

Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security
November 30th 2012, Security Council Chamber

Statement by Mr. Adi Permanent Mission of Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations.

Allow me, first of all, to thank Ms. Michelle Bachelet for presenting the report of the Secretary-General on women and peace and security (S/2012/732). We would like to tell her how much we appreciate her work since she assumed her post.

The Syrian Arab Republic has sought to develop in a qualitative fashion the lives of women, as well as to advance their status, based on international commitments and in line with the principles of our national Constitution. In so doing, we confirm the implementation of our commitment. In that regard, pursuant to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Syrian Arab Republic has presented its second and third periodic reports on its implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

Unfortunately, in the wake of the events taking place in my country today, armed terrorist groups supported, financed and armed by regional and international Arab sides, are seeking to push my country backwards and negate the social progress that Syria had achieved in terms of gender equality. Individuals or elements in those armed groups — be they Takfirist, Wahabists or Salafists — are seeking to sow psychological panic within society by turning back time to the Dark Ages, particularly with regard to the role of women in Syrian society. As a result, working women now are fearful in going to work, and girls are afraid to go to school or university.

The armed groups are continuing to violate women's rights in Syria and are hampering the evacuation of injured and sick people, including women, children and disabled persons, to areas where refuge is being offered, as was the case in the city of Homs, where representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross were present. Furthermore, those armed groups have committed numerous types of sexual violence, targeting women and girls. All such incidents have been documented and reported to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

We also deplore the fact that some people are exploiting the difficult situation that Syrian female refugees are finding themselves in in camps in neighbouring countries — marrying Syrian women under the pretext that they are going to help them escape their difficult situation through what has come to be crudely called sexual jihad. That is in addition to the sexual violence and abuse that have been perpetrated against those women, in violation of all international human rights agreements.

Despite all of that, Syria is continuing to deal with the challenges it faces as it seeks, specifically, to liberate the occupied Syrian territories in the Golan Heights by promoting efforts to reach a just and comprehensive peace based on the resolutions of international legitimacy in order to bring an end to the suffering of civilian Syrians resulting from Israeli occupation, in particular, Syrian women. In that regard, my delegation reiterates its call to the Secretary-General to include in his reports references to the challenges, harrowing reality and types of violence that Arab women are having to face in occupied Palestine and in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

Syrian women in occupied Golan have not been spared repeated detention. Since the Israeli occupation in 1967, nearly 2,500 Syrian citizens have been detained in Israeli prisons, including women and children. Women who live in the occupied Golan region do not have the right to return to their country of origin; even those who are sick and require humanitarian or emergency attention are not allowed to cross the border except with a permit.

We hope that Ms. Bachelet and UN-Women will undertake to provide the necessary assistance to Syrians to achieve gender equality and to empower women to help find an end to the bloodshed by cooperating with the Syrian Government, first and foremost, and by continuing to exert pressure on external parties in order to prevent them from spreading bloodshed and conflict within the country and getting them to put an end to their terroristic interference and their violations of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We would also call on them to play an active role in terms of protecting the rights of Syrian women and advancing their status in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan.

Finally, we would call particular attention to the threats stemming from the unilateral economic measures that have been imposed against my country by international entities in violation of international legitimacy, which are negating its

economic and social development and hampering the active exercise by the Syrian people of their full rights, especially their right to development.