: A Victim Rights-Based Analysis of the 2022 Anti-Torture Law" (November 2023), available at: https://sldp.ngo/en/blog/1551.

criminalise ill-treatment under the new law obstructs the victims' ability to access and enjoy their rights. The prerequisite for victims to exercise their right to remedy is the official recognition of them as victims through domestic legislative measures and procedures that criminalise violations against them, such as ill-treatment.[25]

Moreover, the new law, like any criminal legislation, is not applied retroactively to crimes committed before its promulgation. This means that all crimes of torture committed before the new law will be subject to Article 391 of the Penal Code. In addition to its shortcomings in the definition of torture, the offence provided for by this Article is a misdemeanour and not a felony. Therefore, the possibility of prosecuting perpetrators of torture under this Article may be hindered by the statute of limitations. Under Articles 437 and 438 of the Syrian Criminal Procedure Law, the statute of limitations would be three years from the date of the misdemeanour's commission if no prosecution occurred during that period. This applies to both public and personal rights cases. Consequently, crimes of torture and ill-treatment committed by the Syrian authorities and NSAGs before the issuance of the new law, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, are likely to go unpunished, and, likely, victims will not be able to access justice and claim their rights before Syrian courts. It should be noted that the inapplicability of statutes of limitation to war crimes and crimes against humanity is an established norm of international law, and Syria is obligated to amend its national legislation to ensure the implementation of this rule.

If the Syrian Government genuinely intend to utilise this law to advance justice for acts of torture in Syria, the law should be complemented by broader accountability strategies capable of addressing the state policy behind the use of torture by state officials. These strategies should include, among others, the repeal of laws granting immunity to Syrian State officials and the enactment of laws criminalising crimes against humanity and war crimes to address the widespread and systematic nature of the violations fully. The new Anti-Torture Law should also be complemented by more comprehensive responses to ensure victims' rights. In addition to accountability-specific measures, these should include implementing redress procedures extending beyond the reparations provided by civil and criminal courts to facilitate access to

[25] Ibid.

redress for all victims. Most importantly, if the Syrian authorities genuinely aim to prohibit torture in Syria through the enactment of this law, this legislative step should be accompanied by concrete actions aimed at ceasing abuses and ensuring their non-recurrence. This includes allowing humanitarian actors to visit detention centres, releasing all individuals arbitrarily and unlawfully detained, providing information about the fate and whereabouts of all disappeared individuals to end the torture suffered by their family members, and undertaking far-reaching institutional and security reforms. The Syrian Government has not yet done this.

Finally, it should be noted that the Human Rights Committee had posed detailed questions to the Syrian Government regarding the measures taken concerning the new Law and its retroactive application to prevent torture and the use of ill-treatment in places of detention.[26] The committee also inquired about how the Syrian Government would ensure prompt, thorough, and impartial investigations by an independent mechanism into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment, as well as the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators and the provision of effective remedies and rehabilitation for victims and their families.[27] The Commission also requested the Syrian Government to provide data on the number of complaints received, investigations and prosecutions conducted, penalties imposed, and reparations granted to victims. However, the Syrian Government did not answer any of these questions. Its response to the Committee was limited to merely listing some articles of the new law without mentioning any action taken to prevent torture and ill-treatment, hold the perpetrators accountable, provide full redress and reparation to the victims, and without providing any data related to complaints and redress.[28]

Law No. 32 of 2023 on the Abolition of the Military Field Courts

While the abolition of the Military Field Courts can be seen as a positive step, given their historical role as a tool used by the Syrian Government to suppress human rights defenders and political opponents in Syria, there are legitimate concerns that the abolition could pave the way for further

[26] CCPR/C/SYR/Q/4, Para. 12.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

impunity by destroying the courts' archives and records. Decree 32, consisting of only three articles, provides for the referral of all cases pending before the Military Field Courts in their current state to the military judiciary for trial under the provisions outlined in the Military Penal Code and Procedure promulgated by Decree-Law No. 61 of 1950 and its amendments. However, Decree 32 did not mention the fate of the previous cases considered by the court and the records and archives of the court. For years, the Military Field Courts have been extensively utilised by the Syrian Government to impose sanctions against human rights defenders and political opponents, including the death penalty. After 2011, these courts were responsible for the majority of mass executions and extrajudicial killings in Syrian prisons, particularly in the notorious Sednaya Prison.[29] Thus, abolishing the courts without clarifying the fate of their archives and records or transferring them to another court raises concerns about the possibility of their destruction by the Syrian authorities. This signifies a significant loss of evidence regarding the court's involvement in human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances. It serves as a means for the Syrian Government to shield itself from potential external scrutiny or international prosecution, especially in light of the case before the ICJ concerning violations by the Syrian Government of the CAT, which requires the Syrian Government, among other things, to preserve evidence related to torture and enforced disappearances.

Moreover, referring cases before the Military Field Courts to the military judiciary does not guarantee a fair trial. Legislative Decree No. 109 on establishing Military Field Courts stipulates that the Public Prosecution in these courts shall have broad powers, and its decision shall be final and not subject to appeal. This deprives individuals whose cases have been referred to the military judiciary of the opportunity to challenge the decision of the Public Prosecution of the Field Court, which constitutes a violation of their right to defence. In addition, the military courts in Syria are fully subject to the executive authority and lack independence. Judges are appointed by decree on

[29] See, for example, Amnesty International, "Human slaughterhouse: Mass hangings and extermination at Saydnaya Prison, Syria", (2017), available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/5415/2017/en/

the recommendation of the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Armed Forces,[30] who is at the same time the president of the republic and the head of the executive authority.[31]

Finally, it should be noted that the COI requested information from the Syrian Government regarding the implementation of Legislative Decree No. 32 but did not receive any response. The COI highlighted a lack of clarity from the Syrian Government regarding the fate of those sentenced by the Court, how detainees and their families will be informed of the impact of the abolition on their cases, and how to ensure the preservation of the archives of the Court.[32]

3- Lack of Accountability and Redress for Victims

Syria has accepted recommendations related to combating impunity, ensuring accountability, and conducting impartial investigations for gross human rights violations such as torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killings, and sexual and gender-based abuse. However, all the reports of the COI referred to in this report confirm the absence of accountability at the national level and the persistence of the de facto immunity enjoyed by state agents who commit these violations. The Syrian Government has not initiated any investigations or prosecutions in the alleged cases of gross violations of human rights, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and the victims have not received any reparations for the harm they have suffered.

The immunity provisions in the Syrian legislation are still in force and have not been repealed by the Syrian Government. Under Syrian law, members of the army and its intelligence services, members of the Internal Security Forces, and the General Intelligence Department enjoy effective immunity from prosecution for crimes committed during service. Their prosecution is subject to the approval of their superiors.[33] This means that victims of gross human rights violations in Syria

[30] Legislative Decree No. 61 of 1950, Military Penal Code and Procedures, Articles 34, 35 and 39.
[31] Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic, 26 February 2012, Art. 105. Available in English at: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/91436/106031/F-931434246/constitution2.pdf
[32] A/HRC/55/64, Para. 66.
[33] SLDP & Diakonia report "No Justice for Torture in Syria: A Victim Rights-Based Analysis of the 2022 Anti-Torture Law" (November 2023), available at: https://sldp.ngo/en/blog/1551.

still face a fundamental obstacle in their pursuit of accountability and redress, which is the immunity from prosecution enjoyed by state agents involved in human rights violations such as torture, enforced disappearances, sexual violence, and other violations.

The COI has also confirmed that the Syrian Government has not carried out any investigations into serious human rights violations and international crimes. The COI, for example, documented numerous cases in which the Syrian authorities issued death certificates to detainees without providing details about the circumstances of the death and without conducting any investigation, as families were unable to retrieve the bodies for funerals. In its report on torture issued in 2023, the COI explicitly referred to the failure of Syrian institutions to consistently investigate allegations of torture and deaths inside prisons and during interrogations.[34] Despite the large number of enforced disappearances, the Syrian Government is neglecting the rights of victims' families to truth and to access information. Moreover, the COI notes in this report that the absence of death certificates and the insufficient details provided in the official records when issuing death certificates to detainees and the forcibly disappeared indicate deliberate attempts to conceal deaths that occur while individuals are in custody.[35] This reflects ongoing cooperation between State institutions aimed at committing and concealing acts of torture and deaths in custody, as noted by the COI.

A documented example of the lack of accountability and persistence of impunity enjoyed by state agents is the Tadamon massacre. In April 2022, The Guardian published a shocking video recorded in Syria, which shows a member of the Syrian government forces executing more than 40 people in handcuffs and blindfolds and leaving their bodies in mass graves that were dug beforehand. This video relates to a massacre that took place in the Al-Tadamon neighbourhood and was committed in April 2013, in which members of the Military Intelligence Branch 227 executed more than 280 civilians, including at least seven women and twelve children. The majority of victims had been deprived of their liberty prior to their execution and had been considered disappeared by their families until the day the video was published. In the video, one person is identified as being directly responsible for extrajudicial executions, and he is a Major working at Branch 227. Despite

[34] A/HRC/53/CRP.5, Para. 118.
[35] Ibid.,

his direct involvement in the massacre and his identification, he currently enjoys impunity. He remains an officer in the detention branch of Branch 227.

On 18 October 2023, several Special Rapporteurs, including the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, sent a communication to the Syrian Government about the Tadamon massacre and explicitly expressed their concern about the incident and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrator of the massacre and others. They considered the Al Tadamon massacre an example of the systematic and widespread nature of crimes committed in Syria and the impunity accorded to perpetrators.[36] In the same correspondence, the Special Rapporteurs requested the Syrian Government, among other things, to provide information on the investigations or judicial proceedings undertaken into the Tadamon massacre, including the inspection and investigation activities around the mass grave associated with the atrocities. Still, the Syrian Government, as usual, did not respond to the communication.

4- Safe and Voluntary Return

The Syrian Government accepted a recommendation related to providing an environment conducive to the safe and voluntary return of refugees and IDPs. However, reports issued by the COI, OHCHR and Syrian organisations since 2022 confirm that the Syrian Government has not taken any measures to implement this recommendation. Despite the Syrian Government's public encouragement to return, including holding three conferences since 2020 to support refugees' return,[37] significant challenges persist for those seeking to return to Syria. The absence of a clear legal framework or accessible information for individuals wishing to return continues, alongside

[36] AL SYR 2/2023, 18 October 2023, p. 2-3, available at: https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownLoadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=28380 (Accessed 5 April 2024)

[37] Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, 26 September 2023, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/09/committee-rights-migrant-workers-commends-syria-progress-legislation-last (accessed 4 April 2024)

ongoing human rights violations such as torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, and property rights violations against returnees.

In its report published in February 2023, the COI stated that although the Syrian government has publicly encouraged return, it has not established the required conditions and a clear legal framework for those wishing to return to their country legally, such as who is responsible for issuing return permits and how to submit appeals when return is refused. Indeed, cases of people whose applications were rejected for "criminal" or "security reasons" have been reported without any details or formal procedures for appealing the decision.[38] In the same report, the COI also reported that IDPs were denied return to their village of origin in government-controlled areas from opposition-controlled areas despite having obtained prior approval (security clearance). Others were threatened with being handed over to the security services unless they paid bribes. Many returnees reported having to pay bribes to members of local administrations to access their properties. For example, this report reported a case of a person whose house was severely damaged in retaliation for his insistence on restoring the house. In another case, the COI showed that a piece of land belonging to a returnee was seized by the local leader of a pro-government militia through public auctions, confirming the continuation of a pattern of violations previously documented by it. Remedies to address these cases remain unavailable or ineffective, as authorities have not reacted to complaints from some, while others have reported that they fear retaliation if a complaint is made.[39]

In addition, COI reports confirm that returnees continue to face serious human rights violations upon return, further hampering voluntary repatriation efforts. Torture, arbitrary detention and other forms of abuse continue, perpetuating a climate of fear and insecurity for those contemplating return. The COI highlighted widespread patterns of persecution, including cases in which individuals were subjected to forced military recruitment upon return. Additionally, the ambiguous and arbitrary nature of the Syrian Government's "reconciliation" processes poses additional risks, as returnees often face interrogation, arrest, and enforced disappearance upon arrival. In its report on August 14, 2023, covering January to June 31, 2023, the COI confirmed that Syria remains

[38] A/HRC/52/69, paras. 63-64
[39] Ibid., Paras. 62-72.

unsafe for refugees to return. For example, the COI documented the arrest of a returnee based on a “security report” accusing him of committing crimes that occurred while he was abroad. He was arrested with his wife and children, detained for weeks without access to a lawyer or being brought before a judge, and tortured while in detention by several security agencies, notably the Military Intelligence and Political Security Branch, to obtain information, forcing him to make confessions.[40]

Also, according to the report, hundreds of Syrian refugees and migrants were repatriated from Lebanon during the reporting period, including about 200 individuals on January 1 who were rescued from a sunken ship and forced to return via formal or informal routes. Some were arrested by members of the Fourth Division of the Syrian Arab Army or smugglers. Many were threatened with being handed over to the security services or sent to prison unless they paid large sums of money, averaging several hundred dollars. Those who paid were released and subsequently managed to return to Lebanon through unofficial channels. In contrast, others were handed over and detained by the security services or the Syrian Arab Army. Many of these detainees described being held by the Syrian army in overcrowded facilities with insufficient food and water. Some were forced to enlist for military service and sign a "Settlement Status” document. The report further indicates that some returnees, including children, have gone missing since their return to Syria, with their families unaware of their fate or whereabouts.[41]

In the same context, in February 2024, the OHCHR published a report detailing the human rights violations faced by Syrians upon their return to Syria after fleeing the country. The report highlights interrelated patterns of violations and identifies challenges to access to economic, social and cultural rights, exacerbated by armed conflict and the economic crisis. The report's findings are primarily based on 44 interviews and meetings conducted by OHCHR with primary and secondary sources. Of these, 22 interviews were conducted with returnees and former returnees (people who have returned and left the country again), including 10 women and 12 men between October 2022 and June 2023.[42]

[40] A/HRC/54/58, Paras. 40-42.
[41] Ibid.
[42] OHCHR, "We did not fear death but the life there", (February 2024), paras. 10-16.

The report concludes that although Syrians have returned home, the root causes of the conflict remain unaddressed, leaving returnees vulnerable to various violations of human rights and IHL. Many Syrian returnees face significant challenges and are subjected to grave human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, torture, restrictions on freedom of movement, inadequate housing, and violations of property rights. OHCHR obtained several testimonies of returnees to areas under the control of pro-government forces who reported being subjected to torture and ill-treatment while in detention and being detained until the visible wounds and traces of physical harm disappeared before being brought before a judge or released. One woman described the conditions of her detained son, also a returnee, who was held in a pro-government detention centre in Damascus. According to the woman's testimony, her son was severely beaten in detention. He was only allowed to appear before a judge (he was brought before a military judge) after being provided with an intensive dose of cortisone and other medicines to treat bruises and other signs of torture for weeks, as detainees are not allowed to appear before the court until after any visible signs of torture have healed.[43]

In addition, the report notes the suffering of returnees due to the destruction of their homes during the conflict, the lack of civil documentation, and perceived threats from local authorities due to their previous departure or their opposing views. Additionally, women are disproportionately affected by discriminatory laws and gender-based violence. As a result, the majority of individuals interviewed, especially those with financial means, chose to leave Syria again, seeking refuge in countries such as Lebanon and Turkey, where they expect better economic conditions despite possible mistreatment by local authorities.

Furthermore, ACHR, one of the organisations submitting this report, has documented numerous cases of forced deportation of Syrian refugees from Lebanon to Syria, revealing a pattern of violations committed by the Syrian Government against deportees. The cases were meticulously documented through testimonies obtained via in-person and phone interviews with victims, survivors, and their family members. Additionally, ACHR's documentation efforts included gathering photographic evidence, conducting consented written and audio-recorded interviews, collecting personal identification documents, and obtaining medical reports for victims of torture.

[43] Ibid. Para. 88.

Throughout 2023, ACHR interviewed 299 witnesses and deportees, a significant portion of whom managed to re-enter Lebanon via smuggling routes, often facilitated by payments to Syrian Army officers and affiliated smugglers. According to testimonies from deportees who successfully returned to Lebanon, some were initially held in guarded barracks on the Syrian side of the borders before being handed over by the Fourth Division of the Syrian Army to smugglers. To re-enter Lebanon, they were required to pay between 100 and 3,000 US Dollars; failure to pay would result in their transfer back to the Fourth Division's custody.

After deportation, typically under the escort of the Lebanese Armed Forces, deportees are handed over to the Syrian Army. They undergo prolonged security investigations before being processed in civil or military courts for 'status settlement' procedures. In many cases documented by ACHR, deportees faced torture, ill-treatment, and forced disappearance. Young men of compulsory or reserve military service age were immediately conscripted or detained upon the conclusion of the investigation. ACHR documented one case in which a deportee, during the conscription process, was tortured to death by the Military Police in Damascus's Qaboun neighbourhood in 2023. Additionally, five ACHR interviewees who returned to Lebanon after deportation reported being interrogated and severely tortured in up to four different security branches upon entering Syria in 2023.

Between January 2023 and March 2024, ACHR received information from families regarding at least 146 individual cases of deportees who were transferred to Syria by the Lebanese authorities. However, despite efforts to follow up on these cases, ACHR was unable to establish their fate and whereabouts, raising serious concerns that these individuals may have been subjected to arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance. Moreover, according to the information gathered by ACHR, many of the deportees who survived the security interrogation were unable to return to or reside in their original homes in Syria and became internally displaced.

In summary, the testimonies collected by the ACHR, the COI, and the OHCHR since 2022 have revealed recurring patterns of violations faced by deportees to Syria. These include but are not limited to arbitrary arrest, torture, forced disappearance, and property rights violations, among others. In addition, the Syrian Government has not provided any clear legal framework for refugees and IDPs' return. As a result, Syria has evidently fallen short in fulfilling the recommendations it

accepted to establish an environment conducive to the safe and voluntary return of refugees and IDPs.

Recommendations

The information presented in this report illustrates the Syrian government's failure to implement the recommendations it accepted during the UPR's third cycle regarding the protection of civilians, adherence to the principles of IHL, and cessation of practices such as enforced disappearance, torture, and arbitrary detention. Additionally, the government has not addressed impunity and facilitated favourable conditions for the return of refugees and IDPs. Given these persistent violations, the submitting organisations call upon the HRC and UN Member States to:

A- Violations of International Humanitarian Law

- Continue to unequivocally condemn and raise concerns regarding the Syrian government's violations of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law.
- Continue to focus on violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Syria in the Human Rights Council to ensure such violations are well documented and the need for accountability is not forgotten among competing geographic priorities.
- Support actors working to protect civilians from military attacks, including those coordinating early warning systems, community awareness, and first responders.
- Support actors documenting violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

B- Accountability

- Maintain unwavering support for accountability endeavours in Syria, including holding the Syrian Government accountable for its violations through judicial and non-judicial avenues.

- Continue to support UN bodies engaged in accountability efforts in Syria, such as the Commission of Inquiry (COI) and the International, Impartial, and Independent Mechanism (IIIM), to enable these entities to fulfil their mandates effectively.

C- Torture, Enforced disappearance and Arbitrary Detention

- Support the recently established UN International and Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria (IIMP). This institution will likely play a crucial role in addressing the issue of missing persons, including those who have been forcibly disappeared, and supporting the families. This support is critical given the Syrian government's lack of efforts and legal framework to address the issue of missing persons.

- Support initiatives and resolutions at the Human Rights Council addressing the persistent, widespread, and systematic violations of human rights in Syria, and aiming to achieve justice, truth, and accountability for gross violations and abuses of international law, as well as provide reparations and effective remedies for victims.

D- Safe Return

- Condemn and express concerns regarding the Syrian government's treatment of and human rights violations against returnees, affirming that Syria remains unsafe for refugees and IDPs to return and refrain from considering certain parts of Syria safe, given the government's failure to provide a clear legal framework for their return and the persistent human rights violations against them.

About the Submitting Organisations

The Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP) is a UK-based Syrian organisation established in 2013 in response to the Syrian conflict after realising the importance of addressing complex legal needs triggered by the conflict. SLDP's scope of work embraces various services, projects, and activities implemented in Syria, neighbouring countries, and other states that are involved or have a stake in the conflict. SLDP's work includes but is not limited to legal consultations, training and workshops, policy recommendations, legal assessments and advocacy campaigns explicitly tailored for Syrian NGOs and victims and families' groups to help them with their work on the ground and their documentation and legal advocacy efforts.

The White Helmets (Syria Civil Defense) is a humanitarian organisation dedicated to helping communities in Syria respond to emergencies. It was founded in late 2012 when volunteers from different backgrounds came together to respond to the aerial and ground bombardments of residential facilities and to fill the gaps caused by cuts to basic services from the government such as firefighting and health care. We are now a team of almost 3,000 women and men volunteers. We provide services for civilians in areas that we can reach, and together we strive to achieve our mission of saving lives and helping communities recover from the effects of war. We have been able to save more than 127,000 people. Our teams have also been victims of attack; 238 volunteers have been killed since 2012, most of whom were victims of systematic bombing while rescuing civilians from under the rubble.

Truth and Justice Charter is a group of Syrian families of victims and survivors of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance in Syria launched in 2021. The charter reflects their common vision of how to advance victims' rights and the cause of justice and truth in Syria. The Charter sets revealing the truth, ensuring justice for the detained and the forcibly disappeared and their families, and holding violators accountable as the building blocks for lasting peace in Syria.

Access Center for Human Rights (ACHR) operates as a non-profit, non-governmental human rights organisation. It is led and run by Syrian refugees who have professional backgrounds in law,

human rights, and journalism and who were forced to seek asylum in Lebanon because of their pro-democracy activism in Syria. ACHR is dedicated to upholding the rule of law and fighting impunity. It maintains a non-religious, non-sectarian stance and remains independent of any political affiliations. ACHR defends the communal and individual rights of refugees by investigating and highlighting the many violations of international law from which they suffer. ACHR argues for the voluntary, dignified and safe return of refugees to their countries of origin. It has been registered in Lebanon since 2017 and in France since 2020.

Lawyers and Doctors for Human Rights (LDHR) is a human rights organization that conducts expert medical documentation for legal proceedings relating to patients reporting torture, cruel and inhumane treatment and sexual violence. Its doctors and lawyers started working in 2012 but the organization officially registered in Turkey as an NGO in 2016. Since then, LDHR operates in both Syria and Turkey and has previously operated in Jordan.

ANNEX 1: Status of Implementation

This table displays the status of implementation of the third cycle UPR recommendations accepted by the Syrian Arab Republic. It specifically focuses on recommendations regarding ending indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects, compliance with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the prohibition of torture, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary detention, combat impunity and ensuring accountability, as well as ensuring the safe and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Key	Red: Not implementation
	Yellow: Partial implementation
	Green: Implemented

Recommendation	Full list of themes	Status
Theme: B51 Right to an effective remedy		
133.125 End enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detention and torture and ensure that all allegations are promptly, thoroughly and impartially investigated and that perpetrators are brough to justice. (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)	B52 Impunity B54 Transitional justice B53 Support to victims and witnesses	
133.136 Protect the civilian population in the armed conflict and ensure accountability for all violations and abuses of international human rights law and international humanitarian law (Czechia)	D21 Right to life D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment	

133.138 End the use of sexual violence, torture and ill-treatment in detention centres and ensure accountability and redress for the victims (Denmark)	D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - Persons deprived of their liberty - Disappeared persons - general	
133.142 Combat impunity and ensure accountability for serious human rights violations and crimes committed, including sexual and gender-based violence and harassment (Republic of Korea)		
133.143 Establish a national mechanism to identify and hold accountable all perpetrators engaged in human rights violations and abuses, especially arbitrary detention, torture, abduction and enforced disappearance (Poland)		
133.144 Undertake effective and impartial investigations into violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses and hold perpetrators accountable (Botswana)		
133.145 Disclose and investigate all deaths in custody since 2011 (Ireland)		
133.146 Take steps to hold accountable alleged perpetrators of violations of international human rights law or international humanitarian law and ensure that victims and their families have access to justice and reparation (Malta)		
133.148 Investigate cases of torture and summary executions and hold perpetrators to account (Montenegro)		

133.150 Investigate attacks against journalists and human rights defenders and sentence those accountable (Lithuania)		
133.153 Disclose the fates of detained, disappeared and missing individuals, investigate all deaths in custody, enforced disappearances and allegations of torture and hold perpetrators to account (Belgium)		
133.159 Guarantee independent and impartial investigations of those responsible for human rights abuses and violations, and along those same lines, find forms of reparation and compensation for the victims of the conflict (Costa Rica)		
133.160 Ensure the protection of civilians and prevent and prosecute cases of torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, including sexual violence (Croatia)		
133.161 Ensure access to, and the independence of, the judicial system in order to provide redress for victims (Holy See)		
133.163 Investigate violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law and prosecute perpetrators (Estonia)		
133.164 Guarantee the accountability of those responsible for human rights violations, including acts of sexual and gender-based violence (Ecuador)		
Theme: B11 International humanitarian law		

133.09 End attacks against civilian infrastructure. (Albania); Cease all deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks against civilians (Australia); End indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, including schools, hospitals and humanitarian facilities. (Ecuador)	B11 International Humanitarian Law A28 Cooperation with other international mechanisms and institutions E41 Right to health – general E51 Right to education - general	
133.110 End deliberate attacks against civilian populations and infrastructure and ensure immediate, full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access throughout Syrian territory. (France)	Affected persons: Persons affected by armed conflict	
133.112 Commit to putting an end to the indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure that limit access for children to basic services, such as hospitals and schools, including by outlawing such attacks and their use by the military forces. (Croatia)		
133.113 Put an end to the indiscriminate attacks on civilian infrastructure, such as health facilities, hospitals, schools or any other educational facility, including by ungently developing and adopting domestic laws and policies outlawing such attacks. (Georgia)		
133.116 Grant safe and unhindered access to humanitarian organizations, cease all violations and abuses against civilians, in particular against children, and end attacks against civilian facilities, including schools and hospitals. (Italy)		
133.116 Redouble efforts to comply with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, putting an end to indiscriminate attacks against civilians		

and civilian objects and protecting, in particular, vulnerable social groups, such as children, women, refugees, and internally displaced persons, and persons with disabilities. (Paraguay)		
133.157 Abide by their obligations in terms of international humanitarian law and human rights and respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution (Costa Rica)		
133.235 Observe all international humanitarian law in the conflict, including by allowing humanitarian access and protecting civilian infrastructure such as hospitals and schools (Luxembourg)		
Theme: E22 Right to food		
133.137 End the targeting of civilians and ensure unhindered humanitarian access through all modalities, in accordance with its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law (Denmark)		
Theme: A41 Constitutional and legislative framework		
133.63 Harmonize its national legislation with its international human rights obligations. (Pakistan)	A42 Institution & policies - general B8 Human rights & counter-terrorism	
133.69 Criminalize, in both law and practice, the use of torture and other forms of cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment or punishment, and combat sexual violence. (Holy See)	F12 Discrimination against women F13 Violence against women Affected persons:	

	- General - Persons affected by armed conflict - Persons deprived of their liberty - Disappeared persons - Women	
Theme: D33 Arbitrary arrest and detention		
133.123 Put an end to all acts of torture, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and incommunicado detentions and release activists and human rights defenders arbitrarily detained. (Italy)	D25 Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment D26 Conditions of detention E41 Right to health – general E26 Human rights & drinking water and sanitation E22 Right to food D22 Extrajudicial executions D28 Gender-based violence D32 Enforced disappearances Affected persons: - persons deprived of their liberty - disappeared persons	
133.129 Take all measures necessary to effectively protect the civilians population, ensuring that all cases of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance, the use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and sexual and gender-based violence are brought to an end. (Uruguay)		
133.130 End all torture, and sexual and gender-based violence, in places of detention. (Luxembourg)		
133.134 Terminate the practices of enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention and all forms of torture. (Iceland)		
133.139 Cease the practices of enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and all forms of torture (Ecuador)		
133.147 Release all those who are arbitrarily detained or forcibly disappeared and put an end to torture and other		

cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment within its jurisdiction (Netherlands)		
133.158 Strengthen measures against acts of torture and ill-treatment, sexual abuse, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions and arbitrary detentions (Costa Rica)		
133.168 Release arbitrarily detained political opponents, journalists, human rights defenders and peaceful protesters and respect the human rights of detainees (Portugal)		
133.169 Immediately release human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience, particularly those detained and imprisoned for participating in peaceful demonstrations since March 2011 (Canada)		
133.170 Release all political prisoners and stop targeting, among many others, civil society and political opponents through, inter alia, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention (Denmark)		
133.218 Take the measures necessary to enable humanitarian access to places of detention, in accordance with international humanitarian law (Botswana)		
Theme: D32 Enforced disappearances		
133.141 Take urgent measures to protect mass graves with forensic expertise, in order to preserve the evidence that allows the bodies to be identified and returned to the families, and avail itself of the expertise in the area offered by Argentina. (Argentina)	B51 Right to an effective remedy Affected persons: - Disappeared persons	

133.68 Take active steps to implement the obligations under article 16 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and article 33 of the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 august 1949, and relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, namely, to facilitate efforts to search for and identify any person killed or missing in hostilities, including civilians. (Croatia)	- General - Persons affected by armed conflict	
133.171 Release all political detainees, immediately end torture and other forms of ill-treatment and grant relevant impartial organizations access to all detention facilities (Estonia); Release all political detainees, end torture, grant impartial organizations access to all detention facilities and provide families of missing persons with information on their relatives (Finland)		
133.121 Put an immediate end to enforced disappearances and arbitrary and incommunicado detention and fully collaborate with the efforts of all actors involved in the process of finding and identifying disappeared persons. (Switzerland)		
133.149 Immediately release all those arbitrarily detained and create an independent mechanism to shed light on the fate of all missing persons (Luxembourg)		
133.151 End all practices of arbitrary detention, torture, abduction and enforced disappearance and establish an independent mechanism to clarify the fate and whereabouts of missing persons (Albania)		

Theme: G5 Refugees & Asylum Seekers		
133.273 Proceed to build an environment conducive to the safe, and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. (Japan)	G5 Refugees & asylum seekers G6 Internally displaced persons Affected persons: - Internally displaced persons - Refugees & asylum seekers	