



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 24th Session of the Human Rights Council – Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic
Geneva, 16 September 2013

Mr. President,

The Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic vividly portrays the on-going tragedy in that country and the enormous suffering of its people. Violence reduced to a rule of life by all parties in the conflict generates all sort of crimes and multiplies the suffering of families and individuals without distinction. Violence also has forced millions of Syrians to abandon their homes and to seek protection in refugee camps. Well over a million children are uprooted.

The Holy Father Francis in particular and the Holy See are deeply worried by the large-scale destructive mood that prevails instead of reason and of a minimal respect of human dignity. The Holy Father's initiative to pray and fast for peace found a vast response among persons of every persuasion in the world and they listened well to his lament when he said: "As if it were normal, we continue to sow destruction, pain, death. Violence and war lead only to death... Violence and war are never the way to peace!".

Most people of our world want peace. The cessation of violence is urgent to meet such aspiration as well as to allow humanitarian assistance to begin healing the dangerous situation of a population without medicines and adequate food and shelter. No military solution is a viable option for the conflict in Syria. Besides, the supply of arms only fuels this conflict and should be stopped.

The first step taken, after the unconscionable and criminal use of chemical weapons, to place these instruments of death under international control, can become the positive beginning of a process whereby all parties involved on the ground together with their allies will dialogue and jointly search for a political settlement.

Mr. President,

The difficulties involved for a diplomatic solution to the bloody crisis in Syria seem insurmountable, but the way of dialogue and a rebuilding of trust are the only reasonable options to put an end to suffering and destruction.

Justice and Peace are not mutually exclusive and both can be pursued together so that impunity is not tolerated and reconciliation made possible.

In conclusion, Mr. President, enough suffering has been visited on the Syrian people, especially on minorities like Christians. All fundamental human rights have been cruelly disregarded and the common people have paid the price.

The Delegation of the Holy See encourages all parties to pursue negotiations in a constructive dialogue that may provide a ray of hope to the People of Syria and courage to move into a peaceful future.

Thank you, Mr. President.