OHCHR Inquiry on Syria press conference: Idlib Report
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Shotlist

2. SOUNDBITE (English) – Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “All sides likely committed war crimes. Children were shelled at schools, parents were shelled at the market, patients were shelled at the hospital, entire families were bombarded even while fleeing these attacks”.
3. Exterior shot, Palais des Nations with UN lettering and logo
4. SOUNDBITE (English) – Hanny Megally, Member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “We have actually investigated 52 counted violations, 17 attacks on hospitals, 14 attacks on schools, 9 on marketplaces and 12 others on residential buildings and other places. And within that, we have found that war crimes were likely to have been committed by both the Syrian Airforce and by the Russian Airforce”.
5. Wide shot, UN Palais, Entry Pregny Gate
6. SOUNDBITE (English) – Hanny Megally, Member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “We have come to the conclusion that attacks by the pro-government forces were so systemic and designed to force the population to move and a possible transfer of populations is a crime against humanity. So, we think that again may have happened and by both pro-government forces and by armed groups and terrorist organisations we have seen pillaging and looting happening which again are war crimes”.


7. Medium shot, Place des Nations with Broken chair in front of UN building
8. **SOUNDBITE (English)** – Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “Some people are returning to their homes and places of prior displacement because the conditions in overcrowded camps are just dire and compounded by the looming threat of Covid-19”.
9. Wide shot, Place des Nations with Broken chair in front of UN building
10. **SOUNDBITE (English)** - Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “The very least the Security Council can do now is to renew and strengthen the cross-border and cross-line aid operations. Pandemics know no borders, nor should humanitarian aid”.
11. Wide shot: ICRC with UN flag
12. **SOUNDBITE (English)** – Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic: “While we welcome last week’s resolution by the Security Council calling a 90 day pause in fighting, the Commission urges the parties to the conflict to hear the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy call for a lasting cease fire and the immediate return to negotiations to end this conflict”.
13. Wide shot: UN flag alley
14. Medium, UN flag
15. Medium shot, UN flag alley
16. Wide shot, UN Palais with flags
UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria: War Crimes likely to be committed by all sides

The UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria highlighted in its latest report released today the aerial and ground attacks carried out by Syrian Government forces and Russian Air forces last year in Idlib Governorate which decimated civilian infrastructure.

“All sides likely committed war crimes”, said Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic in a video message to the UN. “Children were shelled at schools, parents were shelled at the market, patients were shelled at the hospital, entire families were bombarded even while fleeing these attacks”.

Syrian children, women and men endured unfathomable suffering during the military campaign launched late 2019 by pro-government forces to re-take the last remaining areas under armed groups’ control in Syria.

The 29 - page report presented today at the United Nations in Geneva covers the period from November 2019 to June 2020 and was based on overflight data and witness testimony.

“We have actually investigated 52 counted violations, 17 attacks on hospitals, 14 attacks on schools, 9 on marketplaces and 12 others on residential buildings and other places”, said Hanny Megally, Member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. “Within that, we have found that war crimes were likely to have been committed by both the Syrian Airforce and by the Russian Airforce”.

The special investigation into recent events in Idlib province and surrounding areas which lead to nearly one million people being displaced in only three months was requested by the Human Rights Council.

The report concluded that the widespread and indiscriminate bombardment carried out by pro-government forces on Ma`arrat al-Nu`man and Ariha (Idlib governorate) as well as Atarib and Darat Azza (western Aleppo) which started in the second half of December and mid-February, foreseeably led to mass displacement and may amount to the crimes against humanity of forcible transfer, murder and other inhumane acts.

“We have come to the conclusion that attacks by the pro-government forces were so systemic and designed to force the population to move and a possible transfer of populations is a crime against humanity”, said Hanny Megally. Member of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

“So, we think that again may have happened by both pro-government forces and by armed groups and terrorist organisations we have seen pillaging and looting happening which again are war crimes”.

The UN investigators also condemned attacks by terrorist fighters. They maintained that UN-designated terrorist-group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) indiscriminately shelled densely populated civilian areas “spreading terror” in Government-held areas.

As if the suffering for the nearly one million displaced civilians was not enough, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic magnified the already dire humanitarian situation in Syria, including in Idlib and western Aleppo. “Some people are returning to their homes and places of prior displacement because the conditions in overcrowded camps are just dire and compounded by the looming threat of Covid-19”, said Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The COI’s Chair urged that “the very least the Security Council can do now is to renew and strengthen the cross-border and cross-line aid operations. Pandemics know no borders, nor should humanitarian aid”.

The Commission called on all parties to the conflict in Syria to cease attacks on civilians and civilian
objects. “While we welcome last week’s resolution by the Security Council calling a 90 day pause in fighting, the Commission urges the parties to the conflict to hear the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy’s call for a lasting cease fire and the immediate return to negotiations to end this conflict”, Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, Chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Commission’s report is scheduled to be presented on 14th July to the Human Rights Council.