

UN Human Rights Council 47: UK statement for the introduction of the resolution on the Syrian Arab Republic

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The UK has the honour to present draft resolution L.6 on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey, the United States and, of course, the United Kingdom.

We do not present again a resolution on the human rights situation in Syria lightly. Indeed, it is with great sadness that we have to present a resolution at all. The crisis in Syria has now entered its second decade – ten years of violence, death, repression, violations, and abuses.

The Syrian regime has every ability to choose to end this conflict now by credibly engaging in the UN process under the auspices of the Special Envoy, but repeatedly ignores its moral obligations and fails to do so.

All the while, the human rights situation deteriorates. It is our duty to ensure that a spotlight remains on human rights in Syria. The Human Rights Council is the place to do this. Not to do so risks implying an improvement in the situation on the ground. This would be an abject failure of our responsibility to the Syrian people.

We have focused this short resolution on the issue of missing people, including those subject to enforced disappearance. This is an issue on which Syrian civil society organisations have worked tirelessly. It features heavily in the reporting of the Commission of Inquiry. It is simply inexcusable that, as we speak, tens of thousands of people remain forcibly disappeared by the Syrian regime. A regime that has the bureaucratic means to provide information on these disappeared individuals, the means to end the suffering of the families and loved ones of these people. But it chooses not to employ those means. This, Madam President, is a deliberate act of unspeakable cruelty.

This resolution highlights the scale of this issue, and the impact not only on the victims, but on their loved ones, who have had to endure so many years of not knowing the fate of those who have disappeared. It also highlights the vital work of Syrian victim, family and survivor organisations, including the pressing need for urgent access to this information, and encourages the international community to coordinate further efforts on this issue.

We held two informal negotiations on this draft. I'd like to thank all those delegations and civil society colleagues who engaged constructively in this process.

Madam President, given the gravity of the situation, we hope this resolution will be adopted by consensus; however, if a vote is called, I urge all members of this Council to vote in favour. The Syrian people deserve nothing less.

Thank you.

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