

**United Nations Human Rights Council
26th Regular Session, 10-27 June 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: STATES MUST SEEK OUT AND PUNISH PERPETRATORS OF GRAVE BREACHES
OF INTERNATIONAL LAW**

17 June 2014

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Distinguished members of the Commission of Inquiry,

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) commends the thirteen Security Council members that voted for referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICJ condemns the veto exercised by the Russian Federation and China, blocking efforts to ensure accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other human rights violations that continue to be committed in Syria with total impunity.

The ICJ believes that ICC referral should not be subject to obstruction by a single State or small group of States.

The ICC remains the best international venue for accountability in relation to Syria. The effective paralysis of the Security Council by the recalcitrance of two States makes it all the more important for the Human Rights Council to send a strong message, and for its members and indeed all States to act decisively to hold the perpetrators to account.

As highlighted by the Commission of Inquiry, the gross violations of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law at issue here include murder, enforced disappearance, hostage-taking, torture and other ill-treatment, rape and other sexual violence, and disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks against civilians and civilian objects.

There is no prospect in the near-term of effective accountability for these crimes at the national level within Syria. This Council should remind all States of their obligations, individually and collectively, to seek out, prosecute and punish any person responsible for such crimes under international law committed by any party in the context of the Syrian conflict, and to ensure their prosecutors and courts have full jurisdiction and the necessary resources in this regard.

This Council should also strengthen the language on accountability in its resolution on Syria, including by affirming that the situation in Syria is of a character that requires referral to an international tribunal, i.e. the International Criminal Court.

I thank you.

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