



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
NEW YORK**

NEW YORK, 24 SEPTEMBER 2021

RAISING THE BAR: WORKING TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE JUSTICE FOR SYRIA
STATEMENT BY H.E. DOMINIQUE HASLER
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE PRINCIPALITY OF LIECHTENSTEIN

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Thank you for joining us today. The situation in Syria has occupied a prominent place in the list of humanitarian and human rights disasters for more than a decade now. A vast impunity gap remains for innumerable war crimes and crimes against humanity. But since 2016, we at least have been able to give a glimmer of hope to the countless victims of the Syrian conflict: There is a real prospect that those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity, whatever their affiliation, will be held to account, on the basis of the work done by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM).

The inaction and political paralysis of the United Nations in Syria has been painful to witness for anyone who believes in this organization. But the grave circumstances in Syria, accompanied by the silence of the Security Council, at last proved enough to have the General Assembly finally live up to the challenge: It created the IIIM. In so doing, it asserted its role as the principal decision-making body of the United Nations. We are proud to have guided this effort, together with our friends from Qatar and others. The response to our initiative was tremendous: An overwhelming majority of the General Assembly supported the creation of the IIIM. As a result, we have also witnessed a decision

for regular budget financing of the Mechanism: I thank the many supporters of the IIIM. Our gratitude also goes to civil society organizations, who believed, early on, in the idea of creating an accountability mechanism and have contributed enormously to it.

Today, as the Syrian conflict has stretched a decade, we are reminded of the vital importance of the IIIM to ensuring comprehensive justice and a lasting peace. The IIIM has quickly established itself as a successful model for accountability work, as it has been replicated for other conflict situations. It has achieved concrete results and enjoys solid and growing political support. But, challenges remain.

The mechanism requires our full cooperation through the sharing of evidence. States, civil society organizations and others have collected large amounts of evidence on the crimes committed in Syria. All this material should go to the IIIM. The Liechtenstein authorities have finalized the steps required to share such information. I strongly encourage others to do the same.

Second and most importantly, the mechanism can be decisive in preparing prosecutions. But it cannot itself prosecute. I commend those States that have undertaken prosecutions on the basis of universal jurisdiction. We hope to see more of this. But we should continue to seek prosecutions before an international tribunal, ideally the International Criminal Court.

Lastly, the accountability discussion must not take place in a bubble and be isolated from the rest of our conversation on Syria. The inclusion of the justice dimension in the discussion of the political process tasked to chart the way to lasting peace for Syria is essential. There can be no sustainable peace in Syria without comprehensive justice.

In conclusion, let me thank Catherine Marchi-Uhel for her leadership as the head of the IIIM and commend her for ensuring business continuity during the pandemic. Catherine, we look forward to continue working closely with you and to your remarks.

Thank you.