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International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the twelfth report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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.



Report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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

Summary

The present report is the twelfth prepared by the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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 for submission to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution [71/248](#), paragraph 50 of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolution establishing the Mechanism ([A/71/755](#)) and paragraph 37 of Assembly resolution [75/193](#).

The reporting period was marked by the evolution of the Syrian national context following the fall of the Assad regime. For the first time in more than a decade, the Mechanism engaged directly with the new Syrian State institutions. Avenues were opened for cooperation that had previously been inaccessible and generated renewed expectations for strengthened support to Syrian-led justice efforts.

In this new context, the Mechanism's mandate assumed increased operational significance. It continued to facilitate criminal proceedings in national jurisdictions, responding to a growing number of requests for assistance. As at 31 January 2026, the Mechanism had received 544 requests for assistance from 17 competent jurisdictions, including 107 new requests during the reporting period. These developments underscore the importance of maintaining the Mechanism's capacity to support ongoing and future investigations both inside and outside the Syrian Arab Republic.

Throughout the reporting period, the Mechanism deepened its dialogue with the new Syrian authorities, consistent with General Assembly resolution [80/224](#) on supporting Syrian-owned and -led accountability processes. Meetings were held with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the Syrian National Commission for Missing Persons, reflecting a new level of access granted by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

In this new reality, the Mechanism's long-standing work on victim/survivor-centred and inclusive approaches remains essential. Engagement with affected communities continued to guide the Mechanism's outputs, ensuring that its work reflects the priorities and experiences of those most affected by the conflict.

The Mechanism's ability to meet these demands continues to be constrained by long-standing resource limitations. Its regular budget has not been increased since 2020 despite the expansion of its workload, and voluntary contributions remain insufficient to cover the additional requirements arising from the new operating environment. Sustained financial support is essential to ensure that the Mechanism can continue to preserve information and evidence, produce analytical products, provide timely assistance to jurisdictions and engage effectively with Syrian institutions.

I. Introduction

1. The twelfth report of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism 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 covers the Mechanism's activities from 1 February 2025 to 31 January 2026.
2. The General Assembly created the Mechanism in December 2016 with a mandate to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of violations of international humanitarian law and human rights violations, and to prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings, in accordance with international law standards, in national, regional or international courts or tribunals that have, or may in the future have, jurisdiction over those crimes.
3. The reporting period was the first full year of the Mechanism's work following the fall of the regime of Bashar Al-Assad on 8 December 2024. That development created a new operating environment and renewed expectations for progress towards accountability for international crimes. The Mechanism's activities in 2025 were shaped by this context and by the opportunities arising for engagement with the Syrian Government and the new institutions established to support transitional justice.
4. Throughout 2025, the Mechanism engaged regularly with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, including through meetings inside and outside the country with the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the new Syrian institutions on transitional justice and missing persons. These discussions revealed potential areas for peer-to-peer exchange and technical support from the Mechanism regarding accountability for core international crimes. The Mechanism requested authorization to open a field office in Damascus and, in the interim, to deploy a liaison officer. Both requests are still pending. In the meantime, engagement continues through approvals for mission-specific activities.
5. The Mechanism continued to coordinate with the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic, whose mandates are distinct but complementary. Engagement also continued with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and cooperation with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) was maintained throughout the year.
6. The Mechanism made progress across all areas of its work during the reporting period. Its central repository continued to expand, with 96 new evidence properties¹ processed in 2025, supported by enhancements to its information management systems. The Mechanism advanced its strategic lines of inquiry while reorganizing its teams under the UN80 Initiative. This restructuring consolidated work on detention-related crimes and unlawful attacks committed under the Assad regime, while maintaining a dedicated team focused on Da'esh-related crimes. Demand for the Mechanism's assistance increased, with 544 requests from 17 competent jurisdictions received by 31 January 2026, including 107 new requests during the reporting period. Since December 2024, jurisdictions have sought a broader range of assistance, including support in locating suspects believed to have fled the Syrian Arab Republic and in conducting investigative activities inside the country. The Mechanism has begun conducting investigative activities in the Syrian Arab Republic

¹ A property represents a batch of evidence provided by a source. A property is limited to one physical item (one hard drive, one USB stick, etc.) or a logical group of hard copy materials (the record of one witness interview, a group of files transferred electronically, etc.).

in support of extraterritorial prosecutions thanks to the critical assistance and significant cooperation of the Syrian authorities.

7. Across all lines of inquiry, the Mechanism continued to apply its inclusive justice approach, including comprehensive external consultations to further strengthen its strategy on children and youth. The Mechanism also strengthened its protection and support capabilities and frameworks.

8. The Mechanism continued to prioritize dialogue and cooperation with affected community civil society actors, including representatives of victim/survivor associations, who make critical contributions to the Mechanism's work and play an important role in developing its victim/survivor-centred approach. The Mechanism conducted its two annual in-person meetings with affected community civil society actors, as well as online meetings, to strengthen two-way dialogue on key aspects of its work.

9. On 29 April 2025, the Head of the Mechanism, Robert Petit, presented the eleventh report of the Mechanism (A/79/799) to the General Assembly under the agenda item "Prevention of armed conflict". He provided an update on the Mechanism's implementation of its mandate since the fall of the Assad regime. The presentation was followed by a debate in which most States expressed support for the Mechanism and its work.

10. The Mechanism continues to monitor developments in the Syrian Arab Republic. It supports the Secretary-General's commitment to supporting Syrians in building a future grounded in reconciliation and justice. Both the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have reaffirmed that all international mechanisms working on human rights protection and accountability must be able to operate effectively in the country. In this context, the Mechanism urges all States to support efforts towards a future Syrian Arab Republic that is based on justice and the rule of law, ensuring accountability for the most serious crimes.

11. The Mechanism continues to operate in a challenging financial environment. Its current programme budget is insufficient to sustain the scope of its structural investigations or to meet the growing demand from competent jurisdictions. These pressures are compounded by uncertainty regarding voluntary contributions, which are essential to maintaining its current capacity.

II. Enhanced engagement with Syrian authorities and civil society

A. Dialogue with Syrian authorities and technical assistance

12. Relationship-building between the Mechanism and the new Syrian authorities is unfolding in a context in which the Government has indicated willingness to advance accountability, while key parts of the national legal framework remain pending. The People's Assembly has not yet been fully established, and the draft transitional justice law addressing core international crimes and creating dedicated accountability structures remains under review. In the meantime, criminal accountability relies on the existing Penal Code and the 1950 Criminal Procedure Code, which do not expressly address the full range of international crimes and under which the death penalty remains applicable. Several national investigations into crimes committed by the Assad regime are reportedly ongoing, although no trials have yet been scheduled. This evolving landscape shapes the context in which the Mechanism's engagement in the Syrian Arab Republic has taken form, including discussions with the authorities on knowledge-sharing and capacity-building.

13. After the Head of the Mechanism's initial mission to Damascus on 21 December 2024, near-monthly visits throughout 2025 and early 2026 enabled continuous dialogue with the new authorities, including the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Interior and Emergency and Disaster Management, as well as the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the National Commission for Missing Persons, civil society and victims' and survivors' groups.

14. To maximize the effectiveness of its support for the transitional justice process, the Mechanism, in May 2025, sent a note verbale requesting authorization to open a field office in Damascus, a request that remains outstanding. As an interim step, the Mechanism subsequently sought authorization to deploy a liaison officer to Damascus to serve as an interface with Syrian institutions, support requests for cooperation and help to develop operational frameworks. This request also remains outstanding, and engagement continues on the basis of approvals for mission-specific activities.

15. During the reporting period, the Mechanism participated in high-level meetings, including the Brussels VIII Conference on 17 March 2025. In October, representatives of the Mechanism, OHCHR, the Commission of Inquiry and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons met with representatives of the National Commission for Transitional Justice and the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Damascus to exchange information on their respective mandates. The discussion clarified respective roles, identified avenues for coordination and reflected a constructive willingness to cooperate with the Mechanism. In November 2025, the Deputy Head of the Mechanism, in coordination with the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, took part in a dialogue with the National Commission for Transitional Justice in Damascus on victim/survivor-centred approaches and inclusive justice strategies. The Mechanism also joined the Syrian-German exchange on dealing with the past, held in Berlin by the German Federal Foreign Office to discuss records and archives, with a focus on information and evidence management.

16. On 10 December, the Mechanism took part in the first-ever Human Rights Day celebration to be held in the Syrian Arab Republic, co-organized in Damascus by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and OHCHR. The Mechanism had regular exchanges with the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations in New York and with the new delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic to the OPCW in The Hague.

17. To increase familiarity with the Mechanism's work and identify areas of support and cooperation, the Mechanism hosted the Head and Deputy Head of the National Commission for Transitional Justice in Geneva in July 2025. In November 2025, the Mechanism similarly hosted representatives of the National Commission in Geneva. Engagement with the National Commission has continued with regular exchanges in Damascus and again in Geneva on 12 and 13 January 2026, during a round table on the extraterritorial prosecution of core international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. The event also brought together representatives of the Ministry of Justice, including the Deputy Minister of Justice for Judicial Affairs, the Public Prosecutor and members of the judiciary, as well as war crimes prosecutors from several national jurisdictions and staff of the Mechanism. Participants exchanged perspectives on the operational realities of prosecuting core international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, discussed challenges faced by justice actors both inside and outside the country and examined practical strategies for overcoming barriers to cooperation.

18. During the reporting period, the Mechanism received two requests for assistance from third States for evidence collection in the Syrian Arab Republic relevant to the Assad regime's detention system and the unlawful use of chemical weapons. The Mechanism has started to collect evidence in the Syrian Arab Republic in response

thereto, thanks to the significant collaboration and essential support of the Syrian authorities. Further communication is ongoing to continue fulfilling these requests.

19. Despite its diminished resources, the Mechanism continues to look for ways to provide technical assistance to the Syrian authorities to advance national justice efforts. The Mechanism is planning a workshop in Damascus in the first quarter of 2026 that will bring together relevant Syrian institutional actors to discuss information and evidence management for criminal accountability. The Mechanism is also coordinating with the Syrian authorities and with third States' judicial authorities with expertise in prosecuting core international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic to assist with knowledge transfer in the area of criminal law investigations. The Mechanism also provided technical feedback on the draft transitional justice law, contributing to ongoing Syrian-led national efforts.

B. Consultations with civil society and victims/survivors

20. During the reporting period, the Mechanism enhanced its cooperation with affected community civil society actors, including victim/survivor associations, as a core element of its victim/survivor-centred and inclusive justice approach, a justice framework deliberately designed to ensure equitable access, participation and outcomes for all. These interactions informed the Mechanism's work, ensuring that it reflected the perspectives and priorities of the communities most affected by serious international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. Following December 2024, the Mechanism expanded its two-way engagement with civil society through structured consultations and thematic discussions about evolving expectations for accountability and participation in future processes. In June, the Lausanne platform, supported by Switzerland and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, brought together civil society actors from affected communities who document core international crimes and staff from the Mechanism. Discussions explored recent accountability developments, new opportunities for comprehensive justice arising since December 2024 and areas for cooperation to address emerging challenges.

22. In addition, the Mechanism convened regular consultations with victim/survivor associations including, in October, its annual in-person convening. These meetings were complemented by online sessions designed to include individuals facing barriers to in-person engagement as a result of security, mobility or other accessibility constraints. These online and in-person consultations provided a dedicated forum for participants to share priorities and expectations, with particular emphasis on the need for participatory justice processes that reflect diverse experiences, notably those of women, girls, boys and other underrepresented groups. Participants also noted concerns related to safety, protection and access to justice. On 1 November 2025, in Damascus, the Head of the Mechanism participated in the third International Conference of Civil Society Organizations on the Use of Chemical Weapons, at which calls were made for accountability and enhanced international cooperation.

23. Across all consultations, civil society actors and victims/survivors insisted on justice, expressing a clear expectation that perpetrators would be held accountable and placing hope in the Mechanism's mandate as an important vehicle for this goal. They emphasized the importance of accountability efforts that are inclusive, comprehensive and responsive to the distinct harm experienced across different communities. Discussions further underscored the urgency of preserving evidence that is at risk of loss or deterioration, alongside the need to protect the safety, dignity and privacy of victims/survivors and witnesses. In parallel with its engagement with the Syrian authorities, the Mechanism held regular meetings with civil society

representatives and victims/survivors inside the Syrian Arab Republic, most recently during the Deputy Head's visit in November 2025. These exchanges confirmed the central role of civil society in accountability processes, subject to appropriate protection and support frameworks.

24. Engagement with civil society also informed the continued development and implementation of the Mechanism's victim/survivor-centred approach and associated inclusive justice strategies on gender, children and youth and broader justice objectives, as explained further below. Insights from these consultations were integrated into investigative priorities, analytical work and engagement strategies. Two in-person convenings deepened dialogue on thematic areas of the Mechanism's work, alongside regular virtual engagements. These discussions offered a structured space for participants to raise concerns, exchange documentation practices and articulate expectations regarding the Mechanism's role in supporting current and future accountability avenues.

III. A central repository of information and evidence

A. Collecting information and evidence on serious international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic

25. During the reporting period, the Mechanism continued to expand and enhance its central repository of information and evidence. In 2025, the Mechanism processed 96 evidence properties, including documentation from information providers, witness interviews conducted by the Mechanism and materials from the Internet. The Mechanism complemented its in-person evidence-gathering with remote collections where necessary and appropriate. The Mechanism continued to engage with new sources and strengthened its relationships with existing ones. The Mechanism's evidence collection efforts were conducted in furtherance of its strategic lines of inquiry and its responses to requests for assistance from jurisdictions and included materials relevant to crimes against children and gender-based crimes, as well as evidence linking crimes to perpetrator groups.

26. The Mechanism continued to engage with a broad range of information and evidence providers, notably States, international organizations, other United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations and individuals, including witnesses and potential witnesses. The Mechanism received materials from the Commission of Inquiry during the reporting period pursuant to their cooperation framework. The Mechanism also benefitted from assistance from the Commission of Inquiry in liaising with sources and potential witnesses in support of criminal investigations in competent jurisdictions.

27. The Mechanism continued to cooperate with the OPCW. As mandated in OPCW decision C-SS-4/DEC.3, dated 27 June 2018, and in line with the memorandum of understanding signed between OPCW and the Mechanism on 26 September 2018, the Mechanism received materials from OPCW relating to the Investigation and Identification Team's investigation of the use of a toxic chemical in Duma on 7 April 2018.

B. Information and evidence management

28. During the reporting period, the Mechanism expanded its evidence-processing capabilities. It continued to exploit Internet resources, improve methods for handling large volumes of complex information and strengthen information governance.

29. The Mechanism broadened collaboration with Syrian officials and other stakeholders by initiating exchanges on building technical capacity and systematizing information and evidence management. These consultations are expected to inform the above-mentioned information management workshop, to be organized by the Mechanism in Damascus.

30. In the summer of 2025, the Mechanism launched an internship programme dedicated to open-source investigations. The first cohort completed a two-month in-house training covering open-source research fundamentals, information collection methodologies, verification techniques such as geolocation and chronolocation, and satellite imagery analysis. The programme contributed to enhancing the Mechanism's open-source investigative capacity while supporting skills development among participating interns. A second cohort began the training in early 2026. Also in the summer of 2025, the Mechanism published its report entitled "Developing and maintaining an open-source investigation capacity from scratch", drawing on reflections from a workshop held in October 2024.

31. The Mechanism continues to partner with United Nations entities in line with the UN80 framework. Cooperation with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar included regular knowledge-sharing on information and records management to better align on infrastructure. The Mechanism's ongoing work with the United Nations Office at Geneva was focused on improving efficiency in software acquisition and management. The Mechanism also leveraged service agreements with United Nations partners to manage and support its customized evidence-processing infrastructure. Taken together, these efforts demonstrated the Mechanism's commitment to innovation and the strategic use of partnerships to automate processes and strengthen information and evidence management.

32. Information governance remained a priority in 2025. The Mechanism established a comprehensive data protection policy to implement the data protection and privacy policy for the Secretariat of the United Nations ([ST/SGB/2024/3](#)). It completed its first entity-wide data-mapping exercise, illustrating how personal data is processed across Mechanism activities. Incident response protocols, including data breach procedures, were refined, and key areas for data protection impact assessments were identified. In keeping with the theme of knowledge-sharing, various information governance processes were shared with other United Nations entities. In addition, the Mechanism contributed to the broader dialogue on human rights and gender equality in the digital sphere, emphasizing accessibility, responsible capacity-building and the importance of confidentiality and privacy obligations.

IV. Supporting justice

A. Analysing evidence and building case files

33. Throughout the reporting period, the Mechanism advanced work within its strategic lines of inquiry while reorganizing its teams to mitigate the impact of staff departures and post abolitions as part of the UN80 Initiative. Teams working on the Mechanism's previously separate lines of inquiry on detention crimes and unlawful attacks were combined, while a dedicated team focused on Da'esh-related crimes was maintained. The Mechanism's work on its strategic lines of inquiry continues to reflect its commitment to inclusive justice, with a particular focus on historically overlooked categories of victims/survivors and on crimes that remain insufficiently documented.

34. The Mechanism initiated a project on security-related detention by Da'esh, examining the structure and operation of Da'esh security forces, patterns of security-

related arrests and detention, treatment in detention and the long-term impact on detainees and their families. Prior work conducted as part of the Mechanism's Da'esh-related line of inquiry continued to be used in domestic investigations and trials during the reporting period.

35. Regarding work related to the Assad regime, the Mechanism organized and enriched materials in its repository to facilitate criminal accountability, including by analysing materials relevant to the existence of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population. As part of this work, the Mechanism continued to examine the roles and functioning of key Assad regime structures. Prior analysis generated by the Mechanism continued to be shared with competent jurisdictions.

36. The Mechanism paused work on its case file concerning chemical and conventional attacks that occurred in 2017. To advance the remaining investigative objectives for this casefile, the Mechanism needs access to government archives and witnesses on Syrian territory, as well as additional materials originating from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons fact-finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. Given the current circumstances, the Mechanism's staff resources are more effectively utilized by focusing on the collection of additional materials for its repository, obtaining provenance information to strengthen the usability of its evidence in criminal proceedings and analysing materials to support cases against Assad regime officials for a broad range of crimes, including chemical and conventional attacks.

B. Frameworks for sharing and cooperation

37. Since December 2024, the Mechanism's cooperation framework has entered a new phase, with the new authorities expressing a willingness to engage with the Mechanism in pursuit of the shared objective of accountability for crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

38. The Mechanism continued to broaden both the volume and the diversity of its cooperation arrangements in support of its activities. By the end of the period, a total of 108 cooperation frameworks were in place with a wide array of States, United Nations bodies, international organizations and civil society actors. Weekly coordination meetings with the Commission of Inquiry and the Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic continued, as did engagement with OHCHR.

39. Of particular importance, as set out above, is that the Mechanism has actively engaged with the new Syrian authorities to explore potential areas of cooperation aligned with its mandate and aimed at advancing justice for survivors.

40. While no formal cooperation frameworks have yet been concluded with the Syrian authorities, the Mechanism notes with appreciation the support provided by the Syrian authorities for the collection of evidence in response to the requests for assistance relevant to the Assad regime detention system and the unlawful use of chemical weapons, mentioned above. The Mechanism also values the willingness demonstrated by the Syrian authorities to identify concrete pathways through which the Mechanism may contribute to justice efforts led by Syrians and enhance support to ongoing extraterritorial prosecutions.

C. Sharing information and evidence with competent jurisdictions

41. The Mechanism has continued to assist numerous investigative, prosecutorial and judicial authorities investigating and prosecuting core international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic.

42. The number of requests for the Mechanism's assistance continued to increase, with 544 requests from 17 competent jurisdictions received by 31 January 2026, of which 107 were received during the reporting period.

43. The 544 requests submitted to the Mechanism concern 362 distinct investigations and prosecutions, out of which the Mechanism has assisted with 259. As some requests require continuing assistance through periodic searches in the Mechanism's growing evidence repository and additional support as cases progress, the Mechanism worked on 179 separate requests during the reporting period. Within the limits of decreased resources, the Mechanism's assistance has continued to take diverse forms to meet the needs of the requesting jurisdictions. In addition to conducting searches in its repository, analysing large volumes of data, identifying sources or collecting targeted additional evidence, the Mechanism has also increasingly assisted ongoing proceedings by identifying and locating witnesses, conducting witness interviews and facilitating their in-court testimonies, as well as providing expertise through court testimony.

44. Since the fall of the Assad regime in December 2024, the Mechanism has observed a broadening in the type of assistance sought, with competent jurisdictions expressly seeking assistance in tracking suspects believed to have fled the Syrian Arab Republic and in conducting investigative activities in the country. The assistance sought includes the collection of copies of official documentation, the documentation of crime scenes and the establishment of witness interview capacity in the Syrian Arab Republic, pending the establishment of the required mutual legal assistance frameworks with the Syrian authorities. As noted above, the Mechanism is actively engaging with the Syrian Arab Republic to execute requests for assistance that require investigative activities in the Syrian Arab Republic and has received substantial support from the authorities.

45. The Mechanism is increasingly permitted to publicly reference aspects of the support it has provided to competent jurisdictions, including: (a) the first convictions, in Sweden, for genocide against the Yazidi community (Lina I. case); (b) conviction, in Belgium, for genocide and crimes against humanity committed in the Syrian Arab Republic (Sammy D. case); (c) in France, for war crimes committed by Army of Islam (Nema case); (d) investigations that led to the issuance of arrest warrants in France against the former President of the Syrian Arab Republic and other high officials (Ochlik/Bouvier and Nabout cases); and (e) criminal trials of a number of accused persons that resulted in convictions in Germany (the Alaa M., Ammar A., Mohammad A. and Asmael K., Ossama A., Khalil A. and Faiz Al S. cases), the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Mustafa A. case) and Sweden (Osama K. case).

46. While the Mechanism's ability to support Syrian jurisdictions is subject to the terms of its mandate and consent requirements, as well as by the features of the nascent institutions and transitional justice frameworks in the Syrian Arab Republic, the Mechanism remains committed to contributing to Syrian transitional justice processes to the maximum extent possible, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution [71/248](#).

V. Mechanism-wide developments

A. Update on thematic strategies

Gender strategy and victim/survivor-centred approach

47. The Mechanism's victim/survivor-centred approach has remained a key compass for its work. Since December 2024, the Mechanism has been considering how its inclusive justice framework could be revised in response to the new and evolving contexts in the Syrian Arab Republic.

48. The Mechanism continued to pursue its commitment to focusing on the experiences, perspectives and priorities of a broad range of victims/survivors of international crimes from a rights-based perspective. Key insights arising from these engagements were shared across the Mechanism for integration into its substantive work and the support provided to competent jurisdictions and to increase the effectiveness of future engagements with victims/survivors and civil society organizations. In addition, the Mechanism has been actively engaging with actors in Syria who work on transitional justice issues to share insights and lessons learned regarding its victim/survivor-centred approach and its inclusive justice approach, including during the Deputy Head's visit to Damascus in November 2025 and during the round table hosted in Geneva in January 2026.

49. The Mechanism's new strategic plan (2026–2028) continues to place victims/survivors at the centre, requiring that a victim/survivor-centred approach and thematic strategy guidance be implemented across its outputs and activities. The Mechanism continued to refine and strengthen integration into work planning and monitoring and evaluation, ensuring alignment between the Mechanism's new strategic plan and project-specific guidance and tools. This included updated guidance for evidence collection and engagement with witnesses.

50. Staff continued to implement the Mechanism's gender strategy and accompanying implementation plan, released publicly in 2022, with the aim of facilitating opportunities for inclusive justice. Throughout 2025, the gender strategy continued to guide the Mechanism's work, including its engagement regarding the development of a Syrian-led transitional justice process, its analytical work product and its support to cases before competent jurisdictions, described above. The Mechanism continued to apply and adapt its internal inclusive justice checklist to analytical projects, guiding staff on how to apply an intersectional gender analysis at each phase, including by identifying and addressing blind spots and evidentiary gaps through the collection, preservation and analysis of evidence.

51. In early 2025, the Mechanism reported for the second time on the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, covering activities performed in 2024. Under the Action Plan, 12 of the 14 applicable performance indicators were met or exceeded. The Mechanism's gender strategy, its enabling gender architecture and the commitment of all its staff to inclusive justice contributed significantly to its positive performance in relation to the Action Plan.

52. The Head of the Mechanism fulfilled two personal commitments as an International Gender Champion related to the changed circumstances in the Syrian Arab Republic. First, during the reporting period, the Mechanism incorporated an intersectional gender analysis as part of its efforts to prioritize the preservation of evidence arising from the changed circumstances in the country. Second, engagements hosted or co-hosted by the Mechanism with Syrian civil society actors regarding the future of Syrian-led transitional justice efforts, including accountability

for international crimes, included the integration of a gender perspective and the balanced participation of women.

53. The Mechanism acknowledges the support provided by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in funding the deployment of an expert throughout the reporting cycle to continue strengthening the Mechanism's gender and inclusive justice work.

Crimes against and affecting children

54. The Mechanism continued to advance its efforts to integrate a child and youth perspective into its work. Following external consultations on the Mechanism's strategy on children and youth with international experts, which commenced in 2024, the Mechanism prioritized engagement with civil society organizations from affected communities that work directly with children and young people affected by the Syrian conflict. In September 2025, civil society actors working extensively with children and young people provided feedback on the Arabic translations of the strategy on children and youth and its accompanying implementation guidance and proposed further engagement in the Syrian Arab Republic and additional cooperation with the Mechanism. The Mechanism is working on incorporating their input and additional revisions to reflect recent developments. In January 2026, the Mechanism conducted an online session for a group of Syrian youth as part of a programme on transitional justice in the Syrian Arab Republic organized by civil society actors.

55. The Mechanism will continue to pursue opportunities to further enhance its engagement with affected children and youth and consider their perspectives on justice and accountability in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Missing persons

56. The Mechanism's contribution to clarifying the fate and whereabouts of persons missing in connection with events in the Syrian Arab Republic since March 2011 is guided by its commitment to leveraging the intersections between its criminal justice-focused work and the broader justice objectives expressed by victims/survivors, in line with the Mechanism's victim/survivor centred approach. This includes the right of families to know the truth about the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones.

57. The Mechanism continued to identify the information in its repository related to missing persons and mass graves and to share that information in support of efforts to clarify the fate and whereabouts of persons missing in the Syrian Arab Republic. The Mechanism also developed automation techniques to match unique information from various sources in its repository against each other to facilitate the search for the missing.

58. In May 2025, the Mechanism concluded a memorandum of understanding with the Independent Institution on Missing Persons with a view to strengthening its contribution in this area. Since then, the Mechanism has engaged in sustained cooperation with the Independent Institution. This involved supporting the Independent Institution through regular coordination and practical collaboration across a range of operational matters, including the exchange of expertise on technological infrastructure and sharing with the Independent Institution, as appropriate and with the sources' consent, information relevant to the search for missing persons.

59. The Mechanism also welcomes the establishment of the National Commission for Missing Persons as an important step towards clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing persons in the Syrian Arab Republic. Acknowledging the central role of Syrian actors in addressing this issue, as noted above, the Mechanism has begun

engaging with the Commission to discuss areas in which the Mechanism can provide support. Such engagement is aimed at fostering constructive dialogue and identifying practical avenues through which the Mechanism may, within the limits of its mandate and available resources, contribute to the Commission's essential work to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the missing.

B. Operational support

60. During the reporting period, the Mechanism strengthened its protection framework by refining internal protocols in line with recognized international standards. These measures ensured the integrated delivery of protection and support. They were guided by the Mechanism's victim/survivor-centred approach and thematic strategies addressing gender, children and youth and reflected a commitment to safeguarding the rights, dignity and well-being of all individuals under the Mechanism's care.

61. The Witness Protection and Support Unit actively supported the Mechanism's investigation and collection efforts and provided ongoing management of protected witnesses, including by facilitating the appearance of protected witnesses in judicial processes. Collaboration with United Nations bodies and sustained commitment and support from Member States will be key to expanding protection and support capacity for operations in the Syrian Arab Republic, when authorized, to ensure that victims/survivors, witnesses and other persons cooperating with the Mechanism may do so safely and securely. The Mechanism encourages Member States to contribute through relocation assistance, the provision of financial support for protection measures and the provision of specialized expertise and technology, which are essential to maintaining a comprehensive witness protection and support network.

62. The Mechanism focused its witness support efforts on enhancing capacity for engagement with vulnerable individuals to ensure that witnesses, victims/survivors and any other persons cooperate with the Mechanism in conditions of safety and security. The Mechanism continued to develop trauma-informed referral pathways for beneficiaries, with a focus on mapping and updating medical and psychosocial support services available in the Syrian Arab Republic. Internal initiatives included the preparation of detailed guidance and the delivery of specialized workshops addressing cultural expressions of distress within the Syrian population. These workshops reinforced culturally sensitive and psychologically attuned practices for interacting with victims/survivors and witnesses, in line with internationally recognized standards. Furthermore, the Mechanism worked on comprehensive procedural documentation for witness support and developed a psychosocial toolbox to guide the assessment and provision of assistance.

63. Security considerations are woven into every part of the Mechanism's work, with a strong focus on supporting field missions to the Syrian Arab Republic and to other locations when needed. Security support was also provided in relation to witness protection. To strengthen overall preparedness and cost-effectiveness, the Mechanism is expanding its in-house training programme, including the courses Individual First Aid Kit and Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments for staff.

64. Interpretation and translation support was provided or facilitated for field missions, witness interviews, witness protection and support assessments, consultations with civil society organizations and victims/survivors, outreach and work on the Mechanism's analytical products. Interpretation support was increasingly provided for missions to the Syrian Arab Republic, including high-level meetings. The Mechanism's victim/survivor-centred approach and thematic strategies were supported with an Arabic translation of the draft report "International, Impartial and

Independent Mechanism strategy on children and youth: justice for and with children and youth” and the updating of a guidance document on gender-related terminology for use by all staff. The Mechanism completed a number of significant translations to facilitate the accessibility of justice outcomes, including the English and Arabic translations of a landmark judgment by the Higher Regional Court of Koblenz, Germany, in the Anwar R. case and the Arabic translation of the Mechanism’s report on the former Syrian Government detention system as a tool of violent repression. Both of these translations were shared with the Government.

65. In addition to Arabic and English, the languages supported included German, Kurdish (Sorani and Kurmanji) and Turkish. To supplement its limited in-house resources, resulting in large part from financial restrictions that have left language positions unfilled, the Mechanism maintained a roster of external Arabic and Kurdish (Sorani and Kurmanji) interpreters, as well as a translation roster for various languages, including Arabic. The Mechanism’s ability to contract essential language support services, where required, continues to depend on financial contributions from Member States.

C. Funding

66. Pursuant to paragraph 35 of General Assembly resolution [72/191](#), the Secretary-General has included the Mechanism in the proposed programme budget since 2020. In paragraph 32 of resolution [79/185](#), the Assembly urged the Secretary-General to include further necessary resources to address the Mechanism’s significantly increased workload since 2020 and ensure the effective discharge of its mandate. There has been no increase in the Mechanism’s resources or staffing since 2020. To the contrary, the Mechanism’s proposed budget for 2026 included a reduction of 14.5 per cent from the 2025 approved level, including the abolishment of 12 posts.

67. While the Mechanism continued to utilize extrabudgetary resources to complement insufficient regular budget resources, the funds raised in 2025, for the second consecutive year, fell short of the amount required to fully cover the needs identified in the Mechanism’s strategic plan. Consequently, the Mechanism was compelled to limit the scope of its substantive work within its strategic lines of inquiry, decline requests for analytical products, limit the scope of searches in the central repository and decline requests for witness interviews. The average time required to respond to requests has increased.

68. In addition, the Mechanism has significantly reduced the capacity dedicated to support the further development and implementation of the Mechanism’s victim/survivor-centred approach and associated inclusive justice strategies. The Mechanism’s information systems management capacities and the integration of digital approaches into its work have also been negatively affected. At the time of reporting, the Mechanism’s financial gap for 2026 was estimated at \$7.5 million, which included \$3.5 million for a potential ongoing presence in the Syrian Arab Republic. Those estimates are subject to modification and may increase, pending the team’s assessment of the situation on the ground.

D. Team

69. At the end of the reporting period, 54 of the 60 approved regular budget posts were encumbered, and an additional 16 posts were funded by voluntary contributions. Owing to the exhaustion of the Mechanism’s trust fund in 2024 and the related funding gap, a total of 18 extrabudgetary posts were abolished in 2024 either through contract non-renewal or resignation. The current staffing levels jeopardize the

Mechanism's capacity to address its significantly increased workload, in particular its ability: (a) to respond to additional requirements arising from the changed circumstances in the Syrian Arab Republic, including the provision of technical support to officials working on transitional justice in the Syrian Arab Republic, as requested by the Third Committee of the General Assembly in its resolution adopted on 12 November 2025 (A/C.3/80/L.31/Rev.1); (b) to meet the growing demands from competent jurisdictions; and (c) to facilitate access to justice for victims/survivors and witnesses while ensuring their safety and protection.

70. The Mechanism is aligning its activities with the United Nations System Mental Health and Well-being Strategy for 2024 and beyond. Several initiatives have been implemented, including an annual well-being and employee engagement assessment. The Mechanism is committed to supporting staff in times of crisis and actively works to prevent vicarious trauma through targeted interventions and continuous support. This commitment ensures that staff well-being is prioritized, fostering a healthy and resilient workforce. Work advanced on developing comprehensive internal guidance for the prevention of vicarious trauma, and the development of guidance on psychological preparedness for deployment is ongoing.

VI. Recommendations

71. The Mechanism seeks cooperation to fulfil its mandate and maximize its impact, as set out below.

A. Cooperation with States

72. The Mechanism requests the new Government of the Syrian Arab Republic:

- (a) To continue constructive engagement and dialogue with the Mechanism;**
- (b) To authorize a presence for the Mechanism in the Syrian Arab Republic;**
- (c) To permit the Mechanism to deploy and conduct operations in the Syrian Arab Republic in support of the country's justice efforts and criminal accountability proceedings undertaken by other States;**
- (d) To support the safeguarding and use of information relevant to accountability processes, in accordance with international standards;**
- (e) To support the Mechanism's engagement with a broad range of victims/survivors of international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic, in furtherance of inclusive justice.**

73. The Mechanism requests Member States:

- (a) To ensure sustainable support to the Mechanism through increased funding from the regular budget and complementary voluntary contributions, considering the evolving situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the Mechanism's expanded workload;**
- (b) To ensure broad cooperation and engagement with the Mechanism, including the timely implementation of agreements and frameworks required to facilitate its work;**
- (c) To coordinate the efforts of national actors and raise awareness of the Mechanism's mandate in order to support its operations;**

(d) To ensure that initiatives concerning the documentation, investigation and prosecution of crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic consider the Mechanism's mandate to support impartial, independent and inclusive justice;

(e) To ensure, where needed, that efficient and effective procedures are in place for the Mechanism to access their territories;

(f) To consider entering into cooperative agreements with the Mechanism to provide witness protection and support-related services necessitated by its work;

(g) To engage with the Mechanism on how it can assist national justice actors in addressing the experiences of a broad range of victims/survivors and achieving more inclusive justice, in line with its victim/survivor-centred approach;

(h) To advocate for and support an inclusive and comprehensive transitional justice process, including accountability for core international crimes, in the Syrian Arab Republic.

B. Cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations

74. The Mechanism requests the United Nations and other international organizations:

(a) To engage in dialogue with the Mechanism to promote coordination across the humanitarian, human rights and accountability spectrum, with a view to systematically sharing information;

(b) To ensure that relevant United Nations agencies and international organizations cooperate fully with the Mechanism, including through the timely execution of requests for information and assistance;

(c) To ensure that the Mechanism has full access to materials held within the United Nations system and by relevant international organizations concerning crimes in the Syrian Arab Republic and to put in place necessary arrangements to that end;

(d) To ensure that materials shared with the Mechanism retain their evidentiary value and that any redactions are strictly limited to what is necessary;

(e) To ensure that other investigative or documentation initiatives within the United Nations system take into account the Mechanism's mandate and promote cooperation to avoid duplication and maximize mutual benefit;

(f) To share with the Mechanism information regarding effective humanitarian referral pathways to assist victims/survivors of international crimes in the Syrian Arab Republic and to facilitate access to support services where possible;

(g) To engage with the Mechanism on its victim/survivor-centred approach and associated strategies on gender, children and youth, and broader justice objectives, in order to facilitate inclusive justice by surfacing and addressing the experiences of a broad range of victims/survivors;

(h) To ensure the inclusion of the Mechanism in relevant consultations concerning information governance, record and archive management and data protection in connection with its mandated functions.

C. Cooperation with civil society

75. **The Mechanism requests civil society:**

(a) **To share with the Mechanism all available information and evidence relevant for facilitating accountability processes and, where required, access to witnesses and potential witnesses, in a timely manner;**

(b) **To coordinate documentation strategies with the Mechanism to strengthen coherence and avoid duplication of efforts;**

(c) **To engage with the Mechanism on its victim/survivor-centred approach and associated strategies on gender, children and youth, and broader justice objectives, in order to facilitate inclusive justice by surfacing and addressing the experiences of a broad range of victims/survivors;**

(d) **To assist the Mechanism in reaching out to other civil-society actors, in particular victim/survivor associations, and to foster a broader understanding of its mandate and work;**

(e) **To share with the Mechanism information regarding effective medical and psychosocial services to assist victims/survivors of international crimes in the Syrian Arab Republic and to facilitate access to such services as required.**

VII. Conclusion

76. **Despite operating under significant and persistent resource constraints, the Mechanism made meaningful progress during the reporting period in advancing inclusive justice for core international crimes committed in the Syrian Arab Republic. The increased number of requests for assistance and the evolving national context placed additional demands on the Mechanism's limited capacity, underscoring the need for sustained and predictable resourcing.**

77. **The political transition in the Syrian Arab Republic has created new and unique opportunities for accountability, including through direct engagement with Syrian institutions and national bodies dedicated to transitional justice. These developments have reinforced the importance of the Mechanism's mandate and the continued relevance of its quasi-prosecutorial role in supporting both Syrian-led processes and proceedings in other jurisdictions.**

78. **The Mechanism remains committed to supporting credible, fair and independent criminal proceedings and to ensuring that its work reflects the experiences and priorities of victims/survivors. Continued cooperation from Member States, the United Nations system, civil society and individuals is essential for the Mechanism to meet the growing demands arising from the new reality in the Syrian Arab Republic.**