

Statement of Deputy Secretary-General Mr. Jan Eliasson at Security Council Meeting on: The situation in the Middle East: Referral of the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court

22 May 2014  
(Unofficial Transcript)

I deliver this statement on behalf of the Secretary-General.

“Since the outbreak of the war in Syria, I have persistently called for accountability for perpetrators of grave human rights violations, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The recent attacks against humanitarian convoys and personnel, which may constitute war crimes, add to the urgent need to see action now on accountability in Syria.

“The Security Council has an inescapable responsibility in that regard. States that are members of both the Security Council and the Human Rights Council have a particular duty to end the bloodshed and to ensure justice for the victims of unspeakable crimes.

“In February 2013, the Commission of Inquiry concluded that the International Criminal Court was the appropriate venue to pursue the fight against impunity in Syria. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has repeatedly called on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the Court, most recently in April. The Syrian people have a fundamental right to justice. The United Nations and its Member States have a fundamental duty to defend that right. I support mechanisms that can genuinely hold perpetrators to account. It is clear in this case that no side to the tragedy is innocent. Let us also recall that accountability will help prevent further atrocities.

“For more than three years, the Security Council has been unable to agree on measures that could bring an end to this extraordinarily brutal war, which has deeply affected and damaged not only millions of Syrian civilians but also the entire region. If members of the Council continue to be unable to agree even on a measure that could provide some accountability for the ongoing crimes, the credibility of this body and of the entire Organization will continue to suffer.

“When we talk of accountability we should be thinking not only of the parties to the conflict, we should also think of those outside who are fuelling the conflict and exacerbating the suffering by their continued supply of weapons to those who are committing the atrocities.

“I call again on the Council and plead with the members to set aside their differences and to finally work together on a joint approach that can bring an end to this long nightmare for the Syrian people.

They desperately need an end to the violence, and a political solution. We all have a responsibility to help the Syrian people finally see a future of peace.”