



United Nations

International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism
الألية الدولية المستقلة والمحايدة
to Assist in the Investigation and Prosecution of Persons Responsible for the Most Serious Crimes under International Law Committed in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011

PRESS STATEMENT – IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IIIM-Syria welcomes German Court’s Crimes Against Humanity Verdict

Geneva, 13 January 2022 - The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism – Syria (IIIM) welcomes the landmark judgement against Anwar R, at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany. The former high-ranking Syrian official was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to life imprisonment for his role in torture, murder and sexual violence in his previous position as Head of the Investigation Department of Branch 251 of the Syrian intelligence services.

This verdict concludes a trial that saw many survivors of Branch 251 give witness testimony, and prosecutors make use of evidence and information that many actors and particularly Syrians, have bravely documented, collected and shared with accountability bodies.

Catherine Marchi-Uhel, the Head of the IIIM, said “The Koblenz ruling is highly significant not only for the direct victims and survivors these crimes, but also for the victims and survivors of the many unaddressed past and on-going violations in Syria. We must acknowledge that there is still much work to be done for justice to be delivered. This verdict reminds us all of what is possible and should leave perpetrators of serious crimes in no doubt that there will be accountability for their actions.”

Germany’s use of universal jurisdiction holding perpetrators of international crimes committed in Syria accountable, shows the vital role national jurisdictions play in providing paths to justice for victims/survivors of crimes committed in Syria. While no international court currently exists, national jurisdictions must continue to uphold international law by bolstering their own laws and processes. The IIIM’s Central Repository of Information and Evidence is a powerful resource for national war crimes units seeking to investigate and prosecute suspects.

“Sharing evidence and analysis is one leg of what is essentially a lengthy relay race of many accountability actors,” Ms. Marchi-Uhel stated “Our role at the IIIM is justice facilitation. We make use of information and material we have collected from many others and share it along with legal analysis and other support to jurisdictions, with the hope that it leads to many more trials and verdicts like those in Koblenz.”

While the IIIM does not comment on its involvement in specific cases, it is a matter of public record that the IIIM is supporting German jurisdictions. The IIIM seizes all available avenues for justice and prepares for those that may emerge in the future. Its primary purpose is to assist competent jurisdictions seeking to investigate and prosecute alleged perpetrators of international crimes committed in Syria since 2011. //ENDS//

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