European External Action Service (EEAS)

HRC 43 - Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic - EU Intervention

2020-03-09 · Geneva

Madame President,

The EU welcomes today's dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria and thanks the commissioners for their report.

The military offensive in Idlib by the Syrian regime and its backers has caused enormous human suffering and represents a serious threat to international peace and security. The Council urges the Syrian regime to return to the negotiating table and repeats that any sustainable solution to the conflict requires a genuine political transition in line with UNSCR 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communique negotiated by the Syrian parties within the UN-led Geneva process and remains committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Syrian state. In this context, the EU commends the tireless efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen to facilitate the implementation of all relevant UNSC resolutions.

We urge all parties to the conflict to immediately cease hostilities and to fully respect their respective obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. We underscore that the continued deliberate denial and obstruction of humanitarian access is a blatant violation of international humanitarian law and principles and unacceptable.

Accountability for violations and abuses of international law is of utmost importance and we reiterate our call that the situation in Syria must be referred to the International Criminal Court. In this respect, we also express our continued support to the work of the Commission of Inquiry.

The latest report highlights the continued blatant disregard by all actors of civilian life, dignity and infrastructure, with severe repercussions also in terms of new mass displacements. The EU is deeply alarmed by the devastating impact of the conflict on children. We express particular outrage at the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including the systematic targeting of medical facilities by pro-government forces in the northwest, as described in the report, and take special note of the Commission’s assessment that at least two of these acts were carried out with the participation of its allies. In that regard, it is of utmost importance that findings of the UNSG-mandated Board of Inquiry be made public.

In the context of a worsening humanitarian situation as pointed out by the Commission's report, we deeply regret the failure to renew the border crossing of Yarubiyah in the cross-border resolution at the UN security council. To avoid dramatic humanitarian consequences in North East Syria, we urge the Syrian regime to allow safe, sustained and unhindered access for humanitarian actors. We also urge the Security Council to renew the cross-border mandate in July in relation to remaining border crossings.

We also welcome the Commission's continued investigation into all incidents throughout Syria, including in the Northeast, and echo the call on the Turkish authorities to launch their own investigations and make the findings public.

We also condemn in the strongest terms the continued use of arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions in areas retaken by the regime. The EU stresses the need to urgently ensure basic services and to restore the rule of law in these areas in accordance with human rights obligations, including by ensuring access to effective remedy. The fates of those detained, disappeared and/or missing must be revealed and investigated in line with international standards.

The EU also voices strong concerns about reports of social and demographic engineering in areas throughout Syria.

We echo the CoI's recommendation to non-state actors to cease attacks on civilians, including members of religious and ethnic minorities. The reported cases of arbitrary detention, killings, abductions, forced recruitment of children, pillaging, torture and other abuses are unacceptable.

Finally, the EU welcomes efforts by the CoI to highlight the gendered dimensions of the conflict. We condemn in the strongest terms the instances of sexual and gender-based violence pointed out by the report and would like to ask the commissioners what immediate steps could be taken to prevent and eliminate human rights violations against women and further promote their leadership roles in the political and public life of the country.

Source: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/un-geneva/hrc-43-interactive-dialogue-commission-inquiry-syrian-arab-republic-eu-intervention_en