

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom

Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté

Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad

Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC, UNCTAD and UNESCO; Special Consultative Relations with FAO, ILO, and UNICEF



WILPF

13 June 2017

Statement on the oral update of the Commission of Inquiry on Syria

UN Human Rights Council 35th session (6 to 23 June 2017)

Item 4

Interactive Dialogue with Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

The conflict in Syria has witnessed intense use of explosive weapons in highly populated areas by warring parties and their international allies. This practice has not yet been faced with this Council's scrutiny despite causing huge civilian death, destruction of infrastructure and displacement, all with distinct, severe and disproportionate impact on women. Women affected by explosive violence often have fewer opportunities to access health care services and reconstruction processes. When heading the household, as women often do during armed conflict, they face systematic discrimination in trying to provide for their families. They also become more susceptible to further physical attack and sexual exploitation, especially when displaced from their homes.

The bloodbath in Syria is also fueled by the easy availability of weapons supplied through illegal or poorly regulated trade to generate profit, overlooking the catastrophic impact on civilian population and the resulting normalization of violence, including gender-based and sexual violence. While several Member and observer States of this Council support the Syrian peace process, many of them are nevertheless paradoxically implicated in arms transfers to all warring parties. The billions spent on technologies of war rather than on peacebuilding, development, and human rights perpetuate a militarized security approach to conflict and international relations, that has proved neither successful, nor sustainable.

In this framework, WILPF strongly supports the Commission of Inquiry's repeated calls to curb the proliferation and supply of weapons to warring parties, and addressing the sources of those weapons.

However, we are deeply dismayed that none of the past HRC resolutions on Syria have addressed arms transfers and their impact on civilian lives. We therefore urge Council Members and observer states to start adopting a different approach that addresses the root causes of the unending conflict in Syria, and confront the ongoing transfer of weapons to all parties in the conflict using the [2013 Arms Trade Treaty](#) as a basis for action. Such approach is guaranteed to prevent and reduce gender-based violence in Syria, and facilitate a new, nonviolent, effective, community-driven, and sustainable peace process.