



49th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 28 February – 1 April 2022

Item 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission of Enquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

“Syrian refugees and their appeal for peace”

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Mr. President,

APG23 praises the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and recognises that the conflict is still going on and that the country cannot be considered a safe place.

Thanks to Operazione Colomba, the Non-violent Peace Corps of APG23, and his volunteers who share their lives with the Syrian refugees, we have collected information about the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In particular, Syrian refugees displaced in neighbouring countries as Lebanon, face several abuses when they try to return to their country, such as detention, torture or forced conscription. Syrian asylum seekers are considered as traitors and during the last elections many of them were forced to vote by means of intimidation, violence and by the promise of a safe return in their homeland, a promise that usually never materialized. As the last report issued by Operazione Colomba pointed out, the majority of refugees who seek to return to Syria are women and children, since these categories face less risks than adult men.

APG23 calls on the international community for concrete solutions to end the conflict based on the humanitarian needs of the Syrians, believing that no solution is possible without granting a true representation to the Syrian refugees and the victims of the war.

For this reason, APG23 wishes to give voice to these Syrian refugees by presenting an appeal for peace. This appeal contains the proposal of creating a humanitarian area in Syria where refugees who have chosen neutrality in the conflict can live in safety. The area should be protected by international forces, so that no armed force can enter inside. This solution would allow displaced Syrians to go back to their country and it would recognize and protect their human rights.

Thank you!