

Foreign Minister Maas on the announcement by the Netherlands of its bid to submit a case against Syria to the International Court of Justice

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18.09.2020 - Press release 

Foreign Minister Maas issued the following statement today (19 September) on the Dutch initiative to launch a case against Syria over violation of the UN.(United Nations) Convention against Torture:

I welcome the Dutch initiative to hold the Syrian regime to account before the International Court of Justice over the most serious human rights violations and acts of torture. It is an important step in the fight against impunity in Syria.

As a contracting Party to the UN.(United Nations) Convention against Torture, Syria has committed itself to preventing torture in its prisons. In the past ten years of the Syria conflict, 150,000 people have disappeared; in 90 percent of these cases, the Syrian regime is responsible. More than 14,400 Syrians have died as a result of torture, almost 99 percent at the hand of the Syrian regime.

It is therefore good that Syria will now have to answer for these actions on the international stage. True and lasting peace in Syria is dependent on the perpetrators of the most serious crimes and human rights infringements being held accountable. The victims deserve justice.

Background Information:

The Netherlands intends to hold Syria to account before the International Court of Justice over infringement of the UN.(United Nations) Convention against Torture. With today's demand for Syria to enter into negotiations on the application of the Convention against Torture, the Netherlands has taken the first necessary step in this direction.

The ~~UN~~(United Nations) Convention against Torture specifically invokes the responsibility of the ICJ in Article 30 (1). Disputes concerning the application of the Convention can be submitted to the ICJ if it has not been possible for them to be settled through negotiation, a request for arbitration was submitted and no agreement on the organisation of the arbitration has been reached within six months.

Germany is working to bring the perpetrators of the most serious crimes and human rights violations in Syria to account and provides particular support to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) set up by the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission of Inquiry of the Human Rights Council to this end. During its Presidency of the Security Council in July, Germany also spotlighted the fate of prisoners and missing persons in its addressing of the political situation in Syria. Furthermore, the first criminal proceedings worldwide against state torture in Syria are currently taking place before the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz.

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