



United Nations Human Rights Council 63rd Session

13 September 2026

Agenda Item 3: General Debate

Oral Statement

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The International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute draws attention to the precarious state of transitional justice and institutional reform in Syria.

While the authorities have taken initial steps toward accountability, deep structural deficits threaten the integrity of this fragile process. Historic domestic proceedings before the Fourth Criminal Court, targeting high profile Assad era officials, are moving forward in the absence of a finalised transitional justice law.

Cases have advanced before the necessary legal, evidentiary, and procedural foundations have been fully developed. This legislative void and the lack of domestic codification of customary international law including crimes against humanity and war crimes, compromises the fundamental principle of legality. On this basis, judges are forced to adjudicate within an insufficient legal framework and under immense public pressure.

Civil society has reported that trials have severely undermined due process and been absent of proper evidentiary and examination protocols. Furthermore, court appointed legal representation has remained largely symbolic, leaving the accused without a coherent defence. When the Fourth Criminal Court hands down death sentences under these compromised conditions, the credibility of the entire transition is placed at risk.

To conclude, addressing the legacy of atrocities and guaranteeing their non-occurrence demands systemic change. The Syrian authorities must prioritise and commit to comprehensive legal and institutional reforms that ensure judicial independence. Only by doing so can accountability processes remain credible, transparent and consistent with fair trial standards, laying the necessary foundation for genuine and lasting peace.

Thank you.

This statement was delivered by:

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