Workshop on Promoting Accountability through UN Mechanisms with a focus on women and children


Concept paper

The conflict in Syria continues to claim staggering numbers of lives, with attacks against civilians having further intensified in recent weeks. An immediate result of the conflict is also the ongoing destruction of people’s livelihoods and property. With each passing day, the goal of regaining ordinary life is increasingly distant and exponentially harder to reach. Despite the creation of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) in the autumn of 2015 and the ongoing efforts of the UN Special Envoy for Syria, the range of violations of international humanitarian law, war crimes and crimes against humanity, is widening and the number of parties involved in the conflict allegedly involved in this violation of international norms continues to grow.

Against this backdrop, it is crucial to bolster the resilience of Syrian civil society and democratic activists and to support their ongoing work for justice and redress. These organisations have done incredible work in documenting and advocating against widespread breaches of international law committed for the last five years in Syria, including torture, sexual and gender-based violence and illegal war tactics such as siege, starvation, barrel bombs and indiscriminate shelling of civilian neighborhoods. They have firsthand experience of these violations and their consequences, including through their tremendous work in bringing relief for the victims, in particular women and children.

The “Workshop on Promoting Accountability through UN Mechanisms with a focus on women and children” aims at bolstering the resolve of human rights activists in favour of a future Syrian system of accountability and transitional justice that responds to the scale of the violence and the needs of the population. It is designed to help equip human rights activists with the technical capacity to act at the international level, also through the UN system, to prioritise justice and accountability as an integral part of any strategic planning for the political solution of the Syrian conflict. The workshop will cover various aspects of the international system for the protection of human rights, focusing on the possibility for concrete advocacy that every facet of the UN system can give, both with UN agencies and mechanisms and its member States.

Ensuring there is a strong and shared political vision that incorporates, as an essential element, fair, effective and independent transitional justice increases the likelihood of mechanisms to achieve those goals being established and of their being an accepted and useful part of Syria’s ultimate transition to democracy and the rule of law.