



## Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression's Activities during the Human Rights Council's 51st session

### Agenda and annotations for the session A/HRC/51/1<sup>1</sup>



The 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council activities and events was launched on 12 September and continued until 07 October 2022.

Under the 3<sup>rd</sup> item on its agenda -which focuses on promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development-, a number of thematic issues were addressed, including: Ensuring equitable, affordable, timely and universal access for all countries to vaccines in response to the corona-virus disease COVID-19 pandemic, and Promoting and protecting economic, social and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities in the recovery from the pandemic, with regard to economic, social and cultural rights. The Question of the death penalty, Contemporary forms of slavery, Arbitrary detention, Enforced or involuntary disappearances, Truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence, and the Right to privacy in the digital age, with regard to civil and political rights. Human rights of older persons, Human rights implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people, and Safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, with regard to the Rights of peoples and specific groups and individuals. In addition to: Civil society space in the contest of COVID-19, the road to recovery and the essential role of civil society, as well as the Use of mercenaries as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of people to self-determination.

And under the 4<sup>th</sup> item -which focuses on human rights cases that require the Council's attention- the human rights situation was addressed for a number of states, such as: Myanmar, Belarus, the Republic of Venezuela, the Bolivarian Republic of, Burundi, Ethiopia, Situation of human rights in Ukraine stemming from the Russian aggression, in addition to the human rights situation in Syria.

<sup>1</sup> HRC51 agenda and annotations can be found via the link [here](#).

## The Human Rights Council discusses the situation of human rights in Syria and adopts a new resolution in this regard

Draft Resolution No. A/HRC/51/L.18, adopted by the [Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in Syria](#) on 07 October 2022, in the context of its 51st session, adopted by vote and subsequently issued under No. [A/HRC/RES/51/26](#). The adopted resolution condemned the continuation of grave violations of human rights, especially those committed by the Syrian authorities, particularly in which children were the victims. It also reiterated its strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, calling for the need to hold those responsible for this crime accountable. The resolution also welcomed the progress made with regard to international accountability, noting “the importance of continuing the ongoing procedures and efforts by states and internationally mandated institutions, including the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism to assist in the investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for the most serious crimes according to the classification of international law committed in Syria since March 2011, in order to prosecute those responsible for the crimes committed by all possible means and when possible and to reveal the truth and bring the perpetrators to justice. The resolution recalls the Security Council’s authority to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court, and welcomes the joint initiative by the Netherlands and Canada to hold the Syrian Arab Republic responsible for breaching its obligations under the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment”.

The resolution devotes a number of introductory paragraphs to addressing the situation of missing persons in Syria, welcoming the United Nations Secretary-General’s study on the issue, and its conclusion that any measure is taken to address the ongoing tragedy of missing persons in Syria “requires a coherent and comprehensive approach that goes beyond current efforts”, and focusing on the pivotal role of civil society organisations, including victims’ associations, recalling the importance of “the full and meaningful participation of victims, survivors and their families in these efforts”.

Out of /47/ member states of the Human Rights Council, /25/ states voted in favor of the resolution, with /16/ states abstaining, and /6/ states opposing the resolution: Venezuela, Eritrea, Cuba, China, Bolivia, and Armenia.

Date: 2022-10-07 Time 14:15

A/HRC/51/L.18 - Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic						
YES	ARGENTINA	YES	HONDURAS	YES	NETHERLANDS	
NO	ARMENIA	ABST	INDIA	ABST	PAKISTAN	
YES	BENIN	ABST	INDONESIA	YES	PARAGUAY	
NO	BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)	YES	JAPAN	YES	POLAND	
ABST	BRAZIL	ABST	KAZAKHSTAN	YES	QATAR	
ABST	CAMEROON	ABST	LIBYA	YES	REPUBLIC OF KOREA	
NO	CHINA	YES	LITHUANIA	ABST	SENEGAL	
YES	COTE d'IVOIRE	YES	LUXEMBOURG	ABST	SOMALIA	
NO	CUBA	YES	MALAWI	ABST	SUDAN	
YES	CZECHIA	ABST	MALAYSIA	YES	UKRAINE	
NO	ERITREA	YES	MARSHALL ISLANDS	ABST	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	
YES	FINLAND	ABST	MAURITANIA	YES	UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND	
YES	FRANCE	YES	MEXICO	YES	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	
YES	GABON	YES	MONTENEGRO	ABST	UZBEKISTAN	
YES	GAMBIA	ABST	NAMIBIA	NO	VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)	
YES	GERMANY	ABST	NEPAL			
	YES	25	ABST	16	NO	6

## Activities held by the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression during this session



On the margin of the session's activities, and in the context of communication and interaction with states concerned with the situation of human rights in Syria, especially the member states of the Human Rights Council, SCM's team -represented by Danny ALBAAJ, and Fares HALABI- held a number of bilateral meetings with representatives of the missions of the member states in the Council, among them were the representative of the permanent mission of Ireland, the representative of the permanent mission of the United Kingdom, as well as the representative of the permanent mission of the European Union. Meetings were also held with representatives of international organisations in consultative status with the Social and Economic Council, among them were: the representative of Amnesty International in Geneva, the representative of Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS), and the representative of Human Rights Watch (HRW).

SCM also delivered three in-person oral interventions at the Palais des Nations (Nations Palace) in Geneva. Where the 1st intervention was delivered by Ms. Fadwa MAHAMOUD -from the Families for Freedom ([FfE](#)), representing the Truth and Justice Charter (TJC) members associations- during the interactive dialogue session with the [Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence](#). While Mr. Danny ALBAAJ -from the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)- made the 2nd intervention during the interactive dialogue session with the [International Commission of Inquiry on Syria](#), and colleague Zahra AL-BARAZI -from the Syrian Legal Development Program ([SLDP](#))- made the 3rd intervention during the general discussion session on Item 6, on the [Universal Periodic Review of Syria](#).

Three side events were organised on the margin of the session in cooperation with organisations and alliances of Syrian civil society. The first side event was held inside the Palais des Nations (Nations Palace) in Geneva, while the second and third side events were held Online.

## Cooperation with Syrian civil society organisations

As part of SCM's cooperation and integration policy, the organisation cooperated with a number of Syrian Civil Society Organisations and Coalitions to provide oral interventions in several meetings and organise a number of side events during this session. SCM also has facilitated for // colleagues from Syrian Civil Society Organisations to attend the activities and meeting of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council in the Palais des Nations (Nations Palace), and to hold bilateral meetings with representatives of States permanent missions and non-governmental organisations in consultative status with the Social and Economic Council, in addition to UN Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups members.

### Oral Interventions

[Oral intervention on item /3/](#) of the session's agenda, which focuses on promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development, delivered by Ms. Fadwa MAHMOUD -of the Families for Freedom (FfF), representing the Truth and Justice Charter (TJC) members associations- on 16 September 2022, during the interactive dialogue session with the [Special Rapporteur on the](#)

[promotion of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence](#). In her intervention, a reference was made to the report of the Special Rapporteur and his affirmation on the central role of the victims in all transitional justice processes, and that their right to justice, truth restoration, and reparation as essential elements in the design and implementation of these processes. She also welcomed the study issued by the United Nations Secretary-General on the missing in Syria, and called on all countries to support the implementation of his recommendation to establish an independent international mechanism to reveal the fate of the missing and forcibly disappeared in Syria without any delay. Her intervention concluded by requesting the Special Rapporteur to dedicate one of his future reports to expand the role of victims in possible transitional justice tracks in Syria.



[Oral intervention on item /4/](#) of the session's agenda, which focuses on human rights cases that require the Council's attention, was delivered by Mr. Danny ALBAAJ -of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)- on 22 September 2022, during the interactive dialogue session with the [International Commission of Inquiry on Syria](#), where in his intervention, he welcomed the update provided by the Chair of the International Commission of Inquiry, Mr. Paulo PINHEIRO, on the latest activities of the Commission, and expressed SCM's support for its recommendations to the Member States, and in particular, the recommendation to facilitate the establishment of an independent international mechanism to coordinate and compile claims relating to missing and forcibly disappeared persons, and asked Member States to adopt this recommendation and put it into practice. He also shade light on the escalation of human rights violations in Syria, Especially with the issuance of reports proving that officers working in the Syrian security services have systematically practised sexual slavery. And finally concluded the intervention by expressing SCM's full solidarity with the peaceful popular protests led by women in Iran.



[Oral intervention on item /6/](#) of the session's agenda, which focuses on the universal periodic review of countries, made by Ms. Zahra AL-BARAZI -of the Syrian Legal Development Program ([SLDP](#))- on 30 September 2022, during the general discussion session on Item 6, on the [Universal Periodic Review of Syria](#). In her intervention, she referred to the national report submitted by the Syrian government at the third review of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2022, which claims that the human rights situation in Syria is sound, and that the challenges came from external factors only, and noted with concern that the Syrian authorities are misusing the UPR to evade of its international obligations by providing misleading and untrue information. She also urged the Council, Member States, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to scrutinize the violations committed in Syria and the human rights situation in Syria rigorously to ensure that the information is truthful and is provided in good faith.



## Side Events

### **“Enforced Disappearances in Syria: The Need for an Independent International Mechanism and Its Importance to Promote Any Future Peace Settlement”**

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), in cooperation with the member associations of the Truth and Justice Charter (TJC), [We Exist](#) Alliance, the Syrian Civil Society Networks Platform ([SCNP](#)), and [Sham1 Coalition](#), organised and held a physical side event on the margin of the 51st session of the Human Rights Council under the name: **Enforced Disappearance in Syria: The Need for an Independent International Mechanism and Its Importance to Promote Any Future Peace Settlement.**

During this side event, the severity and extent of enforced disappearance as a systematic violation in Syria, practised by the Syrian government and the rest of the de facto political and military forces (ISIS, the government, and the opposition factions), the legal consequences of systematic enforced disappearance on the future of Syria from the perspective of the victims were addressed, and the developments of establishing an independent international mechanism in Syria -which Victims' Associations Members of the Truth and Justice Charter (TJC), with a number of civil society organisations, seek to establish- were reviewed, in conclusion with possible future steps to support the adoption of the mechanism.



The side event was held at 16:00 CET on Friday 23 September 2022, in Room /25/ of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, during which SCM was represented by Mazen DARWISH, founder and general Director of SCM, along with Ms. Yasmen ALMASHAN, Founding member of the Caesar Families Association (CFA), and Mr. Yousef WEHBE, Senior Legal Advisor, Diakonia International Humanitarian Law Centre. While Ms. Wafa MUSTAFA, a Syrian activist and journalist, facilitated the discussion for this panel. The speakers gave their speeches in Arabic while English interpretation was provided in the room. Clips from the event were also broadcast live on SCM's Facebook page.

### **“The National Report of the Syrian Arab Republic to the 3rd Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), vs The Realities of Human Rights in Syria”**

In cooperation with [We Exist](#) Alliance and the Syrian Legal Development Program ([SLDP](#)), the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), organised a virtual side event on the margin of the 51st session of the Human Rights Council entitled “The National Report of the Syrian Arab Republic to the 3rd Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), vs The Realities of Human Rights in Syria”.

The side event was held via Zoom platform on Wednesday, 28 September at 16:00 Damascus time / 14:00 CET, and aimed to provide the first response by Syrian Civil Society to the efforts led by the Syrian government within the UPR cycle, and to shed light on the main and most important reservations and comments made by that Syrian Civil Society organisations on the national report submitted by the Syrian government and its responses during the interactive dialogue with State during the past session of the Human Rights Council. In addition, The side event discussed the realities of the human rights situation in Syria and its legal environment. In light of the critical analytical study conducted by the Syrian Legal Development Programme (SLDP) and We Exist Alliance titled “Fallacies Not Facts”, The side event countered the narrative perpetuated by the Syrian government through experts’ opinions and the significant efforts by the Syrian civil society, international NGOs, and UN human rights bodies in reporting violations of human rights in Syria. The side event also shared recommendations to the UN Member States and UN Human Rights Bodies to prevent the Syrian government from hijacking the UPR cycle for disinformation purposes.



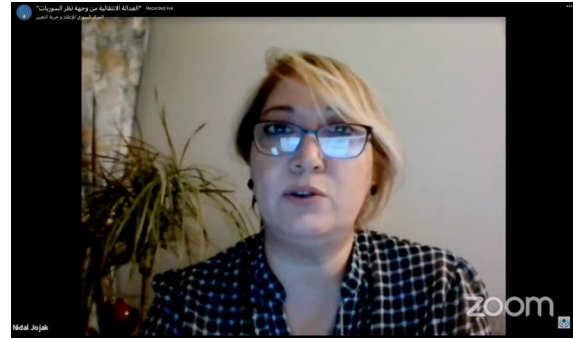
The discussion during this event was moderated by Ms. Mai EL-SADANY: Managing Director; Legal and Judicial Director at The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy ([TIMEP](#)), and the speakers were Ms. Zahra AL-BARAZI, Research Director at the Syrian Legal Development Programme ([SLDP](#)), Mr. Anwar MAJANNI, Technical Legal Supervisor at The Day After ([TDA](#)), and Mr. Bassam ALAHMAD, Co-Founder & Executive Director at Syrians for Truth and Justice ([STJ](#)) as speakers.

“Fallacies Not Facts” study can be read [via the link here](#).

## “Transitional justice from the perspective of Syrian women”

In a virtual side event on the margin of the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council under the title “**Transitional justice from the perspective of Syrian women**”, organised by The Syrian Women’s Political Movement ([SWPM](#)), in cooperation with the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM), The policy paper - which was issued by the SWPM during its consultative sessions - was addressed and the conclusions and recommendations of this paper were presented.

The topics of the policy paper were addressed during the event by the speakers: Ms. Ruwaida KANAAN, a Member of the General Assembly and the Consultative Team of the Syrian Women’s Political Movement, Ms. Ayat AHMAD, a Member of the Movement, and Ms. Mayssa MHAMOUD, Member of the General Assembly of the Movement, while Ms. Nidal JOUJAK, also a Member of the Movement moderated the discussion.



This event was held in Arabic with English interpretation, at 19:00 Damascus time/ 18:00 CET on Wednesday 5 September 2022, via Zoom platform. It was also broadcast on Facebook pages and YouTube channels of The Syrian Women’s Political Movement (SWPM) and the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM).

The recording of the event can be watched [via the link here](#).

The policy paper can be read [via the link here](#).

