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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 November 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Marschik. (Austria)

Contents

Agenda item 71: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*)

- (c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives
(*continued*)

Agenda item 60: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian
questions (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 71: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*)

(c) Human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives (*continued*)
(A/C.3/78/L.43)

Draft resolution A/C.3/78/L.43: Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic

1. **Ms. Carty** (United States of America), introducing the draft resolution and an oral revision thereto, said that paragraph 16 should be removed in order to maintain broad and cross-regional support. The draft resolution kept Syria on the agenda of the General Assembly and addressed the egregious and ongoing violations and abuses committed in the country.

2. The main sponsors welcomed the creation of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. The text contained a call for accountability for atrocities and for Syrian civil society to support efforts to promote accountability.

3. The draft resolution highlighted the dire humanitarian situation faced by 15.3 million Syrians and called for unhindered humanitarian access, particularly through the cross-border mechanism. Impediments to humanitarian access remained concerning, and Member States should be kept updated on the situation, despite the shameful veto cast by the Russian Federation on renewal of Security Council authorization of cross-border humanitarian assistance. She urged all delegations to support the draft resolution, to stand against the brutal atrocities in Syria and to support human rights defenders and families of those who were unjustly detained or missing.

4. **The Chair** said that a recorded vote had been requested on the draft resolution, which had no programme budget implications.

5. **Mr. Mahmassani** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the following delegations had joined as sponsors: Andorra, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Switzerland.

6. **Mr. Al-Maawda** (Qatar), making a general statement before the voting, said that his country had always constructively contributed to international efforts to put an end to the crisis in the Syrian Arab

Republic, in solidarity with the people of Syria. Qatar had worked for a comprehensive settlement through a political process, leading to a political transition, in line with the Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field and Security Council resolution 2254 (2015), so as to achieve the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people and to safeguard the unity and independence of Syria.

7. Since the beginning of the crisis, Qatar had provided humanitarian aid to alleviate and meet the needs of the Syrian people. The draft resolution tackled relevant outstanding human rights questions, which therefore fell within the mandate of the Third Committee and should be addressed by it. He called on all Member States to do the right thing by supporting and voting for the draft resolution in the Committee and within the General Assembly.

8. **Mr. Sylvester** (United Kingdom), making a general statement before the voting, said that his country supported the draft resolution, which underlined concerns about grave and long-standing human rights violations and abuses in Syria. The United Kingdom condemned the escalation of hostilities that had seen the greatest surge in violence since 2020. His delegation was also concerned by the effects of the earthquakes in February 2023, particularly for those in vulnerable situation. Cross-border aid was vital for the 4.1 million people in need in north-west Syria, and the provision of a sustainable, long-term solution was imperative.

9. Regular reporting on the humanitarian situation and humanitarian responses in Syria was necessary to provide transparency and accountability. Aid must reach those in desperate need, in a timely manner, in line with appropriate oversight mechanisms. The Syrian people must not be forgotten or left to resolve the crisis alone. His delegation encouraged Member States to vote in favour of the draft resolution, which would draw international attention to the ongoing human rights violations and abuses in Syria. A genuine political solution, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) was needed to deliver the peace that Syrians needed and deserved.

Statements made in explanation of vote before the voting

10. **Mr. Poveda Brito** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends in Defence of the Charter of the United Nations, said that the presentation of country-specific resolutions without the consent of the States concerned went against the principles of impartiality, objectivity, transparency, non-selectivity, non-politicization and

non-confrontation. It also contravened the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and undermined the development of friendly relations among nations and the achievement of international human rights cooperation. The Group firmly rejected all double standards that undermined human rights and prevented progress in that area. It remained concerned at the proliferation of mechanisms purporting to conduct impartial assessments of the human rights situation in specific States, often without their due consent and participation, based on biased secondary or tertiary sources that lacked credibility, and which functioned merely as propaganda. It also rejected the ongoing practice of the Security Council dealing with issues outside of its mandate, including by addressing human rights issues in pursuit of the political objectives of certain States.

11. The illegal and immoral imposition of unilateral coercive measures negatively affected the enjoyment and realization of all human rights, including the rights to development, food, health and peace. The Group strongly called for States to refrain from promulgating and applying any such measures and to lift any unilateral coercive measure affecting the full development, including economic and social development, of developing countries. The politicization of human rights needed to stop, and the best way to strengthen and guarantee the full and effective realization of the human rights pillar of the United Nations was to strengthen multilateralism, while strictly adhering to the aforementioned principles.

12. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the submission of the draft resolution by the United States of America and certain other countries showed that they continued to use United Nations human rights mechanisms to serve their political interests. Her delegation opposed the politicization of human rights issues and interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States by establishing country-specific human rights mechanisms without the consent of the concerned countries. Such measures were counter-productive, created tension and confrontation and often lacked the credibility and legitimacy to be effective. Iran urged the international community to promote dialogue and cooperation instead of politicizing human rights issues.

13. The biased and politically motivated text turned a blind eye to all activities and achievements of the Government of Syria in bringing about stability, peace and civilian protection, in providing humanitarian assistance and in facilitating the safe return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The unfair and unjust draft resolution should be rejected as an affront to the Syrian people, who had faced immense challenges in recent years. It did not reflect the Government's

cooperation with the United Nations or tireless efforts to combat terrorism and it failed to recognize the damage caused by Israeli raids, the resulting human rights violations or their impact. The United Nations human rights monitoring mechanism should be based on a fair, non-discriminatory and professional approach, which was lacking from the draft resolution. To preserve the credibility of the Committee, her delegation would vote against the biased draft resolution.

14. **Mr. González Behmaras** (Cuba) said that his delegation would vote against the draft resolution, which was selective and clearly politically motivated, given that the main sponsor was the United States, a country that was responsible for some of the worst, and well documented, human rights violations. It was both worrying and unacceptable that such resolutions were applied only against developing countries that were also subject to coercive unilateral measures. The impunity offered by the United States for the genocide being committed by Israel against the civilian population of the Gaza Strip was a further sign that the United States was concerned not about human rights in Syria or elsewhere but about its own interests. The delegation of the United States had shamelessly spoken about the veto cast by the Russian Federation in the Security Council, despite itself having vetoed 46 draft resolutions on the situation in the Middle East, including on the question of Palestine, in the same body.

15. The draft fostered a punitive and condemnatory approach that did not take into account the interests of Syria. Such resolutions would not contribute to a political solution to the conflict that took into account the interests and aspirations of the Syrian people. His delegation trusted that the Syrian Government and people would achieve a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict and called on the Committee to foster cooperation and dialogue with full respect for the sovereignty of the country. If there was a genuine will to find a solution to the conflict, such selective and politically motivated practices should be abolished.

16. **Ms. Pichardo Urbina** (Nicaragua) said that her delegation rejected and opposed the annual submission of politically motivated reports and draft resolutions that lacked objectivity and impartiality and did not contribute to human rights. Her Government condemned the politicization, selectivity and double standards of the Committee's work, which should be based on universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity and constructive international dialogue and cooperation. The draft resolution was part of a defamatory campaign against the Government of Syria and intentionally omitted the impact of illegal unilateral coercive measures, which contravened international law and

undermined the human rights of the Syrian people. The sovereignty, self-determination and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, alongside non-interference in its internal affairs should be respected, and human rights issues should not be manipulated to politically attack Governments that refused to be subordinate to imperialism. Her delegation would vote against the draft resolution and called on Member States to avoid double standards. The Committee must treat all States equally and avoid political bias and the instrumentalization of human rights for the hegemonic interests of imperialist countries.

17. **Mr. Kim Nam Hyok** (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his country rejected country-specific resolutions, as they were submitted for political interests, demonstrated selectivity and double standards and were aimed at exerting pressure and overthrowing the Governments of other countries. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea supported the continuous efforts of the Syrian Arab Republic to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity and to fight against all attempts at foreign occupation and military intervention. Politicization, selectivity and double standards in the consideration of human rights issues bore no relevance to the genuine promotion and protection of human rights. His delegation firmly opposed all attempts to infringe upon national sovereignty, to interfere in the internal affairs of States and to overthrow their legitimate Governments and social systems. All human rights issues must be discussed and resolved in an atmosphere of constructive dialogue and cooperation, on the basis of the principled position of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. His delegation would therefore vote against the draft resolution.

18. **Ms. Rios Balbino** (Brazil) said that her country was concerned at the human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by different actors in the Syrian Arab Republic and fully supported the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. A balanced, humanitarian and comprehensive approach, together with the collaboration of the Syrian Government, would be critical for the implementation and successful functioning of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Brazil supported the work of humanitarian agencies in Syria and the continuation of cross-border assistance, which should be sustained, unhindered and guided by the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

19. Her delegation called for a more balanced draft resolution and for future iterations of the text to be non-selective, impartial and objective. Although the

Syrian Government unquestionably had the primary responsibility to protect the Syrian population, many other actors also bore responsibility for human rights violations and abuses in Syria. Her delegation would therefore abstain from voting on the draft resolution. Only a political process owned and led by Syria and facilitated by the United Nations, in full respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, would bring lasting peace and alleviate the suffering of the Syrian population.

20. **Mr. Kuzmenkov** (Russian Federation) said that the draft resolution was a typical example of politicization and double standards and was based on unsubstantiated allegations and conjecture. The United States, a main sponsor, had taken a particularly cynical position, as it bore responsibility for the fate of the civilian population and controlled the territories of the infamous Hawl and Rawj camps, where women and children continued to live in appalling conditions. The United States was directly complicit in looting natural and agricultural resources belonging to the Syrian people, was failing to honour its donor pledges and had imposed stifling illegal sanctions against Syrians. The United States should compensate the Syrian Government and people for billions of dollars of damage and withdraw its troops immediately.

21. Russia took a conscientious approach to using its Security Council veto to protect the national interests of sovereign States and ensure protection from intervention in internal affairs and encroachment by the United States and its allies. Syria had rightly ensured that cross-border supplies to regions outside the control of its authorities were no longer under the purview of the Security Council, and all humanitarian assistance was entering the country with the consent of and in close coordination with the Syrian Government.

22. The true nature of the pseudo-humanitarian principles of the United States were clear from its approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As a result of the veto of the United States, a Security Council resolution on a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip had not been adopted and thousands of people, including women and children, had died as a result. The United States was directly complicit in their murder. His delegation urged Member States not to go along with the aggressor State.

23. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that the content of the infamous resolution targeting only his country was not surprising, since the core group would do everything in their power in the interest of their political agendas to target Syria. Nevertheless, they had failed to do so.

24. The text contained numerous mistakes. The thirty-third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution recalled that the report of the United Nations Headquarters Board of Inquiry (S/2020/278, annex) had stated that it was “highly probable that the strikes had been carried out by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and/or its allies”. However, a second part of that quote, which was not included in the draft resolution, clarified that the evidence at the disposal of the Board of Inquiry had not been sufficient for it to reach a conclusive finding on the attribution of that incident to any individual or entity.

25. The tenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution included new language claiming that a statement of 13 July 2023 by the Syrian Arab Republic had “acknowledged the need for cross-border humanitarian assistance”. However, in that statement, which was in fact a letter sent by the Syrian Arab Republic, his Government had stated that it had decided to renew the cross-border humanitarian assistance mechanism, since the Security Council had failed to do so, but had not welcomed such assistance. Furthermore, during the 9371st meeting of the Security Council held on 11 July 2023, his delegation had stated that there was a need to accelerate cross-line deliveries, but had not referred to the cross-border mechanism. The core group was therefore simply lying.

26. The thirty-seventh preambular paragraph contained a reference to the more than 30,034 children who had died in Syria, but what the exact figure was, or the source for such information, was not clear. Indeed, there were no sources in any part of the draft resolution.

27. The sponsors of the text were insulting the intelligence of all delegations by expecting them to blindly follow their lead. It sufficed to read the text to see that it was full of contradictions, fallacies and lies. None of the core group truly cared about the situation of human rights in Syria and were instead just upset that they had failed in achieving their political goals in the country. The evidence and the hideous, silly and inaccurate language used in the draft resolution merely reflected the mindset of the core group.

28. The draft resolution either contained mistakes, which showed incompetence, or such mistakes were intentional, which showed partiality and further incompetence. He called on delegations to read the text that they were voting on, rather than blindly following the core group, and to send the text back to their capitals and convey what his delegation had said. The core group was humiliating everyone’s intelligence and promoting its ideas. His delegation would vote against the draft

resolution and welcomed all those who would do likewise.

29. *At the request of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, a recorded vote was taken on draft resolution A/C.3/78/L.43, as orally revised.*

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cabo Verde, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Côte d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Nauru, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Senegal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Türkiye, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu.

Against:

Algeria, Belarus, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Burundi, China, Cuba, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Mali, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Zimbabwe.

Abstaining:

Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and

Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia.

30. *Draft resolution A/C.3/78/L.43, as orally revised, was adopted by 86 votes to 15, with 73 abstentions.*

31. **Mr. Rojas** (Peru) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, which contained important elements for addressing the human rights situation in Syria. All parties, including the Government of Syria, should respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Peru welcomed the new language on the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants and the prohibition against indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and the calls for all parties to the conflict to desist from attacks directed against civilian objects. Such language should be applied to every conflict situation.

32. Nonetheless, his delegation dissociated itself from paragraph 14. The inclusion in a General Assembly draft resolution of value judgments on a specific case of the use of a veto was not standard practice, and the value judgment contained in that paragraph was inconsistent both in content and tenor with the statement made by Peru on 19 July 2023 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 76/262 (2022), after the aforementioned veto had been cast. Good faith negotiations should be prioritized, with a view to reaching structural solutions related to reform of the Security Council. All Security Council members, particularly permanent members, should refrain from the politicization of humanitarian affairs. In particular, geopolitical considerations should not be prioritized over humanitarian issues when considering the use of the veto.

33. His delegation had voted in favour of the decision that mandated the creation of the Investigation and Identification Team within the framework of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and conducted careful reviews of its reports. In that regard, the sixth and seventh preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution were misleading in relation to the findings of the third report of the Investigation and Identification Team. General Assembly draft resolutions must be objective, precise and balanced, particularly those that addressed human rights situations in specific countries. Any failure in that regard could undermine the credibility of that body and diminish the value of such resolutions.

34. **Ms. Garcia Rico** (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the candidate countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine; the potential candidate country

Georgia; and, in addition, San Marino, said that the ongoing violence and instability in Syria was deeply concerning, and caused enormous suffering and hardship to the Syrian people, who faced the largest escalation of hostilities in that country in four years. Any sustainable solution to the conflict required a genuine political transition, in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015). The European Union called on the Syrian regime, its sponsors and all parties to the conflict to engage fully and in good faith with the Syrian-led political process.

35. All parties responsible for breaches of international law, which might amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, must be held accountable. The European Union condemned the consistent and systematic use of arbitrary detention, torture, sexual and gender-based violence, involuntary or enforced disappearance and summary executions by the Syrian regime and all other parties to the conflict. Allowing families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives was a crucial humanitarian imperative. The European Union therefore welcomed General Assembly resolution 77/301 (2023) establishing an Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, and underscored the need for the swift establishment of that institution. All parties to the conflict should support efforts to determine the fate of such missing persons.

36. No further displacements should take place in any part of Syria, nor should such displacements be exploited for the purpose of social and demographic engineering by parties to the conflict. In that regard, the Commission of Inquiry had recently found that conditions for a safe, voluntary, secure and dignified return of Syrian refugees were still not being met. Meanwhile, accountability remained of the utmost importance, both for victims of human rights violations and in the framework of a lasting political solution. The European Union continued to fully support 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 (International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism). The situation in Syria must be referred to the International Criminal Court and the Syrian regime must cooperate fully with all investigation and accountability mechanisms.

37. All parties to the conflict, in particular the Syrian regime, must allow safe, full, rapid, unimpeded and sustained cross-line and cross-border access, including to places of confinement or detention. In that context, the deletion of provisions on reporting by the

Emergency Relief Coordinator, as originally included in paragraph 16 of the draft resolution, was disappointing. Lastly, the European Union welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution.

38. **Ms. Wallenius** (Canada) said that after more than 12 years of conflict, the ongoing human rights violations perpetrated by parties to the conflict in Syria remained deeply alarming. Women and children faced disproportionate and long-lasting impacts; millions of civilians were internally displaced; and devastating earthquakes had exacerbated the already dire humanitarian crisis. Cross-border assistance remained critical, and Canada welcomed the draft resolution's condemnation of the non-renewal of the Security Council authorization of cross-border humanitarian assistance to the Syrian Arab Republic. Her delegation also echoed calls to extend the Bab al-Hawa, Bab al-Salamah and Ra'i crossings for as long as humanitarian assistance was required. However, the decision to withdraw the request for the Emergency Relief Coordinator to provide reports on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic was regrettable.

39. The delivery of humanitarian aid should be transparent. Increasing attempts to politicize humanitarian assistance in Syria was regrettable, and the ongoing human rights violations in that country were deplorable. Thousands of civilians, including returnees, had been arbitrarily detained, tortured, forcibly displaced and held in cruel and inhumane conditions, and more than 111,000 had been forcibly disappeared. Canada welcomed the references in the draft resolution to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism and recognition of the need for continued funding to that body, as well as the collaboration with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic.

40. Canada remained committed to pursuing accountability and justice. To that end, together with the Netherlands, her country had initiated legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice to hold the Syrian regime accountable for torture and other ill treatment of its own people. Canada would continue to support the Syrian people and to call for a just political solution in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#).

41. **Mr. Pilipenko** (Belarus) said that Belarus rejected selective, country-specific approaches to human rights, which did not improve the real situation on the ground, but rather generated an atmosphere of confrontation. Consequently, it had voted against adoption of the draft resolution. The secret drafting of country-specific resolutions, as done by the United States for the draft resolution under consideration, ran counter to all

principles guiding the work of the United Nations and was unacceptable.

42. **Mr. Sibomana** (Burundi) said that his delegation objected to all country-specific resolutions.

43. **Ms. Zhang Sisi** (China) said that differences in the field of human rights should be addressed through constructive dialogue and cooperation. China was opposed to the politicization of human rights issues and to the establishment of country-specific human rights mechanisms without the consent of the country concerned. The draft resolution went against the will of the Syrian Government; ignored the challenges posed by foreign interference and unilateral sanctions on the Syrian people; underestimated the efforts of the Syrian Government to improve the living conditions and humanitarian situation in the country; and unilaterally exerted excessive pressure on the Syrian Government.

44. In addition, the draft resolution supported international mechanisms that were strongly rejected by the Syrian Government, including the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. The text also contained many references to reports of the Investigation and Identification Team, which had not been established by consensus and had been opposed by many countries, including China. The draft resolution sought to use human rights as a pretext to pressure the Syrian Government for political purposes. Therefore, China had voted against the draft resolution.

45. **Ms. González** (Argentina) said that her country had voted in favour of the draft resolution, with a view to supporting international efforts to improve the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. All parties should take an approach that prioritized the defence of human rights without restriction and the protection of the civilian population throughout the country. In addition, all parties, particularly the Syrian authorities, should seek to clarify the whereabouts of all missing persons in the country. Full respect for the sovereignty, unity, independence and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic must be guaranteed at all times. The draft resolutions under consideration must not be subject to unnecessary politicization, and should focus on areas related to the promotion and protection of human rights in Syria and not on issues that overstepped the mandate of the Third Committee.

46. **Mr. Aydil** (Türkiye) said that the human rights situation in Syria remained a matter of deep concern. The draft resolution was important in underscoring the root causes of the human rights situation in that country, including the recent increase in ceasefire violations,

which had caused immense suffering to civilians. The humanitarian situation in the region had also deteriorated and, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, over 120,000 people had been displaced in the two weeks following the hostilities that had begun on 5 October 2023, also resulting in a more challenging environment for humanitarian workers in north-west Syria. Given the dire situation, continued cross-border humanitarian assistance by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was crucial.

47. The biggest threat to the human rights situation in Syria was terrorism. The Kurdistan Workers' Party/People's Protection Units (PKK/YPG), the terrorist organization of the so-called "Syrian Democratic Forces", was documented by the United Nations as one of the primary perpetrators of human rights violations in Syria. According to recent reports of the Secretary-General, among other violations, the cases of killing and maiming of children by terrorist organizations had increased by 100 per cent in comparison with the previous report. Moreover, thousands of third-country nationals at the Hawl camp were deprived of liberty and proper access to humanitarian assistance.

48. Türkiye would continue to uphold and support the human rights of Syrians and advocate a political solution to the conflict, in line with Security Council resolution [2254 \(2015\)](#), and as reaffirmed in the draft resolution.

49. **Mr. Mc Bean** (Ireland), speaking also on behalf of Norway, said that his delegation welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution. Ireland and Norway were proud to have been co-penholders on the work of the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria, and reiterated their shared commitment to supporting the people of that country.

50. The most significant escalation of violence in Syria in four years was currently under way, with a devastating impact on civilians, including grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Over 15 million people in Syria currently relied on humanitarian assistance. For that reason, the deletion of paragraph 16 of the original text submitted was regrettable, as it had requested the continuation of vital reporting by the Emergency Relief Coordinator on the humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and on the humanitarian response. Working together to ensure adequate reporting was crucial, and his delegation looked forward to continued discussions to that end.

51. **Ms. Rajandran** (Singapore) said that her delegation had abstained from voting on the draft resolution, in line with its principled position to abstain from voting on all country-specific human rights resolutions in the Third Committee. However, the voting position of Singapore should not be interpreted as a position on the substance of the human rights issues raised in the draft resolution.

52. **Mr. Shaked** (Israel) said that the comments made by the representative of the Assad regime over the past month suggested that the speaker sought to champion human rights by criticizing other countries, specifically through extensive efforts to demonize and delegitimize the State of Israel. It was truly shameful that he had gone so far as to claim that Israel was inventing its victims, and that the massacre undertaken by the Hamas terrorist organization on 7 October 2023 had not occurred, despite much of it being filmed by Hamas terrorists themselves.

53. Contrary to the revisionist interpretations and disinformation spread by the representative of the Assad regime, the well-documented facts in the draft resolution, the reports and elsewhere spoke for themselves. The actions of the Assad regime in the Syrian civil war had led to over 500,000 deaths, including of over 30,000 children through use of heavy weapons, aerial bombardments, the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare and the use of chemical weapons. The Syrian civil war and its unfathomable consequences had created a reality in which half of the population had been displaced, with 5.3 million forced to seek refuge in other countries. When hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in Syria had been gravely endangered by the civil war, and thousands killed in the Yarmouk refugee camp and elsewhere, mostly by the Assad regime itself, no strong solidarity with Palestinian victims had been demonstrated. Evidently, the regime only cared about Palestinian lives when they could be leveraged to demonize and delegitimize the State of Israel.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

54. **Mr. Arbeiter** (Canada) said that the content of the draft resolution on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran ([A/C.3/78/L.41](#)), presented by his delegation, changed each year based on the current and relevant reports of the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur. While the trends remained the same, unfortunately, the violations detailed in the report had been committed within the calendar year. Many delegations had referred to a long-standing policy of opposition to country-specific resolutions; Canada respected those views, despite disagreeing with them.

All instruments in the human rights architecture should be utilized. Accordingly, Canada itself had a standing invitation to all special procedure mandate holders.

55. His country had recently welcomed the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, and had approached the difficult conversations held with openness to engaging, learning and improving in the future. Canada had also recently completed its fourth universal periodic review. During the third review cycle, his Government had accepted over 70 per cent of recommendations; according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Iran had accepted less than half of the recommendations it had received. However, the universal periodic review relied on the willingness of countries to listen carefully to the feedback of their peers.

56. Vociferous criticism of the human rights record of Canada had also been expressed, particularly with regard to Indigenous Peoples. His delegation fully acknowledged the intergenerational trauma caused by the historic treatment of Indigenous Peoples by Canada, in particular Indigenous women and girls. Significant work remained to be done, and while the first step of reconciliation was to listen and be open to scrutiny, action was even more important. Canada had set up a truth and reconciliation commission, comprised of representatives of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, which had submitted a report with 94 recommendations, all of which had been accepted by his Government, including the enshrinement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into national legislation. Canada had also recently established a national day to foster understanding of the trauma caused to Indigenous Peoples.

57. His delegation lamented the lack of evidence of listening by the Islamic Republic of Iran, whether to the protests on its streets or to the discussions held at the United Nations. Instead, the response of that country contained obfuscation, bombast and counteraccusations, the latter having been extended to multiple countries, and not just Canada. Increasing the number of States that were criticized and intensifying that criticism did not obscure the human rights violations in Iran itself, nor did it absolve that country of its responsibilities under international law to comply with the human rights treaties and conventions that had been voluntarily signed and ratified by that country. Canada was committed to listening, learning and doing better, and to continuously accepting the criticism and acknowledging the work to be done. His delegation encouraged others to do the same.

58. **Mr. Altarsha** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that in general, his delegation only replied to Member States and not to occupying authorities. However, the representative of the Israeli occupation appeared to have been addressing his delegation directly. That country was simply spoiled by all the support it had received from Western countries over the years, and was therefore unable to accept the truth.

59. **Ms. Arab Bafrani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that following its submission of the draft resolution, the delegation of Canada had levelled repeated accusations against her country. Canada expressed anger at discussions on Indigenous issues in its country; naturally, the Islamic Republic of Iran and its people felt the same when its own national issues were targeted, without taking into account its achievements.

60. Indigenous peoples in the child welfare or correctional system in Canada reportedly had an increased vulnerability to addiction, homelessness and being the victims of crime. No double standards should be used by Canada when targeting other countries, nor should it have exercised the right of reply after having submitted such a biased resolution against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Agenda item 60: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions (continued) (A/C.3/78/L.61)

Draft resolution A/C.3/78/L.61: Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa

61. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

62. **Ms. Ossebi** (Congo), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introducing the draft resolution, said that the text was primarily based on General Assembly resolution 77/199. The Group commended the ongoing efforts and leadership of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with the support of the international community, to support African States hosting large numbers of refugees who required protection and assistance. The African continent held one fifth of the total number of refugees and over one third of forcibly displaced persons globally, including over 8.5 million refugees and asylum seekers and almost 28 million internally displaced persons.

63. The draft resolution urged the international community, in line with the principles of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, to continue to generously fund the refugee programmes of

the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant humanitarian organizations, taking into account the substantially increased needs of programmes in Africa. Increased, flexible, predictable and multi-year funding was also necessary in that regard. The Group also reaffirmed the importance of the Global Compact on Refugees. All delegations were invited sponsor the draft resolution and proceed to its adoption by consensus.

64. **Mr. Mahmassani** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the following delegations had become sponsors of the draft resolution: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Palau, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Türkiye, Ukraine, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

65. He then noted that Albania also wished to become a sponsor.

66. **Mr. Ivanyi** (Hungary) said that Hungary was deeply concerned by the continuing rise in the number of refugees and displaced persons in Africa. Accordingly, his delegation had joined the consensus on the draft resolution, however, it dissociated itself from paragraph 4 due to the reference to the Global Compact on Refugees. Hungary did not endorse the Compact or participate in its implementation, and therefore could not accept any reference to it in international documents.

67. *Draft resolution [A/C.3/78/L.61](#) was adopted.*

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.