



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 34th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 4 – Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Geneva, 14 March 2017

Mr. President,

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as other sources, depict all too well the disastrous situation that continues to unfold after more than six years of violence: hundreds of thousands of victims and wounded; family-life disrupted; infrastructure, houses, schools, hospitals, and places of worship wrecked; entire cities ravaged; malnutrition and inadequate medical care. This is the grim reality that the Syrian people face every day.

The Holy See wishes to reiterate its solidarity with the Syrian people and especially with the victims of violence, and encourages the international community to embrace the perspective of victims. Six years of senseless slaughter expose once again the illusion, and the futility, of war as a mean to settle disputes. The ambition for political power and selfish interests, combined with the complicity of those stirring up violence and hatred by supplying considerable amounts of resources and weapons, have resulted in an exodus of 5 million people from Syria since 2011, leaving behind another 13.5 million people in need, with about half of them being children.

Confronted with these numbers, dialogue on all levels is the only way forward. While my Delegation welcomes the small steps adopted recently in this regard, we wish to stress that there can be no military solution to the situation in Syria. We must not succumb to the logic of violence, as violence only begets violence.

Mr. President,

It is unacceptable that children often pay the ultimate price during such conflicts: “Some of them know no other life than war. Others were born under bombings. They suffer enormous psychological pressure...Rarely does a smile

appear on their faces. Suffering comes through in their frightened eyes. They wake up under the sound of explosions, bombs, and rockets”¹.

Pope Francis has expressed repeatedly his closeness to the Syrian people, especially to “...the young people affected by the brutal conflict in Syria, deprived of the joys of childhood and youth, such as the ability to play games and to attend school”².

Mr. President,

My Delegation wishes to make an appeal that peace, forgiveness and reconciliation can triumph over violence and resentment. Six years of ongoing conflict indicate the failure of the international community at large. The situation in Syria is our common responsibility as a family of nations. The rights of the Syrian people, regardless of their religious or ethnic identity, must be protected as all Syrians share the just aspirations to justice and peace, fundamental elements of integral human development. In this regard, it is of the utmost importance that religious and ethnic minorities do not become the pawns of geopolitical trade-offs, but be fully involved in a transparent and inclusive negotiating process, with equal rights and equal responsibilities, as this is the only way to build a peaceful future.

In conclusion, my Delegation wishes to emphasize that the dignity inherent in every human person must take every precedence over power and revenge. The unjust suffering of the innocent victims of this senseless slaughter should motivate all involved parties to engage in a serious dialogue and to work towards a future of peace and justice.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ *Letter sent from the Latin Parish of St. Francis in Aleppo to Pope Francis, 28 December 2016.*

² *Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps, 9 January 2017.*