

Human Rights Council – 37th Session

**Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Inquiry on Syria
13 March 2018**

Australian Statement

We would like to thank the Commission for its comprehensive report.

Australia is deeply concerned by the widespread human rights abuses and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria.

Of particular concern is the recent violence in eastern Ghouta, where attacks have been indiscriminate, disproportionate and targeted at civilians.

We have seen increased attacks on civilians and medical facilities in Idlib. More than a million vulnerable people displaced from other parts of Syria are sheltering there, and many are now suffering bombardment and besiegement again.

Reports of chemical weapons use have emerged in Ghouta and Idlib. We know, thanks to the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism, that the Syrian regime and ISIL have used chemical weapons. The regime's disregard for international law is shocking. We applaud the Commission's work documenting previous attacks and seek its views on recent allegations.

We support all efforts to hold the perpetrators of atrocities to account, and appreciate the role the Commission plays in this regard.

Following recent military escalation, the UNSC's demand for a nationwide ceasefire in Syria is critical. All parties must comply with the ceasefire and allow immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all areas. The regime cannot continue using starvation, the destruction of basic infrastructure and the denial of humanitarian access for military gain. We hope the Human Rights Council can highlight this issue.

How can we convince Syria to allow unhindered and sustained humanitarian access to all of the population?

We urge the Commission and the IIIM to create a secure, efficient and effective way of sharing information as soon as possible to enhance the prospects of achieving accountability in the future.

271 words