



Side-Event on the Margins of International Law Week

**Putting Syrians First:  
A Victim and Survivor-Centred Approach to Comprehensive Justice  
– now and in the future –**

31 October 2019

1.15 pm to 2.45 pm, United Nations Headquarters, Conference Room 11

Welcoming remarks

H.E. Mr. Michael Braad, Undersecretary for Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Opening remarks

Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights

Moderator

Ms. Sherine Tadros, Amnesty International

Panellists

Ms. Michelle Jarvis, Deputy Head of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (Syria)

Ms. Jane Connors, Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations

Dr. Maher Azzouz, Chairman of the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS) Foundation

Mr. Mohammad Al Abdallah, Executive Director of the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre

Closing remarks

H.E. Mr. Carl Magnus Nesser, Legal Advisor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden

## Concept note

The continuous commission of some of the worst crimes under international law in the Syrian Arab Republic since the outbreak of violence in 2011 paired with the inability of the international community to take action to end and prevent further violations of human rights and humanitarian law has triggered an urgent need for meaningful accountability. While there are ongoing efforts, such as by the General Assembly-mandated International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) to assist in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes as well as increased progress in domestic judiciaries aimed at holding alleged perpetrators accountable, there is at present no sign of a more comprehensive and holistic solution to ensure justice.

This is to the detriment of respect for international law in conflict worldwide, but first and foremost to the detriment of affected Syrians demanding justice. The concern arises that, in prioritising accountability options, the international community will differentiate between offender, crime and victim categories based on the national interests of affected third states instead of the interests of the affected Syrian people.

The side-event aims to highlight the need for a survivor-centred approach at the core of efforts to achieve comprehensive justice for Syrians by bringing key actors from Syrian civil society, international civil society and the United Nations around the table. Panellists will elaborate on how the experiences of survivors and affected Syrian communities at large and their desire for comprehensive justice now and in the future can and should inform the work of those involved in accountability processes in order to respond to the needs and demands of victims and survivors, in particular regarding the issue of missing and detained persons. Issues discussed will include the empowerment of survivors in the work of accountability mechanisms; the use of effective referral pathways for victims, avoiding their re-traumatization; integrating gender-perspectives into the development of survivor-centred approaches; situating accountability work within broader transitional justice objectives; and the need for an ongoing dialogue with Syrian civil society representatives in particular.

In case of questions, please contact:

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