

Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 17th 2013, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Ja'afari, Permanent Mission of Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.

I would first like to congratulate my colleague Ambassador Eugène-Richard Gasana on his leadership of the Security Council for this month. I also welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda to preside over today's important meeting. I also welcome Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflicts.

My country has examined the Secretary-General's report on sexual violence in armed conflict (S/2013/149) and the information it contains, submitted by the Special Representative. We support all efforts aimed at putting an end to all forms of the crime of sexual violence in conflict, ending impunity and punishing perpetrators and those who incite such violence. However, we also call for extreme care and objectivity in addressing this grave humanitarian issue, which has reached serious levels in more than one place. Perpetrators must be held accountable and brought to justice, whether for crimes committed in the jails of Abu Ghraib in Iraq or in any other place.

The report of the Secretary-General includes seven paragraphs concerning my country. The allegations contained in the report were based on reports by the independent international commission of inquiry in 2012 and 2013. My country would like to stress that the work of that commission since its inception was not professional; rather, it was primarily politically motivated. The commission rejected hundreds of compelling documents and evidence submitted by the Government of Syria regarding crimes committed by armed terrorist groups. It conveniently selected inaccurate claims, as the Special Representative herself admitted, and chose to use inaccurate sources implicated in terrorism and the bloodletting of Syrian citizens. In its conclusions, the commission relied on unofficial, inaccurate reports submitted by opposition parties and sources hostile to the Syrian State and the Syrian people. For the Council's information, I would like to mention that the commission has to date not visited Syria.

The Government of Syria has outlined those serious lapses to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to the commission of inquiry in an official and documented manner. But the commission has ignored all that, for unknown reasons. My delegation addressed several official letters to Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura that included documented information on the responsibility of armed terrorist groups for committing acts of rape, sexual assault and killing of Syrian women and girls. Those armed groups have become proficient at kidnapping Syrian women and girls and exploiting them as sexual handmaidens for the entertainment of terrorists.

At the same time, the advocates of those armed terrorist groups, the jihadi thugs and perverts in some Gulf sheikhdoms, issue open religious edicts on satellite television channels sanctioning their crimes under the guise of what they call sexual religious warfare or sexual intercourse religious campaigns. That morally and socially perverse behaviour has been met by unwarranted responses by many United Nations specialized agencies. It is no longer acceptable for this suspicious silence to continue.

In that regard, I would like to raise some questions. Why did the Special Representative choose to ignore the statement she issued on 15 February under the headline "Syria, release kidnapped women and children and protect them from sexual violence". In the statement, she documented an incident involving the kidnapping of a bus carrying no fewer than 40 civilians, most of them women and children, by armed groups in north-western Syria. Why did the Special Representative choose to ignore the hundreds of reports that have been issued in the course of the two years of the crisis by

Western media sources that document violations by terrorist groups of the rights of Syrian women and girls? Why did the Special Representative choose to disregard the admissions by armed groups themselves of having committing sexual assaults and rapes — contained in documented videos posted on the Internet — in which those crimes were part of the Takfiri fundamentalist ideology they seek to promote? Why did the Special Representative avoid shining a light on the violations committed by the countries hosting displaced Syrians and Syrian refugees of their obligations under international conventions related to the protection of the rights of women, children and refugees?

We had sincerely hoped that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would have publicly presented the violations of the rights of Syrian women and girls in refugee camps in neighbouring countries. For example, there were more than 250 documented cases in which Syrian women in a Turkish refugee camp had been impregnated by Turkish supervisors and their terrorist associates. We had hoped that there would have been references to violations against Syrian girls in Jordanian refugee camps, of the serious violations by means of systematic acts of rape by false religious groups wearing religious garb, and of Syrian women being forced to enter into forced marriages, in some cases involving girls under the age of 14. That is in addition to the inappropriate exploitation of the suffering of Syrian families in another Arab State where documented reports have referred to the marriage of more than 12,000 underage Syrian girls in the course of one year — on the basis of false edicts and pernicious calls by clerics in certain mosques who are followers of Salafi and Wahhabi movements. It is as if the only way to provide humanitarian assistance by those demagogic religious idiots is through religious sexual warfare.

In conclusion, my homeland, Syria, would like to seriously deal with those horrendous and egregious violations of human rights. Syria would like to cooperate with the United Nations, especially with Ms. Zainab Bangura, in order to expose the true events unfolding in Syria in a manner free of sensationalism and politicization and divorced from the agenda of influential Powers in this international Organization. We therefore look forward to her forthcoming visit to Syria as the beginning of an optimal way of cooperating and ascertaining correct information on the sexual violence committed by armed terrorist groups against the Syrian people.