

Address by the representative for Syrians for Truth and Justice

Thank you Mr President.

My name is Bassam Al-Ahmad and I address you today in the name of the organisation Syrians for Truth and Justice, which is a local Syrian organisation, that documents human rights violations perpetrated by all parties in the conflict.

At the time that we are now having this discussion, and during this international forum on minorities, the residents of northern Syria, including the Syrian Kurds and other minorities, face an existential threat, due to the Turkish readiness to launch a new invasion and aggression on our homeland of Syria.

Turkish forces have previously launched several military operations in Syria. Paradoxically, systematic human rights violations have occurred in the Turkish occupied areas in the aftermath of a brutal military operation called “Olive Branch”.

Subsequently, in 2019 Turkey launched another invasion on the cities of Ras al-Ayn and Tell Abyad, which was named “Peace Spring”. However, the operation only brought the indigenous inhabitants, including Kurds, Yazidis, Armenians, Syriacs, Assyrians, and Arabs ruin, destruction, and displacement instead of peace.

The Turkish military was not solely responsible for these violations. The International Commission of Inquiry documented the involvement of opposition Syrian militia named the “Syrian National Army” in these systematic violations that targeted the Kurdish people in particular.

We request that the United Nations and all international organisations focus on the violations being committed by all parties in northern Syria; and to ensure that these parties are held accountable and do not evade punishment. We also call for pressure to be placed on the relevant parties to halt the military escalation in northern Syria and to prevent Turkey from launching a new invasion, which inevitably leads to further serious human rights violations and new waves of internal and external displacement and asylum seeking.

As the subject matter of the forum this year revolves around closing the gaps, rethinking, and reforming the Universal Declaration on Minorities, thirty years since it was originally adopted, the principle recommendation is to develop the wording of the Declaration and encourage the states to adopt a specific treaty addressing minority rights, which is binding on all countries, including Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran and other states in the region.

Diversity is strength. Equal citizenship will protect all groups, regardless of their differing affiliations.