

**United Nations Human Rights Council
20th Regular Session, 10 to 28 September 2012
Agenda Item 4**

**ICJ Oral Statement in the General Debate under Item 4:
The situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic**

17 September 2012

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Madam President,

The International Commission of Jurists calls on the Human Rights Council to request the Security Council to immediately refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and, as a matter of urgency, take other effective measures at its disposal to protect civilians and to address the humanitarian crisis in Syrian cities and villages, including *Aleppo*.

The situation in Syria has, due to the paralysis of the international community, deteriorated into an internal armed conflict. Government forces have increased the indiscriminate shelling of civilians and civilian objects with heavy weapons, tanks, warplanes and helicopters. These forces, assisted by pro-regime *Shabiha*, are responsible for systematic and widespread attacks against the civilian population that may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes, including unlawful killings, torture, pillage and destruction of property. Anti-government forces have also been responsible for violations, including unlawful killings and torture.

Central to the mandate of this Council is the responsibility to ensure accountability. In its resolution 66/253 last month, the General Assembly deplored the lack of action by the Security Council on Syria. Let the Human Rights Council do better. After eight resolutions, it must recommend that the Security Council take robust measures to end these breaches of international law, hold the perpetrators to account, including by referring this situation to the ICC, and ensure the immediate protection of civilians.

Indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilian objects, including infrastructure, medical facilities and water and sanitation services have resulted in a dire humanitarian situation, with large numbers of civilians in urgent need of food, water, fuel, electricity and medical supplies. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians have been forced to leave combat zones and seek refuge abroad. It is the responsibility of the international community, to act immediately to address this humanitarian crisis by providing urgent and full support to refugees and displaced persons.

I thank you.

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