

UN Security Council Arria-Formula Meeting

Transitional justice and missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic

21 July 2026 3:00-6:00 PM

Trusteeship Council Chamber
United Nations Headquarters, New York

Overview

For 54 years, the Syrian people suffered under the brutal Assad-regime, marked by widespread violations including enforced disappearances, unlawful killings, arbitrary detention, and systematic repression. Every Syrian has been affected by these violations, either directly or through the loss and suffering of loved ones. Addressing the legacy of these violations through a comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive transitional justice process is essential to achieving accountability, restoring dignity to survivors, rebuilding trust in national institutions and the rule of law, and laying the foundation for sustainable peace.

Within this broader framework, the unresolved fate of the forcibly disappeared and missing continues to inflict deep pain on millions of Syrians and remains a critical priority. Victims, survivors, families and Syrian civil society at large, especially women-led groups, have played an integral role in preserving memory, documenting violations, recording testimonies, and advancing calls for truth, justice, accountability and reparations. Their work has been instrumental to lay the foundation for a transitional justice process that is victim-centred and rights-based, consistent with international law, Syrian-led and nationally owned, with the support of relevant United Nations mechanisms and others.

As the Syrian government works to reform the very institutions that once carried out and legitimised gross violations, human rights can help guide the path forward, ensuring that violations do not recur and that Syria achieves greater long-term stability. That stability serves the broader interest of international peace and security, which is why transitional justice merits sustained attention from the international community, including the Security Council.

For Syrian authorities, in particular the National Commissions for Transitional Justice and for Missing Persons, to succeed, steadfast, mutual and complementary cooperation and coordination among them as well as with international actors, including the Independent Institution on Missing Persons (IIMP), the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) and the Commission of Inquiry (COI) is needed. Ensuring effective search processes will contribute directly to the realization of victims' rights to truth and justice, and help establish guarantees of non-repetition by clarifying patterns of abuse, preserving institutional memory, and strengthening public confidence in State institutions.

The question of missing persons also falls to the General Assembly, and for the case of Syria to the IIMP, established through GA-resolution 77/301 of 29 June 2023, which gives the Institution a humanitarian mandate to clarify the fate and whereabouts of all missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic and to provide adequate support to victims, survivors and the families of those missing, in close cooperation and complementarity with all relevant actors. This includes holistic assistance and a multi-track approach incorporating elements such as capacity building and the creation of an enabling legal and technical environment for the exchange of information among all relevant actors for the benefit of the families of the missing.

Objectives and outcome

This Arria-formula meeting seeks to:

1. Examine the progress on and challenges to transitional justice in Syria with particular emphasis on missing persons.
2. Explore options to enhance support for national Syrian authorities in their work on transitional justice and truth seeking, including drawing on capacities within Syrian civil society, victims' and families' associations, and from relevant international institutions.
3. Elevate transitional justice as a priority that warrants broader and more sustained support, in line with the Secretary-General's 2023 Guidance Note on Transitional Justice, and grounded in close coordination among relevant United Nations entities and the independent international mechanisms on Syria, including the Independent Institution on Missing Persons (IIMP), the Commission of Inquiry (COI), and the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).
4. Highlight inclusive and victim-centred approaches to transitional justice and the search for missing persons, including the meaningful participation and leadership of women, victims' associations and families of the missing in advancing truth-seeking, accountability, and sustainable peace.

The outcome of the Arria-formula meeting will be a summary note.

Guiding Questions

1. What can Member States do to support the Syrian national authorities in advancing a credible, victim-centred, inclusive, and rights-based transitional justice process, while addressing the scale, complexity, and resource needs of this work?
2. How can UN entities currently present in Syria, along with any future configuration, best support the missing persons and transitional justice files, as well as broader efforts to ensure non-recurrence?
3. What is needed for Syrian victims and survivors, families of the missing and disappeared, and civil society, including women-led organisations, to participate meaningfully and safely in transitional justice processes?

Briefers

1. **Mr. Volker Türk**, Under Secretary-General & High Commissioner for Human Rights (VTC).
2. **Ms. Karla Quintana**, Assistant Secretary-General & Head of the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic (IIMP).
3. **Mr. Abdulbaset Abdullatif**, Head of the Syrian National Commission on Transitional Justice.
4. **Mr. Mohammad Reda Jalkhi**, Head of the Syrian National Commission for the Missing.

Format and Participants

All Member States of the UN, Permanent Observers, UN entities, non-governmental organizations accredited to the UN, civil society and academia are invited to attend. Following introductory remarks and the panellists' interventions, members of the Security Council will be invited to take the floor followed by Member States and Permanent Observers.

Delegations wishing to take the floor are kindly invited to request speaking slots in advance through the RSVP link [HERE](#) by end of day Friday July 17th.

All delegations are requested to speak no more than three minutes which will be strictly enforced to allow as many speakers as possible. Interpretation will be provided.

For any questions, please reach out to Frederik Vængtoft Kristensen (frekri@um.dk), Paula Ximena Sanmiguel (paula.sanmiguel@cancilleria.gov.co), or Stéphanie Toschi (Stephanie.Toschi@mae.etat.lu).