



**HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, 54TH REGULAR SESSION**

**ID WITH COMMISSION OF INQUIRY ON SYRIA**

**22 SEPT. 10:00-13:00, ROOM**

**STATEMENT BY LEGAL ACTION WORLDWIDE/LAW**

**Mr. Chairperson, distinguished representatives, colleagues**

We thank the Commission for their report from July 2023, stating the widespread and systematic patterns of torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment continued to the present day in detention facilities across Syria. It is clear from the Commission's report that documenting and reporting violations in Syria is insufficient. To end the decades of arbitrary detention, torture and killing in government detention, Member States must combat the impunity that perpetrators have enjoyed until this point.

LAW commends the efforts of Canada and the Netherlands to hold the Syrian government responsible for torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and we wish them success before the International Court of Justice. We encourage other Member States to follow the lead they have established and join the proceedings at the International Court of Justice. But that is not all. There are individuals who are responsible for every act of torture. They must be held criminally liable. Member States can promote individual responsibility by referring the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court under Article 14 of the Rome Statute.

This is what victims and survivors demand, and it is victims and survivors who should be at the centre of all documentation and anti-impunity efforts. We emphasize the importance of ensuring that Syrian victims have access to the justice and accountability process. Victims' participation not only provides the process with legitimacy, but it can also be an important milestone in survivors' personal journey, as they struggle to attain a sense of closure and healing.

LAW has been working on the Syria crisis since 2019 and has represented over 100 victims of the gravest human rights violations, including victims of arbitrary detention and torture. Consistently and determinedly, they have voiced their demands for justice and accountability. To quote



one victim represented by LAW, his wish is “To close all prisons, torture and detention centers in Syria ... [and he hopes] that justice will be achieved by holding those involved in the violations in the regime’s detention centers to account”. These are the voices that must be heard as the work of justice moves forward.

Thank you.

