

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are pleased at Uruguay's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

We have taken note of the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (S/2017/249), which contains information submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

While it is true that we support every effort to put an end to all forms of sexual violence in armed conflict and to bring the perpetrators and instigators to account, we believe that at the same time, we should be very cautious and objective in considering this very dangerous humanitarian issue, which has reached alarming levels in several parts of the world. The perpetrators of such crimes must be brought to justice.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General indicated in her report that it was based on the reports of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry. I should reiterate that my country has rejected the work and reports of the Commission since its establishment. Its work has been exceedingly politicized and totally unprofessional. We are therefore concerned about the fact that the Special Representative is basing her points on reports and information from a body that has no credibility or humane principles. She should rather be basing her conclusions on investigations conducted by her own office.

In her secret report submitted to the Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, the Special Representative gave long, detailed descriptions of the flagrant acts of sexual violence committed by Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and their affiliates against Syrian and Iraqi women. In her current report, however, she says that none of those groups have committed flagrant crimes against Syrian women, whether of abduction, rape, violence, torture and the separation of mothers from their children. She confines herself to timid mentions of their restrictions on women's access to work and education. She has gone far outside her remit — identifying acts of sexual violence in conflict. In fact, in some of the paragraphs of the report she mentions Syrian women's participation in political life. This leads one to ask why — if the Office of the Special Representative is unable to conduct investigations into sexual violence perpetrated by armed terrorist groups against Syrian women on Syrian territory, which do fall under her mandate—she is going beyond that mandate to discuss other topics, which increase her workload. She is also promoting the non-consensual resolution 71/248, which also goes beyond her remit.

Syrians in areas controlled by terrorist armed groups are targets for the worst kinds of sexual violence and slavery. Women and girls have been abducted and forced into marriage with terrorists, including foreigners. That is why we once again urge the Office of the Special Representative to shine a light on the fate of hundreds of women and girls who have been abducted by

elements of the terrorist group Jaysh Al-Islam to Adha in the suburbs of Damascus and exhibited in ironc ages in Douma. We also call on the Special Representative to support the Syrian Government in seeing justice done for the women who have been abducted, enslaved or killed in Latakia, in the north, and those who have been killed in cold blood in Zara and Hama. All those crimes have been reported to the Office of the Special Representative and the Security Council, and we therefore call for more support in investigating what happened to these victims of takfiri terrorism.

The report ignores the suffering of the Syrian women and girls living in refugee camps in neighbouring countries, despite the fact that their situation has always been an issue discussed in the previous reports, since it involves violations that have been documented

in United Nations resolutions and internationally. We had hoped that the report would mention the flagrant violations that Syrian women in camps in Jordan and Turkey have suffered, particularly the systematic rapes committed by Da'esh bandits who shelter behind a façade of legitimacy.

All of this indicates structural gaps. The Government of Syria has already officially submitted and documented all of its structural gaps to the Office of the Special Representative, who has regrettably ignored all its requests. We do not know why, but we hope that she will submit concrete proposals aimed at ending sexual violence against women and using her influence with the countries sponsoring armed terrorists, all of which we are familiar with, to put an end to the terrible crimes committed by these terrorist groups. We do not expect her to submit secret reports to the 1267 Committee that only expand her mandate in a way that interferes with countries' internal affairs. We are ready to cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative and to be informed of every name and incident that she has received in order to open investigations and punish the perpetrators of any crimes in a framework of cooperation and dialogue, so that she can fulfill her worthy mandate as effectively as possible.

The people responsible for violence directed against Syrian women and girls in Syria, Jordan and Turkey come from the same countries that announce in Security Council meetings that they want to do everything to protect Syrians while giving money, aid and support to terrorist groups and foreign terrorists who come to Syria in order to commit the worst possible acts of violence against Syrians.