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Written statement* submitted by Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights Association, a non- governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic

Human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic

Presented to: 40th session to HRC

Presented by: Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (In a Special Consultative status in the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations)

Date: Feb. 2019

About: Item 4, Interactive Dialogue with the independent commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Preface

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights (Egypt) submits this report to monitor and analyze the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. This is within the context of the association's interest in promoting respect for human rights in the Arab region. The current scene shifts don't provide a horizon for peaceful and sustainable solutions to the settlement of the existing conflict and the restoration of cohesion. On the contrary, it is frighteningly limiting aspirations. UN-sponsored settlement efforts in Syria Arab Republic have shifted from negotiations between political parties to a mere attempt to form a constitutional committee to draft a constitution. However, guns and aircraft have not diminished, especially with the external interference and the proliferation of armed groups that increase tension and ignite the crisis.

The report uses a methodology based on the international obligations of the Syrian government by ratifying a number of international conventions for the protection of human rights. In addition to collecting, compiling and analyzing available information on the human rights situation in Syria, as well as communicating with a number of local activists in order to prepare report.

Combating terrorist organizations and Starting peace negotiations

Recent months have witnessed a dramatic change in the situation in Syria, as well as a major shift in events on the ground. The Syrian government Succeeded in regaining control of large parts of Syrian territory that were under the control of the armed opposition groups and ISIS.¹ Since September 2017, almost all of the ISIS strongholds have been restored in eastern Syria, in particular Al-Raqqa and Deir Al-Zour. This military progress came as a result of Russian-Syrian efforts and their allies, and the efforts of the international coalition against ISIS in cooperation with the Syrian Democratic Front and Kurdish militias.

The conflicting parties –except terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al-Nusra Front, as well as the Kurdish militias due to Turkish pressure- were able to meet in Astana, the Kazakh capital. This was after Russian-Turkish arrangements for a political solution to a complete cessation of the conflict, as they agreed to cessation of hostilities in three regions². Few months later, The United States of America and the Russian Federation agreed to include a forth region. The Astana agreement has been renewed in several phases until-now. Although the committed violations by all parties, the agreement is still existing generally.

Either the former UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, or the current, Mr. Geir O. Pedersen, called the international community and the conflicting parties³ to support the Geneva process as the only guarantor of peaceful transition in Syria. They also calling other

¹ Check the following link: <https://syriancivilwarmap.com>

² Check the following link: <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/04/middleeast/syria-ceasefire-talks-deescalation-zones/index.html>

³ Check the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Htt8ie>

countries to take "practical actions" regarding the phase. At the same time, Russia and its allies are trying to find alternatives to international forums to translate their military victory into a political process. This is happened either through Russia's attempt to unite the opposition or through national reconciliation carried out by the Syrian government on the ground.

Targeting civilians and indiscriminate killing

Serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law continue to be committed in Syria by the conflicting parties, through targeting civilians and indiscriminate killings, including women and children. These violations were on a lesser scale during 2017 / 2018. Estimates of the number of victims of conflict in Syria vary According to motives of the various sources. According to some resources the number of victims estimated to 530 thousand dead by the middle of 2018, about 474 thousand Syrians and the rest of other nationalities. And the estimated number of Syrian civilians at 370 thousand dead at a minimum, including children by 32%, women by 22%⁴, all the conflicting parties have the responsibility for the targeting of civilians, including the international coalition that is fighting against ISIS.

Violations by terrorist groups

Terrorist groups in Syria continued to kill civilians. During the period between February and April 2018, armed groups including the Jaysh al-Islam, Ahrar al-Sham and Faylaq Al-Rahman killed hundreds of civilians in indiscriminate attacks on Damascus. According to the United Nations Fact-Finding mission, these groups regularly arbitrarily arrested and tortured civilians in Duma, including members of religious minorities. Indeed, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, an al Qaeda-linked group in Idlib, also carried out arbitrary arrests and kidnappings targeting local political opponents and journalists. Internal fighting has killed civilians, in addition to frequent assassinations and car bomb attacks. On July 25, 2018, ISIS led a Concurrent incursion into the province of Suwayda, killing 200 people and abducting at least 27 others. One of the hostages was illegally hanged in August 2018, by ISIS. Unfortunately, The fate of thousands of people abducted by the ISIS in east of Syria before losing its control over the region, is unknown.⁵

Refugees and internally displaced persons

According to a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the conflict in Syria since the beginning of the crisis in 2011 has contributed to a mass exodus. Almost half of the population fleeing their homes. the estimated number of who have fled inside is 6.1 million, while 505 million were displaced outside, most of whom live in neighboring countries. Between January and April 2018, more than 920,000 people were displaced inside Syria, according to the United Nations. Neighboring countries, including Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, have continued to prevent Syrians from seeking asylum on their borders, despite the risks of violence.

According to human rights organizations, 13.6 million Syrians are in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations has reported that around 600,000 of internally displaced Syrian refugees have returned to their hometown in 2017. Many of those faces real problems in resettling themselves in war-torn areas. However, around 300,000 people have returned to eastern Aleppo, which has witnessed some of the fiercest confrontations in the entire Syrian conflict.

⁴ التقرير السنوي لعام 2017/2018، المنظمة العربية لحقوق الانسان، ص15. يمكن الرجوع للتقرير من خلال اللينك التالي: <https://bit.ly/2BnODvp>

⁵ Check the following link: <https://www.hrw.org/ar/world-report/2019/country-chapters/325524>

Recommendations

Maat for Peace, Development and Human Rights calls international bodies and parties and all Conflicting parties in Syria to:

- Work to end the armed conflict in Syria and to unify all efforts for the success of the Geneva process in order to reach a settlement of the conflict. This settlement held on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254, which affirms Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity and provides a political solution.
 - Cooperate in the fields of combating terrorism and extremism to eliminate the terrorist groups that undermine the peace process inside Syria. Besides, The rehabilitation of the national army, and monitor its actions from the human rights perspective by the Security and Human Rights Councils.
 - Combine international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons in Syria, while providing support to countries receiving refugees to assist them in providing for the needs of Syrian refugees.
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