

34<sup>th</sup> regular session of the Human Rights Council –27 February to 24 March 2017

ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Commission Of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic

### Oral Statement

#### **“The nonviolent voice of Syrian refugees in northern Lebanon”**

*Check against delivery*

Mr President,

The war in the Syrian Arab Republic is entering its 6th year. It is a war that has destroyed a country with civilians paying the biggest price. It is a war that represents a human tragedy of enormous proportions.

The international community, in spite of the efforts made so far, has not yet managed to solve the conflict through diplomacy and peaceful negotiations and to oblige the different actors to respect international humanitarian and human rights law.

More than half of the entire Syrian population has been forced to leave their homes constituting the largest displacement crisis in the world today. According to UNHCR, there are 3.9 million registered refugees<sup>1</sup>, of which about 95% is residing in five countries, namely Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and Lebanon. Lebanon, which is a country of about 4.5 million inhabitants and not a signatory of the Geneva Convention on Refugees, hosts alone 1.2 million Syrians most living in very precarious and risky conditions.

The volunteers of our Civil Peace Corps, Operazione Colomba, have lived since April 2014 with some Syrian “refugees” in a camp in northern Lebanon, sharing daily their life, their suffering, fears and threats. Our volunteers are committed to bring the voice of those Syrians belonging to the nonviolent civil society, who are asking for peace, justice and the right to a safe return to Syria.

Nonviolent Syrians say: *“Our country is not a battle field for the powers who want to control it and it does not belong to those who believe in violence and are ready to kill in order to dictate their supremacy; our country is a land of encounter and peace and it belongs to all the people who love it”.*

These Syrians, gathered in organisations and associations, simple citizens and families, escaped from violence and death, refuse the war and embrace nonviolence for resolution of conflicts and would like to be heard at the international level.

APG23 invites the Members of the Commission of Enquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and all of you, distinguished delegates and representatives of the Civil Society, to read the appeal for peace of these Syrian refugees that is contained in our written statement<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/34/NGO/134, submitted to this regular session of the Human Rights Council.

As Pope Francis says in his message for the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> World Day of Peace *“In the most local and ordinary situations and in the international order, may nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions, and indeed of political life in all its forms”.*

Thank You!

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Syria Regional Refugee Response, Inter-agency Information Sharing Portal, 15 April 2015

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/34/NGO/134