

Justice must be done for Syria crimes, says head of UN body building cases for prosecution

Those who committed the most serious crimes in Syria must be identified, and criminal case files must be built as the basis for prosecutions, the head of a United Nations body assisting these efforts said Wednesday.

“Perpetrators of core international crimes must be held accountable,” Catherine Marchi-Uhel, head of the [International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism](#), told diplomats during an informal meeting in New York organized by the UN General Assembly, an intergovernmental body consisting of 193 Member States.

Established in December 2016 by the Assembly, the Mechanism is mandated to conduct two tasks: one, to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyze evidence of violations; and second, to prepare files to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings in national, regional or international courts, in accordance with international law.

“The horrors suffered by the Syrian people over the past seven years defy description,” she said. “The continuing widespread death and suffering, including recent allegations on the use of chemical weapons, are a stark reminder of the importance of justice for victims.”

Ms. Marchi-Uhel said the communities most affected by these events have been “understandably” disillusioned by the prospects of accessing that justice.

So, by establishing the Mechanism, the Assembly took a crucial step towards ensuring accountability for these crimes.

She called on all UN Member States to provide all the support needed for the Mechanism to fulfil its important tasks, by committing funding, preferably on a multi-year basis, and continuing to support regular budget funding for the Mechanism.;

She also urged countries to implement any changes to national legislative frameworks that may be required to facilitate cooperation between States and the Mechanism, and share relevant material about international crimes committed in Syria, including material previously provided to the Joint Investigative Mechanism and to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and its Fact-Finding Mission.

Further, she asked nations to consider entering into cooperative agreements with the Mechanism to provide witness protection and support services.