

**Security Council Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Council, April 2014, Security Council Chamber**  
*Statement by Mr. Ja'afari, Permanent Mission of Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.*

At the outset, I should like to congratulate you, Madam, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I also welcome Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and am gratified by the participation in this meeting of the Minister of National Defence of Ecuador, Ms. Maria Fernanda Espinosa.

My country has spared no effort in providing the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with data, forensic reports and formal letters documenting the responsibility of the various armed terrorist groups in my country for the sexual assault, rape, abduction and killing of women and girls in Syria. These crimes are part and parcel of the Salafist, Wahabi and takfiri ideology they seek to spread throughout the region. We have demonstrated our commitment to supporting international efforts to end all forms of sexual violence, holding their perpetrators and instigators accountable, and ending the silence and unjustified indifference in the relevant reports of many specialized agencies of the United Nations concerning all such ethically and socially abnormal behavior against Syrian women.

While we appreciate Ms. Bangura's efforts in the preparation of the report before us (S/2014/181), her interpretation of events in Syria remains unfortunately partial and unilaterally sourced. In order to explain why this is so, I have prepared the following remarks on the section of the report pertaining to the situation in Syria.

First, those who drafted the report continue to allege that the information contained therein was not verified "largely owing to a lack of access" (S/2014/181, *para.55*). In the regard, I assert that the Syrian authorities have received no request from any United Nations office in Damascus or elsewhere, including that of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to visit any location in order to verify information provided by the Syrian Government. I recall that we have extended a formal invitation to the Special Representative to visit Syria on more than one occasion since her appointment, and before the drafting of her two reports, in order to help her assess events on the ground rather than relying on misleading allegations arising from the media. We have done so because of our interest in objectivity and balance and in order to prevent politicization. However, for reasons unknown to us the Special Representative seems not to have found time to undertake such an important visit. Clearly, her failure to do so has prevented her Office from reporting accurately on sexual violence in Syria.

Secondly, in the report the Special Representative indicates that her allegations are based on "[i]nformation gathered from displaced civilians outside the Syrian Arab Republic and reported by the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic" (*ibid.*), as well as by former detainees. I insist that the work undertaken by the commission since its establishment has been neither professional nor objective. Instead, it has been political in nature and supremely biased against the Government of Syria. In that regard, I confirm that the Government of Syria rejects all accusations against the Syrian national army, including the allegation that women have been subject to sexual violence at checkpoints that are in busy, open locations — a fact that in itself negates any possible truth or validity of such accusations.

Thirdly, despite the attempts of the Special Representative and her team to document crimes of sexual violence committed by the armed terrorist groups in Syria, she remains unable to verify them, preferring to keep references to them vague and indirect. Fully aware that the Syrian Government has provided her with documentation of crimes of sexual violence committed by members of these groups against women — including murder, kidnapping, gang rape, slavery, torture and marriage jihad — the Special Representative and her team have unfortunately not bothered to verify any such allegation or to seek additional information from the Syrian Government or other entities.

In this connection, if the Special Representative has been unable to verify what she calls “media reports” concerning the crime of marriage jihad, we are prompted to ask whether the statement made by the Minister of the Interior of Tunisia before the Tunisian Parliament on 19 September 2013, which falls within the reporting period covered by the report, to the effect that 300 Tunisian women had fallen victim to this sick fatwa from the Gulf, is also to be considered a media report that cannot be verified. The United Nations, as represented by the Special Representative, plays a key role in eliminating this unprecedented humiliation of women. This phenomenon affects not only Syrian women, but women and girls worldwide. One such incident, although surely not the last, involved four minor girls — two from Austria and two from France — who fell prey to this heinous fatwa, as reported by the French and Austrian official media.

Fourthly, it is critical for us to focus on the suffering of displaced women in camps in neighbouring countries. We are deeply concerned over the deteriorating security situation in the camps in neighbouring countries that host Syrian women and girls, who suffer insecurity, human trafficking, rape and false marriages. All this is documented in reports of the United Nations and the Western media, which highlight the tragedy of displaced Syrian minors below the age of 14 who have found themselves shipped to major slave markets in the Arab world, where petrodollar sheikhs and human- trafficking mafiosi enslave them in the name of religion. Moreover, two documented reports confirm 18,000 cases of trafficking in the organs of Syrian girls and children in Turkish hospitals. We have communicated this information to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts.

Here we would ask: If it is claimed that the failure to document the crimes of sexual violence committed by the terrorist armed groups is due to the inability to access locations within Syria, how can it be explained that none of these violations in the camps — which their host countries have always declared open to whoever wishes to visit — is being documented? And why did the Special Representative not mention the host countries’ violations of their commitments to those displaced Syrians?

Syria reaffirms that it is serious about dealing with such grave and heinous violations. Furthermore, we assert that we continue to desire to cooperate with the United Nations, and in particular with Ms. Zainab Bangura, to highlight the reality in Syria without incitement or politicization. The Syrian authorities are ready to look into any name or incident that has been referred to the Special Representative so that it may be investigated within the framework of ongoing cooperation and dialogue with her Office.

In conclusion, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence at King’s College London has uncovered that 10 women travelled from Britain to Syria to fight side by side with the armed terrorist groups in Syria.

Belgium has called on the nine European States concerned with the issue of foreign combatants in Syria to meet in Brussels on 8 May, alongside representative of the United States of America, Turkey, Morocco, Jordan and Tunisia. The Minister of Interior of Belgium has said that addressing the issue of the return of foreign combatants to their countries of origin is one of her most important concerns. This issue, which we have warned against that repeatedly over the past three years, has now become a concern of Europe.