



## Special report on the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council, And the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression Activities

### Summary:



The 53rd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) activities and events was launched on 19 June and continued until 14 July 2023. Council discussions for this session included a range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, with a special focus on violence and discrimination against women and freedom of expression.

The periodic resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria was adopted and issued on July 13 under the number [A/HRC/RES/53/18](#), demanding the Syrian Government to meet its responsibility to respect and protect the human rights of all persons within its jurisdiction in a manner consistent with the applicable international law obligations. The resolution also focused on women and girls' recognition that they have been disproportionately affected by the crisis for a myriad number of reasons.

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 and non-governmental organisation, SCM's team held a number of bilateral meetings with representatives of States Permanent Mission and international NGOs in consultative status with the Social and Economic Council.

The SCM team also prepared and submitted three Oral Interventions, two on item /3/ and one on item /4/ to the HRC53.

## Agenda and annotations

At this session, the Council discussed a range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights through dedicated debates with the mandate holders and the High Commissioner with a special focus on violence and discrimination against women and girls and freedom of expression, among others. Within the agenda of the session, the SCM team identified a number of interactive dialogue sessions with working groups and special rapporteurs that fit into its programs and activities. Consequently, the team worked on drafting oral interventions on a number of items, in cooperation with partner organisations.

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: “freedom of peaceful assembly and of association” and “the impact of casualty recording.” 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: Afghanistan, Belarus, China, Eritrea, Israel and Occupied Palestinian Territories, Russia, Sudan, Syria and Venezuela, among many others.

## Human Rights Council Resolution on “The Situation of Human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic”

On the 13th of July, regarding the periodic resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria, 24 countries had voted in favour of the resolution, while Bolivia, China, Cuba, and Eritrea objected. While /18/ countries abstained from voting.

The text of the draft resolution number [A/HRC/53/L.16](#), adopted later and issued under the number [A/HRC/RES/53/18](#), demanded that Syria meets its responsibility to respect and protect the human rights of all persons within its jurisdiction in a manner consistent with the applicable international law obligations. And focused on women and girls’ recognition that they have been disproportionately affected by the crisis for a myriad number of reasons.

The resolution also called upon the Syrian authorities to protect returning refugees and internally displaced persons from human rights violations and abuses and to help create the conditions necessary for the return of refugees; demanded that the processes for reclaiming property required by authorities throughout Syria, predominantly **the Syrian Government**, comply with the principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons and are

### Meeting Title: HRC 53

A/HRC/53/L.16 - Situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic					
ABST	ALGERIA	YES	GABON	ABST	NEPAL
YES	ARGENTINA	ABST	GAMBIA	ABST	PAKISTAN
ABST	BANGLADESH	YES	GEORGIA	YES	PARAGUAY
YES	BELGIUM	YES	GERMANY	YES	QATAR
YES	BENIN	YES	HONDURAS	YES	ROMANIA
NO	BOLIVIA (PLURINATIONAL STATE OF)	ABST	INDIA	ABST	SENEGAL
ABST	CAMEROON	ABST	KAZAKHSTAN	ABST	SOMALIA
YES	CHILE	ABST	KYRGYZSTAN	ABST	SOUTH AFRICA
NO	CHINA	YES	LITHUANIA	ABST	SUDAN
YES	COSTA RICA	YES	LUXEMBOURG	YES	UKRAINE
YES	COÛTE D'IVOIRE	YES	MALAWI	ABST	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
NO	CUBA	ABST	MALAYSIA	YES	UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
YES	CZECHIA		MALDIVES	YES	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NO	ERITREA	YES	MEXICO	ABST	UZBEKISTAN
YES	FINLAND	YES	MONTENEGRO	ABST	VIET NAM
YES	FRANCE	ABST	MOROCCO		
	YES	24	ABST	18	NO
					4

equally accessible, in particular for women; called upon all parties to the conflict, first and foremost the Syrian authorities, to release immediately all persons subjected to enforced disappearance and to provide accurate information to the families of those who are missing regarding their fate and whereabouts; called upon all parties to the conflict to adopt a more effective response to sexual and gender-based violence across the whole of Syria; condemned restrictions imposed on journalists and civil society; demanded that all parties to the conflict respect the human rights of all persons, including their right to life, liberty and security of person and rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association and movement, without discrimination.

SCM team had attended the informal consultations session for the draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Syria at the 53rd session of the Human Rights Council, which took place on June 30 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, represented by Omar Al-Asaad.

### 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 and non-governmental organisation, SCM's team -represented by Omar Al-Asaad- held a number of bilateral meetings with Mrs. Anna Pruitt, representative of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom, Mr. Mattia Toaldo, representative of the Permanent Mission of the European Union, and Mr. Abdullah Behzad, Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Qatar.

Meetings were also held with representatives of international organisations in consultative status with the Social and Economic Council, among them was the representative of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).

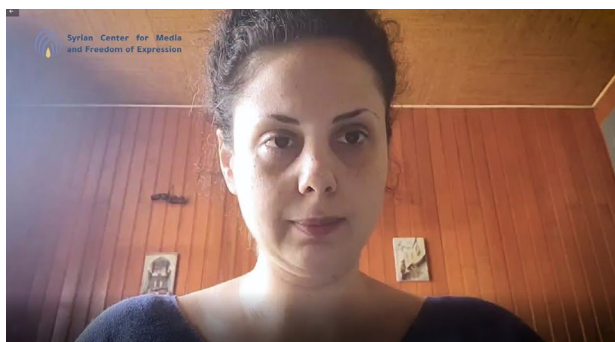
The SCM team prepared and submitted three Oral Interventions, two on item /3/ and one on item /4/ to the HRC53. The Oral Intervention on item /4/ was delivered in person in Palais des Nations in Geneva, while the two Oral Interventions on item /3/ were not due to the limited time granted to civil society organisations during the interactive dialogue sessions.

**Oral intervention on item /3/** of the session's agenda, which focused on "the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural, including the right to development"

**[Interactive Dialogue on the report of the High Commissioner on the impact of casualty recording - 30 June 2023.](#)**

The intervention recognised the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' efforts in following the human rights situation in Syria and urged the Human Rights Council to continue to exert maximum efforts and play an effective role in the promotion, reaffirmation, and protection of human rights at a national level in Syria by employing all available tools in protecting human rights defenders inside the country, including organisations documenting human rights violations, and to act immediately on the ground to address the deteriorating human rights situation in Syria since 2011.

The oral intervention was recorded by SCM's Programs Manager, Ms. Yara Bader, and submitted through the HRC53 official platform, yet it was not streamed during the session due to the limited time granted to civil society organisations during the interactive dialogue sessions.



**Oral intervention on item /4/** of the session's agenda, which focuses on Human rights situations that require the Council's attention.

**[Interactive dialogue with the International Commission of Inquiry on Syria - 05 July 2023](#)**

SCM urged the Human Rights Council to reiterate its request to the Syrian government to grant the Commission of Inquiry, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Syria access to the country. It also commended the vote on draft resolution [A/77/L.79](#) -which was subsequently issued under the number [A/RES/77/301](#)- on the Independent Institution for Missing Persons in Syria, and expresses its support for the resolution, and requests OHCHR to provide the necessary support for its establishment in cooperation with the Secretary-General and relevant actors, including associations of victims, survivors, and their families, and to cooperate with the Foundation for Access to Information and Documents, to provide it with the necessary information and documentation to fulfil its mandate.



The oral intervention was delivered in person by Omar Al-Asaad, SCM's Policies, Advocacy and Communications Manager at the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the interactive dialogue session.

## Cooperation with Syrian civil society organisations

As part of SCM's cooperation and integration policy, the center cooperated with a Syrian Civil Society Organisations to engage in the Human Right Council Regular Sessions.

**Joint Oral intervention on item /3/** of the session's agenda, which focused on "the promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural, including the right to development."

This Intervention was prepared by the Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights (FFHR) and SCM, as an intervention that represents a common goal for both organizations.



### [Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association - 28 June 2023,](#)

The intervention referred to reports and research published by both SCM and Fraternity Foundation for Human Rights (FFHR), which focused on the right to freedom of association in Syria, where these report contain assessments reveals that the various parties to the conflict violate international standards and human rights conventions relevant to the issue at hand and continue to exert repression and pressure against the NGO sector and Syrian civil society in general. The intervention concluded by calling on the Council to exert pressure on the conflicting parties to cease violations against these organisations, and on the Syrian government to fulfil its obligations and enshrine them in Syrian law related to human rights.

The oral intervention was recorded by SCM's Deputy Director, Mr. Isam Khatib, and submitted through the HRC53 official platform, yet it was not streamed during the session due to the limited time granted to civil society organisations during the interactive dialogue sessions.

