SYRIA: THE UPR PROCESS AND CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE IN PROMOTING JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

21 September 2016 15:30 – 17:00
Room XXV, Palais des Nations
United Nations Office in Geneva

During the first week of November 2016, the Human Rights Council will meet for the Universal Periodic Review of Syria. This will be a further opportunity for the international community to discuss and, most importantly, provide recommendations on how to break the cycle of violence and impunity in Syria.

Despite the efforts put forward by Mr de Mistura and other international initiatives, the situation in Syria continues to deteriorate and there are few prospects of an end in sight to the conflict. According to UN sources, between 250,000 and 470,000 people have been killed since 2011; over half the population forced from their homes out of fear and want; some 4.6 million people eke out a minimal existence in places that few can leave and aid cannot reach; and a further 4.8 million people, including an estimated 2 million children, have fled the country. The conflict has fractured Syria along sectarian lines, divided the country into an unstable patchwork of competing military zones and threatens the peace and stability of the entire region.

Civil society in Syria has evolved dramatically over the course of the conflict. When the uprising started, Syrians began to organise themselves, united in a common desire to promote human rights and prepare for the eventual political transition. Syrian civil society has increasingly developed the breath of their knowledge and understanding of the needs of the country and on international standards and mechanisms for the protection of human rights. All this accumulated experience can, and has to, contribute to the foundations for a halt to the conflict and a political solution.

By focusing on the situation of children, young people and women, the efforts to document the widespread violations committed in the last five years and on how achieve justice and accountability for the victims of these crimes, this side event aims at raising awareness about the role the UPR process can play in reinforcing the importance of including the Syrian civil society community in the pursuit of a political solution to the war in Syria. The meeting serves as a reminder that the urgent priority of reaching a lasting political solution requires an inclusive and participatory process capable to ensure that the root causes of the conflict be addressed. It aims to articulate the request from Syrian civil society for freedom, democracy and accountability for violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, irrespective of their ethnic, religious and political affiliation, which must be met to foster national reconciliation and a political solution.
Welcome and refreshments

Co-Chairs: Hussein Sabbagh, Secretary General Euro-Syrian Democratic Forum
Niccolò Figà-Talamanca, Secretary General No Peace Without Justice

Welcome remarks: H.E. Amb. Peter Matt, Liechtenstein Permanent Representative to the UN
H.E. Amb. Julian Braithwaite, UK Permanent Representative to the UN
H.E. Amb. Maurizio Enrico Serra, Italy Permanent Representative to the UN

1. A Lost Generation, the impact of the conflict in Syria on children and young people.
   Riyad Al-Najem - Hurras, Syrian child protection network

2. Documenting widespread and systematic attacks against civilians.
   Husam Alkatlaby - The Violations Documentation Center in Syria

3. Sexual and Gender Based Violence as a weapon of terror.
   Ola Aljounde, Women Now for Development

4. Protection, redress and participation in accountability and peace processes.
   Diab Serrth – The Day After

Conclusions: H.E. Amb. Keith Harper, US Permanent Representative to the UN

Interventions from the floor

Closing: Co-Chair's Conclusions

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