



World Society of Victimology

In Consultative Status with the
United Nations ECOSOC and Council of Europe
The Office of the Secretary General

20 January 2013

President of the Security Council
United Nations
H.E. Mr. Mohammad Masood Khan
Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, New York

Dear President,

Daily victimization of civilian women, men, girls and boys continues to be a pervasive societal problem of extraordinary magnitude that will continue to increase until a lasting peace occurs in Syria.

Crimes against humanity and war crimes will have a prolonged physical and/or psychological impact on hundreds of thousands of people — mostly innocent victims. Already estimates suggest 60,000 deaths are known, but, like others we suspect, thousands are not yet known. Additionally, approximately 1.2 million people have been internally displaced and 2.5 million people are in dire need of humanitarian aid. Unless there is an independent and fair process of investigation and if appropriate, prosecution, there will not be justice for the victims.

It seems too many people (on all sides of the conflict) in Syria have forgotten their country's commitments made in the name of humanitarian rights:

- Firstly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (which Syria endorsed).

The Secretary General of the World Society of Victimology
Michael O'Connell | Commissioner
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- Secondly, the four 1949 Geneva Conventions (to which Syria is a party to each one).
- Thirdly, numerous other conventions, declarations and instruments aimed at protecting the innocent especially during armed conflicts.

Furthermore, Syria endorsed the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power of 1985.

Victims in Syria should have access to justice (including legal representation); and, states should co-operate to provide victim assistance (including medical and psychological treatment and practical aide). Many of the victims of the conflict in Syria are likely entitled to seek reparations under the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005).

Victims' rights are very important - indeed right - for the people in Syria, yet they are threatened by those who shirk their responsibilities to humanity.

The late-1990s were marked by the passage of the Rome Statute and other instruments up on which the International Criminal Court is grounded (of which Syria signed on 29 November 2000 but is not yet a Party). The time is ripe for that Court to begin a comprehensive expose' on the vast array of atrocities at the core of the crimes against humanity and war crimes that now plague Syria.

No one should be above the law. Perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes have exploited religious freedom, political differences and cultural diversity, among other factors, to justify their shocking and shameful acts and omissions. And, too often, those who should have helped have failed the victims.

The World Society of Victimology joins Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, No Peace Without Justice and other members of civil society in urging all members of the United Nations Security Council to approve the initiative sponsored by Switzerland to refer situations in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

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If the Security Council does not act accordingly, it will be to the detriment of victims – past, present and future. The Security Council is vested with extraordinary influence in the lives of especially the vulnerable and the innocent people of Syria. If the Council fails to act, the rights of all victims of crimes against humanity and war crimes lose credibility and all human society is diminished.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O'Connell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Michael O'Connell | Commissioner
WSV Secretary General

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