

## Special report on the 57th session of the UN Human Rights Council and the activities (of the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM

### Summary:



### Summary:

The activities and events of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council were launched from 24th of February to 4th of April 2025. During this session, the Council discussed a range of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) prepared and delivered five oral interventions independently and in collaboration with partner Syrian civil society organizations. Three of these interventions were submitted under Item 3, one under Item 4 and one under Item 7. The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression submitted comments related to the provisions of the Human Rights Council resolution on the “Human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic” to the member states of the core group for inclusion and/or consideration in the final resolution.

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression also facilitated the access of a number of partners to the Palais des Nations to attend side events on the sidelines of the session's activities or to deliver joint oral interventions. SCM submitted recommendations related to the provisions of the Human Rights Council resolution on «the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic,» which were addressed to the member states of the Core Group for inclusion and/or consideration in the final resolution. The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression organized and/or participated in three side events on the sidelines of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council.

## Agenda and Annotations

**During this session, and based on the approved agenda, the Council addressed organizational and procedural matters under the first item,** including the determination of the date and venue of the session (from 24 February to 4 April 2025 in Geneva), the nomination of Bureau members, and the consideration of the appointment and renewal of mandate holders in accordance with the Council's mechanisms.

**Under the second item,** concerning the annual reports of the High Commissioner, the Office of the High Commissioner, and the Secretary-General, the Council reviewed several reports on the human rights situation in various countries, including Sudan, Myanmar, and Palestine. It also discussed strengthening the Office's capacity to document gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.

**Under the third item,** the Council focused on the promotion and protection of all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development. It discussed reports on the impact of climate change, the right to a healthy environment, the situation of persons with disabilities, racial discrimination, and the impact of terrorism on human rights.

**Under item four,** relating to situations requiring particular attention, the Council decided to extend the mandates of the commissions of inquiry on Syria, Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Sudan, and requested updated reports for future sessions.

**Under item five,** the Council reviewed the work of its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms, including the special procedures and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

**Item six** included the adoption of the outcomes of the forty-sixth session of the Universal Periodic Review for several countries, including Lebanon, Ethiopia, Brunei, and Yemen.

**Under item seven,** relating to the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories, the Human Rights Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the human rights situation in the occupied Syrian Golan, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to prepare a report on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The report was issued under symbol A/HRC/5873/.

**Under item eight,** on follow-up to the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, no reports were submitted.

**Under item nine,** devoted to follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the Council discussed ways to combat racial discrimination and to promote racial justice and equality. It also extended the mandate of the UN mechanism on racial justice in the context of law enforcement.

**Under item ten,** the focus was on technical assistance and capacity-building. The Council reviewed reports on support provided to countries in building national institutions and strengthening respect for human rights.

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

A resolution on the human rights situation in Syria was adopted unanimously by the member states of the Core Group responsible for preparing resolutions on the human rights situation in Syria under **item 4** of the Council’s agenda

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression submitted suggestions regarding the resolution’s provisions and language, which were addressed to the member states of the Core Group for inclusion and/or consideration in the final resolution. The resolution, at this session, focused on the following:

- The political transition in Syria, marked by the fall of the Assad regime, a pivotal moment allowing for the release of large numbers of arbitrarily detained persons and opening the way for the first visit of the International Commission of Inquiry to Syrian territory since 2011, which gained access to detention centers and mass grave sites. The Commission concluded that the former government committed crimes against humanity, including torture, genocide, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence.
- Despite the political change, challenges remain; more than 100,000 people remain missing, and there are real risks to evidence. Retaliatory acts and violations continue in several areas.
- Despite the return of approximately 200,000 refugees, the country continues to suffer from widespread destruction and a severe shortage of basic services. More than 16.7 million people require humanitarian assistance, with food insecurity and internal displacement increasing since November 2024.
- The Commission recommended the protection of civilians and the preservation of evidence, the suspension of sanctions that hinder reconstruction, and emphasized the need for Syrian-led justice efforts with the support of the international community, including the involvement of civil society and victims’ organizations, and enhanced cooperation with the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and accountability bodies.

**SCM activities during this session, in cooperation with Syrian civil society organisations and victim associations:**



SCM undertook several activities on the sidelines of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council. These activities included:

- 1. Oral Interventions:** Drafting and delivering five oral interventions on various agenda items of the session, either individually or in collaboration with Syrian human rights organizations, civil society, and partner victim associations and groups.
- 2. Facilitating Access:** Collaborating and providing the necessary administrative and logistical support to colleagues from Syrian human rights and civil society organizations, and partner victim associations and groups to ensure their access to deliver oral interventions, and/or participate in and attend side events on the sidelines of the session activities.
- 3. Side Events:** The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression organized a side event during which the Association of Families of Missing Asylum Seekers was launched, under international sponsorship from the Permanent Missions of Luxembourg and Switzerland to the United Nations. The Center also participated in a side event organized by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, titled «The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Advancing Syria's Path Toward Democracy and the Rule of Law.» Additionally, it co-sponsored a second event, also organized by the Cairo Institute, titled «Syria at a Crossroads: Transitional Justice and Accountability - The Missing, the Protection of Civil Society, and the Role of UN Mechanisms.»
- 4. Visits/Meetings:** Two in-person meetings were held on the sidelines of the 58th Session of the Human Rights Council; one with IIMP and the other with IIIM.



## 1 - Oral Interventions

Oral interventions during the interactive dialogues at the 58th session of the Human Rights Council:

### 1. Interactive Dialogue on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on transitional justice - Item 3:

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) delivered an oral intervention during the interactive dialogue on the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' report on transitional justice. The intervention emphasized the need for a comprehensive transitional justice process that includes victim participation, legislative reforms, strengthening the rule of law and democratic institutions, and



ensuring sustainable international cooperation free from political influence. The intervention was delivered via video by Muhannad Sharabati, Director of the Violations Documentation Project at SCM, and was presented during the session on March 5, 2025.

The intervention was saved to the session archive and shared with the relevant special procedures  
\*Video recording of the intervention can be accessed [here](#).

### 2. Interactive Dialogue with SRSG on violence against children- Item 3:

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression and the Families for Freedom Association prepared an oral intervention during the interactive dialogue session with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. The intervention aimed to focus on all the grave violations against Syrian children by all parties to the conflict in Syria and the role of the international community in protecting children's rights. The session was attended physically by Fatima Saad from the Families for Freedom Association on March 12, 2025, at the Palais Des Nations.

The intervention was saved to the session archive and shared with the relevant special procedures. It was not delivered due to the limited time allocated to civil society organizations.

### 3. Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI) - Item 4:

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies delivered an oral intervention during the interactive dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (COI). Both centers expressed their appreciation for the efforts of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry and its extensive investigations into human rights violations in



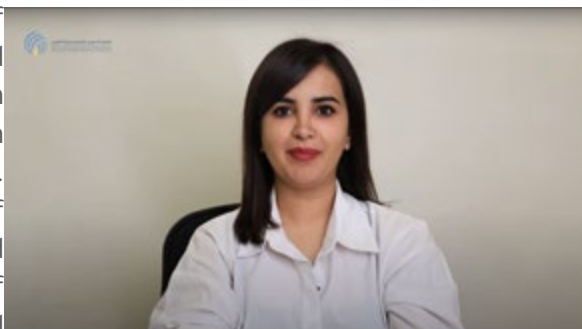
Syria. They emphasized the urgent need to initiate a comprehensive transitional justice process that includes holding all those responsible for violations against Syrians accountable.

The intervention was delivered by colleague Maysa Al-Sheikh from the Cairo Institute on March 18, 2025, at the Palais Des Nations.

The intervention was saved to the session archive and shared with the relevant special procedures.  
\*Video recording of the intervention can be accessed [here](#).

#### 4. Interactive Dialogue with the ID with SR on Minorities- Item 3:

The Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) and Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) delivered an oral intervention during the interactive dialogue session with the Special Rapporteur on minority rights. The intervention focused on the concerns of minorities, which coincided with the widespread use of hate speech and the intensification of societal conflict following the fall of the Assad regime.



It welcomed the government's response by forming a fact-finding committee on the events in the Sahel to identify and hold accountable those responsible for the crimes, and the agreement between the Syrian Democratic Forces and the Syrian government as a step toward Syria's commitment to the citizenship rights of Syrian Kurds and the protection of their constitutional rights. It emphasized the importance of establishing a comprehensive transitional justice process and drafting a constitution that upholds equality, eliminates ethnic and religious discrimination, and is based on the rule of law and an independent judiciary. Simav Hasan of Syrians for Truth and Justice delivered the intervention via videoconference on March 21.

The intervention was saved to the session archive and shared with the relevant special procedures.

\*Video recording of the intervention can be accessed [here](#).

#### 5. Oral Intervention during the General Debate on the Human Rights Situation in Palestine and Other Occupied Arab Territories - Item 7:

On March 26, 2025, the Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM) delivered an oral intervention during the general debate on the human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories. During the session, the center noted that Israel is exploiting the current situation in Syria to impose new facts on the ground and escalating its attacks on Syrian territory, violating international law and the principles of civilian protection. This comes



in conjunction with unprecedented brutal bombing of the Gaza Strip, which has claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians, including many children. The intervention was delivered by colleague Nadia Kheir al-Deen, Advocacy Officer at the SCM, via video.

The intervention was saved to the session archive and shared with the relevant special procedures.

\*Video recording of the intervention can be accessed [here](#).

## 2 - Securing Access and Logistical Support

During the 58th session of the Human Rights Council, SCM provided necessary administrative support to colleagues from partner Syrian human rights and civil society organizations to ensure their access to the Palais des Nations in Geneva. This included securing Access permits/temporary accreditations for /14/ NGO representatives to:

- Hold bilateral meetings, Deliver oral interventions, Attend session meetings and Participate in and attend side events on the margin of the HRC58.

## 3 - Side Events



Association of Families of Missing Asylum Seekers (AFOMAS), organized a side event on the sidelines of the 58th session of the Human Rights Council to officially launch the Association. The event was sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Luxembourg and Switzerland to the United Nations, and brought together members of the Association, the SCM, and representatives of international organizations and Syrian civil society organizations.

SCM also participated in a side event organized by the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) entitled «The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Activating Syria's Path to Democracy and the Rule of Law» on March 17, 2025. Mazen Darwish, General Director of the Syrian Center, spoke about the role of Syrian civil society organizations in the areas of justice, human rights protection, and documentation, and the types of essential elements that must exist (space for Syrian civil society organizations, freedom of expression, assembly, association, etc.).

Furthermore, the SCM sponsored a side event, also organized by the Cairo Center, on March 19, 2025, entitled «Syria at a Crossroads: Transitional Justice and Accountability: Missing Persons, Civil Society Protection, and the Role of UN Mechanisms.» The event highlighted the efforts of thousands of Syrians seeking truth, justice, and reparations, as well as the role of UN mechanisms, including the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, and the Independent Commission on Missing Persons in Syria, in ensuring accountability, documenting human rights violations, and preserving evidence for future justice efforts.

#### 4 - Visits/Meetings:

On March 24, 2025, following a side event for the launch of the Association of the Families of Missing Asylum Seekers (AFOMAS) two in-person meetings were held in Geneva between the Manager of the Violations Documentation Project.

The first meeting took place with the IIM at their office in the Palais des Nations, where discussions focused on recent developments in Syria and the organization's planned activities in the country.

The second meeting was held with the IIMP and addressed collaboration on the issue of clarifying the fate of the missing in Syria, as well as the memorandum of understanding between the two parties.

### Special Thanks

**SCM would like to extend its sincere gratitude to all the partner organisations, associations, and coalitions for their cooperation in planning and implementing the aforementioned activities, and in particular thanks to:**

[the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies \(CIHRS\)](#)

[the Association of Families of Missing Asylum Seekers \(AFOMAS\)](#)

[Syrians for Truth and Justice \(STJ\)](#)

[Families for Freedom \(F4F\)](#)





