

Joint statement by Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on instituting proceedings at the International Court of Justice to hold Syria to account for torture

Statement

June 12, 2023 – The Hague, the Netherlands – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Wopke Hoekstra, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, today issued the following joint statement:

On 8 June 2023, Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands started legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice to hold Syria accountable for torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment of its own people. Since 2011, Syrians have been tortured, murdered, sexually assaulted, forcibly disappeared and subjected to chemical weapon attacks on a mass scale. Twelve years on, human rights violations at the hands of the Syrian regime persist.

Canada and the Netherlands invoked the responsibility of Syria under international law, including under the United Nations Convention against Torture on 3 March 2021 and 18 September 2020 respectively. With that, they initiated a dispute under this Convention. Despite genuine attempts made by Canada and the Netherlands, a negotiated solution with Syria could not be reached, nor could an agreement be reached on terms of arbitration. Canada and the Netherlands have thus taken this step of

referring the dispute to the International Court of Justice, to seek Syria's compliance with its obligations under the Convention against Torture.

Canada and the Netherlands have also requested that the Court order provisional measures for Syria to immediately cease the torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of its people, while the case is being decided.

Canada and the Netherlands are guided by the firm belief that there can be no sustainable peace and lasting reconciliation in Syria without accountability for human rights violations and justice for victims and survivors. We remain committed to upholding compliance with international law and call on all States and the international community to support accountability efforts for Syrians.

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