

سوريون  
من أجل  
الحقيقة  
والعدالة  
Syrians  
For Truth  
& Justice



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Cour  
Pénale  
Internationale  
International  
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Court

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An open letter to international  
institutions to address the  
deployment of Syrian mercenaries  
and children to Libya

## **An open letter to international institutions to address the deployment of Syrian mercenaries and children to Libya**

*The International Criminal Court must investigate the report of  
deployment of mercenaries and children to Libya by both sides to the  
Libyan conflict*

Last May, after several months of investigation and research, Syrians for Truth and Justice (STJ) published [its first report](#) documenting the recruitment of Syrians by Turkey to take part in fighting in Libya, that has over the past few years become the theatre of a remote conflict between, on the one hand, Turkey and its allied Qatar, supporting Sarraj's GNA, and on the other hand, a coalition formed by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia, France and Egypt, supporting Haftar's LNA.<sup>1</sup>

STJ continued its investigations and was able to [reveal](#) that the other side, in particular Russia, with the complicity of the Syrian government, took part in the same conduct.<sup>2</sup>

The practice, by both parties, consisting in profiting off of an alarming economic and social context after ten years of conflict, to hire fighters, for some civilians who had never taken arms, is disgraceful. The ultimate objective lies in escaping any accountability for the violations committed by these mercenaries on behalf of these governments. Stripping these fighters of any legal protection granted to lawful combatants by International Humanitarian Law, the practice disregards Syrian lives as worth less than that of official soldiers. By enlisting soldiers and civilians in a conflict they have no interest in, other than that of financial gain, governments taking part in this conduct undermine any prospects of recovery and worsen the already weakened social fabric of the country. Finally, by entangling the practice with that of child recruitment, and sending to Libya children as young as 15 years old, they violate the foundations of child protection.

It is essential for international bodies monitoring and participating in the process of accountability in Libya, to address this conduct and hold to account those responsible for it. The International Criminal Court, who opened an investigation into the situation in Libya in March 2011, and whose Office of The Prosecutor reaffirmed, in April 2019, her attachment to investigating "any new instances of crimes falling within the Court's jurisdiction", must take this practice into consideration.<sup>3</sup> A Commission of Inquiry must be established in order to bring significant resources into investigating the numerous violations committed in Libya, including the recruitment of mercenaries and child soldiers.<sup>4</sup> The fates of Syria and Libya now seem linked for the worst, and it is time for international bodies to address it.

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<sup>1</sup> *Syrians for Truth and Justice*, Turkey's Recruitment of Syrian Mercenaries to Fight in Libya: Process and Legal Consequences, 11 May 2020, <https://stj-sy.org/en/turkeys-recruitment-of-syrian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-libya-process-and-legal-consequences/>

, In Collusion with the "Syrian Government", a Russian Security Company Recruits Thousands of Syrians as Mercenaries to Fight in Libya alongside "Haftar", 28 July 2020, <https://stj-sy.org/en/in-collusion-with-the-syrian-government-a-russian-security-company-recruits-thousands-of-syrians-as-mercenaries-to-fight-in-libya-alongside-haftar/>

<sup>3</sup> Statement of ICC Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, in relation to the escalation of violence in and around Tripoli, Libya, 16 April 2019, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/Pages/item.aspx?name=190416-otp-stat-libya>

<sup>4</sup> *Human Rights Watch*, Libya: Q&A on an International Commission of Inquiry, 12 February 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/12/libya-qa-international-commission-inquiry#Q5>

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## History

Syrians for Truth and Justice was conceived during the participation of its co-founder in the Middle-East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Leaders for Democracy Fellowship program, who was driven by a will to contribute to Syria's future. Starting as a humble project to tell the stories of Syrians experiencing enforced disappearances and torture, it grew into an established organisation committed to unveiling human rights violations of all sorts.

Convinced that the diversity that has historically defined Syria is a wealth, our team of researchers and volunteers works with dedication at uncovering human rights violations committed in Syria, in order to promote inclusiveness and ensure that all Syrians are represented, and their rights fulfilled.

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