

**United Nations Human Rights Council  
25<sup>th</sup> Regular Session, 3-28 March 2014  
Agenda Item 4**

**ICJ Oral Statement in the Interactive Dialogue under Item 4 with the Commission of  
Inquiry on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic**

**SYRIA: THREE YEARS OF FAILURE TO PROTECT THE CIVILIAN POPULATION**

18 March 2014

*Check against delivery*

Distinguished members of the Commission of Inquiry

For more than three years, the international community has failed to respond in a meaningful or effective manner to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and other human rights abuses committed in the context of the Syrian conflict, to ensure that perpetrators on all sides are held accountable, and to implement concrete measures towards justice for victims.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) calls on the Human Rights Council to act decisively to address the human rights impact of the conflict, including by requesting the Security Council to take effective measures, in accordance with the UN Charter, to protect the civilian population, bring an end to the conflict, and restore and maintain peace and security in the region. States, including the member States of this Council, should also act to provide urgent humanitarian relief to refugees, IDPs, and those trapped in besieged areas.

As the armed conflict continues to escalate, government forces and opposition groups have both been responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other crimes under international law, including murder, hostage-taking, torture and other ill-treatment (including rape and other sexual violence), enforced disappearance, recruiting and using children in the hostilities, and disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects.

As the Commission of Inquiry has noted, the parties do not presently fear that they will be held accountable. To address the pervasive and structural culture of impunity, the ICJ calls on the Council to request the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. States, individually and collectively, must also comply with their obligations under international law to prevent war crimes and crimes against humanity and to exercise all grounds of jurisdiction at their disposal to investigate and prosecute anyone suspected of responsibility for such crimes.

I thank you.

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