

UN Human Rights Council 50: UK statement on Syria resolution

Thank you Mr President,

I have the honour to present draft resolution L.5 on the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, on behalf of a group of states: France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Kuwait, the Netherlands, Qatar, Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

Mr President,

Yesterday, the Council adopted a number of thematic resolutions focused on gender. Today – in this resolution – we focus on a country in which the rights of women and girls are systematically violated and sexual and gender-based violence used as a weapon of war

Devastatingly, sexual and gender based violence remains a feature of the war in Syria and a tool used to instil fear across the country.

The Commission of Inquiry has repeatedly told us that women and girls are being abused at checkpoints.

They are being exploited and assaulted during ground operations

And they are being abused and tortured in places of detention.

In prisons – we hear of men and boys suffering vile acts of sexual torture – to intimidate and humiliate them into silence. This Council cannot stay silent.

Survivors live in fear of retaliation and endure not only devastating psychological and physical suffering, but also the stigma associated with their trauma.

The resolution presented today condemns these violations and calls for the immediate end to sexual and gender based violence by all parties. It calls for the perpetrators to be held to account and for immediate access to health and psychosocial services.

Our resolution also calls on all parties to protect children from all forms of violence. It is unimaginable that children are subjected to sexual violence and exploitation but it is happening in Syria.

I sincerely thank all those colleagues who engaged constructively in the informal consultations on this resolution.

Given the appalling prevalence of sexual violence in Syria, the very least this Council can do is to adopt this resolution and show the survivors of these atrocities that we have not forgotten them.

If a vote is called on this resolution, I would urge our fellow members of the Council to vote in favour of it.

Thank you