Civil society and international mechanisms synergies to seek justice and accountability for Syria
Gaziantep, 13 - 14 November 2017
Background
Accountability for violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law is critical to ensure justice for the victims and to contribute to building sustainable peace and preventing recurrence. Since March 2011, the continued, systematic, widespread and gross violations and abuses of human rights, the ongoing violations of international humanitarian law and the lack of any meaningful path to address the crimes against humanity committed daily in Syria has led to a situation in which the sense of impunity has grown and become more and more imbued within the social fabric of the country. This has deepened a general situation of insecurity and the “rule of the might” that disrupt all facets of life for the civilian population and dampen prospects to reach a political solution to the ongoing conflict in Syria.

There have been various initiatives by the international community to address the human rights violations and crimes under international law committed by all warring parties involved in the conflict and to respond to calls for justice and accountability by Syrian citizens. The United Nations has established three main international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria, namely: the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI), the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 (IIIM). These three mechanisms, with their different mandates and reporting procedures, represent critical elements for the establishment of possible transitional justice processes in Syria. They also relate and interact with civil society organisations in different ways, according to their goals and mandates.

At the same time, a large amount of information about violations of international human rights and humanitarian law have been collected both by Syrian and international non-governmental organisations. Syrian civil society plays a key role in fostering accountability and justice for all Syrian citizens, also through their valuable work in documenting and collecting data on past and ongoing violations of human rights and IHL. They are a key player for social reconstruction and to accompany and monitor any eventual political transition.

Over the course of the years, like in other countries where international justice institutions and other accountability mechanisms were established to address periods of massive political violence or conflict, hopes, expectations, concerns, misunderstandings and misconceptions have developed among Syrian civil society on the effectiveness and work of the international efforts to bring justice and accountability to Syria. Various fora for dialogue have been set up to address these issues and facilitate synergies and coordination of international efforts with the work conducted on the field by local organisations. Yet the information needs of Syrian civil society, particularly smaller grassroots organisations, remains large and there remains a need for broader consultation with Syrian civil society to address their hopes, expectations, concerns, misunderstandings and misconceptions.

To answer these needs, NPWJ organised the “Civil society and international mechanisms synergies to seek justice and accountability for Syria” workshop, which took place in Gaziantep, Turkey, on 13-14 November 2017. Participants consisted of representatives of Syrian CSOs and NGOs who work on documentation, accountability and transitional justice. The two-day workshop offered an opportunity for Syrian civil society organisations and the international community to come together and reflect more broadly on how common efforts and shared objectives can contribute to achieving justice and accountability for the Syrian citizen. The workshop focused on the three main international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria and on the main components of how the current efforts to document, investigate and prosecute the continued, systematic, widespread and gross violations and abuses of human rights and IHL in Syria can
contribute to foster nonviolent and inclusive political dynamics to find a political solution to the conflict in Syria. It was also designed to examine how the everyday work of those working on documentation efforts can foster synergies and coordination between local and international initiatives.

**Structure of the workshop**

The workshop took place over two days, during which the experts gave interactive presentations on the mandate, working methods and procedures of the CoI, the JIM and the IIIM. Each session was very participative, with participants sharing their experiences and asking questions about how to improve their documentation work and how to ensure that the documentation and information about violations of international human rights and IHL collected by Syrian non-governmental organisations can better assist international mechanisms in fulfilling their mandate. By bringing together representatives of Syrian civil society organisations and representatives of the international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria, the workshop was an opportunity for Syrian human rights activists and civil society leaders to engage actively with and contribute to the work of international accountability options and promote a fair, effective and independent transitional justice system. It also increased and strengthened civil society capacity and skills to allow human rights activists and democracy advocates to contribute more effectively to the design and implementation of transitional justice measures, whether as partners or monitors or both.

In the last day of the workshop, the organisers held a public event, which was attended by the broader civil society community in Gaziantep, as well as representatives of the diplomatic corps and UN officials. The purpose of the event was to foster mutual recognition and coordination between local civil society and international accountability mechanisms and bolster a strong and shared political vision of human rights campaigners, as a necessary foundation for citizens to demand accountability and justice.

**The Speakers**

The main workshop speakers were Ms Catherine Marchi-Uhel, Head of the IIIM, and Ms Valentina Falco, Chief of Investigations of the CoI.

Ms Marchi-Uhel is the first Head of the Mechanism that was established by the General Assembly on 21 December 2016. She has more than 27 years of experience in the judiciary and in public service — including with the United Nations — in the fields of criminal law, transitional justice and human rights. Since 2015, she has been the Ombudsperson for the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. Previously a judge in France, Ms Marchi-Uhel served in the same capacity with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. She was Senior Legal Officer and Head of Chambers at the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and also held legal positions in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with United Nations peacekeeping missions.

Ms Falco is currently the Chief of Investigations of the CoI. Prior to that she was in charge of special investigations with the Joint Human Rights Office of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in Goma and she served with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Peace Mission Support and Rapid Response Section in Geneva (including as a member of OHCHR’s rapid response mission to Kenya in the framework of the 2013 general elections), and with MONUSCO in Kinshasa, as the
coordinator of the follow-up project to the OHCHR/Department for Peacekeeping Operations/UN Development Programme Mapping exercise in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The experts were joined by the NPWJ Syria team: Gianluca Eramo, Mustafa Ghashim and Alaa Abed in facilitating the training.

Participants
The training course participants consisted of representatives from Syrian CSOs and NGOs who work in the field of human rights violations, documentation and transitional justice, with a focus on smaller organisations that could particularly benefit from this training course. The organisations represented included: Badael, a Syrian NGO which is committed to strengthening civil society groups and NGOs; Adalah, a Syrian CSO works on promoting the dissemination of human rights, democracy and values of citizenship. the Syrian Network for Human Rights, an independent human rights organization, which aims to document the ongoing human rights violations in Syria, and periodically issuing reports, studies and researches; LDHR, a network of Syrian lawyers and physicians They dedicate their efforts in serving Human Rights and distributing its, fighting against violence, documentation and empowering women in the Syrian community; Women Now for Development, an organisation dedicated to women’s rights and empowerment; Civilians for Peace and Justice, an organisation dedicated to constitution reform, transitional justice and the rule of law; the Free Syrian Lawyers Aggregation, which works towards the strengthening of the rule of law and justice in a way that protects freedoms, public and private rights, achieves equality and preserves human dignity; the Syrian Civil Defence (also known as White Helmets), a neutral and impartial organisation, consisted of nearly 3000 volunteers who work on saving lives and strengthening the Syrian community; the Syrian Center for studies and Human Rights, a human rights organization who works on transitional justice and capacity building for the Syrian CSOs; Justice for life, a Syrian organization consisted of human rights activists and defenders who work on documenting human rights violations and advocacy campaigns; Start Point, a structure assisting Syrian women who have suffered rape, detention or kidnapping to reintegrate into their communities and Hurras, a children rights protection organisation.

Day One – 13 November 2017
The workshop opened with welcoming of the participants and an explanation of its purpose, outlining its structures and objectives. In turn, participants introduced themselves, their work and described how they expect to benefit from the workshop and their expectations for the international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria.

Following the introductions, the workshop began with an explanation of the purpose and objective of engagement between Syrian civil society, international non-governmental organisations and the international mechanisms for investigation of human rights violations and crimes under international law committed in Syria, consisting of two parts. The first part included an introduction of the CoI, its structure and modus operandi regrading investigation and reporting on misconduct by all parties to the conflict in Syria. The central point here is the modus operandi regarding the investigation of misconduct. The continuing lack of access to the territory requires exploration of alternative measures and means that the CoI relies primarily on Syrian non-governmental organisations, or organisations working in the territory, to gain access to witnesses and survivors. For this purpose, and to operate under the principle of do-no-harm for survivors, the CoI often employs technological communication channels through various messenger services.
The continuing lack of access to Syria provides methodological challenges for the collection of information and evidence. Hence, the current standard for the determination of the reliability of sources and their collection is the ‘reasonable grounds to believe’. It also requires the CoI to resort to alternative means to access information, including interviewing witnesses and survivors in neighbouring countries, establishing encrypted communication to engage those remaining in Syria, as well as reviewing other documentation, such as flight logs and satellite images, to verify violations taking place. As the CoI is not a criminal investigation, its purpose is to document violations and store them on the database and report publicly on their findings.

The second part, and simultaneously central purpose of the workshop, was to provide a platform for representatives of the Syrian civil society to address questions, expectations and concerns to the representatives of the international mechanisms, in this case the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (CoI). The discussion uncovered central questions and concerns echoed among all participants.

**Key Challenges and Issues Highlighted by Representatives of the Syrian Civil Society**

There are three key issues and challenges regarding the collaboration and work of the international mechanism. A central point of concern raised by representatives was the efficiency of the operations of international mechanisms. The continuing lack of access to Syrian territory for international investigations teams hinders accountability. Multiple participants commented that it is essential for the international community to continue the pressure on the Syrian regime to allow the CoI (and other international mechanism) access to the territory. The representative of the CoI clarified that without the approval of the UN Security Council there will be no access to Syria as it would violate its sovereignty. In order to overcome these issues, the CoI focuses on interviewing Syrians living in neighbouring countries or through messaging systems inside the country. Yet, despite the limitation of the mandate, the reports issued by the CoI can assist in highlighting the violations that are taking place within Syria and continue to shed light on the ongoing misconduct.

A second concern that emerged in the discussion was the role of Syrian society actors in cooperation with the international mechanisms. This was particularly the case regarding the collection of information and documenting violations inside Syria. Various Syrian participants expressed the need for training in order to be able to match the international standards on evidence collection, so the information can be admissible in regional and international courts. It was questioned in what way the information collected could be of use for the international mechanisms. The participants also voiced frustration about the lack of criminal prosecutions despite mounting evidence of misconduct of the Syrian armed forces. The representative of the CoI responded that the cooperation between local NGOs and the international mechanisms has become essential in documenting violations taking place in Syria. One aspect in this development is that government forces are increasingly regaining territory from the opposition and Daesh – leaving Syrian citizens in fear of communicating with the international mechanisms about violations taking place. The representative also stated that the CoI is working on alternative means of communication that do not put those remaining in Syria into harms-way. However, the representative restated that the CoI does not have the capacity to provide training for civil society actors but can only offer to discuss evidence collection and methodologies upon request. Another point of concern in relation to the cooperation between local and international mechanism were issues in relation to witnesses and survivors. Civil society actors raised the concern of putting witnesses and survivors through more psychological distress by requiring additional interviewing or testimony to satisfy international standards. This is particularly the case for violations that directly and indirectly target children. The representative of the CoI responded that it is inevitable for the international mechanisms to
conduct their own interviews with witnesses and survivors to ensure first-hand the reliability of the sources and their impartiality, and not to take any information at face value.

A third point of concern brought forward was the overall lengthy process of establishing criminal accountability and the pressing situation in Syria. Many of the participants raised frustration with the international mechanisms as criminal prosecutions remain delayed despite overwhelming evidence of misconduct, for instance the use of chemical weapons in the country. Much of the evidence was obtained in collaboration with Syrian civil society actors operating on the ground, as for instance the use of sarin gas. Participants voiced concern that certain violations, such as forced disappearance and torture of detainees held by the Syrian government, was time-sensitive and required immediate action that could not wait until the international community found a political unity to establish a criminal case. The representative stated that the commission’s mandate does not include preparing criminal cases and instead is solely to document the current situation and provide recommendations. As Syria is a sovereign State, an intervention into its territory of any sort requires the approval of the United Nations Security Council – which remains blocked by a Russian veto. The representative acknowledged the ‘conflict fatigue’ among Syrian civil society actors, occurring as result of a lack of intervention by the international community to halt the violence. Yet, the representative appeared positive that continuing naming and shaming of the ongoing violations in official UN reports will assist in shining a light on the situation in Syria until criminal prosecution can proceed. Although the CoI’s mandate does not allow it to prepare criminal cases, the information it has can be of use in future criminal trials. It was also stated that criminal prosecution is not synonymous with a cessation of violence, as many previous examples (such as the International Criminal Court or the ad hoc tribunals) have shown. Participants responded by stressing that a central aspect of justice for Syrians is to promote criminal accountability for crimes committed in order to restore the faith in the international mechanisms.

The final concern raised by the participants was in relation to the impartiality of the mechanisms. It was suggested that funding could have an impact on the impartiality of the international mechanisms and an attempt by States providing funding to influence the reporting. The second point of concern is access to the CoI database, whereby information can be available upon request of UN member States. The representative of the CoI responded that States cannot influence the findings or the reports of the Commission, as these are only visible to the public, including States, after they are published. Furthermore, the CoI continues to ensure that information accessed by courts (as for instance courts in Germany and Sweden), as well as States are not putting individuals at risk by releasing sensitive information.

Central Questions by Civil Society Actors to main international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria

The final part of the discussion sought to identify key questions to be raised in discussion with the representatives of the main international mechanisms tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria, during the second day of the workshop. These key questions included:

• Question of funding and independence;
• Overarching strategy of cooperation between civil society actors and international mechanisms concerning data collection and witness protection;
• The use of data by national and international tribunals/courts with jurisdiction;
• Outreach policy regarding files and policy work or strategy of new mechanism to ensure the flow of information to Syrian citizens and civil society actors.
Day Two - 14 November 2017

After having introduced the speaker Catherine Marchi-Uhel, head of IIM, day two began with a recap of the aims and purposes of the workshop.

Presentation of the IIM work and tasks
The first session started with a description of the IIM’s tasks and the speaker reiterated the importance of strengthening cooperation between the IIM and Syrian civil society organisations. Clarifications on the complementary roles of CoI and the IIM were provided to the participants. In particular, the IIM’s tasks envisage mapping events, identifying potential victims, building trust with NGOs and assisting national jurisdictions by providing them with evidence that can be brought to court according to international standards, thereby promoting accountability and redress. Nevertheless, establishing the crimes is a large amount of work and it may take years. In this regard, collecting and preserving evidence is what the IIM will do in order to get closer to the prospect of trials. The IIM has in mind courts as recipients of its files. Supporting national prosecutions means identifying the best evidence for them. That said, files will not necessarily go to every court, but only to domestic jurisdictions that respect international human rights standards. One of the IIM’s priorities is the storage and preservation of data in order for the national courts to be able to rely on materials provided by the IIM, such as video and digital evidence. In this regard, the Head of the IIM highlighted the importance of data protection. Currently, works are ongoing in setting an advanced IT infrastructure not only on cybersecurity but also with respect to software and processes to facilitate the assessment and analysis of data.

Key Challenges and Issues Highlighted by Representatives of the Syrian Civil Society

1. Administration, Functioning and Funding
During the Q&A session, Catherine Marchi-Uhel was asked several questions on the functioning, administrative and funding issues of the Mechanism. In particular, one of the participants asked if the staff of the Mechanism have been already appointed, if they managed to have the necessary amount of money in order for the mechanism to start working and what is the future of the Mechanism after its one-year mandate. On the administrative questions, Ms Marchi-Uhel responded that the UN Secretary-General has already appointed the deputy head of the Mechanism. At the moment, the staff consists of 9 people, including administrative officers, lawyers and investigators and the first analyst will start working on 1 December. Currently, the recruiting process for cybersecurity officers is also ongoing. Attention to gender sensitivity has been put in recruitment processes to guarantee a balance of women and men among the staff personnel. Furthermore, the Mechanism chose to have one analyst, one lawyer and one investigator specialised in SGBV crimes. At the end of the year, 20 persons are expected to have been recruited. In total, there will be a maximum of 60 staff members.

On the funding issue, Ms Marchi-Uhel stated that in the first year, 17 million dollars are needed (especially for IT equipment and software) and the priority is to make sure the IIM has all the tools to preserve the evidence. Funds are not available in cash yet and most funds are coming from written pledges. They are trying to avoid relying on key funders in order to ensure the credibility and impartiality of the mechanism. Therefore, enlarging the basis of funding and increasing the number of donor States is one of the Mechanism’s priorities. Currently, 32 States are funding the Mechanism and the biggest contributors are Germany and Sweden, namely the two States that have already started national prosecution on crimes committed in Syria. The hope is that donor States
will not only secure the monetary support for the first year, but enough funds for the future as well.

Some of the participants cast doubts as to the impartiality and independence of the Mechanism, taking into account its dependency on State contributions, asking if the Mechanism would exclude accepting funding from States that are involved in the conflict in Syria. Ms Marchi-Uhel confirmed that it is a false assumption that States can lead the work of the Mechanism using the provision or withholding of monetary contributions. Therefore, she assured participants that although a State may decide to cease funding the Mechanism, the budget issue has not yet prevented its work. Therefore, also States involved in the conflict can offer their monetary support without having the presumption of being able to influence the Mechanism’s duties or work.

2. Cooperation with domestic jurisdictions
With respect to the collaboration with domestic prosecutors, one of the questions addressed the modality and procedures of sharing the information gathered by the Mechanism with domestic jurisdictions that are currently undertaking prosecutions related to serious crimes in Syria. While domestic laws restrict the possibility of sharing information with local NGOs, as an international entity, the Mechanism is able to negotiate MoUs with States and local actors and general agreements with international and domestic NGOs to share the collected information. However, collaboration with States does not mean accepting every analysis made by others. The Mechanism’s work is to collate information, put together the pieces and make its own assessments. The Mechanism will not solely be reactive but also proactive in collecting evidence that could be supportive for national investigations. When asked if IIIM will also cooperate with States who allow the death penalty, Ms Marchi-Uhel stated that she would not in principle exclude providing materials to States who have the death penalty in their laws, but only after being assured that the penalty would not be applied on the particular case in question. For example, she confirmed that without being certain that Iraq will not apply death penalty, the Mechanism will not provide them with evidence. This is a limitation but also a guarantee of respecting human rights and justice. Going back to the funding issue, she reiterated that even if a State is a big contributor, but some doubts arise as far as the respect of human rights in respect of any particular case, the Mechanism will not provide the State with evidence if that could put lives at risk.

3. Inclusion of Syrian lawyers in the IIIM
One of the participants asked if the IIIM is considering the possibility of including Syrian lawyers in the staff as they have experience and expertise on the Syrian situation. The Head of the Mechanism stressed that this is a very sensitive issue and there is a need to ensure that impartiality is maintained. In doing so, they should avoid giving the impression to support one side against the other. Therefore, even if she does not exclude in principle the possibility of having Syrian lawyers in the staff, at these initial steps, including them could affect the perception of the impartiality of the Mechanism. Bearing in mind the example of the ICTY, which included national lawyers at a later stage, she opened the possibility of a future integration of Syrian national experts in the Mechanism.

4. Different mandates of OPCW- UN JIM and IIIM
As the distinction between the different mandates and tasks of each international mechanism tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria is of critical importance, the Head of the IIIM took the opportunity to clarify that although OPCW focuses on evidence collection in relation to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, it is not within their mandate to identify criminal responsibilities. Whereas the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission (OPCW FFM) is not mandated to reach conclusions about attributing responsibility for chemical weapons use, OPCW-United
Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism focuses on the identification of individuals, entities, groups, or governments who were perpetrators, organisers, sponsors or otherwise involved in the use of chemicals as weapons in Syria where the OPCW FFM has determined that a specific incident in Syria involved or likely involved the use of chemicals as weapons. As stated in the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of UNGA Resolution 71/248, the Mechanism’s task is to prepare files in order to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings, in accordance with international law standards, in national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have or may in the future have jurisdiction over these crimes, in accordance with international law.

The Mechanism will seek to establish the connection between crime-based evidence and the persons responsible, directly or indirectly, for such alleged crimes, focusing in particular on linkage evidence. It focuses on evidence pertaining to mens rea and to specific modes of criminal liability, including under the principle of command or superior responsibility established under international criminal law.

The Mechanism will take into consideration the work of OPCW and the JIM and take it step further, considering the chain of custody. Neither the OPCW nor the JIM applies criminal law standards in their findings, but on the basis of what they have established, the IIIM has to investigate where there are gaps in order to be able to attribute responsibility to individuals and to build an indictment.

5. Victims protection and informed consent
One of the IIIM’s guiding principles is the respect of informed consent, namely only the information the victims clearly accept to share can be brought to trial. One of the limitations in the Mechanism’s work is the absence of protective measures, although the establishment of the Victim Protection Unit is envisaged in paragraph 39 of the Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of UNGA Resolution 71/248. In this regard, to guarantee the protection of victims, the IIIM should work with courts who have these measures in their system. “Protective measures” does not only mean measures applied during trials, but also relocation, resettlement for protection, ensuring higher standards of security and protection. These measures require a higher budget and in order to secure them, the Mechanism should rely on State cooperation as only States are able to provide them.

Particular care will be paid to children, in line with the principle of the best interests of the child. The Mechanism will make sure that they are not unnecessarily interviewed in order to avoid re-traumatisation. It has been stressed that sometimes the temptation is to take as many statements as possible, but the reality is that the more you take multiple statements the more you have inconsistencies.

6. Cooperation with NGOs
Building trust with NGOs is a priority for the Mechanism. They are the ones who are close to the victims and can ensure access to them. Support of NGOs should start with collecting information and testimonies according to international standards.

7. IIIM presence in Syria
The possibility of a IIIM team presence in Syria has been discussed and at the moment, the Head of IIIM does not see any possibility for the Mechanism to operate in Syria, given the fact that the Syrian Government does not allow them to enter into the country and does not recognise the legitimacy of UNGA Resolution 71/248. Therefore, unless circumstances will change in the future, the Mechanism will work only in neighbouring countries and elsewhere outside Syria.
Mechanism will not give up on trying to engage the Syrian Government again, as it is critical not to close the door to anyone, in order to guarantee impartiality.

The public event “The role of International mechanisms in seeking justice and accountability for Syria” - 14 November 2017

In the afternoon of the second day, a public event took place at the Divan Hotel in Gaziantep, where the panellists were Gianluca Eramo, NPWJ; Catherine Marchi-Uhel, IIM; Valentina Falco, CoI; and Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ. The public event was attended by more than 40 participants, among which representatives of the broader civil society community in Gaziantep, representatives of the diplomatic corps, including representatives of the Danish and Turkish Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission, as well as UN officials, to foster mutual recognition and coordination between local civil society and international accountability mechanisms and bolster a strong and shared political vision of human rights campaigners, as a necessary foundation for citizens to demand accountability and justice.

NPWJ representatives presented the work done so far by NPWJ in Gaziantep and explained the aim of the two-day workshop, namely to bring together the representatives of Syrian civil society and UN mechanisms to seek justice and accountability in Syria. After having introduced the main tasks and the differences between CoI and IIM, the representatives of both mechanisms reiterated the need to engage actively with the stakeholders, especially Syrian NGOs and explore further paths of cooperation. The presentation was followed by a Q&A session where the participants expressed some concern on the efficacy of the international mechanisms to have a real impact in establishing justice in Syria.

One of the main issues at stake was what strategies should be applied to circumvent the Russian veto in the UN Security Council. The representatives of the CoI and the IIM reiterated their commitment to collecting information and evidence and other tasks envisaged in the UN Resolutions establishing the two mechanisms. Recalling the cases of previous international *ad hoc* tribunals, Ms Marchi-Uhel responded to the disappointment of inaction of the UN reiterating that to build a case a prosecutor will not base their indictment on reports and data collected by others, but it will necessary to collect real proof and clear evidence according to the highest legal standards. The road to justice is a very long one, considering the large timeframe occurring between the indictment and the conviction. The mechanisms do not have the ability to overcome political will, but they will be able to bring the States and stakeholders involved into the discussion.

Conclusions

The experts were very positively received in the workshop and participants were engaged in the topics of discussion. The group worked well together as there was a strong desire to learn and for self-improvement. Upon completion of the workshop, the participants filled out an anonymous evaluation form to share their view on the quality of the workshop. Some of the participants commented that they would have liked a longer workshop to better absorb the amount of information provided.

The participants endorsed how much is useful to learn and apply the suggestions by the international mechanisms in their documentation work, in addition to the importance and the benefit of having regular meetings with international bodies tasked to seek accountability and justice for Syria. The participants also expressed their desire to continue receiving updates on the work of the international mechanisms, especially the IIM, in order to create synergies and coordination and improve the quality of their work to better meet international standard of documentation.
The workshop offered an opportunity to Syrian civil society organisations and the international community to come together and reflect more broadly on how common efforts and shared objectives can contribute to achieve justice and accountability for Syrians. The public event, organised at the conclusion of the workshop, achieved its goal to foster mutual recognition and coordination between local civil society and international accountability mechanisms and to bolster a strong and shared political vision of human rights campaigners, as a necessary foundation for citizens to demand accountability and justice.
Annex 1 – Biographies of the experts

Ms. Catherine Marchi-Uhel, Head of the International Impartial and Independent Mechanism to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011. Ms. Marchi-Uhel is the first Head of the Mechanism established by the General Assembly on 21 December 2016. She brings to the position more than 27 years of experience in the judiciary and in public service — including with the United Nations — in the fields of criminal law, transitional justice and human rights. Since 2015, she has been the Ombudsperson for the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh), Al-Qaeda and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities. Previously a judge in France, Ms. Marchi-Uhel served in the same capacity with the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. She was Senior Legal Officer and Head of Chambers at the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and also held legal positions in France’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with United Nations peacekeeping missions. Ms. Marchi-Uhel holds a master’s degree in law from the University of Caen.

Ms. Valentina Falco, Chief of Investigations of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. Ms. Falco is currently the Chief of Investigations of the CoI. Prior to that she was in charge of special investigations with the Joint Human Rights Office of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission of the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in Goma and she served with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Peace Mission Support and Rapid Response Section in Geneva (including as a member of OHCHR rapid response mission to Kenya in the framework of the 2013 general elections), and with MONUSCO in Kinshasa, as the coordinator of the follow-up project to the OHCHR/Department for Peacekeeping Operations/UN Development Programme Mapping exercise in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Ms. Falco has extensive experience as a researcher and consultant on human rights and international humanitarian law, including with the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (INTERIGHTS), the European Commission, and the International Committee of the Red Cross/British Red Cross Customary International Humanitarian Law Project at the University of Cambridge. She holds a Master’s Degree in Law from the University of Milan, and a Master of Research in Law from the European University Institute in Florence.
# Annex 2 - Program of the workshop

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<td>9.30 –10.15</td>
<td><strong>Welcome remarks</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduction of participants and workshop orientation. Identification of expectations</td>
<td>Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ</td>
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<td>10.15- 11:15</td>
<td><strong>International efforts for accountability for Syria</strong>&lt;br&gt;A discussion on the current situation and ongoing efforts, including the CoI, the IIIM and the JIM, their mandates and means of establishment</td>
<td>Gianluca Eramo, NPWJ Valentina Falco, CoI</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Coffee break</strong></td>
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<td>11.30 – 12.30</td>
<td><strong>Civil society engagement with international mechanisms and initial identification of grey areas, including briefing from Lausanne meetings</strong></td>
<td>Mothana Naser, Syrian Center for studies and Human Rights Jalal Alhamad, Justice for life</td>
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<td><strong>Light lunch</strong></td>
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<td>13.30 -15.00</td>
<td><strong>Delving deeper: Key areas of concern, hope, expectation and confusion on the international mechanisms</strong></td>
<td>Gianluca Eramo, NPWJ</td>
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<td><strong>Coffee break</strong></td>
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<td>15.30 – 17.00</td>
<td><strong>Development of key messages and questions for the following day</strong>&lt;br&gt;Identifying key messages and questions by theme and recipient and who will raise those points the following day</td>
<td>Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ Gianluca Eramo, NPWJ</td>
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## Day Two – Tuesday 14 November 2017

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<td><strong>Welcome remarks</strong>&lt;br&gt;Introduction of participants</td>
<td>Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ</td>
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<td>10.00 – 10.45</td>
<td><strong>Initial remarks from the IIIM and CoI</strong></td>
<td>Hussein Sabbagh, ESDF Catherine Marchi-Uhel, IIIM Valentina Falco, CoI</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Coffee break</strong></td>
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<td>11.00-12.30</td>
<td><strong>Discussion of key issues</strong></td>
<td>Hussein Sabbagh, ESDF</td>
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<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<td>13.30 – 14.00</td>
<td><strong>Concluding remarks</strong></td>
<td>Hussein Sabbagh, ESDF Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ</td>
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<td><strong>Coffee Break</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>15.00 – 17.00</td>
<td><strong>Public event: The role of International mechanisms in seeking justice and accountability for Syria</strong></td>
<td>Gianluca Eramo, NPWJ Catherine Marchi-Uhel, IIIM Valentina Falco, CoI Mustafa Ghashim, NPWJ</td>
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